The Fantasy of the Modern: Romantic Love in the Bombay Cinema of the 1950s

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DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that the PhD Thesis entitled "***The Fantasy of the Modern: Romantic Love in the Bombay Cinema of the 1950s***" is bonafide work and that it has not been submitted in part or in full for any degree or diploma of this or to any other university.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled "***The Fantasy of the Modern: Romantic Love in the Bombay Cinema of the 1950s***" by **Aarti Wani** for the award of **Doctor of Philosophy** is her own work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full for any other degree or diploma of this or any other university.

We recommend that this thesis be placed before examiners for evaluation.

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INTRODUCTION

Love and romance have been ubiquitous to Hindi cinema's narrative universe. The idiom of love inhabits all kinds of films and genres and is often considered one of Hindi cinema's essential ingredients. The 'love interest' is generally central to films, even as at times it is peripheral; it is extremely rare to have a mainstream popular Hindi film without any ingredient of love. However, the pervasiveness of romantic love over the last five decades has been taken for granted and rarely attracted focused theoretical attention.[1] This critical indifference to the phenomenon of love in films is even more striking in the case of the 1950s because a powerful formula centered on the trope of romantic love was possibly consolidated during this period although its seeds were present in the earlier period of mythologicals, historicals, socials and action films. Barnouw and Khrishnaswami say about the fifties that an overwhelming number of Bombay films centered on the chance acquaintance of hero and heroine, who met in 'unconventional', 'novel' and 'glamorous' circumstances with obstacles provided by 'villainy or accident, and 'not by social problems' (1980:155). The role of dance and song for providing 'conventionalized substitutes for love-making and emotional crisis' was also noted (ibid.). Arnold Alison (1991) notes the excessive engagement with love in the songs and the lyrics from this period. Indeed the 1950s preoccupation with the trope of love is extraordinary and evident in its themes, lyrics, visual aesthetics and also in the publicity and gossip surrounding

[1] Rachel Dwyer's *All you want* is *Money, All you need is Love: Sex and Romance in Modern India* (2000), a book length intervention is perhaps an exception. However, Dwyer's focus is on love as it is imagined and deployed in the films in the nineties and she is concerned with placing it within a consumerist logic.

films and film stars. Nevertheless, the importance of romance as a 'major signifier of this new-nation-in the making' something that can be said to have had 'a dim after-life after the Nehruvian era' (Sangari 2007:278) has received little attention. In seeking to understand the meaning of romantic love in the films of the post independence decade, this dissertation aims to explore its wider cultural significance in the making of modernity.

In settling on the period from 1947 to the early 1960s, which I shall refer to as the 'fifties moment' I am guided as much by aesthetic and popular perceptions as by a periodization that cinema studies in India has found useful.[2] Thus, if independence and the partition cuts the 'fifties moment' from an earlier period, then the coming of color in the mid sixties separates it from a later period, giving it a distinctive black and white aesthetic unity.[3] Significantly, this is the period that saw a medium come into its own. The variety of themes and genres, the aesthetic mastery over sound and visuality at the hands of some of the finest filmmakers, aided by the contribution of actors, lyricist, music directors and other technicians, testify to the achievement of the fifties as unmatched in the history of Hindi cinema. If the euphoric experience of national independence, laced as it was with the anguish of partition overwhelmed the moment, it has also shaped the way scholars have engaged with the period. The 1950s 'social' has been viewed as a major force contributing to the formation of national identity and the imagining of modernity (Vasudevan 1989, Prasad 2000). I draw on this discourse but take it to a hitherto ignored and unexplored area of love and romance. In so doing I also rely

[2]A periodization such as the fifties, the seventies etc. has emerged from the work of Vasudevan (1989), Prasad (2000) and Thomas(1995).

[3] Even though we have the occasional colour scene or film right through the mid-fifties, it is only from the middle of the 1960s that a sizable number of films are made in colour.

on an instinct that popular perception of this period has always associated its cinema with romance and love.

Love and the Nation

Love and Romance, with its assumptions about individual choice and agency in the formation of the couple and its private spaces is associated with post-enlightenment modernity. In its cinematic versions, particularly that of Hollywood, love is seen as continuing the project of modernity, albeit as a complex and conflictual trajectory. In her book *Creating the Couple*; *Love, Marriage, and Hollywood Performance* (1993), Virginia Wexman investigates Hollywood's construction of the couple against the background of American social history. Noting the complex processes and interrelations between cultural products and social practices, she explores an ever evolving narrative of romance via cinematic genres, star performances and acting styles. In the American context, cinema is often seen as representing and actively contributing to the cultural discourse of love because it 'constantly performs, creates, and deliberates on acts of love' (Fuery 2000:102). Consequently, love in cinema is viewed as reflecting, as it invents and reconfigures the culture's understanding and practice of love and romance. Indeed, most available discussion of romance in the West has this context of the experience and reality of love as a psycho-social phenomenon in the culture at large. Typically, cinematic romance and love stories are sought to be understood by connecting them either with the history of the phenomenon or the psychological experience (of historical subjects) of romantic love. For instance a study of romance narratives suggests that 'naming love by turning it into a story is

the oldest of the 'deep structures' used to make sense of its complexity, not least in accounting for the apparently irrational behaviour of the beloved such as hostility, faithlessness, disappearance' (Lynne 2007:2). Hence, intrinsically connected to real time psycho- social experience, narratives are seen as repositories of 'all that is essentially irrational, contradictory and *cause-less* about romantic love' (17). Similarly, scholars of cinematic romance routinely argue that, 'When a movie's story concerns romance, the movie must be understood as both incorporating those norms and understandings governing romance that exist in the actual world and, in reciprocal fashion, retransmitting them back into the culture reinforced or reenergized' (Dowd & Pallotta 2000: 565). It is no surprise therefore that Wexman's discussion of the creation of the Hollywood couple quite automatically leads to a search for its historical origins to note that 'the emphasis on romantic love and its association with marriage and personal fulfillment first took hold in the nineteenth century as part of the romantic cult of individualism' (1993:12). What is of interest about this discourse is its understanding of the imagination, narration and /or performance of love in relation to a historical, lived experience of love. In our context, how do we understand or make sense of the spectacular form, role and place of romantic love in the Hindi films of the 1950s? Is it possible to put the fifties' text and context of love in a representational and/or ideological play and to see the imaginary of romance as a mode of transgression?

Any consideration of a contextual or historical reading of cinematic love in our context comes up against the absence of a substantial social history of love along with its limited presence as real psycho-social experience in the life of most

people.[4] Love, its rituals, conventions and spaces of courtship, dating and fruition are not only absent as quotidian experience from the lives of a majority of Indians, but its practice has often attracted subtle and not so subtle, indeed, often brutal opposition and hostility in the hierarchically organized community lives of most citizens. 'Is it possible to write a history of love?' asks Sudipta Kaviraj at the beginning of his essay on *Tagore and Transformations in the Ideals of Love* (2007). Indeed, is it? Kaviraj answers in affirmative with a few provisos and proceeds to write what he terms a 'conceptual and social history of love through the prism of Rabindranath Tagore' (161). Significantly, Kaviraj, focuses on the textual history of the transformation of the idiom of love from its Sanskrit roots focused on *shringara* and *rupa* through to its modern interiorized, individualizing form in the novels of Tagore and others. Noting the near absence of a social form to love even in the time of the novel- 'the vast majority in Bengali society calmly carried on practicing arranged marriage', Kaviraj observes,

> novels tend to create an impression of commonplaceness of such actions and behaviour, giving them a misleading aura of ordinariness, i.e. such things as engaging in love relationships happen all the time in novels in a society in which these things happen only rarely (181).

Observing further the 'fictional normalization' of the conduct of love through novels and their production of a 'new sensibility', Kaviraj also points to the similar role played by 'Bengali romantic films with Uttamkumar and Suchitra Sen' (ibid.). The history of love in Bengal, or for that matter, in India is, in fact, unavoidably that of its repertoire, its idiom, its poetic or literary themes and forms, its theatrical

[4] It is virtually impossible to find any serious and scholarly engagement with romantic love in India. Sociological writings in journals and books often deal with issues of gender, marriage, divorce, kinship, sexuality, alternative sexualities, but almost never on romantic love. Do we say therefore that romantic love is not a 'social fact' in India?

and now, cinematic avatars. The absence of a social history that narrates the everyday experience of romantic of love in the lives of ordinary people is in direct contrast to its presence in the enormously rich and varied repertoire across time as Francesca Orsini (2007) demonstrates.[5] Love has always been in the air and occupied our affective universe as it has been endlessly narrativized, performed, and encoded in words, songs and dance. Indeed love's position in literature, observes Orsini, is 'quite out of proportion…to its place in real life' (2). Bringing together an impressive body of work that enumerates and comments upon the numerous sites and forms of love; the 'Sanskrit and Prakrit repertoire centering on Shringara and *Kama*', the 'Perso- Arabic repertoire centering on *Ishq* and *muhabhat*' and the 'modern repertoire of *prem* and love' (ibid: 4), Orsini's book is a testimony to the culture's deep engagement with love's many shades, tones and varieties as it is of its essentially, and almost exclusively textual nature.

The absence of romantic love in pre-capitalist, patriarchal societies needs no explanation given that its quotidian social practice assumes a degree of modern individuation and self-actualization. Consequently, a semblance of gender equity, freedom of choice and a degree of democratization of public life, along with corresponding decrease in the role and power of family, community and other traditional structures and norms shaping individual lives are also prerequisite for love to flourish. Is it possible that the constraint on the real experience of love in such societies itself drives its explosion in the realm of the imagination? Orsini suggests that in a 'patriarchal and segregated society, poems, songs and stories about love not only give voice to deeply held human feelings, but may also offer

[5] Kaviraj's essay features in the same anthology.

bounded, hence limited but important, expression to feelings and desires that the dominant ideology considers illicit or destructive of the social fabric (2007: 23). Clearly, unlike the West, it is not possible to read in the sub-continent's literature the culture's discursive engagement with love as an existent everyday psycho-social phenomenon. Indeed, literary love is instead theorized as being a distinctive affective field that its users entered to experience something that had very little credence or validity in their material and social lives.

Orsini's insights and indeed that of the many other contributions' in *Love in South Asia*, Kaviraj's included, influence this consideration of romantic love in films, particularly of the post independence decade. Is love in the 1950s film equally an expression and experience of the illicit and the proscribed? To be sure, as a site of prohibition and escape, love in cinema was a textual intervention, in some ways, following upon and continuing earlier modes of textuality. After all, the films of the 1950s played out the excesses of romantic love in a context where a majority of the audience was faced with a constraining reality that denied most a socially acceptable experience, expression/performance of falling in love. However the story of cinematic love, particularly that of the 1950s is complicated because even as it continued to use, reproduce and reform motifs, imagery, themes and the performative and visual languages inherited from the sub-continent's repertoire of love, it did so in a radically modern form in terms of technology, effect and reach, hence, calling for a different and critical engagement. Thus, we need to ask- does the imagination of love, which had historically taken various forms in legend and literature, transform and mutate in the Hindi cinema of the 1950s as it aligned with modernity's myths of individualism, freedom, agency, movement, speed and

urbanity? By holding onto the thread of romantic love, can we entertain a dialogue with the 'fifties moment' and its relationship with the promises and anxieties of modernity?

Film scholarship of the post-independence decade has drawn attention to the project and anxiety of modernity as it has imagined and articulated in the cinema of the period while also noting its intersection with the nation on the one hand and tradition on the other. Scholars have variously looked at the presence of tradition, in form, content and spectator position in the modern practice of cinema.[6] Crucially, cinema as the site for constructing the nation and providing a national identity has been the central concern. Seeing in Indian popular cinema an 'evocation and inscription of Indian national identity' (1993: 5), Sumita Chakravarty, for instance, attempts a reading of this cinema against its condemnation by an elite opinion which claimed to safeguard 'Indianness', and finds in its 'contaminating, masquerading impersonating impulse' (10), a 'mediated form of national consciousness'(9). Ravi Vasudevan (1994) too views the 1950s' film as responding to the processes of modernity 'by conceptualizing an extended geography for the national subject' (108). By bringing together a variety of concerns and motifs such as geography, travel, community, region, representation of gender and modes of address, Vasudevan unravels this cinema's production of a 'national space', while alerting us to the uncertainties and fissures inherent to the enterprise. Significantly, Vasudevan reads the 1949 film *Andaz* (Mehboob) to bring out the contradictions at the heart of the fifties cinema's

[6]According to Chidanand Dasgupta (1991) the spectator continues to have a pre-modern, irrational expectation and understanding, for Ashish Nandi (1995) the cinema continues to carry the traces of pre-modern form and traditions and Ashish Rajadhyaksha (1987a, 1987b) has drawn attention to frontality and the *darshanik* visual conventions in early cinema.

involvement in 'nation-building as *modernizing* enterprise,' by unraveling the complex mechanisms of framing, mise-en-scène and narrative staging of, what he calls, a 'fascinating and perverse text'. The tension between the pleasure of transgression afforded by the heroine, Neena's persona, and the narrative closure that inflicts on her a punishing regime emanating from and representing a masculine, and patriarchal 'nationalist authority', places the woman as the emergent figure of modernity in need of containment. Vasudevan (1995) suggests that *Andaz* set a trend in the 1950s whereby a gendered modernity was systematically erased by the 'foregrounding of masculine activities and romantic fulfillment' (104). According to this reading, through strategic framing and carefully calibrated processes of melodramatic narration that produced moral hierarchies, the spectator was invited into the space of the nation.[7] More recently, Bhaskar Sarkar's, *Mourning the Nation Indian Cinema in the Wake of Partition* (2009) a book length exploration of Indian cinema's complicated negotiation and participation in the project of nationhood, focuses on the history and memory of the particular event of the partition of the subcontinent as a foundational and traumatic moment of origin, loss and mourning. Describing his book to be about the 'historicity of cinematic representations of partition' (3), Sarkar explores the extension of the one traumatic event in the life of the nation as it refracts through many sites of experience and representation. Intrigued by post independence cinema's apparent silence over this most momentous event from its immediate and

[7] Vasudevan (2011:64) has since nuanced his position to see Indian cinema as instantiating an 'unprecedented public congregation outside the constraints of ritual and social hierarchies based on caste and community proscription'. Calling it an 'illegitimate form that flew in the face of priorities generated by state cultural officials and elite publics invested in national culture based on classical and folk forms and realist imperatives', Vasudevan suggests that the cinema 'provided an alternative public realm, if rather different from the countercultural connotations of that category'.

constitutive past, Sarkar situates the 1950s cinema in relation to the nationalist project. Tracking this cinema's conflictual relationship with the state and government institution, he explores its allegorical relation to the trauma of partition. Earlier in the nineties, the narrative of nationalism had found an additional dimension of the state in the work of Madhava Prasad. In his *Ideology of Hindi Film* (1998), Prasad argued that the heterogeneous mode of manufacture of film is reflected in film form, the most dominant of which is that of the feudal family romance. As a part of a hegemonic cultural project, the feudal family romance carries the ideological burden of the continuing presence of a pre-capitalist economic and social organization that has arrested the development of democratic formations and modernity. The resultant 'blocking' of the 'representation of the private' is behind the unwritten ban on the kiss. This 'injunction against the representation of the private' reflects the ideology of the state in its paternalist attitude to women and in the preservation of tradition (2000: 99-100). The policies of the state play a crucial role, in this reading, in fabricating a national culture through cinema.

The authority of nationalism as the explanatory trope of post-independence cinema is not surprising given that the emergence of this cinema was co-temporal with the formation of the Indian nation state, which in turn had followed upon the heels of an immensely popular mass movement for national independence. While the category of the national has given weight to reflections on several formal, thematic and visual articulations in the post independence Hindi cinema, such as, the visual consolidation of national geography through travel and landscape, a moral economy influenced by an understanding of Indian tradition, the recurrence

of certain motifs, figures, and power structures associated with the nation's history, as well as technologies of framing and representation, it has been unable to account for the 1950s films' overwhelming investment in romantic love. In performance and song, through spectacle and mise-en-scène, and often also in the main pivot of plots and stories, romantic love had in fact overwhelmed the 1950s. However, the national argument, resting on the assumption that films address as they construct national subjects by providing moments and spaces in the cinematic for identification with the collective unity of the nation, examines deep structures in films that connect with a pre-existing set of values, images, symbols, myths, legends, motifs and metaphors held by the audience in a kind of collective unconscious. In the process, romantic love of the films, seen as mere surface, vehicle or formula is ignored or sidelined. Criticizing the national turn in film studies generally, Michael Walsh, argues that, 'National imaginary criticism limits itself by the assumption that artworks function overwhelmingly to manage an unconscious psychical economy' (15). It was perhaps romantic love's, self-evident, surface level ubiquity that made it invisible to critics looking for deeper, unconscious meanings underlying this superficial waste of spectacle and affect. Also since romantic love was this 'strange affair' having little credence, either ideational or practical in the lives of Indians as 'Indians', an anomalous 'non-Indian' thing that played minimal role, if any, in the lived culture of the nation, it was automatically ignored or under-examined by criticism focused on nationhood and modernity.

Little wonder then that discussion about the 'national' in cinema, have slipped by the obvious role and presence of romance in Indian cinema. To be sure,

Madhav Prasad speaks of the formation of the couple, but only to insist that the prohibition of the private, evinced in the unwritten ban on the kiss, is the ultimate postponement of modernity's promise of individuation. However, if lovers did not kiss on Indian screens, they bravely romanced and serenaded each other in public; in the public spaces of gardens and streets in the cinematic diegesis, and effectively in the public, through the darkened, space of the cinema. The question is what kinds of publics were thereby created? Do we find in the interstices of 'Indian modernity' revealed through the nation, yet another, alternative modernity afforded by the transgressive pleasures of romance? Perhaps we need a more calibrated understanding of the films' trade in identities and pleasures? Do we find lurking within the folds of a national imagination, other, alternate forms of being and experience encoded and effected by cinema? In the dark space of the theater, where each is alone with others, did the spectator, finding herself intermittently relieved of the burden of nationhood, escape into an affective no-man's-land of romantic fantasy? I suggest cinematic modernity in the 1950s was being configured and negotiated through romantic love. In doing so, undoubtedly, it weaved itself with the concerns of the nation as it ploughed in the traditional, however, the sheer volume of cinematic investment in romance as also the excesses of this imagination, allowed it to construct and make public identities, situations, events, moods, ideas, and spaces that elide, exceed or reshape the contours of the traditional and the national. In other words 'love and romance', I would like to argue, is cinema's fantasy of the modern in the 1950s.

At this point, it is worth taking a detour to ask, was there any place or role for romantic love in the nationalist imagination, either in the praxis of national

struggle or in the ideas or ideals of the new nation in the making? That the youth involved in the national struggle for independence experienced the romance of adventure, danger and at times violence is a matter of legend. For instance, the romanticism inherent in the life and struggle of young revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh and his comrades was palpable as it was cinematic; evident from the numerous films it engendered.[8] But the question about what the freedom fighters thought of love becomes urgent only if romantic love is imagined to be relevant for any transformative politics trying to create new social order.[9] Even though an exploration of the emergence of the romantic episteme during and within the fold of the nationalist movement is beyond the scope of the present study, it is interesting, if perhaps reductive, to read Bhagat Singh's ideas on love as representative of a larger revolutionary sentiment. In a letter to his friend and comrade, Sukhadev, Bhagat Singh eulogizes love as a great support in life's struggle, demands that it be 'pure', unlike the 'animal attraction' seen in films, and expects that it will finally transcend the individual to merge with a universal love of mankind (Chamanlal 2009:187). Despite the fact that Bhagat Singh seems to allow youngsters the choice of falling in love, while asking them to rise above it, in actual practice, romantic love remained an anomaly and could not be normalized

[8] Christopher Pinney (2004:203) ascribes the preponderance of films on Bhagat Singh to the nature of visual history as distinct from the textual history of the nation in the making. According to him this explains why there have been hardly any films on 'official' national figures like Gandhi and Nehru, who dominate textual histories, while 'unofficial' figures like Bhagat Singh have been celebrated visually, not only in pictures, posters, and calendars but also in innumerable films. One may also add that the popular film culture's investment in youth, beauty, romance, and drama also likely made Bhagat Singh the preferred choice for cinematic rendition as against the more somber 'official' national figures.

[9] Rabindranath Tagore's profound understanding of this necessity is evident in his writing, particularly in the seminal *Gora* (2002). Mapping the immense changes in social organization, opinions, believes and practices on to the person of his eponymous hero, *Gora*, a white man raised in a Hindu family, Tagore makes love the conduit to the transformation of the self in alignment with modernity's many challenges, not only on the national scale but those ushered by and requiring a commitment to a larger, internationalist humanism.

nor acquire social sanction even during the heady days of anti- colonial struggle in the early decades of the century. It is interesting, therefore, that it is during this time that its textual life took ever new and secular forms in the novels, plays and films, which contributed to the making of a modern public sphere. Similar to its discursive engagement in Bengali novels (Kaviraj 2007), there was a veritable explosion of love in novels and stories written in Marathi, Hindi and other languages.[10] Attributing the popularity of such fiction among women in the Hindi public sphere to the fledgling individualism of the 'right to feel', Francesca Orsini suggests that these 'social romances defended and legitimized 'individual feeling' (2002: 289).[11]Orsini, however, goes on to observe that this exploration of 'individual feelings' was bound to be merely textual and literary, since, its relationship to reality was to remain 'at best oblique' (ibid.).

Even as the colonial encounter, capitalist industrialization, modernization and the national movement for political independence caused enormous social churning, romantic love remained illegitimate and continued to be a rare and extraordinary occurrence. In this regard the history of the law that made love marriage possible and legal is intriguing. Tracing the origins, tumultuous progress and consolidation of the law that opened a space in which 'two Indians could legitimately marry out of choice and love rather than by the dictates of 'birth'',

[10] Among the many specimens of this genre, a collection of stories in Marathi stands out for its realistic engagement with a gendered urban modernity. *Kalyanche Nishwas* (Blossom's sighs) written by Vibhavari Shirurkar (pen name) in 1933 brought together tales of thwarted, unrequited love, all told in the first person by young college going or working girls. At a time when narratives with romantic love, often with sexual overtones were popularly read, this collection received much flak and criticism for what was seen as an obscene articulation of women's feelings. The author, Malati Bedekar, in a preface for a recent edition (1976, 2006) insists that she was only capturing the changing reality of women's experience on the cusp of modernity. I thank Madhuri Dixit for pointing out this collection.

[11] That several explorations of individualism in novels were markedly gendered is evident from the novels with eponymous heroines like, *Nalini* (1920), *Ragini* (1914), *Sushilecha Dev* (1953), *Indu Kale, Sarla Bhole* (1934) and others.

Perveez Mody (2002:223), demonstrates the historical schism between the law governing free unions between couples in love and its social acceptability. Throughout its checkered history, the law, first passed in late nineteenth century and consolidated with the passing of the Special Marriage Act in 1954, met with sharp criticism and resistance from religious bodies and individuals, who felt it to be against their faith and way of life. Significantly, when the law, making love marriage legal for the first time, was first passed in 1872, after much deliberation and vitriol, it actually accommodated its critics by virtually excommunicating the marrying couple from their respective religious communities. At all times, even after the Special Marriage Act, the law concedes parental authority by mandating a period of time between the registration of the desire to marry and its solemnizing, as a time given for parental intervention.[12] Mody observes that love marriage in India continues to be viewed as a challenge to ''natural' (that which *Kudarath* or nature, has created) caste hierarchy, and social considerations of class, status and standing' (225-226). Parental pressures, community norms and caste rules governing alliances have continued to overpower young desire for autonomy. How do we understand this obdurate resistance to individual choice and agency in the realm of the private, despite the flow of powerful currents of modernity? Why did the modernizing landscape of the nation have no place for 'the transformation of intimacy' (Giddens 1992)?[13]

[12] According to Mody, the Act possibly retains the concern about parental guidance from the earlier enactments of the law (ibid:233)

[13] In *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies* (1992) Anthony Giddens offers a provocative reading of love as transformative force implying the 'wholesale democratizing of the interpersonal domain, in a manner fully compatible with democracy in the public sphere'(3).

Partha Chatterjee's elegant explanation of the specific modernity endorsed by nationalism hinges on the resolution of the women's question by the nationalist movement. According to Chatterjee, the nineteenth century movement for social reform was sidelined during the national movement for independence by the imaginary of two separate spheres of activity and being; the inner and the outer. Aligned with the home and the world, the private and the public, the inside – outside was constituted in a way that there 'would have to be a marked *difference* in the degree and manner of westernization of women, as distinct from men, in the modern world of the nation' (243). If the precise binaries of this explanatory model allow us an understanding of the nationalist discourse, it is necessary to be aware of the fact that many other kinds of modernities, other than the nationalist variety, were, in fact, being produced, retailed and accessed by the people.[14] Additionally, the issue of romantic love can be seen as an excess that spills over and problamatizes these neat binaries. Firstly, as pointed by Charu Gupta (2001), in her study of colonial publics, the incidences of 'elopement and conversion' hinting at 'love and romance', stirring the public sphere every once in a while, alert us to the fact that there were 'elements of defiant love and sexual pleasure in the face of a culture that continually sought to restrict them' (326). Secondly, the 'inside-outside' spliced with 'women-men' dichotomy is inadequate to explain the

[14] For example urban experience, industrialization, changing labour relations, migration, the expansion of women's work in mills, offices, cinema etc. suggest the making and accessing of diverse and dynamic modernities. The rise of working class movements and its brand of agitational politics is, suggests Sandip Hazareesingh in his book *The Colonial City and the Challenge of Modernity*, the third strand of 'radical modernism' contrasting with 'both colonial modernism and Gandhian traditionalism' (2007:6). In another context, the transformation of the home itself as a modernizing project needs to be considered. Detailing the efforts of people like A.P. Pillay in introducing scientific knowledge and 'sexual reform' to Indian family, Sanjay Srivastava in his book, *Passionate Modernity*, avers that 'while in some context the inner-outer division of nationalism may hold, it is not a position that can be easily universalised; there is considerable evidence that the Indian family was also sought to be 'exposed' to modernity, to make it a 'better' form of organisation (2007:47).

prohibition of romance. If a woman was in love, which space did she occupy? Undoubtedly, in the confinement of her home, the demand that she be 'spiritually Indian' would divest her of any agency and freedom in the choice of her partner, however, if in defiance of these norms she did fall in love, her very act dissolved the boundaries between the home and the world, as she entered a liminal space by 'publically' constituting a 'private world of intimacy'. More importantly, the prohibition on love applied equally to men, and even if ordinarily men had greater freedom and control over their sexuality, when it came to romantic love leading up to marriage, they were as helpless as women. In matters of love, the 'new patriarchy', Chatterjee speaks of, in fact, made no difference between men and women and was equally oppressive to both. It is evident therefore that it was not solely the inner space of the home, but the outer realm of affect within the public sphere, the communal space *between* homes in the interstices of the politics and economics of nation making that was also being regulated. Hence the holding back of the promise of modernity in the realm of the personal cannot be read along the lines of gender alone. Surveillance and regulation of the communal borders of caste was of utmost importance to a patriarchy deeply invested in the ideology of purity. It is not surprising to find that one of the rare, perhaps lone, voices to advocate 'love marriage' as essential for women's emancipation was to come from the Tamil Self Respect movement. The anti-caste, anti-brahminaical position of Periyar, and a desire for a radical transformation of Tamil society made him a logical and strident supporter of women's sexual freedom, and the freedom to choose the person they wished to marry (Geetha 1998). It is necessary to see in the continued power of the caste system and its structures of hierarchy along with

nationalist modernity's connivance in its perpetuity, the real cause behind the thwarting of the modernity of love.

In an effort to define the spirit of the caste system, Bougle (1991) states that even as hereditarily and hierarchically separated groups do not tolerate miscegenation, what actually 'animates the whole system of the Hindu world is a force of repulsion' (69). The horror of impure contacts excludes the sharing of spaces and food, but much more importantly, Bougle says, 'caste is a matter of marriage. Marriage outside caste is strictly forbidden: the caste is rigorously endogamous' (71). Evidently, the ideology and practice of romantic love is the very obverse of caste, the one is based on attraction and the other on repulsion, but more pertinently, the emergence of one would automatically ring the death knell of the other. Historians have debated the exact contours of nationalist modernity's engagement or dalliance with women's emancipation, caste eradication and patriarchal family and community structures. However, there is no denying the social conservatism at the heart of the nationalist project.[15] For instance, Mahatma Gandhi, who is credited with bringing women into the public sphere under the aegis of the national movement, was extremely puritanical when it came to their freedom in matters of sexuality. If for Gandhi 'mothering was the most venerated form of female sexuality (…) permitted within the parameters of Hindu marriage' he ideally preferred women to 'renounce sex altogether' remain unmarried and devote themselves to work with their rural sisters (Katrak 1991: 399). Not surprisingly, although Gandhi condemned untouchablility, his obfuscating ideas

[15] Indeed, nationalism was not one thing but held in its fold a multiplicity of positions and interests. If a spectrum of opinion and practices from the radical left to the extreme right animated the nationalist movement for political independence, as regards issues of caste and gender an influential strain seems to have been conservative.

about the *Varnashrama*, led him to brush aside intermarriage; even if he was in principal not against it, he believed that if the original law of Varnashrama was observed, 'there would naturally be a tendency, so far as marriage is concerned, for people to restrict the marital relations to their own *varna'* (Chakravarty 2006: 155). Post-independence too, the legacy of Gandhi as well as other orthodox Hindu opinion continued to resonate in and outside the parliament, stalling and contradicting the reform process set in motion by Jawaharlal Nehru and B.R. Ambedkar (Som: 2007). The duo's endevours of introducing legislative reform that would regulate Hindu marriage and divorce, among other things, in the form of the, Special Marriage Act, 1954 and the Hindu Code Bill, 1955, met with stiff opposition and angry protest from old guard Gandhians like Rajendra Prasad and Vallabhbhai Patel, other tradionalists from the congress, as well as parliamentarians from the Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Mahasabha and other opposition parties, revealing 'age-old superstitions, complexes, patriarchal feelings, and deep-rooted prejudices running along caste, class and regional lines'(ibid:249).[16] By the time a much diluted bill was passed in 1955, we are in the middle of the cinematic decade under consideration, at the site of a contradiction; hundreds of films espousing romantic love were made and released to an audience inhabiting and inventing a modernity imbricated by caste and patriarchy. Significantly, even as I undertake to delve into the cinematic romance of 1950s, a question that teases but

[16] Madhu Kishwar (1994) maintains that not all objections to the Bill came from regressive quarters, or were based on old-fashioned conservative beliefs. There were many arguing in favour of the preservation of the diversity of practices as well as warning against the administrative difficulties of implementing a uniform law related to personal matters in remote areas. She further demonstrates that in respect to already existing practices of divorce, succession, and even women's rights, there were in fact 'several existing much more liberal principals which were decimated by the Hindu Code (2147). However, one presumes that the civil marriage allowed by the new Act had no precedent in Indian society before its nineteenth century legalization and its consolidation in 1954.

possibly remains unanswered is, indeed, whether caste is the absent presence of this cinematic engagement? In other words, is caste the subtext of these films, something that is seldom named, but is under erasure by their unequivocal celebration of romantic love?

The 1950s

Taking shape as it did amidst post-war economic crisis and the social and political turmoil of independence, the 1950s cinema seems a breathtaking feat. One of the greatest pre-war studios Bombay Talkies had closed down in 1942, and even its surviving breakaway Filmistan saw its decline in the early fifties. But this space was immediately filled up by filmmakers setting up their own production houses.[17]Consequently, a truly varied array of films from romantic comedies to crime thrillers, brooding tragedies to probing socials were made. However, romantic relations; love and desire between the sexes, was a running theme through a majority of film. More importantly and specifically, we find films where love and/or desire are explicit thematic concerns. In a seemingly generic compulsion, the uncomplicated plots of films like *Anokha Pyar* (M. I. Dharamsay, 1948), *Barsaat* (Raj Kapoor, 1949), *Arzoo* (Shahid Latif, 1950) *Deedar* (Nitin Bose, 1951), *Bewafa* (M. L Anand, 1952), *Aah* (Raja Nawathe, 1953), *Yahudi* (Bimal Roy,1958**),** among countless others, merely strung together scenes with two or three characters performing love; its avowal or disavowal through the various

[17] Thus Mehboob Khan with his **Mehboob Films** with its hammer and sickle logo, Raj Kapoor'**s R.K. Films**, Bimal Roy'**s Bimal Roy Productions**, Guru Dutt's **Guru Dutt Films Pvt**. **Ltd.**, the Anand brother's **Navketan Films** and B.R. Chopra'**s B.R. Films** allowed these directors a unique freedom and opportunity of exploring and investing in distinctive styles and genres. At the same time earlier directors like K.A. Abbas, Sohrab Modi and A.R. Kardar continued to make films well into the fifties while towards the middle of the decade we see Raj Khosla and Hrishikesh Mukherji arriving on the scene.

stages of declaration, rejection, misunderstanding, separation, mourning and reconciliation. Even when films were not so single mindedly about love, the unusual intensity, energy and emotional charge released through narrative, visuality, the play of light and shadow and most significantly the lyrics and music around the trope of love was singularly definitive of the period.

If contemporary conversation about and around the films of the 1950s is any indication then there is a case for saying that films and film stars were overwhelmingly perceived in terms of the discourse of love and romance. For one, films were commonly publicized as 'love stories' and one can easily come across countless advertisements such as '*SENTIONAL- GLAMOROUS- AMOROUS, LOVE at its Best! LOVE that made history!*[18] Or, *'EMOTION CHARGED DRAMA OF LOVE…SUFFERING AND WOMAN'S DESTINY!'*[19] Or, *WHEN BOY (Of Today) MEETS GIRL (Of Tomorrow)….*[20] Or, *A Memorable LOVE STORY of your LIFE TIME* …[21] Similarly, even film reviews described particular films as 'a moving love story', 'love tale', 'thrilling romance' and so on. Film magazines routinely carried features that one way or other emphasized the film industry's investment in love. Thus, you can find a piece that compares the 'torrid love-making' of earlier films to the 'languid romance' of the day (*Filmfare*, May 13,1955, pp.10-11) and stars discussing their first love scenes, their ideas of love or advising their fans on this delicate matter of heart and custom. For example *Filmfare* carried a long article by Kidar Sharma, titled *"Cupid Directs the Film"* (August 8, 1952). Sharma, a successful director and an insider to the industry

[18] Advertisement of *Nisbat, Filmindia,* January 1948, p.64.
[19] Advertisement of *Amar, Filmindia,* 0ctober 1, 1955, p.2.
[20] Advertisement of *Aaj or Kal, Filmindia,* May 1948, p.5
[21] Advertisement for *Amar Deep, Filmindia,* July 58, p.1

writes in order to give an overview of Hindi cinema's engagement with love. Warily observing that 'love forms the basis of ninety eight percent of Indian films' (11), Sharma categorizes films according to their directors' conception of love, giving us the westernized, realistic, poetic and caveman attitude to love. Castigating the majority of directors for their 'Westernized' rendition of love-scenes and conversely, for catering to the imagination of love as it 'exits in the imagination of the millions of uneducated, illiterate filmgoers' (ibid: 13), Sharma, called for a greater realism in the depiction of this popular obsession. If in demanding that filmmakers be true to the Indian ethos in their depiction of love, Sharma was begging the question, the very schism that separated fact and fiction, the real life experiences and expectations of the audience and the fantasy world created by films, produced a sharp reaction. A normative and censorious discourse can be seen to emerge which assumed an identification of the movies with the 'immorality' or 'obscenity' of love, while also holding the movies responsible for *teaching* love to an unsuspecting audience. For instance, it is quite common to find gossipy magazines like *Chaya* running moralistic articles blaming the film industry; one particular piece blamed the heroines for 'giving lessons of love' by way of producing massive quantities of love (February, 1949, p.4). [22] Furthermore, just as heroines were blamed for promoting love, women audiences were seen as dupes. Hence, rejection of screen love, which was seen to set 'on fire the susceptible hearts of girls of marriageable age. They yearn for love affairs like those depicted on the screen' (ibid.) found popular expression. Paradoxically, even though most films ended with the loving couple united in marriage, the institution

[22] This was a Marathi magazine edited by V.V. Bapat from Pune.

of marriage itself was felt to be threatened by this depiction of the pre-marital courtship of young lovers and demands were made for substituting these 'sickening themes of boy-meets-girl' with more suitable subjects espousing 'nationality, patriotism, self-reliance and strict discipline' (*Filmindia* June 1947, p.51).

Commenting on the dominant intellectual critique of films in the fifties, Ravi Vasudevan suggests that the discourse was 'related to the formation of art cinema' and 'addressed a potential art cinema audience' (2000: 100). In an obvious contrast to contemporary critics like Kobita Sarkar, who represented an elite point of view in demanding a Hollywood style realism from Bombay film, there was a ground swell of popular criticism deploying nationalist rhetoric and questioning films and the film industry for their romantic themes and 'cheap love-making' that were seen as 'foreign to the indigenous culture of either Hindus or Muslims'.[23] In the early months of independence, one 'Sardi' of the *Bombay Chronicle* in a series of articles hoped that freedom will open a new era that will give us films, which, 'elevated the taste of the masses', and stopped 'pandering to sensuality and cheap values (sic)' (August 23,1947, p.8). Baburao Patel, the owner–editor of *Filmindia* complained that Indian film producers can do no better than produce 'hackneyed love stories told a thousand times over and stuffed with silly sequences, vulgar songs and dances and almost obscene jokes' (April 1948). Patel's continuous rants and the magazine's call, in his editorials, for bans provide an interesting archive of the conservative opinion formed around the film industry.[24] The ban on particular

[23] These are the remarks of Mr. R.P. Saksena, the Assistant Sessions Judge of Gorakhpur reproduced by *Filmindia* (June 1950:10).

[24] On different days he could warn nationalist politicians for their puritanical and hypocritical attitude towards the film industry (Burlesque of nationalism?', September 1947), and the film industry for breaking homes and destroying Hindu culture due to the extra-cinematic, inter-religious affairs amongst its personnel (A warning to Don Juans, October 1949).

films because of the seeming obscenity of language and depiction was normally couched in terms of religion, tradition or culture.[25] For instance, very early in our period, an editorial of *Filmindia* appealed to the censors to ban the film *Panihari* (1947) (water girl) and accused the 'great Brahmin writer' of the film, Pandit Indra, for being anti-social and disrespectful of Hindu traditions by way of loading the film with 'filthy', 'vulgar' and sexually explicit or suggestive language.[26] Interestingly, the writer, Pandit Indra was allowed to defend the film in the next issue, which he did by asking if the editor wanted a 'nation of 400 million saints' and by evoking the literary tradition of Kalidas and Bharatrihari to justify sexual explicitness. Pandit Indra ended his piece with a warning that if the editor and ministers did not change their views then a day may come 'when will (*sic*) make the whole country a sex-starved one'.[27] Indra's defense is significant because in evoking the traditional repertoire of love, he sought to yoke an elite erotic idiom, with its explicit sensuality, to a mass cultural product that often invited the ire of cultural purists. In this regard, the President, Rajendra Prasad's, condemnation of films with 'sex appeal' for playing 'havoc in our society' not only gave voice to a generally held view among the conservatives, but his views favouring the restriction of 'social intercourse between men and women' along with the 'evils of prostitution' all expressed in the same speech, reveal deep seated anxieties regarding the influence of cinema on the sexual economy of the country.[28] Clearly,

[25] *Anokhi Ada* was asked to be re-censored because entire sequences in the film ridiculed our well-nursed institutions of law and order (November, 1948, pp. 57-59), and the title of review of *Taxi Driver* demanded 'Minister Keskar must see "Taxi Driver" immediately! Unblushing picture of Crime and Sex! (May 1954, p.81).
[26] 'Striping Women to make Money' (*Filmindia*, March 1947, p.3).
[27] 'Pandit Indra Advocates Vulgarity' (*Filmindia,* May 1947, p. 47).
[28] *Motion Picture Magazine,* November 1950, http://hindi-films-songs.com/books/Motion-Picture-Magazine- November-1950.pdf

in this inaugural moment of the 1950s, when the idealism of a new nation laced with a specific understanding of our 'national culture' suffused the air, a section of the public felt and expressed an acute discomfort with cinema's uninhabited immersion in the 'alien' imaginary of romance.

Echoing the elite orthodox opinion, the official state's response to films and the film industry displayed indifference, confusion or downright hostility. Bhaskar Sarkar, aptly describing the 'official doublespeak' of the contemporary government's reactions to the medium says, 'even as the state derided and denounced cinema for pandering to base instincts and promoting values and lifestyles that conflicted with an "authentic" Indian ethos, it called upon the industry to play a significant role in nation building' (2009:54). The Indian state, caught between its own contrary position of wanting to curb 'cinema as a social vice' and the desire to use it as 'one of its ideological apparatuses' (ibid: 55), put in place a regulatory mechanism that mostly translated into heavy taxation, a censorship regime and bans. The film industry responded with bitter complaints as is evident from the then president of the Film Federation of India, Chandulal Shah's plea for tax relief. Lamenting the 'top heavy and multiple taxation which had been crippling' the industry, Shah ascribed it to the prejudice in official circles that saw films as a 'demoralizing influence on the people' (*Bombay Chronicle*, May 9, 1952, p.2). A remarkable coalescence between cultural orthodoxies and state policy thus evolved in the 1950s; the infamous and by now much discussed ban on Hindi film music being its most bizarre example. Even when tremendously popular and loved, film music had its puritan detractors articulating their angst in the pages of popular magazines. A letter to the editor of a magazine, worried about

the adverse effect on young girls and boys, of the 'riotous, pubescent and lustful' film songs, and asked for government intervention (*Rajatpat*, 15 February, 1950). Similarly, a full-length article in the early fifties is striking in the ferocity of its invective against film music, which was seen, as poisonous and destructive of our social foundations.[29] Thus when Mr. Keskar, minister of information and broadcasting in the Nehru cabinet, effectively stopped the broadcasting of film songs from *All India Radio*, it is indeed a coalition of forces, in the government and outside that ranged against what was seen as anti-national, alien influence. A champion of Indian classical music and a promoter of 'national culture' with a desire to educate the Indian masses, minister Keskar, believed that 'except for raw and immature people like children and adolescents, householders in general detested film music'.[30] Consequently, he first reduced the time allotted to the broadcast of film songs and then disallowed the announcement of the film titles because it was a form of advertisement. Producers reacted by withdrawing film songs from All India Radio itself (ibid: 207 -214). In this regard the fans' famed behaviour of promptly turning to Radio Ceylon's shortwave service that was broadcasting Hindi film music, and thus eventually forcing **AIR** to restart its programming of the same by 1957, alerts us to the emergence of a contrary and unstructured public sphere propelled by consumerist desire in the immediate aftermath of independence.

A vocal public also made its presence felt in debates around censorship that were given prominent place in popular film magazines. Revealing the confusion of

[29] The sensational title of the article announces ' *jovan aur javani bhare ye vishaile geet samaj ki maryada ko mita denge*' (*Rajatpat*, December 15, 1949, pp.11-16)
[30] Quoted in Barnouw & Krishnaswamy (1980: 211)

the moment an editorial in a magazine like *Filmindia*, which was at the forefront in demanding bans on individual films, decried what it termed 'Censor's vagaries' and complained that, 'To be anti-vulgarity is one thing; but authoritarian puritanism is quite another. To ban cheap and vulgar dances is one thing; to suppress all scenes suggestive of love and romance is entirely different' (May 1948, p.3). Questioning the wisdom and expertise of the censor judges, *Filmfare* in its turn blamed the overzealous censor board on the government's indifference to the medium evinced in statements made even by the likes of the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru himself, who wanted to see progress in other industries that 'would produce something concrete and provide employment for the unemployed' (November 28, 1952). Readers of the magazine, participating in a 'Filmfare Forum on Censorship' mostly expressed their chagrin at the censors' high handedness. One particularly articulate reader questioned the Board members' wisdom in banning pictures they themselves had seen and survived in the process of censoring. If the pictures had no adverse effect on the members, what gave them the right to presume that it will 'have that effect on others?' he asked, and further mocked with, 'It is as good as saying, in effect: "This film will harm my neighbour, but not me because I am a superior being"' (April 29, 1955, p.14). Even the normally moralistic Marathi press, on occasion mockingly pointed to the fact that kissing was not allowed in Indian films, and that how often during the shooting of films, family members, husbands objected to the most innocent of intimacies required of the heroine (*Chaya*, May, 1950, p.7). A regular feature in this magazine was a box titled 'Censors' Scissors' which numerically detailed the cuts demanded from a particular film, complete with the descriptions of the

cleavage, heaving breast and obscene words and songs that now stood censored, but continued to have a discursive afterlife in the pages of the magazine. Clearly, in driving a wedge between the 'orthodox', 'puritanical' view represented by the nationalist state on the one hand, and the film industry and its audience on the other, the issue of censorship highlights a transgressive and potentially subversive aspect of the 1950s film culture.[31]

Fantasy of Modernity

Fantasy as a term of derision, pointing to the non-realist, escapist nature of its entertainment, has been in casual currency in the descriptions of Indian films. Contemporaneously, the term fantasy was used in advertising and publicity of films alongside 'thriller', 'comedy', 'melodrama', 'crime drama' to specifically indicate the extra bit of distance from reality in fanciful adventure stories of bandits and such like.[32] The automatic oppositional or inverse relation between fantasy and reality is based upon fantasy's closeness to the ideas and experience of dreams, magic and the irrational. Film studies' deployment of the term has often assumed a psychoanalytical paradigm and is informed by Freudian and Lacanian theories of subject formation. For instance, Linda Williams, while discussing body genres like pornography, horror and melodrama, suggests that their typical features

[31] One image that illustrates the comical fall out of censorship battle between Bombay cinema and the repressive state machinery is a photograph of two actresses Nishi and Nirupa Roy (in a male costume) kissing each other on the lips. Reproducing this production/publicity photograph from the film *Chalbaaz* (1958), *Filmindia* commented, 'Congress censors won't let a man and a woman kiss as doing so shakes the celibate pillar of our Gandhian State. Film producers therefore, decided to put female lips together so that a kiss may not disappear from our life completely (April 1958, p.71). Whether or not this image survived the censors' scissors, this attempt to circumvent the obdurate censors could have unwittingly given visibility to an even greater unacknowledged secret of an alternative sexual economy of modern India.

[32] For instance, the review of *Azaad* (1954) carried by *Bombay Chronicle* (December 12, 1954, p.2) was titled "Dilip, Meena Teamed in Fantasy" in the supplement, 'Film Chronicle' of the newspaper.

of repetition, excess, the improbable and lack of psychological complexity allow them to be explored as gender fantasies. Each of these genres, according to Williams, answer basic enigmas faced by a child in the Freudian scenario; enigmas of the 'origin of sexual desire', of 'sexual difference' and of the 'origin of self', enigmas 'solved' by fantasies of seduction, castration and family romance or return to the origins respectively (1991:10).[33] Psychoanalysis has been found relevant for the reading of certain Indian texts described as 'fantasy' as well. For example, Ajanta Sircar's reading of Satyajit Ray's *Goopy Gyne Bhaga Byne*, while positing fantasy as the obverse of enlightenment ideas of reason and order, relies on a psychoanalytical lens to excavate repressed themes from Ray's childhood, and finds them displaced onto the surface of the 'fantasy', the children's film (1999). Even Sudhir Kakar, a trained psychoanalyst, responding to the fairy tale simplicity and childishness of Indian films speaks of Indian film as a 'fantasy' that functions like a 'bridge between desire and reality' (1983: 91), but locates its popularity in the role of family life in Indian culture, psyche and films. According to Kakar, family is central to the lives of Indians, and as such the relationship problems between parents, children and siblings and their resolution is of paramount importance to the fantasy plots of the majority of films. In all these formulations, an understanding of Freud, Lacan, and Zizek provide the critical armature for the considerations of film as fantasy. Even though not indifferent to this discourse, instead of the individual subject of production and reception of film, here, I try to imagine and work with the idea of collective, migratory, dispersed, distracted and randomly organized spectators of films and the fantasy they manufacture.

[33] Fantasy is considered 'the fundamental object of Psychoanalysis' by Lapalanche and Pontalis (1986:14).

The 1950s bulk manufacture of cinematic romance seen in the context of the cultural regulation of its audience' love life calls for an understanding of fantasy as a mass, collectivist phenomenon.[34]At any time in a cinema hall, as the spectacle of love unfolded on the screen, what are the chances that there were significant numbers of lovers, and not only parents, children, friends, single men, and married couples occupying the seats?[35] The absence of the experience of romantic love in reality drives this conception of its onscreen plenitude as fantasy. Following, Richard Dyer's revisiting of the common sense view of entertainment as 'escape' and 'wish-fulfilment' to notice its 'central thrust' in utopianism, the cinematic romance of the 1950s needs to be seen as offering an image of 'something better to escape into' (1992:18). The fantasy of romance offered its audience an experience of love as entertainment, an experience they were disallowed in reality by the patriarchal family and caste structures that strictly regulated the sexual economy of its members. Drawing on Bloch, Gaines speaks of the '*utopianizing*' effect of films, suggesting that it would be worth looking for 'intimations of hope in mass culture' for 'visions of a better life and a world

[34] A contemporary view of cinema as unreal and fantastical, foregrounding anxieties aroused by this new entertainment medium was expressed by Devaki Prasad Bose, an erstwhile film director in Calcutta's New Theatres Company, in a long article titled 'Beware of such films' (*Eise chitron se savdhan rahiye*). Roundly criticizing the films for their falsity, distance from real lived experience and excess of sensuality and sexuality, Bose brought an insider's expertise to his argument that the dream world created by films can disrupt life in society by creating discontent with its mundane and limited joys, beauty and happiness (*Rajatpat*, November 15, 1951,pp.17-20).

[35] In this regard, Annette Kuhn's *Everyday Magic* (2002) is a fascinating account of the spectatorial practices of the 1930s British film going public. Based on hundreds of hours of interviews, the book allows an insight into that generation's memories and dreams revolving around going to the cinema. What is of interest here is the evolution of the space of cinema as the site, among other things, of courtship and romance. The luxury and privacy afforded by the cinema places became a part of the generation's courtship rituals, where you could meet people of opposite sex as well as go there routinely as couples. Although we lack in a comparable study of the 1950s, or earlier spectatorial practices in Bombay or elsewhere in India, it is safe to speculate that spectators here would have very rarely mobilized the space of the cinema for their own romantic adventures. I thank Ipsita Sahu for bringing this book to my notice.

transformed' (Gaines 2000:107).[36] One such transformational site in the films of the 1950s is indeed that of the family.

The Indian family, central to the nationalist imagination, has also occupied a critical place in film scholarship. Not only Sudhir Kakar, but even other attempts to engage with the Hindi film form in terms of Melodrama or the Social have also deployed kinship and family as grids of narrative organization. Thus, Rosie Thomas says 'Hindi films are structured according to the rules of melodrama, which require a universe clearly divided between good/morality and evil/decadence' (Thomas 1995:163). And further, 'Reading broadly across the body of Hindi cinema, two archetypal figures emerge: the mother and the villain. In them the opposing values of good and evil are most centrally condensed' (ibid: 166). Family is central to Vasudevan as well, who sees 'the characteristic drama of the family triad; a fearsome father (standing in for the various articulations of law in its opposition to desire), the nurturing mother and the traumatized son 'played out again and again' (1989:32). Madhava Prasad's 'feudal family romance' is of course, one of the most influential articulations regarding the symbolic and narrative role of the family. Though suggesting that cinema, 'emerging in the historical space of the modern is committed to the endless reproduction of the couple' (2000:95), Prasad avers that the formation of the couple in Indian cinema

[36] In *The Principle of Hope* (1986) Ernst Bloch, traces the functioning of the utopic imagination in fairy tales, circus, bestsellers, fashion, dance, pantomime and films, as ways to escape dull mundane reality, and to experience alterity, lightness, freedom of movement, exhilaration and so on. If these wish images are signs of rebellion, according to Bloch, he also alerts us to the reigning in or taming of the rebellion by commercial and conservative interest in capitalist cultural forms like movies and romantic fiction. Nevertheless, according to him films, not least because of their new technological form, indicate that 'a different society, indeed world, is both hidden and circulating in the present one'.

does not mean a transition from the familial to the conjugal, rather the couple is 'repeatedly reabsorbed into the parental patriarchal family' (ibid.).

However, when we actually turn our gaze at the 1950s, it is difficult not to notice the striking *absence* of the family in many of the films in this post-colonial decade and in this it is intriguingly different from the strong families visible more commonly in later decades. It is remarkable that the 1950s' films typically give us heroes who have neither father nor mother, that is, no parental family.[37] Heroines occasionally have families made of kind and gentle old men and/or women who are not oppressive or domineering.[38] When at times, fathers or father- figures are crooks or villains, as it is in *Baazi* (Guru Dutt, 1951) or *The Gateway of India* (J. Om Prakash, 1957), the heroine's need to be rescued from this 'family', effectively undermines its cultural preeminence. A contemporary survey of films noted that in 'roughly half the films the hero lived alone; in one third he lived in a family. The heroine generally lived with a family. Rarely did hero and heroine live in a joint family'.[39] Hence, even Prasad's highly insightful formulation of the feudal family romance (2000) valuable for its attempt to connect film form, production relations, processes and ideology, does not sufficiently take into account the near absence of the 'feudal' family in the 1950s. True, for all these critics, parental figures need not

[37] *Aar Paar* (Guru Dutt, 1954) *Andaz* (Mehboob Khan, 1949), *Barsaat* (Raj Kapoor, 1949), *Shri 420* (Raj Kapoor,1955), *Anari* (Hrishikesh Mukherjee, 1959), *Nau Do Gyarah* (Vijay Anand, 1959) *Bambai ka Babu* (Raj Khosla, 1960), *CID* (Raj Khosla, 1956), *Madhumati* (Bimal Roy, 1958), *Taxi Driver* (Chetan Anand, 1953), *Baazi* (Guru Dutt, 1953), *Kagaz ke Phool* (Guru Dutt, 1959), *Sahib Bibi Aur Ghulam* (Guru Dutt, 1962), *Mr. & Mrs. 55* (Guru Dutt, 1955), *Howrah Bridge* (Shakti Samant, 1958) *Anari* and many others. *Aag* (Raj Kapoor, 1948), *Arzoo* (Shahid Latif, 1950) *Awara* (Raj Kapoor, 1951) *Parineeta* (Bimal Roy, 1953), *Devdas* (Bimal Roy, 1955) are some exceptions. Similarly Vijay of *Pyasa* (Guru Dutt, 1957) does have a family which he completely rejects by the end of the film.

[38] *Aah* (Raj Kapoor, 1953), *Shri 420* (Raj Kapoor, 1955), *Bambai Ka Babu , CID, Kala Bazar* (Vijay Anand, 1960), *Bandini* (Bimal Roy, 1963), *Chalti Ka Nam Gadi* (Satyen Bose, 1958), etc.

[39]Barnouw and Krishnaswamy (1980:148) site a study by Professor Asit Baran, sociologist at Lucknow University who did a content analysis of sixty Hindi films in the fifties as reported in *Statesman,* December12, 1959.

be necessarily biologically related to the hero but could be symbolic authority/nurturing figures. It is indeed intriguing that even when parents are necessary to the narrative as in *Anari* the traditional family is avoided and the hero has to have a Christian landlady as surrogate mother and the heroine is an orphan brought up by her uncle! On the whole, however, there is no doubt that the strong patriarchal family scenario was sidelined if not erased in the fifties and films like *Awara* (Raj Kapoor, 1951), *Devdas* (Bimal Roy, 1955), and *Mughal-e-Azam* (K. Asif, 1960) are exceptions rather than the rule. Can the family's prominence in critical discourse be attributed to a generalization from these iconic films' dramatizing of the generational conflict?

The case of *Devdas* is indeed interesting. Although the hero does have a 'feudal family', his love story is in no sense a romance. In fact, the film stands out for its unusual blend of realism and melodrama, and the near absence of the fantastic. Not surprisingly, the family is staged melodramatically to give full force of its oppressive reality in actual experience, and the end instead of recuperating the couple in the patriarchal family brings separation and death. The separation and final defeat of the couple in *Mughal-e-Azam* too goes against the thesis of 'feudal family romance'. To be sure these films are not fantasies of romance proper, their dominant mood being dystopic; they echo the reality of family life in India, complete with its mechanisms of control and oppression staged as melodrama.

Indeed, melodrama has been identified as the aesthetic form of modernity and cultures in transition, such that large, unwieldy and profoundly disturbing ideological, moral and existential transformations in cultural life are configured in melodrama via the personal and the familial (Brooks 1984, Elsaesser 1987, Singer

2001, Gledhill 1987, Bhaskar 2012, Vasudevan 2011, et al.). Reflecting on a set of post-independence films, Ira Bhaskar describes their narrative investment in performative and emotional excess as the melodramatic articulation of the 'tragic sense of desolation' and 'incomprehension about rapid social changes' in the wake of the modern in India (2012:162). At the same time, there is no denying that the majority of 1950s films, in fact register a contrary response; that of escape, a turning away from the reality of patriarchal authority and control in India. This cinema's visual and thematic attenuation of the family actually produced the dream of a 'better world' and the transformative possibilities of new personhood. Significantly, this dream of modernity was produced equally by taking recourse to the grammar of melodrama. Discussions of melodrama have expanded its scope beyond generic boundaries to see it as a cultural form mobilizing certain performative and expressive registers constituted by visual, gestural, musical and affective excess, moral polarization, and intense emotionality to negotiate the pressures, aesthetic and ideological, thrown by modernity's myriad challenges (Brooks 1994, Bratton 1994, Gledhill 1991, et al.). Extending Singer's observation about melodrama's relation to the 'history of modern experience' to Bombay cinema, Ravi Vasudevan suggests that its loose assemblage of plots and effects are 'held together on the basis of a melodramatic axis of personalized experience that relentlessly articulates itself in publicly expressive ways (2011:55). Hence, the 1950s production of an indigenous cinematic idiom of love, its spectacular investment in romance needs to be seen as the 'unleashing of the language of desire…in its thrust to break through repression and censorship' (Brooks 1985:80). The modern couple of 1950s film, freed from family structures and at liberty to

love and desire helped envision a fantastically free zone of romance with intimations of an alternative community.

This reading of the onscreen excess of romantic love in the context of its near absence socially as a fantasy of modernity can be enriched by placing it next to Walter Benjamin's concept of 'phantasmagoria'. Fantasy of course implies the fantastical, in the sense of the unreal and the irrational, but it also means dreamlike and is related to wishful thinking. But this family of meanings is also connected, at the other end, with the notion of phantasms, meaning the ghostly, and arising from the mind or the unconscious. The connection of 'fantasy' to 'phantasmagoria', I propose, is not one of identity but of association. Even though 'phantasmagoria' is initially the name for illusions produced by the new techno-visual material in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Europe; ghost like apparitions in spectral shows produced by magic lanterns, very soon, as Terry Castle (1988) demonstrates, the term assumed metaphorical dimensions, and came to stand in for ghosts of the mind; imaginations, hallucinations, deliriums and such like. The cadence of the term, veering between 'pleasurable or whimsical states of imaginative experience' to 'disturbing and frightening mental phenomena' (ibid: 47) indicates its essential ambivalence. Benjamin's privileging of the term is also closely tied with its evident polyvalence in his work. Similar to their earlier techno-visual, proto-cinematic forms like the panoramas that expressed 'a new attitude to life' (2002:35) phantasmagorias, according to Benjamin, illuminate as they emblematize commodity culture. Speaking of the industrial and architectural form of the Parisian arcades, Benjamin says,

> Corresponding to the form of the new means of production are images in the collective consciousness in which the new is permeated with the old.

> These images are wish images; in them the collective seeks both to overcome and to transfigure the immaturity of the social product and the inadequacies in the social organization of production. At the same time, what emerges in these wish images is the resolute effort to distance oneself from all that is antiquated-which includes however, the recent past. (2002:33).

Can we think of the spectacle of romantic love staged by the 1950s films as wish images, fantasies, phantasmagorias of a collective seeking to overcome the inadequacies of their societal organization and contract; a modern democratic nation that hampered the emergence and expression of individual choice and agency? Margret Cohen (1989), tracing the changing, shifting significance of phantasmagoria for Benjamin, argues that the concept allowed him to conceive of ideological transposition in expressive terms. Themselves artistic products, phantasmagorias do not 'project a *reflection* of the objective world but rather the objective world's *expression,* its representation as it is mediated through imaginative subjective processes' (94). Cohen further demonstrated that rather than the individual subject of psychoanalysis, Benjamin postulated collective subjectivities impelling the ideological transposition of phantasmagorias. The 1950s cinematic romance, emerging out of the discursive proliferation of love in texts and images; old and new- poems, novels, and Hollywood films cannot be thought of as reflecting an (because it is non-existent) objective reality of love, but rather as a phantasmagoric expression by the collective of the desire for a new affective economy and community. It was a fantasy for a modernity repressed by nationalist modernity, whose phantasms nevertheless haunted the collective.

II

Romantic love in the 1950s was an excess that spread across and spilled over the cinematic frame, reverberated in the air, found lyrical expression in music and produced gossip and scandal to offer an eccentric variant of modernity. Although dissimilar from the experiential modernity afforded by contemporary social and communal processes, technological change, urban living, and new expressions of individuality, it was a fantasy of modernity that borrowed eclectically from all these, to configure in the melodramatic mode, its singular realm of spectacle, performance and affect. This gathering of 'the elements of real in order to show another reality' (Bloch 1986:411); the 'entertainment' in the midst of a culturally regulated life world, mostly took utopic forms, although, at times, the pull of the 'real' forced a confrontation with the dystopian limitation of this fantasy. The 1950s investment in this dream of the possible takes many forms, but can be crucially located in the films' visual and thematic exploration of the city and urbanity, in the lyrical excesses of its songs, and in the excitement of its stars' extra cinematic love affairs. The city, the song and stardom are, thus, the three threads of this inquiry into the fantasy of modernity delivered by romantic love.

The City

In the popular imagination of love constructed by Hindi cinema the visual and aural registers of the city have come to play a pivotal role because the cinematic imagination itself has been overwhelmingly urban. The connection between modernity, the city and cinema has long engaged the interests of scholars in the West. The early insights of Benjamin (1973, 1992), Simmel (1971) and Kracauer

(1995) in the nature and experience of modernity inspired ever expanding circles of critical explorations of cinema and the urban experience. Western modernity cannot be disassociated from the experience of urban living and the city as the space that allowed the negotiation of modern individual subjectivities as well as the fragmented distracting experience of the city; both were viewed as closely connected with the thematic and formal concerns of cinema.[40] But here in India, even today, big metropolitan cities are hardly the universal experience of modernity and this was bound to influence both, the construction of the cinematic city, as well as the scholarly response it generated. For instance, it is only recently that the city of cinema has attracted serious scholarship as is evident in the work of Ranjani Mazumdar and others.[41]Arguing that cinema 'constitutes a hidden archive of the Indian modern', Mazumdar (2007) suggests that it is 'through the fleeting yet memorable forms of urban life in popular Bombay cinema that the texture of modernity in India can be understood' (xxxiv). In seeking to navigate the 1950s cinematic city, I follow Mazumdar's emphasis in order to unravel the specific tone and texture of its modernity, as also to open this cinematic period to a reading of its dynamic form that twines romance with the experience of urban modernity.

From all accounts, through the 1950s Bombay was witness to a continuing and at times intense struggle for resources and power in the form of almost daily incidents of demonstrations, strikes and bandhs over economic and politico-spatial

[40] Perhaps cinema's umbilical tie with the urban needs to be traced to the ontology of the photograph, which in its affinity with the transient and fleeting created an alternative to the realism of landscape painting and 'naturally' drifted to the impressions afforded by the city as against the timeless and quiet beauty of streams and woods?

[41] Other than Mazumdar's *Bombay Cinema: An Archive of the City* (2007), *City flicks: Indian Cinema and the Urban Experience*, (2004) ed. Preben Kaarsholm brought together significant responses by several film scholars to the city of Indian cinema.

demands.[42]At the same time, a cosmopolitan culture and life style around theatres, restaurants, fashion, art exhibitions and sports saw an expansion, of which the film culture was an intrinsic part. Cinema as medium and space is of course tied to urban modernity, and undoubtedly, Bombay cinema; the industry, its studios and stars, cinema theatres, posters and the film music in the air became essential to the experience of the city, evident in the period's cinematic representation of the city and its film culture in *Solva Sal* (Raj Khosla,1958), *Sone ki Chidiya* (Shaheed Latif,1958), *Kagaz ke phool* (1959), *Kala Bazaar* (1960), and many others. Madhava Prasad has noted the significance of Bombay as 'the metropolis of choice' for Hindi cinema (2004: 86). Till date the city of Bombay has been a place with magnetic allure as countless heroes and heroines make their way to it either in search of a new life or only to escape from the old one, in ways, reflecting the migrational flow that constitutes the geo-political significance of this city in the national economy.[43] Consequently, movement, transformation and turmoil of the geographical body of the city have been paradoxically permanent. Noting Hindi

[42]A Newspaper like the *Bombay Chronicle* becomes an archive of class struggle as mill hands, dockyard workers, women mill workers made daily news by transforming streets and public spaces into political theatre.

[43] For the fortunate few this emigration was aspirational- a conquering of the metropolis as a stage in the making of the self as is evident in the chapter title, 'A City for Conquest' in the writer, director K. A. Abbas' autobiography, *I am not an Island* (2010) .The chapter details Abbas' arrival in Bombay and working in the 'only' nationalist news paper, *Bombay Chronicle.* However, an altogether different city emerges in the writings of Annabhau Sathe (1998). Sathe, a preeminent cultural figure in Maharashtra, was a novelist, playwright, and a singer performer of *powadas* and *tamasha*. A dalit whose family had immigrated to Bombay in search of livelihood, Sathe, despite lacking formal education, rose to become the voice of the laboring masses of the city and the state. Influenced by communism, and a mobilizer in the Samyukta Maharashtra movement, Sathe came to represent a militant working class sensibility. The city of Bombay is pivotal to Sathe's imagination, with obvious dystopic values. The Bombay that surfaces in songs like '*Mumbai Chi Lavani* (Song of Bombay) and Mumbai cha Girnikamgar (Bombay's Mill hand) is rapacious, exploitative, unequal and unjust. One of his most popular songs '*Mazi Maina gavavar rahili'* (My Mynah remains in the village), speaks of the beloved wife of the worker who is left behind in the village- her earthy beauty and sterling qualities, and the pain of this separation; the imperatives of poverty and the promise of a better life in the big city of Bombay, drives a wedge between couples. In this imagination, Bombay only breaks hearts and people.

cinema's fascination with Bombay, Gyan Prakash says that in holding the 'promise of exciting newness and unlimited possibilities' the city 'reached out across physical and cultural distance to stir desires and kindle imaginations'(2011:5). However, the relation between the real city and the cinematic city is a complicated one and it is essential to remember that not only was the city of cinema not always literally Bombay, since Calcutta and Delhi also featured in some films but, more importantly, the rhetorical force of the constructed city necessarily drew on the poetics of 'the city' that assumed a global cosmopolitan imagination and its allegorical dimension. The city of Bombay cinema is thus, not one but necessarily, many 'cities'. The imagined city of cinema hence emerges through the splicing of the 'real' city, its iconic landscape and monuments, with the metaphorical city of light and dark, hope and despair, success and failure. To read this spatial register of cinema is essentially to read the promises, desires and anxieties of modernity in its urban form.

In the light of the growing importance of space and spatialization in cultural theory, Mark Shiel has drawn attention to 'cinema's status as a peculiarly spatial form of culture' (2001:5). That the culture of the city produced by cinemas located in diverse national spaces would necessarily be different, and yet share something of the imaginary of modernity is evident. Thus, for instance, the city of Indian cinema is seen to be different from the western city because of the continual presence of the rural in its fold (Mazumdar 2007, Prasad 2004, and Nandi 2001). Similarly, in tune with the centrality of the nation and national identity in the consideration of the period, the city is said to assume certain representativeness. According to Madhava Prasad, 'a benign representative face of Bombay was

always present in the imaginary of the 50s, even as the Nehruvian socialist thematic unfolded in reformist tales of class conflict' (2004:88). However, the ubiquity of nationalism in the debates of Indian modernity has now been questioned by scholars like Mazumdar, who, by focusing on the urban have pointed to 'several instances of dislocations that complicate the issue of national identity (ibid: xxiii). Films like *Shri 420, Awara, Baazi* and *Kismet* (Gyan Mukherji, 1943), according to Mazumdar, address the dislocation caused by the traumatic 'opposition between the city and the countryside' (ibid.). I would further argue that the cinematic city of the 1950s is not simply a representational space. Just as the countryside finds a complicated place in the city, there is also a proliferation of 'wish images' inhabiting this city that operate in excess of its nationalist iconography. If the actual class conflict unfolding in the streets of Bombay was not exactly contained by nationalism's hegemonic drive, the cinematic city's staging of romance in the midst of a world of crime, needs to be read as plucking the elements of this conflict in order to displace them across the screen in fanciful tales of love and its enemies. In other words, the cinematic city in this decade is best understood as the city of dreams, at times of nightmare, which tapped into the desires and aspirations outside or on the fringe of the national imaginary.

The Song

The film song has been central to the cinematic staging of romantic love, as it has been to the overall cultural distinctiveness of Indian cinema. Often the object of criticism for being 'intrusive' and/or 'irrelevant' to the narrative flow of films,

songs are that one thing that loudly proclaim the 'non-realist' aesthetic of this cinema. Indeed, the presence of song and dance in Hindi film is part of its structural specificity; its non-linear dramatic progression, disregard of psychological motivation in characterization, incorporation of elements of the comic along with action and melodrama and the importance, above all, of spectacle and emotional excess. At times elite opinion had viewed the film song as a sign of the 'immaturity' of popular Hindi films and its audience.[44] Not surprisingly, any alternative to mainstream Hindi film seemed to entail discarding them in the form they have in these films, that is as 'sung' by the characters in voices given by an array of popular and well known playback singers. Satyajit Ray, bemused at the tolerance for songs in films famously complained 'If I were asked to find room for six songs in a film that is not expressly a 'musical', I would have to throw up my hands, yet six songs per film, per *every* film, is the accepted average and at no point in the history of Indian films has there been an uproar against it' (1976:73). It is only recently, after Indian Cinema became an 'object' of scholarly and critical interest with the establishment of film Studies as a discipline in India has this opinion changed and the special significance of song in Indian cinema acknowledged.

Termed the golden period of Hindi film music, the 1950s resonate to this day with the power to lift listeners out of the flow of their everyday life into the

[44] That the same play back singer could give voice to different characters in the same and different films cause much irritation in early days is evident from this comment from Kobita Sarkar, a film commentator writing in the 1950s – How a village yokel and a sophisticated city slicker have identical voices [using the same playback singer in different films], and how they voice the same type of complex sentiments is the sort of absurdity in the Indian film, which stretches willing suspension of disbelief to breaking point (Sarkar 1975:105).

realm of dream and fantasy.[45] The immense popularity of Hindi film songs in the 1950s, particularly, their extra cinematic after life through their proliferation in radio programmes and gramophone records is legend as it is intriguing. In the immediate aftermath of the nationalist movement for independence as well as the actual event of nation formation, the post independence decade was possibly flush with nationalist sentiment. In this context the popularity of the Hindi film song is curious, if not anomalous because in the fifties, although employed for rendering a variety of experiences and occasions in the filmic diegesis, undeniably, the overriding use of songs for the expression of love- its joy, ecstasy, celebration, suffering and loss was particularly pronounced. As Sudipta Kaviraj (2004) has noted 'the songs of fifties' love reverberated in cinema halls and outside, saturating the acoustic environs of cities and small towns. Little wonder that one of the most creative and versatile composers, S. D Burman, along with Madan Mohan and some others are known to have consciously composed with the view to foregrounding, what Ashok Ranade calls the 'song impulse'(2006: 260). According to Ranade, by avoiding 'dazzling orchestration' and by producing 'hummable, identifiable tunes', these songs guaranteed a 'personal relationship of a listener with what he hears' (ibid). In creating channels for empathetic identification, and because of their advocacy of the 'individualistic principle of

[45] While the work and role lyricists like Sahir Ludhianvi, Majrooh Sultanpuri Shakeel Badayuni and Shailendra, music directors like Anil Biswas, Naushad, O.P. Nayyar, Roshan, Laxmikant-Pyarelal, and S.D. Burman and play back singers like Mohammad Rafi, Talat Mehboob, Mukesh, Manna de, Lata Mangeshkar, Geeta Dutt and Asha Bhosle is universally acknowledged credit is also to be given to the largely unknown and uncredited arrangers mostly from Goa, who had been trained in Portuguese schools into reading music and playing western instruments. The heady mix of East and West in our three minute songs needed huge orchestras involving musical instruments from all over the world and it was arrangers like Chick Chocolate, Johny Gomes, Sebastian D'Souza, Frank Fernandes and many more who 'helped our directors to write and arrange their music' pulling off 'one of the greatest peacetime revolutions in synthesizing diverse elements in the music of the world' (Chandavarkar 1988: January-April, p.20-23).

romantic choice of partners' (Kaviraj 2004:64), songs, I suggest also became conduits of the newer technologies of the self. In shaping as it revealed the contours of the individual in love, the fifties film song produced the fantasy of modern individuality itself, one that was free to invent itself in contradistinction from social norms and the ruling nationalist sentiment. To the extent individual agency and choice were even now constrained by society's regulatory mechanisms, in all likelihood, this fantasy of modernity addressed profoundly experienced cultural anxieties and fears even as it embodied radical hope.

The Stars

Impelled by the glamour of personality, that is, the cinematic bodies of the stars animating the screens, filmic romance succeeded in giving currency to a new sexual economy based on mutual attraction and desire. In inhabiting and exploring the phantasmagoric city of romance and in enacting its transgressive force through the excesses of its songs, film stars embodied the fantasy of modern individuality. Scholarship on the star phenomenon has noted the mechanisms of valorization and identification with stars and how this feeds into the ways in which people make sense of films (Miller 2000, Gledhill 1991, Stacey 1994 and Dyer 1986). In the context of Hindi films and particularly this project, I would suggest that even more complex processes were at work because here stars do not only live more glamorous and successful lives but are likely to live altogether different lives, particularly in the sphere of the erotic. As far as the 1950s stars were concerned their extra-cinematic love affairs, in tandem with their on-screen performance of romance must have played a major role in defining their personalities, and

producing the idea of the modern individual. Star romance, relationships, and affairs were as much a staple of stardom in the fifties as it was before or since. Star pairs like Raj Kapoor-Nargis, Dilip Kumar- Madhubala, Guru Dutt- Waheeda Rehman, Dev Anand-Suriyya, who participated in producing a spectacle of romance on screen, also played out their love stories outside of films in full public view and knowledge. If the cinema of the moment was overwhelmed by the trope of romantic love, how did the extra-cinematic love affairs of stars, the gossip and scandal they generated, feed into the popular discourse of love?

At first glance film stars as well as the film industry seem to be actively engaged with the nationalist vision of cultural revivification as is evident from their enthusiastic participation in the first film seminar organized under the aegis of the newly started Sangeet Natak Acadami in 1955. The presence of national leaders, Nehru's inaugural address and the interested contribution of film personalities like Raj Kapoor, Nargis, Dilip Kumar, K.A Abbas and many others in the various panels and discussions spelt out an agenda of promoting socially relevant films, national education and integration (1956).[46] To be sure, the fifties' famed Nehruvian socialist themes were visible in films even before the seminar. Films like *Neecha Nagar* (Chetan Anand, 1946), *Andhiyan* (Chetan Anand, 1952) and Bimal Roy's *Do Bigha Zamin* (1953) had specifically addressed issues of inequality and oppression but, by and large, notwithstanding a general infusion of sentimental socialism, film narratives remained essentially centered on romantic

[46] The Sangeet Acadami Film Seminar Report (1956) reveals that Nehru's emphasis in his inaugural speech was on the role and necessity of censorship. Conceding that artists required freedom, and that he was not in favour of 'too much restriction or too much censorship' he averred that there were occasions when 'the state has to interfere to some extent' (12). It is necessary to notice that depiction of violence and horror, as in the comic books was something he wanted to be 'suppressed ruthlessly'. On a personal note Nehru said that he was 'not very interested in melodrama', and only once did he talk of the need for films to 'mould the public taste' (15).

love. Raj Kapoor acknowledges Nehru's influence on his and others' film practice, but despite being considered an ambassador for India and Indian films, neither his nor anyone else' stardom ever assumed serious political overtones, like that of the stars of the Tamil film industry.[47] On or off-screen, stars of the Bombay film never espoused explicit political causes, or aligned themselves with political parties like that of their Tamil counterpart, MGR, whose anti-congress, pro-DMK political agenda was a part and parcel of his star persona (Pandian 1991). Performing love on screen, the off-screen images of film stars were popularly associated with glamour and life style identified with a liberal ethos of sexual freedom and promiscuity. Gossip and rumours regarding affairs, rendezvous, and elopements circulated in hectic frenzy in the film magazines feeding the popular perception of stars as glamorous, westernized and immoral.

Central to the 1950s cinematic culture, stars were not only endlessly written about in various formats in English and vernacular languages, films themselves became the site of a discursive engagement with stardom and star love. In investing, valorizing and slandering stars for producing and participating in a sexual economy based on love and attraction, the fifties' star discourse seems to project stardom as extraordinarily if disreputably modern. The role of male and female stars of Bombay film in producing and making available the meaning of agency and modern individualism via their on-screen and off-screen romance

[47] In his conversation with Ritu Nanda (2002) Raj Kapoor says, 'It was the post-independence era. There were a lot of factors that influenced young minds, and they influenced me. Panditji (Nehru) said that he wanted every Indian in this country to do something for the nation to build it up into the beautiful dreamland that he had. He was a visionary and I tried to follow him to do my best, whatever I could through films' (68). It is interesting to see Raj Kapoor's translation of this vision- ' I gradually drifted towards socially committed cinema and came out with films like *Awara, Boot Polish*, *Shree 420* and *Jagte Raho*. We wanted a reformed social order, a certain kind of discipline, education to eradicate poverty and so on. I saw the social effect it had on people and tried to present it with romanticism and a certain sensitivity of belonging, of humanism….and in totality it worked out as love'(96).

needs scrutiny. With a view that stars cannot be linked to the whole society, Dyer suggests that instead we think in 'terms of the relationship between stars and specific instabilities, ambiguities and contradictions in the culture' (1986:35). It is possible to read in the stars' performative access to romance on the screen and in real life, the processes of reproducing and containing the contradictions and anxieties of an emergent social form based on individualism. Thus the figuration, adulation and condemnation of star personas of the fifties was probably closely tied to the anxiety of influence they provoked. If the 'reality' of love; the difficulties and obstacles encountered by these star lovers and the ultimate failure of these love stories likely undermined its fantasy on screen, it is possible to trace at the intersection of the star text and the extra textual discourse produced by contemporary film gossip, rumour, and news, the making of a popular culture of love and romance.

In reading the films of the post-independence decade through the prism of romantic love; its dream and its reality, I am essentially turning a lens on a cinematic experience that has not received adequate attention. The dissertation attempts to situate romantic love of the 1950s films as staging alternative ways of accessing, producing and limiting the experience of modernity. Each chapter engages with a distinct aspect of the cinematic experience. **City of Love** tracks the unfolding of the urban experience of romance as also the limits to this imagination through a close reading of *Aar Paar* (1954*), Solva Sal* (1958)*, Kala Bazaar* (1960)*, and Pyasa* (1957) while drawing on many other films. **Songs of Love** explores a variety of film songs as affective sites for the staging of subjectivities through the ecstasies and vicissitudes of love. And finally, **Love and Stardom** reads stars and

film texts, specifically *Arzoo* (1950) *Sone Ki Chidiya*, *Mughal-e-Azam* and *Kagaz Ke Phool*, as staging the freedom as well as the constraints of individuality in love.

The 1950s were engaged in cinematically producing a new understanding of love- a discourse and practice that had very little currency and almost no customs or conventions in the society at large. The fantasy of modernity it produced not only envisioned newer gender identities, but the novel technologies of the self it promised and the experiences and affect it mobilized tapped into desires that were barely acknowledged by the new nation in the making. In the context of the fifties, the transformation of the private and public spaces imagined by its cinema was an instance of radical dreaming in the realm of popular entertainment.

CHAPTER 1

CITY OF LOVE

> But isn't every square inch of our cities a crime scene? Every passer-by a culprit?
>
> Walter Benjamin.[1]

The image of Raj Kapoor and Nargis singing '*Pyar hua ikrar hua*', walking over rain washed streets and bridges, with an umbrella under the evening lights of the city is emblematic of the post independence decade. The song's powerful evocation of romance via lyrics that play on desire and dread along with the erotic charge of the imagery of rain have made it iconic of the 'romantic fifties'. Countless reproductions of the image and its circulation via posters, photos, and advertisements are a testimony to its currency in the culture's imagination of romance. As a cinematic moment that unfolds in an urban everyday space, where the streets of a metropolis are transformed into a stage for a romantic encounter, the song is not exceptional, but indeed typical of the 1950s Bombay cinema in that the city, in all its beauty and sordidness, was intrinsic to its romantic imagination. Critical attention focused on 'national identity' and 'the nation' of the 1950s film has tended to ignore the spatial dynamics of urbanity that animated the films of the period. As noted by Ranjani Mazumdar (2007) when nationalism or the state are seen as sole carriers of Indian modernity, 'the texture, fluidity and fragmentary character of urban life seem to get lost' (xxxiv). It is this texture of urban life, as an imagined and performative space of romance that yields an alternative reading of

[1]See Walter Benjamin (1999:527), 'Little History of Photography'.

the films of the period. I wish to argue and demonstrate that the 1950s film's engagement with, and investment in, romance was essentially routed through and depended upon an imagination and dream of urban modernity. This chapter will explore the contours of this decade's cinematic city and the role it played in producing, celebrating and containing romantic love as modern practice.

The conflictual and contradictory nature of modernity has long been thought of as essentially urban, even if the very nature of modernization, its economic and political underpinnings, necessitated its spread into every nook and cranny of the globe. However, if cities were nodal points of modernity, it was still a modernity inflected by geo-political locations and contexts. As Raymond Williams argues, even though metropolitan development inheres in the 'excitements and challenges of its intricate processes of liberation and alienation, contact and strangeness, stimulation and standardization,' in each and every case the modernity it produces is conditioned by specific local effects and response, 'productive but imperfect' to the 'stimulating strangeness of new and unbounded social form' (2000:64). In our context, even as the most important cities were the result of complex economic and political processes and conditions instantiated by the colonial encounter, the city was not central to the nationalist imagination that had seen the village as vital to the transformation as well as construction of modern India (Mazumdar 2007, Radhakrishnan 1991). Nevertheless, despite the nationalist discourse and movement, the forces of modernization found expression in the city. This was a kind of modernity- not an 'alternative' to nationalist modernity but existing in tandem with it. This everyday modernity took shape and expression in the cities that were animated by the new found pleasures and pains of an

industrializing landscape.[2] Bombay and Calcutta, the two cities that were products of the colonial mercantile enterprise made available disparate modernities to people of different classes and gender who made it their home, often migrating to it in search of life and livelihood. Much of this enterprise and struggle was barely tolerated by a certain kind of nationalizing modern. For example, pre-independence Bombay was witness to forms of urban struggles over recourses, space, and urban rights that took the form of strikes, demonstrations, public meetings and also riots. But this culture of protest was at variance with the nationalist struggle as sculpted by Gandhi and the congress.[3]Thus, there developed in Bombay, 'two forms of class based modernities' among others, one consolidating around the nationalist movement, bringing together the elite; the migrant, mostly Gujarati and the English-speaking and the other, made of the Marathi working and middle classes whose modernity took the political form of working class movements (Patel 2003:4).[4]

[2] It is known that although textile mills were central to economic and cultural life of Bombay, it was trade via its sea ports that was at its origin in the colonial economy, and over time whatever industrial production it could boast of was marginalized as the city became enmeshed in a service economy, of which the film industry was an important part.

[3] For example, Gandhi was a reluctant leader in the protest against the Rowlatt Bills sought to be introduced by the post-war colonial government, essentially spearheaded by Horniman, the radical nationalist editor of *Bombay Chronicl*e. Gandhi's distrust of urbanity as well as the confrontational politics of the newly class conscious laboring layers of the city had made him suspicious of their cause as well as methods (Hazareesingh 2007). Interestingly, a 1939 Marathi novel *Dhavta Dhota* (*The Flying Shuttle*) (1972), written by Mama Varerkar, describes the class and regional divide in the wake of the Swadeshi movement. Mills, destitute mill hands, their exploitation by obscenely rich mill owners, and strikes, forms the locus of a narrative that gives a glimpse, imagined and real, of a modern city in turmoil. At one point, the narrator casually observes that the use of Swadeshi cloth by Maharashtrians had simply enriched the Gujarati mill owners; indeed the great mills and mill owners directly owned their existence to the Swadeshi movement. The fissures between classes created by a movement that was meant to fashion a singular nation were evident so early in the day.

[4] The cinema of the formative period in the 1930s, while drawing on myth and history, had also responded to modern desires and aspirations. On the one hand, the display and performance of bodies in action that drew on the energies of the folk and the newly emerging laboring aesthetic was mobilized. On the other, female stars; sensuous, stylish, mostly Anglo- Indian young girls, whose performative bodies drew on both, western and Indian accouterments, helped fashion an idea of the 'modern girl' that was hugely popular across the populace. (Bhaumik 2001 and Vitali 2010).

The discipline of film studies across the globe has brought to surface the vital connections between modernity, city and cinema. As mentioned in the introduction, early commentators of modernity had drawn attention to the experiential, thematic and spatial links between cinema and the city. In the context of globalization, urbanization and cinematic cultures, recent interventions too have focused on the spatial dynamics of inhabiting the haptic universe of both, the city and the cinema (Shiel and Fitzmaurice 2001).[5] Observing the thematic, formal and industrial linkages between the cinema and the city, Mark Shiel advocates spatial engagement with cities across the globe as *'lived social realities'* (Shiel 2001: 2). On a different track, Giuliana Bruno (2002) offers a uniquely emotional exploration of the cinematic city. Engaging the 'moving image' of cinema and its linkages with other visual sites like architecture, art, fashion, and travel, Bruno provides a spatial understanding of urban modernity in its correlation with the cinematic. Bruno argues that film studies' focus on the 'gaze' has missed the 'emotion of viewing space' (16). Instead, through a move away from sight to the site of cinema, from the optic to the haptic, Bruno pursues cinematic space's affective spatiality. Reiterating that cinema had historically expressed an urban point of view since its inception, Bruno shows how the cinematic city operates through corporeal, erotic and emotive drives that produce spectacular spatial vistas. Such an intervention is useful for my own exploration of the cinematic city of love in the 1950s. My reading of films such as *Aar Paar* (Guru Dutt, 1954*), Solva Sal* (Raj Khosla, 1958), *Kala Bazaar* (Vijay Anand, 1960), and *Pyasa* (Guru Dutt,

[5] The 'haptic' is constituted by the sensorial relation between bodies and spaces. Depending upon the sense of touch and contact, the feel of skin and objects, the haptic reflects on how we understand and experience space. The haptic, hence, plays a tactile role in the production of spatiality.

1957) proceeds with an understanding of Bombay's imaginative force as an 'atlas of emotion' captured by cinema.

Romancing the City

Urban modernity, which afforded spatial and temporal sensations, at once liberating and disorienting, has not been specifically identified with the cinematic exploration of urban romance. And yet the urban sensorium that was seen as giving rise to *flanerie* could also be seen to shape the experience of romantic love. Marshall Berman in his seminal book, *All that is Solid Melts into the Air* (1983), describes the joyous environment of cities with their cafes, boulevard and lights; a perfect mise-en-scène for love that allowed lovers private moments of anonymity in very public spaces, so that, in the midst of 'immense and endless flux' they 'could feel their love more vividly as a still point of a turning world' (152). Berman goes on to describe the performative possibilities available to lovers in crowded city streets where the very anonymity allowed them the chance to enact their love for an audience – ' The more they saw of others and showed themselves to others -the more they participated in the extended 'family of eyes' – the richer became their vision of themselves' (ibid.). However, Berman's context is Europe and although we might extend its relevance to the rest of the western world, it may not adequately account for the city and its romantic possibility in India, particularly in the 1950s. Given the social strictures against young people exercising individual choice and agency in matters romantic and sexual, in all probability this 'city of love' in the fifties was denied to all but the very few elite and/or courageous couples. Since a romantic involvement in the Indian context often means going

against social norms, its open celebration in the streets and cafes would have been rare if nonexistent.[6] Nonetheless, we see the cinematic city of the 1950s providing a stage for mounting the spectacle of love and become a conduit for the romantic couple's negotiations with the claims of family, community, tradition and the nation. At the same time, romance is not expected to remain uncontested even in this city of love because as a fantasy of modernity it must necessarily contend with other dreams and other realities.

The discourse of the city in American and European cinema has often either focused on the melodramatic drive of early cinema based on the shock, speed, fragmentation and contrast of urban experience (Singer 1995, Gunning 2004), or on aspects of the noirish or the uncanny central to the experiential modernity of both, city and cinema (Krutnik 1997). Observing the correspondence between the alienating experience of metropolitan isolation and the mid-century's noir thrillers, Frank Krutnik argues that the 'traumatic disjunctions experienced by (such) noir protagonists connect with broader anxieties about identity, gender and the decay of community within the cultural unconscious of the modern US' (91). It is interesting that unlike its American counterpart, the 1950s Bombay cinema, even as it invested in the city's darker precincts and dangerous pleasures, only rarely explored its truly bleak and alienating aspects. On the whole, in the cinema's city of possibilities, the individual always found a community in the midst of danger

[6] That the notion of romantic love was alien to most people's sense of the lived experience of the city is evident from a news item regarding a discussion in the Madras legislative assembly over the origin, purpose and cost of the maintenance of what was called "Lover's Path" on the Marina sea front. The news item titled, *'Lovers' path intrigues Madras MLA'* reports that one member in the assembly wanted to know whether "Lovers Path" was intended for lovers before marriage or Married people?' Even the answering Minister disowned knowledge of the meaning of the term 'Lover's path' (*Bombay Chronicle*, February 11, 1955, p.1). Cleary, the censure implicit in the pointed question about 'before or after marriage' was widely shared and a cultural common sense.

and despair. Thus, for example, even as he battled crooks and gangsters, Mangal, the taxi driver hero of *Taxi Driver* (Chetan Anand, 1953) could rely on his friends' support and take off on a romp singing the raucous '*chaahe koi khush ho chaahe galiyan hazaar de, mastram banke Zindagi ke din gujar de'* (let them praise or curse, you spend your days in enjoyment). The seemingly insurmountable barriers and hierarchies of caste and religion that separated people in real life seemed to dissolve on the screen as friendships and communities emerged, transforming the cinematic street into a 'site of community and crime, dance and violence, madness and freedom, death and renewal' (Mazumdar 2002: xx).[7]

The black and white cinematic city was created, both by a realist navigation of its roads, bridges and waterways and by a marking of its iconic locations and monumental places.[8] The opening title sequences of *Aar Paar* as well as *Taxi Driver* (Chetan Anand, 1954) introduce you to the city, as we move past buildings, bridges and billboards seen through a moving vehicle.[9] For Giuliana Bruno, the visual experience of the urban often involves a movement between interior and exterior spaces. This is something we experience when a taxi enters urban space (35). Thus we notice that in these films too, the stage is set for a glimpse of the city

[7] We can also say that the city is also present in the rural in those few but notable films located specifically in villages. *Aah* (1953) *Barsaat* (1949), *Parakh* (1960), *Naya Daur*(1957), *Anuradha* (1960), *Madhumati* (1958), *Bambai Ka Babu* (1960) all involve a movement or a 'trespassing' of the urban into the rural in one form or the other.

[8] The Gateway of India, the Marine Drive, India Gate, Howrah Bridge etc. are some sites that pop up regularly as synecdoches standing in for the metropolis in question. In an exploration of cinema's real and imagined cities, - Geoffrey Nowell Smith (2001) discusses the differing effect and affect of cities produced in studios and on location. Interestingly, his observation that locations are necessarily 'impure', because no matter how close the location is to the film makers idea it can be 'guaranteed not to enact'. the idea, therefore, requiring a degree of 'manufacturing' of the space'(103). It is possible to describe the 1950s Bombay films' cities as themselves 'impure', because most films seem to be shot in the studios, mixed with a liberal dose of on location shooting, not only to capture the monuments, but also to produce 'reality'.

[9] The title sequence of *Solva Saal* begins after the first sequence in the house, as the heroine Waheeda Rehman, steps out into the street, tracing her journey to the bus stop as she is joined by her friends, following the bus as it winds its way across the city to drop her at her college.

that is entered with a camera. The taxi driver protagonists of both the films will ensure mobility through all kinds of spaces, from up-market residential areas, isolated beaches to the gamblers' dens and nightclubs. Essentially, this cinematic traversing of the city seems to fulfill the wish to see documentary evidence of the promise of the new. Pointing to the cosmopolitan imagination of Navketan films, Ranjani Mazumdar notes that *Taxi Driver's* use of the 'taxi as a mode of vision provided the film with a 'wanderlust aesthetic' (2009:15). Similarly, harnessing the travel mode, *Nau do gyarah* (Chetan Anand, 1957), begins in Delhi and moves towards Mahableshwar via Bombay as the hero, Madan (Dev Anand), must leave one city and proceed to the other in order to claim his fortune. He buys a vehicle especially for the purpose but gives us a quick tour of the iconic spots of Delhi before he hits the road, mobilizing spectatorial pleasure in 'cosmopolitan travel, visual cartography and the desire to see urban vignettes' (ibid:20). The sights in these instances, seen through the windscreen and the windows of the vehicle as the camera looks out on the passing city is interspersed with those from above as the camera moves out giving us a panoramic view wherein the moving vehicle becomes a point in the traffic and the larger movement of the city. The fascination with the city as a contemporary space in evidence here is naturally not unique to the cinema of the period. The newspaper, the medium of choice for the construction and circulation of the nation, according to Benedict Anderson (2006) is also absorbed in exploring and thus producing the city.[10] For example, in the early years of the decade *Bombay Chronicle*'s photographic coverage of the city of

[10] Vasudevan has specifically placed 'cinema's work of modernity' alongside Anderson's 'print capitalism' in the construction of a national identity (1995; 2809)

Bombay continually reinvents it via an exploration of its visual registers, its sights, as also through a series of news items and articles specifically discussing the city.[11]

In *Imagining the Modern City* (1999), James Donald investigates the role of cinema in producing the imagination of 'the city'. According to Donald the urban space of cinema is not as much representational as it is 'sensory and symbolic' (68). However, as a prelude to the discussion of the cities 'conjured up in cinema', Donald highlights the role of the other mass media in shaping the experience of the city. On the whole, we see the newspapers, particularly *Bombay Chronicle*, performing a similar function for Bombay by constructing a certain kind of 'word city' that may have mediated between the 'reality of the metropolis and its imaginary place in the mental life' (63) to produce a cosmopolitan city for its elite readers.[12] Thus we have full-page features on the city or a photographic series on the vendors that ply the streets, quaint vignettes of the everyday alongside the usual news of thefts, murders, accidents, suicides as well as strikes, demonstrations and riots. Thus emerged a sensational city on the move as it was being made and imagined![13] Film reviews and advertisements along with film related news play an

[11] Early in 1949, the congress president, Dr. Pattabhi Sitarameyya addressing the press is reported to have said, 'This is a city built up by the Maharashtra intellect, Guajarati wealth, Marwari adventure, Parsi enterprise and Karnataka talents. It is a common child of all communities in India and is big enough to constitute a province by itself' (Bombay Chronicle, Jan 12, 1949, p.1). Tellingly, in his nationalistic fervor the speaker fails to mention *whose labour* went into the making of the city and its cinema! His and Congress' proposal of carving out Bombay and giving it an independent status was to be passionately and successfully questioned in what came to be called the Samyukta Maharashtra Chalval (The United Maharashtra Movement).

[12] Bombay, its boundaries, sovereignty, and organization have remained a concern till date and have recently taken chauvinistic and parochial forms. But in the 1950s the *ruling* sentiment was inclusive even when the United Bombay movement, staked, what was essentially, a territorial claim on the city by the state of Maharashtra. Although the movement, which saw the Maharashtrian working and middle classes, under a left and socialist leadership agitating against the Gujarati capital's claim on the city, the rhetoric was not of expelling (South/North Indians) from the city, but for the whole body of the city to be integrated in the state of Maharashtra rather than Gujarat.

[13] From 1st January 1949 onwards there were in all 100 photos on the front page with little write-ups about various vendors under headings like 'A family in fruit', 'Banana woman', 'full scape wala' etc. Mostly, these people are seen as nuisance adding to the squalor of the city rather than providing any useful service. Similarly, a full-page article titled *City that never Sleeps* describes Bombay at work and play, drawing attention to the strange contrast between its wealth and squalor. The two

important role in evoking the word city of the newspapers. Film advertisements typically promising 'Romance', 'Fantasy', 'Crime Thriller', 'Crime Drama', 'Love Tale', can be read as claims about the city itself. The fascination with the city was closely connected with the film industry it was home to and the cinematic city of the 1950s capitalized on the city as it contributed to its visual economy. Film posters, theatres, at times even a film studio as in *Solva Saal* (1958) regularly animated the cinematic street and city along with 'filmy types' and create a sense of a 'happening present'. In a different context, Giuliana Bruno speaks of the city being 'imagined as a corporeal affair' wherein 'one can literally fall in love with a place' (2002:242).[14] The city that housed the Bombay film industry and which was in turn imagined and reconfigured on-screen by that industry, probably involved a similar seduction and mobilization of desire. Sudhir Bedekar, a Marathi writer and editor, writing in the mid seventies recalls the new sensibility shaped by cinema that was responsible for the likes of Sophia Lauren, Zorba, Guru Dutt, and Waheeda visiting his heart with a strange frequency. He then goes on to make a distinction between the new generation from the old by elucidating young people's experiences of the city of Bombay.

> Concrete roads and jungles, slums, tetra pad embellished beaches, iron and glass city, lights and crazy music, sickly alive Foras road, motor horns, skirts…(1976: 17).[15]

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photographs accompanying this article are titled 'Bombay at Pleasure' and 'Bombay at Work', the first showing couples, 'the smart set' dancing to 'Waltzes and Rhumbas, and second has two workers on machines, 'getting Rotary ready to print the morning paper' (January 5, 1949, p.10). The most striking in this engagement with the city is 'A Day in the Life of a Bench' that has nine photos of a bench in Cuffe Parade taken through the day as people of different classes, gender, age; children, workers, bourgeois couple occupy the bench at various times of the day. The last one taken at 10 p.m. has a couple in a passionate kiss! (May 28,1949, p.12).

[14] Attempting to chart the emotional cartography in the 'spatial forms of literature', Bruno suggests that implied in the narrative geography of emotions is a 'transport that attaches eroticism to space' especially engaging the 'seduction of architecture and topographical architectonics' (ibid: 234).

[15] Bedekar was central to the left intellectual discourse in Bombay and Pune and edited Magova (1972-76) and Tatparya (1978-87). The above lines from his book *Hazar Hatancha Octopus* (1976) (Octopus of thousand hands) occurs in a piece titled 'New Minds' (My translation).

Mobilizing a desire for spatiality, the city in 1950s cinema is a site of unexpected meetings and romantic encounters between total strangers. Underscoring the accidental nature of these 'loving' encounters, the streets of the city become the stage for its dramaturgy. In *Aar Paar*, Guru Dutt playing Kalu comes strolling down the street and trips over Nikki's (Shyama) feet, who lying under a car, is trying to repair it. In *Taxi Driver*, it is by pure chance that the goons trying to kidnap Mala (Kalpana Kartik) force themselves into Mangal's (Dev Anand) taxi. In *Gateway of India* (1957, Dir. Om Prakash), Anju's (Madhubala) meeting with Prakash (Bharat Bhushan), when she finds him sitting under a lamp post writing a poem, is the last of a series of unpleasant encounters she has had through the night as she is being chased through the city. Unlike the village, where everyone knows everyone else, the city offers sweet anonymity, and lovers meet in strange encounters. In general, urban modernity forces a negotiation with the alienating strangeness of a world that resists becoming home. But the fleeting impressions of the flow of streets and faces as they pass us by are at once held and transformed in these moments of impossible connections between strangers staged by these films. Discussing the affective charge of the film song in another city, Calcutta, Sudipta Kaviraj (2004) differentiates between the middle and elite classes' melancholic response to the city and the more complex response of the lower classes, to whom it could provide a sense of 'freedom from restrictive village customs'(80). According to Kaviraj, this anonymity could be experienced by filmic characters as a 'context in which genuine love could be experienced against deterrents of deprivation and social and cultural taboos' (ibid.). In the films, the contingent nature of these romantic alliances was possible because of the

narrative absence of kith and kin. The young protagonists of these films, particularly the men have no family to speak of. Early on in *Aar Paar*, Guru Dutt replies to a guard's query about his name with Kalu Birju and then to the query about his father's name (*Baap ka naam?*) he answers Birju Kalu! But this Birju Kalu is never seen in the film, and the joke, I think, destabilizes notions of pedigree and family background. The Kalpana Kartik character in *Taxi Driver*, who arrives in Bombay to make a living as a playback singer is running away from an uncle who wants to marry her off for money. The narrative turns of the film allow Kartik an exploratory access to urban space as well as the 'gestural world of men' (Mazumdar 2009: 17). The young protagonists of these films embody a freedom from crippling family ties that would thwart romantic aspirations in real life. The audacity with which the family is erased by the cinematic city is hence contrary to the 'feudal family romance' (Prasad 1998) that is perceived as determining film form and is perhaps indicative of a desire to shrug off the burden of the past, not only that of the individual, but more dramatically, of the nation, which had seen the dominance of towering father-figures in recent times!

The romantic encounters in these films can be contrasted to the tragic love between childhood sweethearts in *Arzoo* (Shahid Lateef, 1950), *Deedar* (Nitin Bose, 1951), and *Devdas (*Bimal Roy, 1955), where feudal and/or patriarchal expectations and pressures succeed in separating the lovers. It is perhaps not surprising, that urban modernity was viewed as more conducive for successful romantic alliances. An earlier film *Kangan* (1939) thematically emphasizes this difference in possibilities. A Bombay Talkies film directed by Franz Osten, *Kangan*, has Ashok Kumar playing Kamal, a city educated son of a rich landlord,

who falls in love with Shanta Apte, playing Radha, a poor village maiden. The opposition from the hero's father to this unequal match manages to separate the lovers but their complete devotion to each other and their ability to take decisive steps in the direction of their union gives us a happy ending. It is interesting that even though the couple form a relationship in the village they can come together only in the city, constructing a contrast between the village, a space of nature, feudalism, piety, and villainy and the city with its possibilities and a new community. The city is a place of cars, theatres, art and independent girls who creatively support the hero's literary aspirations. Even the heroine, Radha finds asylum with a *bhikaran* (beggar woman) in a temple who befriends her and suggests that she dress up like a *vishanvait* beggar in order to avoid the dirty looks of men as she roams the city streets searching for her beloved. At an earlier narrative moment a man in the village (the husband of the heroine's friend) says of Kamal that he has been in the city, where each one '*must* fall in love' (*sabhi ko pyar hota hai*).

The 1950s films' production of an urban cartography through the staging of protagonists' desire as they play out narratives of romance and adventure create an exhilarating sense of spatial freedom and energy as the 'urban text' is mastered in movement, suffusing the city experience with a sense of infinite possibilities. Needless to say, the male and female protagonists' access to the city is not equal and similar just as their relation to each other and their world continues to be marked by normative gender roles and identities. And yet, these uncomplicated narratives of romantic love ensured that female protagonists were substantially present because they revolved around the formation of the couple of which the

heroine was a pivotal half. Women's presence in the cities, particularly of the metropolitan West, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, has been the object of intense critical engagement (Wilson 1991, Felski 1995). Modernization and industrialization made women, as workers, shoppers, and consumers of leisure a part of the restless urban crowd. The anxiety caused by the new urban presence of women was phenomenal and has been recorded by many contemporary writers, poets and commentators. According to Elizabeth Wilson, women's presence in the city was often an aspect of the city's disorienting experience, so that she herself was seen as a 'symptom of disorder, and a problem: the Sphinx in the city' (1991: 9). However, women's own experiences of the city could be much more complex because it could also offer them freedom and liberation in the form of 'pleasure, deviation, disruption' (ibid: 7). The many insightful and nuanced readings of women and urban modernity visible in the context of western cities, have fewer parallels here, and women's presence in the cities, their activities and negotiation within it have been sparsely addressed in the sociological writings and scholarship on the city of Bombay.[16] And yet women's presence in the cities, specifically in fifties' Bombay, is undeniable. Newspapers such as *Bombay Chronicle* and *Times of India* in their coverage and reports of events and sights of Bombay regularly featured women. Women as sports persons, leaders, artists, vendors, hawkers and workers were constantly in the news and visible in photographs. One of the most startling images from this period is that of a group of women mill workers on strike (*Bombay Chronicle*, December 3, 1954, p.3). The image of languid, half-reclining

[16] For instance gender is an absent term in the two immensely useful, sociological interventions in the city of Bombay, *Bombay and Mumbai: The City in Transition* (2003) and *Bombay: Mosaic of Modern Culture* (1995). In this regard, Ranjani Mazumdar's (2007) discussion of women's presence in the city in the context of the city of Hindi cinema is a pioneering intervention.

and tired bodies of these striking women in a 'sit-in' draped in nine yard Maharashtrian saris alongside images of film posters and advertisement with glamorous female bodies, not only produced a truly diverse and cosmopolitan city, but is also a striking reminder of the different kinds of modernities circulating and being accessed by the citizens of the city.

A remarkable example of a fluid female subjectivity fleeting across the city's atlas is Anju, played by Madhubala in *Gateway of India* (J. Om Prakash, 1957). Anju is on the run from an evil uncle who is after her inheritance. Sporting Chaplinesque attire with short trousers and a jacket, and desperately trying to escape from the uncle's men chasing her, her flight begins in Lonavala sometime in the evening and ends at the Gateway at six-thirty in the morning. Her journey through the night takes her to diverse places and people; running over railway tracks, lonely walks, night clubs and strange houses of disrepute. This chase in the night produces a thrill of spatial discovery as Anju moves from one disreputable place to another.[17] The film's episodic structure allows her the chance to inhabit diverse spaces. It is not so much the physical pursuit as much as Anju's finding herself in unusual places in an effort to escape her followers that is narratively significant. In a way, the film 'narrates with space' (Bruno 2002: 29) as Anju breezes through these illicit places and learns about a parallel sexual economy as also about her own desire. Through the night, she manages to trick several interested men into believing her reciprocal interest by playing a variety of roles

[17] Right from the beginning of cinema, films have invested in the sensational and vivid experience of thrills such as 'explosions, crashes, torture, contraptions, elaborate fights, chases and last – minute rescues and escapes (Singer 2001:93). Arguing the essential connection of these early Hollywood attractions and its "aesthetic of astonishment"' with the experience of urban modernity, Ben Singer, insists that attractions continued to entertain even in the later classical narrative cinema and that it is likely that 'classical narration amplified the stimulating capacity of attractions by endowing them with strong dramatic and emotional significance (ibid: 129).

suited to the imagined allure of the urban type she encounters; from a suave flirt to Pradeep Kumar's cad to a streetwise toughie to Om Prakash's '*gunda'*. Her final encounter is with Bharat Bhushan, who is a poet struggling with his first line under a lamp post. With him too she plays a role, that of a '***shayara'*** except that now she falls in love and the playful banter of the song they construct together and sing '*Do ghadi woh jo pas aa baithe hum zamane se door ja baithe'* truly transforms his room where she is hiding, if only for a moment, into a refuge away from society - the '*Zamana'*.[18] If certain films undoubtedly used 'its women character(s) to set limits to the image of modernity' (Vasudevan 2000:109) the very heterogeneity and contradictions of this modernity allowed films like *Gateway* to mobilize, through characters like Anju, fascinating explorations of urban femininity that provide images of the empowering and transformative possibilities of the city. Such images of female bodies in motion foregrounded the radical newness of the urban experience.[19] That this urban imaginary was faintly disquieting is evident from the *Filmindia* review's criticism of the film on the grounds that it gave 'the city of Bombay a bad name and makes it look like another Chicago' (August 1957, p.62).

A significant feature of the spectacle mise-en-scène of love mounted by these city films is their utilization of everyday spaces to flood them with affective possibilities. An example of the use of the most mundane of places for the purpose

[18] The song itself is explored in greater detail in the chapter on the song.

[19] For instance, as mentioned earlier, in Mama Varerkar's novel *Dhavta Dhota* (Flying Shuttle) written more than a decade before our moment, the figure of a migrant female worker in the mill town of Parel becomes a pivot of all movement, physical and political, as she not only steers the male protagonist in his journey of discovery through the chawls, eateries, mill compounds, but also herself traverses spaces marked by class difference by easily going into the house and bedroom of the rich mill owner's daughter, hitches a ride, at times in a Rolls Royce, but also on a goods' van, to finally ride on the shoulders of the striking workers, a figure of liberty and revolt.

of wooing the heroine is the garage in *Aar Paar*, where the delightful *Sun Sun Bewafa* is performed amidst dismantled cars, tools, tyres and broken parts. A similar mise-en-scène frames Kishore Kumar singing *Ladki Bhigi Bhagi Si* to Madhubala in *Chalti ka Naam Gadi* (1958). But, even when 'nature' is the performative site for love songs, the access to these spaces is narratively inscribed.[20] It is notable that this fantasy of romance in the 1950s did not require an interruption of the narrative location and a transport to an exotic or foreign landscape; the dream remained eminently quotidian. This claiming of everyday work and living spaces by the couple for the 'practice' of romance organized, to borrow a term from Michel de Certeau, 'an ensemble of possibilities' (1984:98) that need to be seen for its offer of transformative hope. Admittedly, the other side of this public performance of love is, as Madhava Prasad has argued, the 'blocking' of the 'representation of the private' that explains the unwritten ban on the kiss as also our arrested modernity. At the same time, in a context where the influence of caste hierarchy results in a strict organization of the sexual economy and a severe penalizing of romantic alliances, the mobilizing of the urban text for the display of the erotic need to be seen for its 'ability to suggest a different world' and for providing 'models of identification for being modern' (Hansen 2000:344).[21]

[20] Hence, Kalpana Kartik intentionally takes Dev Anand to a garden/ wood where she sings of her love. In *CID* Dev Anand and Shakila find themselves by the side of a stream with village girls singing of youth and beauty in the morning, where they have been stuck in the rain during a night chase. Similarly, Madhubala and Dev Anand make their way to a ruin that one assumes is close to the city in *Kala Pani*, as do the picnicking Madhubala and Kishore Kumar in *Chalti ka naam Gadi* in a sequence with the song *Hal kaisa hai jhanab ka*.

[21] The effect of social strictures against romantic alliance is subtle and works by socializing the youth into adopting normative behaviour and only on rare occasions takes the form of open protests as reported by *Bombay Chronicle* (May 27, 1952) with a front page headline 'Mass demonstration against marriage' Delhi minister stoned'. The news item went on to describe urban rage in the form

In this light, the films' deployment of the world of crime and criminals to frame the urban text of romance, its noirish iconography mobilized around theft, bank heists, gambling, smuggling and kidnapping provide a thrill peculiar to the experience of the city. The proliferation of terms like 'crime thriller', 'crime drama' in advertisements as well as film reviews points to the excitement of a form that presented a world of crime just around the corner; ready to entrap the hero.[22] If the city has always provided the right soil for organized crime, in the 1950s, Bombay was also witness to concrete manifestations of class conflict as strikes, protests, demonstrations and riots animated its streets.[23] Nonetheless, as far as the cinematic city was concerned, this conflict got channelized through the, often, underclass hero's individual struggles in his 'private interest', where the dangerous world of crime provided the necessary obstacle in the trajectory of his love. These narratives, organized around urban crime, while realistically deploying the cityscape of roads and built areas, were animated by the performative energy of gamblers and gangsters on the one hand and the dangerous excess of female sexuality on the other (Mazumdar 2007). Interestingly, it is the figure of the other woman- the vamp, the club singer that emerged in these films, symbolizing the lure of its world that, I believe, feminized it as it relieved it of referential burden.

One reading of the character of the vamp, the 'other' woman is that she embodies modernity as dreadful as films seemed to 'split the women in terms of

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of burning of buses, a bonfire of Gandhi caps, and a demonstration by 5000 people against the marriage of a Hindu girl, Ms. Raj Sharma and a Muslim youth Mr. Sikndar Bakhat.

[22] *Filmfare* review of *House No 44* had the heading 'Young Lovers in Gangland' (April 15, 1955, p.28) and that of *Filmindia* was the usual 'A crime thriller' (October, 1955, p.73). Example's like, Shree Shakti film's *Howrah Bridge is Routine Crime Drama*' (*Filmfare*, September 26, 1958, p.23) can be multiplied.

[23] Through the 1950s, newspapers like the *Bombay Chronicle*, *Times of India* and *Hindustan Times* construct a city in strife through photographs, bold headlines and full page coverage of the various strikes and demonstrations by mill workers, dockhands and the socialists and communist for united Bombay.

the figuration of her desire' (Vasudevan 2000:117). Accordingly, films appear to reward heroines with love and marriage while the 'other' woman's frank and uninhabited desire for the hero, her 'westernized' ways and demeanor delegitimizes her claim to love and life. However, a closer look at the figuration of female desire in individual films as also across a set of, what we will call, 'city films' throws up a complicated picture. Thus, despite narratives punishing the 'other' women, her substantial diegetic role was not consistently coded moralistically. Indeed, her songs articulated the films' 'vision' or 'philosophy' of 'love and romance' and 'living for the moment' as also, at times, warning of the perils of the same. An established star Gita Bali brought considerable sensuousness and histrionic skills to playing her role of the club dancer, Nina, in *Baazi*, completely overshadowing the new comer Kalpana Kartik playing Rajani. And despite Madan's (the hero) judgmental rejection of her, the complexity of her persona and situation as also her sacrificial death prevents a simple negative reading of her character. The women are linked in this film not only by their desire for the hero, but by a performance of desire that is equally overt. Rajani as a doctor makes the first moves in her romance with Madan, at one point taking him away from Nina to a secluded spot to confront him with her love. The fact that the villain played by K.N Singh, is not only Nina's boss but also Rajani's father further implicates both of them in the illegal economy of the city making the distinction between the two not as clear-cut as might seem. Moreover the distinction disappears altogether in a film like *Howrah Bridge*, where Edna (Madhubala) as Prem Kumar's (Ashok Kumar) romantic interest is also the club singer, albeit

working under duress, in her gangster uncle's establishment.[24] *Howrah Bridge* ends by recuperating Edna into domesticity, but not before the possibilities of a sexually liberating feminine modernity have been explored through her performance. It is Edna who makes the first move in her romance with Prem Kumar. To be sure, the character Kamini, played by Waheeda Rehman, the gangster's moll in *CID* (Dir. Raj Khosla, 1956) is harsher when compared to the club dancers in other films. Clearly a 'kept woman', she is not a performer in a night club frequented by the hero Shekhar (Dev Anand), the CID inspector, and therefore, not free to fall in love with him and compete for his affections, which clearly belong to Rekha (Shakila). Rekha is also on the right side of the law, being the daughter of Shekhar's superior, the chief of police (K.N Singh). Kamini, on the other hand is in charge of certain aspects of her boss', the socially respected Seth Dharamdas' criminal business, who turns out to be the gangster behind the murder of the editor the hero is investigating. There are references to an unhappy childhood in the orphanage, as also to her being forced into this place and situation. Although she sings no romantic numbers for the hero, the glamorous framing of her face and body in the play of light and shadow give her a mysterious and, in another sense, a romantic aura. In the end, her sense of responsibility towards other members of the gang, alienate her from Dharamdas, who has had no qualms about disposing of people once they have served his purpose. Also

[24] In *Milap* (1954), a considerably raw first film by Raj Khosla, the country bumpkin hero's (Dev Anand) initiation in the ways of the city is through the heroine played by Gita Bali. Already an ambivalent figure; a kind of gangster's mall working for the evil lawyer who plans to cheat the hero of his inheritance, she is an efficient, calculating, modern girl who introduces the hero to various aspects of the city life, and then transformed by love, becomes his accomplice in defeating her boss' plans. An advertisement for the film declared –'What all does she know? Thought Rajendra, since she knew typing, singing, dancing! Gita Bali's fantastic role- Milap!' (*Kal*, April 2, 1955, p.4) The ambiguous charms of the city are quite clearly spliced onto this heroine who in the end wins over the hero to the city.

Kamini's nursing of Shekhar's wound, helping him to escape from the gangster's den and in the capture of Dharamdas completely redeems her in the moral economy of the film that revels in blurring the lines that segregate the good and the evil of the city. In a city where business and money rule , where you get everything except love (*milta hai yahaan subkuch par milta nahi dil*) , as Johny Walker sing's of its amorphous charms, where Seth Dharamdas is a respected member of its elite, and Shekhar himself a fugitive from law, Kamini's dark appeal offers a troubled negotiation of its urban terrain. Interestingly, in *CID*, even though the 'other' woman is not romantically inclined towards the hero, the chemistry between them along with her agency, cool presence, proximity to danger and figuration as a sexually active adult; constructs a modern subjectivity far more striking than Rekha's petulant, childish charms.

It is essential to note that the vamp of the 1950s is a romanticized figure. Even as her westernized clothes and accoutrements signaling overt sexuality distinguished her from the heroine's controlled and normative performance of romance, and even if she often competed with the heroine for the hero's love, she was no more than a foil to their romance. Although, at first glance the vamp's sexualized performance and body seem to align her with the femme fatales of contemporary Hollywood noir films, it is difficult to view her as either colluding with or subverting patriarchal ideology. Devoid of the violence and volatility seen in the femme fatales and never as evil or threatening, she calls for a different reading. Unlike the femme fatale, she cannot be viewed as embodying cultural disaffection and revolt (Boozer 1999/2000), or as being central to the epistemological drive of the narrative (Donne 1991). On the whole, the vamp

seemed to signal the illicit pleasure and thrill associated with the city's ambiguous possibilities rather than articulate a fear of women's sexual desire.[25] Not surprisingly, the diegetic split in the female figure did not translate into a split at the level of actresses playing these roles. In other words, the role of the vamp, club singer/dancer was not reserved for specific actresses as it was to be from the sixties onwards. Gita Bali had played a variety of roles as the leading lady, and continued to do so after *Baazi* as did Madhubala. Shakila, who played the vamp in *Aar Paar,* played the heroine against Waheeda Rehman's more dynamic gangster's mall in *CID,* and Sheila Ramani played both heroine and club singer opposite Dev Anand in *Fantoosh* (1956) and *Taxi Driver* respectively. The female subjectivity explored by these films and actresses construct an image of urban modernity at once fascinating and forbidding, spilling over neat binaries and narrative closures, since the performing body of the vamp, like that of the actress who played her could suggest, as Rita Felski observes in another context, a 'loosening of sexuality from familial and communal bonds' (1995:19).[26]

In his book *Mumbai Fables* (2011), Gyan Prakash notes the significance of clubs and gangster's den in the imagination of the city as a space of 'easy communication across gender and religious identity'(155). Particularly opportune are his observations about the club dancer, Sylvie, in *Taxi Driver*- an ambivalent figure, not quite a prostitute, more an urban trickster bent on having a good time,

[25] In the decades following the 1950s, the figure of the vamp underwent transformation. With the cabaret emerging as a 'spectacle of vice and abandon' (Mazumdar 2007:86), the vamp's unrestrained performance and her unambiguous diegetic alignment with the criminal, gave her a distinctly negative iconicity. As the ambivalent charm of the 1950s vamp gave away to the clear cut binary of chaste heroine/licentious vamp, women's body became the site of conflicting value systems (ibid.).

[26] Felski's context is nineteenth century European urban imaginary in evidence in the art and literature of the period that saw in the prostitute an emblematic figure of the city (ibid).

she is essentially 'a modern woman pursuing the man of her dreams' (ibid.'). Indeed, Sylvie's performance offers an attractive cosmopolitan 'spatial dynamic' as she moves 'around in the city's cafes, seductively flirts with Dev Anand on the streets, and dances for the men at the nightclub' (Mazumdar 2009 :17). The ambiguous allure of actresses in the 1950s, as heroine and vamp, is therefore central to the organization of the desire for modernity, the attraction and dread of its promise of freedom from societal norms and constrains. In this regard, I revisit the much discussed *Aar Paar,* and the nearly forgotten *Solva Saal* which provide, I suggest, compelling examples of the fantasy of modernity mediated through romantic love.

Aar Paar

Advertised in *Filmindia* as 'A Bombshell of Human Emotions' (November 1953, p.46) the film tells a straight forward story of a down-and -out, just-released-from-jail Kalu setting out to find love and life in the city, which he does by the end of the film but not before he negotiates its more dangerous and seamier side. This film, like others of its kind, put in motion elements appropriated from American genre films that never become 'integral to the narrative development' (Vasudevan 2000:109). This is so, I believe, because its hero's trajectory is clearly driven by his desire for a romantic alliance with his heroine Nikki, played by Shyama, to which the world of crime only provides a counter-point. Guru Dutt himself as Kalu brings to his role a performative panache and a self-conscious style that refers to cinema itself. Supremely confident of his masculine charm, at one point in his banter with Nikki, he says he could have joined the film industry and become a

hero! The city of the 1950s cinema has been seen as a non-specific space, but in *Aar Paar*, Guru Dutt's Kalu, with his swagger, attitude and choice vocabulary creates a 'Bombay type'. Indeed, 'Kalu's, '*yaron ke'* and '*safa safa'* gives a non-specific North Indian texture to his Hindi. Nikki's father, Lalaji's Panjabi outbursts, his chess friend's Lucknowy, and Rustom (Johny Walker) the night club barman's Parsi creates an experience of the multilingual hybridity specific to Bombay. [27]It is the streets of this Bombay that Kalu must negotiate after his release from jail. In the very first sequence, Kalu finds himself, without home or employment. It is significant that Kalu has no big dreams and his aspirations crystallize around Nikki, from the moment he sets his eyes on her, with the complicity of the city itself, or at least, its poor. The very first encounter between the couple is played out on the street, where the mock angry exchange between the dungaree clad Nikki and cheeky Kalu is understood for what it is by female laborers on top a nearby construction site, who sing *Kabhi Aar Kabhi Paar*, supported by urchins dancing to tune, in a legitimizing gesture - the labour that builds the city seems to smile from its height on the unfolding love story below giving it a sanction it surely lacks. But eventually, Nikki, who is obviously better educated and better placed than Kalu will have to prove herself able to meet the challenge of the new, muster courage to go against her father's law and choose her lover over the patriarch. As Kalu says, '*Aar ya Paar*!'

Shyama as Nikki is a modern city girl. She drives the car, goes under it in the middle of the road to (unsuccessfully) repair it and wears trousers. She responds to Kalu's overtures with frank appreciation and later in the plot has no

[27] Abrar Alvi, the films dialogue writer claimed that they had 'started a trend of modern writing with *Aar Paar'* by giving 'each character individuality'(Kabir 1996:76).

inhibitions visiting his rooms where she catches him inadvertently in his bath. The courtship of Kalu and Nikki draws upon and constructs the performative registers of the body, dress and affect to mount a spectacle of romance on the geography of the city. In one song sequence, Nikki sings to coax Kalu, admitting her mistake while Kalu driving the taxi plays at annoyance as the camera moves in and out of the vehicle to track the passing city.[28] Speaking of the role of love in Hollywood cinema, Virginia Wexman in the preface to her book *Creating the Couple* (1993: ix) says that 'As a form of modern popular ritual, movies define and demonstrate socially sanctioned ways of falling in love'. As noted earlier, since the social sanction earned by love in western societies as a part of post-enlightenment modernity and hence assumed by Hollywood is absent in our context, the extraordinary investment in the accoutrements of romance by movies can only be understood as providing fantastical models of behaviour, action, identity and politics of a new practice.

A bipolar logic seems to determine the structure of Kalu's experience; either his romantic aspirations with Nikki will come to fruition, or he will slip into the lawless world of criminality and the vamp's, Shakila's arms. Shakila's space is the nightclub, where even she is not safe from the unwanted attentions of its clients or the desolate godown of smuggled goods where she sings of her youth in a drunken stupor.[29] Distinguished by their performance and the spaces they occupy, the two women at one level signal opposed values and possibilities offered by the city. Nikki's is the aspirational world of petty bourgeois virtue, Shakila's dangerous sexuality stands for the uncertain and illicit pleasures of criminality.

[28] *Ye lo mein haari piya* (Alright I lose)
[29] *Hoon abhi mai javan ai dil…*(I am young, O my heart…).

And yet this stark difference goes unnoticed by Kalu who swaggers in and out of both the worlds with equal élan. Shakila, according to him, is quite nice, only Nikki is nicer. When Shakila offers herself to him, after his disappointment with Nikki, he shrugs her off saying all women are the same, 'you see one you've seen all'. It is significant that his rejection is not moralistic like that of *Baazi's* Mangal and he seems to judge both the women, on the basis of values like commitment and courage!

To be sure, Kalu's disinterest in Shakila's charms is reflective of his relation with the world of crime she represents to which he remains an outsider and is nearly forced to participate in the criminal plot. The visual registers mobilized for the production of both the spaces, are in keeping with the narrative thrust of the romance. The dark smoke filled club with its chiaroscuro of light and shadow and the wide solitary godown of smuggled goods, although cinematically stunning, display a formulaic iconography suggestive of vice and criminality that is contrasted with the realism of Nikki's place, shot on location in a garage in Parel. Most importantly, Kalu maneuvers his way into this world of crime and back, ultimately untouched by its lure while his experience of love and conflict in Nikki's space, have a clear affective valence because it is here that he comes up against parental authority, the only real threat to his romantic aspirations. The dangerous seductions of criminality offered by the city merely manage to separate the lovers and function as obstacles in the course of their romance, replicating the real and powerful familial and community structures that otherwise determine the fate of love, in and outside the film. In the end, in this romantic fantasy the imagined world of dark crime quickly crumbles when even the overtly sexualized

Shakila has her own little romantic dream of running away with Kalu, and Rustom, the comic barman, ditches the bank heist plan, because he too desires marriage and domesticity with a pretty girl he likes.

Solva Saal (1958)

Just as the experiential and sensorial economy of the city charted onto the feminine body becomes a conduit for the male protagonist's initiation into the rites of modernity, in *Solva Saal* (1958), the female protagonist's, transgressive subjectivity is steered through the ambivalent geography of the city by the hero's confident mobility and access to its diverse spaces. Here the brush with the world of crime is due to the heroine's excessive desire that causes her to steal a valuable necklace from her father's home at the behest of her boyfriend as she elopes with him. Laaj's (Waheeda Rehman) elopement and violation of the patriarchal hearth, clearly plays on the anxiety and fear of wayward women abandoning the security of their homes in the wake of 'new fangled' ideas of love as also the opportunities made available by urban modernity. The film tells the story of a young college girl, Laaj (Waheeda Rehman) eloping with her boyfriend Shyam (Jagdev) in the night only to discover that he is a cad merely interested in the stolen jewel. But she is noticed by Pran Nath (Dev Anand) a newspaper reporter, who, the film reveals in the end, is the young man her father has already decided on as her prospective husband. In the diegetic moment when they meet they are strangers to one another and, unaware of their elders' plans for them. Sensing a story in the situation, Pran Nath befriends her and the rest of the film traces their journey as it takes them to

diverse spaces of the city, from the railway station to a taxi drivers' haunt, to a *dhob*i (washer men's) colony, to finally a film studio in search of the necklace.

Solva Saal, to the considerable chagrin of the director, was given an 'A' (adult) certificate by the Censors. Ascribing, its relative failure to the drastic reduction of its potential audience because of the certification, the director, Raj Khosla, saw this as 'ironic' since 'the purpose was to tell youngsters not to elope' (1986: 27). The censors' verdict, possibly the cause behind the film's subsequent disappearance from public memory, reveals the anxiety and dread in the public sphere around the issue of elopement.[30] To be sure, despite Khosla's disclaimers, instead of moralizing about the problem of youngster unruliness with appropriate punishment, the film in fact produces a beautifully shot adventure in the night as two young people journey through the city alone, get to know one another and fall in love. Trashing the film for not properly utilizing the opportunity to provide an emotionally educative film on teen-age impetuosity, the *Filmindia* review bemoaned its 'absurdly light-hearted treatment' (October 1958, p.59). That by and large, films treated such subjects with an eye on entertainment, and its 'frivolity' and 'musical irrelevance' (ibid.) promoted rather than censured youthful aberration, was a charge that could be bought against them. *Filmfare* reported on Lilawati Munshi, a member of parliament, who wanted to start a mass campaign to stop the exploitation of crime and sex themes by motion picture producers. Munshi said, 'Newspapers report an enormous increase in the number of people taking to stealing, housebreaking, looting, murder and elopement. The causes of those

[30] Almost none of the write-ups and obituaries written after Khosla's death that I was able to access, mention *Solva Saal in* the list of his films. Although made after *CID*, it is a forgotten early film. Even *Milap*, a decidedly raw and naïve first venture gets a nod because of its 'firstness'.

crimes may be traced to illiteracy, poverty and environmental factors, but the part sex and crime films play in them is not at all negligible and cannot be ignored'(*Filmfare* June 31, 1959, p.15).[31] It is not insignificant that in this list of crimes, 'elopement' sits cheek by jowl with 'murder', which if emulated by film crazy youngsters was possibly considered more dangerous because it could disrupt traditional structures of caste, class and religion that informed matrimonial alliances. By the end of *Solva Saal*, the romantic couple discovers, to their delight, that they have the sanction of the community, reflecting the widespread concern in the public sphere regarding youthful independence.

Solva Saal's resemblance to *It Happened one Night* (Frank Capra, 1938) that had also inspired Raj Kapoor's *Chori Chori (1956)* has gone unnoticed along with its critical neglect.[32] However, if *Chori Chori* kept close to the original in its thematic and diegetic movement of the plot and characterization, *Solva Saal*, seems to have only picked ideas and elements from both, the original and the Hindi remake, in order to explore an altogether different terrain. In both the earlier films, the heroine is an heiress and the only spoiled child of a tycoon. She runs away from home in a moment of impetuous revolt in response to her father's objections to her choice of partner. *Solva Saal* draws on a realist register when it shows Laaj as belonging to an upper middle class family with a number of siblings. The first scenes establish her as 'the woman' in a motherless home, responsible for her father's and siblings' care. Unlike the heroines of earlier films, she actually steals

[31] This article appeared a few months after *Solva Saal.* It is not improbable that this was one of the films, among many others, to have irked the writer.

[32] Veena Das, **(**2003), considering the issue of the remake of films speaks of *Nau do Gyarah*, along with *Chori Chori* as remakes of *It Happened one Night*. However, apart from the runaway girl, *Nau do Gyarah* moves along a completely different trajectory, one involving aspects of the 'crime genre' with its 'other woman' intrigue, theft and murder, which is at variance from the 'purer' romantic adventure of the other two films.

from her own home, making her transgression even more shocking, not only because it takes her straight into the realm of petty crime and its spaces but also because it is a violation of the domestic space. Also, unlike the other films, *Solva Saal* never leaves the city, and unlike other couples, who find one another in the 'purer' elements of nature in the countryside, the romance between Laaj and Pran Nath, flowers in the midst of the familiar, everyday, and in places corrupt, city. Most significantly, the diegetic time of Laaj's escape from home is strictly one night, from around 11pm to 5.30am in the morning when she returns to awaken her father in time for his flight to Bangalore where he is scheduled to go to fix her marriage alliance. This exploration of the city of night, with its associations of danger and sexuality, and the temporal compression of the main action to a few hours is generally unusual in Hindi films and specifically different from the day out in the countryside of the original Hollywood film and its Hindi remake.

Laaj first meets Pran Nath on a train they happen to be travelling. On 'night duty' as a newspaper reporter, Pran Nath is commuting through the city, accompanied by a friend and colleague. Laaj, with her boyfriend Shyam, is eloping to Delhi to his home, or so she thinks until she finds herself stranded on Bombay Central station, where Shyam leaves her and disappears with the necklace. Travel and transportation are early established by the film as central to its urban experience. The opening titles, after the first scenes in the house, trace Laaj's journey to college as she walks, boards a bus that winds its way through the streets of Bombay, hops off and walks the last remaining stretch with friends. Soon this is followed by trip to a picnic spot in the back of a van. Laaj's mobility is intrinsically a part of her youthfulness, and agency. On the picnic with friends, her

frolicsome teasing of Shyam, telling him that he looked like a 'monkey' when he sulked, and singing the song " *Yeh bhi koin ruthane ka Mausam hai diwane, Kismet se aate hai pyar ke zamane,* (Is this a season for sulking? It is fate that bestows a world of love*)* prepares us for a youngster who, in defiance of social norms, would follow her heart's desire and readily agree to elope with her lover. Noting the persistent resistance to women's mobility, Giuliana Bruno argues that travel is an 'important part of the expansion of women's horizons beyond (and within) the boundaries of the home (2002:81). Indeed, Laaj's mobility is central to the narrative of her losing and finding herself and love in the city. Her mobility at the beginning of the film and later in the company of men, Shyam and Prem Nath, is displayed through the characters' continuous movement and traversing of the city using all modes of transportation. Commenting on *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* (1927), James Donald notes the film's 'emphasis on networks of communication, transport, circulation and exchange' since in a modern city 'space is experienced as time' that is, as 'movement between spaces' (1999: 77). Solva Sal's deployment of the travel mode not only constructs a mobile city, but threads the city's distinct and dispersed spaces into one single adventure. Most significantly, the film's mobilizing of the night infuses its travel mode with the dimension of the uncanny- the presence of the unseen, dark alterity of the self and the city. The first encounter of the romantic couple in the running train itself generates a distinct allure, as Pran Nath, attracted by Laaj's young beauty and questionable demeanor breaks into a song '*hai aapna dil to awara na jane kise pe ayega'*. As he moves about the brightly lit compartment amongst the passengers, the night outside the train is another 'cinema' 'framed' by its windows that succeed

one another in a continuous band; a flicker of stations, passing trains, crowds, and lights. The sensorial similarity of the railway journey to film wherein the world outside becomes a 'tableau; a complex of "moving pictures"' (Strathausen 2003:25) has been noted as contributing to the early psycho-somatic experiences of urban modernity.[33] Here it constructs a dense mise-en-scène; a movie within a movie. The words of the lyrics sung by Pran Nath, suggest the *flânerie* of the heart – *hai aapna dil to awara*- its predilection to be charmed by the unexpected as it journeys forth like a gypsy- *Safar mein hai yeh banjara*. The night as a flicker of lights in the dark through a moving vehicle will recur in the film even later as Pran Nath and Laaj travel in taxies to search for Shyam. Sergei Eisenstein's suggestion that the 'modern urban scene, especially of a large city at night, is clearly the plastic equivalent of jazz' suitably describes the mosaic of experience that is produced by the juxtaposition of emotions, characters, movement and the play of light and dark in the train song sequence as also the cinematic adventure it kick starts.[34]

The heroines' leap into liberation by literally jumping off their father's yacht, inaugurate the romantic adventures in both, It *Happened One Night* and *Chori Chori.* It is possible to read in these opening scenes a modern day replication of the damsel-in-distress-escaping-the-ogre's- castle scenario; a revolt against

[33] In his seminal study on the Railway Journey, Wolfgang Schievelbusch (1977), details the development of a new consciousness brought about by the coming of the railway in the19th century. The transformation in the way people perceived, experienced and related to the visual, sensory and kinetic stimuli produced by journeying in the moving train was radical, according to Schievelbusch. A striking correlation between the new sensorial regime instantiated by the railways and the cinematic, concerns the adaptation of 'panoramic seeing' by travelers. This new visuality implied an ability of travelers to perceive the landscape, urban and rural scenery through the train window as a single whole, –'the ability to perceive the discrete', as it rolled past the window, 'indiscriminately'(60). Interestingly, Schievelbusch extends the cinematic metaphor even further when he says 'the traveler saw the objects, landscapes etc., *through* the apparatus, which moved him through the world (64).

[34] Quoted in Donald, James (1999: 76).

existing structures and relationships of power in a bid for personal freedom. *Solva Saal* too has Laaj throwing herself in the water; however she does this, unlike the other heroines, not in a bid for freedom but to end her life. Laaj's attempted suicide follows upon an initially failed effort to find Shyam and the necklace. Refusing, Pran Nath's offer to escort her home, Laaj walks alone onto the street, crosses a bridge and jumps off a culvert into the dark waters below. Pran Nath who has followed her, jumps after her and hauls her out. Playing on sight, emotion and memory, this sequence evokes the spatial dynamics of the uncanny of the city at night.[35] Clearly, Laaj's suicide bid reveals deeply felt anxieties associated with the contradictions of urban modernity. As Laaj leaves Pran Nath outside the film studio they have gone to in search of Shyam, she is troubled by the enormity of her transgression and the felt impossibility of facing her father. The light and shadow along the sharp edges and framework of the steel bridge Laaj climbs and descends followed by Pran Nath at a distance, accompanied by a haunting soundtrack is visually unsettling. A lone woman on a dark street at night, Laaj is treading a perilous path. Words, as memory of a secure past in the domestic sphere and her nurturing role of normative femininity invade her as she confronts the consequence of her desire. Laaj's suicide attempt that marks her acceptance of guilt as well as its atonement is suggestive of the uncanny presence of forces unleashed by the city

[35] The similarity in the psychological experience generated by the city and the cinema, that of the uncanny, has engaged many scholars (Donald 1999, Strathausen 2003).The ambiguity and allure of this mental state rests on the tension between the visible and hidden, light and dark, knowledge and confusion, location and displacement, common to the urban modernity of both, the city and the cinema. The spaces of the city, its geometrical architectural forms made of steel, concrete and glass contrast with the amorphous anonymity and softness of the crowds and individual bodies, to produce uncanny effects and affect. The visual and affective texture of night, seen to accentuate the uncanny, was often mobilized by Hollywood Noir (Christopher 1997, Krutnik 1997).

that threaten to spill over into domestic spaces of tradition and authority. Laaj's walk alone at night aligns her with that figure of urban modernity, the prostitute.

Commenting on the ambivalence of the scene of the woman's suicide by throwing herself in the water in *Berlin* (1927), James Donald says that here 'Berlin's mysteries were imagined as feminine through the figure of the prostitute', thus, instantiating a 'metaphorical equation between the city and modernity, between modernity and the feminine and so between the city- its commoditised social relations, its pleasures and its dangers –and the feminine' (1999:82). After Laaj has been rescued by Pran Nath, in a scene reminiscent of a scene from *Pyasa*, the police man on the beat questions them as they sit drenched on the street recovering from the ordeal.[36] The low angle shot from between the triangle of the police man's legs, frames the couple 'suspiciously' leading up to the policeman's question '*Kya lafda hai*?' Like Vijay, Pran Nath too claims that they are married and were out strolling when Laaj fell, accidently, in the water and that there is no *lafda* (scandalous business). The similarity in the two scenes, despite the evident difference in their affective valence, reveals anxious concern around feminine transgression. Concerns regarding young girls from a 'good' families straying away from the realm of respectability were connected with the thriving presence of an illegal economy and its spaces in the city.[37] If the city affords the pleasures of anonymity and travel through the night even to women; it does so under the

[36] In a narrative moment detailing the illicit sexual economy of the city, Guru Dutt (as Vijay) is seen to save Waheeda Rehman (as Gulabo) from the clutches of the law by claiming her as his wife.
[37] Reports of young girls falling into 'bad times' surfaced in the news papers from time to time; *Bombay Chronicle*, (Dec 29, 1954, p3) announced 'Poor Girl falls on Evil ways. Tries to end life'. The story describes 'a beautiful 18 years old girl (…) standing in the prisoner's dock' and admitting 'that she wanted to end her life as poverty led her to a wrong path and nobody was ready to marry her'. The tale of this girl's migration to the city in search of livelihood , reiterates the story of formation of the city of Bombay- 'a city of migrants' and typically fashions many a hero/heroine's trajectory, not least the Kalpana Kartik character in *Taxi Driver*.

constant fear of their slipping literally and metaphorically into the dark waters of disrepute. After saving her, Pran Nath reminds Laaj that her suicide would have harmed her father's reputation as much or even more than her original transgression. Registering the fears associated with the possibilities of modern personhood, Laaj's theft and elopement in *Solva Saal* likely earned the film its 'A' certification, and is a measure of the discomfort it had provoked.

However, the film's lightheartedness ensures that the tension generated by the suicide scene is immediately dispersed in the very next sequence that has the couple walk to a dhobi colony in search of dry clothes. The scene where they change clothes with a curtain hanging between them, though clearly inspired by a similar scene in *Chori Chori*, creates a space of adult intimacy. In *Chori Chori* the curtain is a marker of the distance between the couple, as Raj Kapoor and Nargis argue and snap at each other before the song *Yeh raat bhigi bhigi* dissolves the disagreement. In *Solva Saal*, however, it is a playful barrier as Pran Nath and Laaj get to know one another; an introduction that quickly turns into flirtation. Interestingly, the flirtation between the two from across a curtain followed by a song by the *dhobans* (washer women) outside was roundly criticized by the *Filmindia* review for coming too soon after Laaj's separation from her first lover and hence trivializing the pain of loss she ought to feel (ibid.). The suicide bid, it appears, has freed Laaj from her attachment to Shyam, while also allowing her access to the various spaces of the city, from the Dhobi colony- a nostalgic space evocative of the rural/ folk community, to the film studio- a site of ambivalent morality, metonymically standing in for the city itself. In traversing the urban landscape along with Pran Nath, it appears as if Laaj has simply replaced the lover

she eloped with by another, and a film that wished to provide a moral lesson against elopement, ironically, continues to offer its thrill as experience via Laaj's exploration of the city of night in the company of an attractive stranger.

Significantly, *Solva Saal* maps the city as a space of adult nocturnal intimacy via an intertextual investment in Hindi cinema itself. After the initial visit to the film studio the couple returns to it in a long penultimate section. In between, during the dhobi colony sequence, a series of references to Hindi cinema frame the contours of this growing intimacy. The space where we see them changing into dry clothes with a curtain hanging between is a rough shelter with the walls decorated with film posters. The curtain that hides them from one another but allows us to see them in partial undress can be read as a reference to 'the curtain' of cinema as also 'the curtain' imposed by censorship codes against the display of intimacy. The film's consciousness of this cinematic ruse becomes evident in the mise-en-scène; Laaj's crisscrossing the space on her side of the curtain has the backdrop of a film poster on the wall moving in and out of the frame. Next, Laaj teases Pran Nath over his name- 'you should have been called Hemant Kumar (the actual playback singer for Dev Anand here) considering your singing!' Thus the filmy excess of the name 'Pran Nath' (Lord of my soul) is underscored by a reference to the excess of the convention of the song in Hindi cinema as *Solva Saal* claims for itself a self-reflexivity and relative realism.

The film studio, to which the couple returns once again in their search for the necklace, is a fascinating space, a place of everyday labour, struggle and hope as also a place of intrigue, subterfuge, disguise and performance. In this studio the line between 'reality' and 'cinema' blur to create an exhilarating sense of

movement and transformation that is the promise of urban modernity. Here, Pran Nath and Laaj are instantly offered roles as extras, and an opportunity to slip into makeup and perform to merge with the performative energy of the studio. In a teasing moment, Tun Tun, the well known playback singer Uma Devi, playing her usual 'fat lady', coaxes the assistant director to give her a role. After seeing her size, and comically exaggerated performance along with a sample of her singing, the assistant director agrees to take her on only as a playback singer. Similarly, the film's director, Raj Khosla, is also the director, Raj Sahib, of the film that is on the sets, and Pran Nath's good looks and demeanor are compared with the legendary 'hero', Dilip Kumar. When Pran Nath puts on a big moustache and cap, it is make-up for his role in 'the film' on the sets, but also works as disguise to hide from Shyam and his girlfriend, Nina (Kammo). Nina, on the other hand, now has Laaj's necklace around her neck as she dances in the night club scene in 'the film' that is being shot by Raj Sahib. The film's self- reflexivity codes Laaj, Pran Nath, and all that happens to them as 'real' and not 'filmy', while also constructing the studio; its artifice and personnel, as the 'real' that happens behind the cinematic screen; its glitz and glamour.

The world behind the cinematic screen, the film studio is an amorphous space, on the one hand alive with the rush and movement of artists, extras, laborers but also home to crime and criminals. Shyam has come here to Nina, having ditched Laaj and stolen her necklace. But Nina, in turn, tries to cheat him with the help of a jeweler, by having him pretend that the necklace is fake and valueless. Nina is the club dancer in 'the film' within the film , a character type , as we have seen in films like *Taxi Driver*, *Baazi*, and *Aar Paar*, expressive of the seduction of

dangerous sexuality and criminality, but also endowed with a romantic loyalty to the hero. However, here in the stark lights of the studio, Nina is a deglamorized artist, a sly operator with purely monetary concerns, thereby, divesting the vamp, or the 'other woman' of the 1950s cinematic underworld of the enigma that atypically, feeds into the framing of Laaj. Indeed, the workings of the studio are on display; a thrilling chase sequence has the spotlight following Pran Nath scaling the roof of the studio that is all a network of levels, ropes, ladders and pulleys- the technical entrails behind the pretty picture. By exposing the constructedness and artifice of films, *Solva Saal,* perhaps inadvertently, stages romance as possible in the everyday; encounters and connections between strangers who accidently meet in the night in 'real' trains speeding across the 'real' city. The end of the film that reveals Pran Nath as the man Laaj's father has selected for her, can be read as an attempt to rein-in the libratory experience afforded by the night city. However, this attempt to assuage the dread of modern individual agency through narrative closure is a mere gesture of acquiescence to the traditional practices of parental involvement in the forging of marriage alliances. The intimate scene of the soulful parting of the couple after Pran Nath has brought Laaj home before daybreak is revealing. Pran Nath playfully quizzes Laaj- why had she not met him earlier? Laaj's reply that it was a question she too could ask of him seems to indicate that even if Laaj was mistaken about Shyam, the possibilities of romantic encounters offered by the city were not thereby exhausted. The adult certification of the film was probably a result of a disquieting perception that despite its narrative closure, *Solva Saal* in fact continued to offer the pleasure of the fantasy of romantic associations outside the pale of traditional society.

Limiting the City

If a majority of 1950s films display an overwhelming mood of celebration of the city and its romance, a few films sought to contain this imagination by attempting a realistic engagement with the city. Two films that I consider here are Navketan's *Kala Bazaar* (1960) and Guru Dutt films' *Pyasa* (1957). Both films, produced towards the end of the decade under consideration, seem to question as they employ and redefine, aspects of the romantic, one through an appeal to the larger entity of the nation, and the other through its rejection.

Kala Bazaar (1960)

The film industry, its reception, audience and most significantly the black market it generated and thrived on organized the urban romance between Dev Anand and Waheeda in *Kala Bazaar* as well. Once again, it is the male subjectivity of the hero, Raghu that strays into the world of petty criminality only to consciously seek redemption through romantic love in a narrative that enfolds as a quest for wealth, space and cultural entitlement while also, unwittingly perhaps, raising questions about cinematic pleasure. Raghu's romantic desire for Alka, a figure emblematic of modern bourgeois individualism as also its idealism saves not only him but the city itself from its black economy (*kala bazaar*) as he transforms himself into a messiah of bourgeois enterprise and uprightness.[38]

Sujata Patel (2003) speaks of the significant economic changes that were seen by Bombay in the two decades since the forties. The continued and

[38] A picture preview of the film in *Filmfare* (January 15, 1960, p.27) declared 'she shattered a Gang of Black Marketeers'.

accelerated migration, along with the transformation of the economy, from one based on industrial production to one geared by commercial and service interests meant a reduction in the bargaining power of labour. The ascendency of the 'upper class variant of modernity' and Bombay's 'self-perception as a cosmopolitan city' (9) in this period can be traced to these economic changes. Raghu's trajectory in *Kala Bazaar* plays out the induction of the lumpen proletariat (in the form of petty thugs living by selling film tickets in black outside cinema theatres) into respectable trade and business. Significantly, it is Alka's assertive idealism that first attracts Raghu, and her cosmopolitan modernity that makes possible their romance and the consequent transformation of Raghu.

Kala Bazar opens to a city that is harsh and competitive while offering few opportunities to its poor. Thrown out of a bus conductor's job, a semi-literate Raghu has little choice but the black market in order to tend to a family of two siblings and a mother. His dare-devilry and enterprise, quickly make him the boss of a gang of hoodlums and also very rich. But once there, he is attracted by Alka, a college girl with high principles; he first notices her tearing and throwing away film tickets got in black by her boyfriend, Nand (played by Vijay Anand). Raghu starts following her and eves-dropping on the couple. One of the most interesting exchanges between lovers, possibly in the history of Hindi film, is thus witnessed by Raghu and the audience. In a garden; an urban refuge for lovers, Nand, who is studying diligently so as to be able to go abroad for higher studies, insists that he and Alka ought to use this separation as an opportunity for seeing the world, explore other relationships and test their love, which according to him is a kind of childishness, a proposition Alka seems to readily accept. Raghu, who overhears

this exchange sees in it an opportunity. Clearly, Raghu's desire for Alka is aspirational as he becomes conscious that he may have the money but not the culture and class that are Alka's. Finding himself a teacher in a 'Nehruvian' figure, who helps destitute people on the road but steals books to educate himself further, Raghu begins a process of self-instruction. After Nand's departure, and fully cognizant of it, Raghu follows Alka and her family to Ooty, and using all his subaltern guile and cunning inducts himself into their good books. Alka, like other heroines is not shown singing of loss and separation for her absent lover and even though she warns off Raghu by saying that she is engaged to another, spends time frolicking and flirting with him on the hill side. However, it is only later in Bombay, after two years, that Raghu and Alka will accidently meet again on a bus stop, share an umbrella under a drizzle and reconnect. By now Alka has moved away from Nand, who has himself found a French girl, and is free to get into a relationship with Raghu. Hailed by reviewers as an adult romance, the film offers an unusually sober and rational view on romantic alliances.[39]

It is noteworthy that despite a title that evokes the black economy of the city, *Kala Bazar* has moved away from the underworld imagery of the early 1950s. The gambling den, the night club, and the other woman are conspicuously absent. Although there is the *adda*, an underground space reached by a staircase, reminiscent of the steps Dev Anand used to climb down in *Baazi;* it is just an all-men hangout for the hoodlums, bereft of the music, charm and romance of the gangsters' den we had encountered earlier. One number by Helen, which is

[39] The *Filmindia* review, titled '*Kala Bazar*" Provides Excellent Edifying Entertainment', praised the film for its adult handling of romance as well as displaying an 'appreciation of life's higher values' (March 1960, p.55). *Filmfare* too announced - 'Slick Direction, Spontaneous Portrayals Highlight "*Kala Bazar*"'(March 25, 1960,p.29).

discussed later, only underscores the move away from these stylistic features associated with the dream city of Bombay cinema. Scaling down the fantastical city, *Kala Bazar* selectively deploys a realist register in the way it imagines Bombay's underworld without the dark seductions of the vamp, and with crooks, who are not glamorous but family men trying to make a living. Money, its allure and lack, and the various trades offered by the city organize the film's narrative. The song Raghu sings with his friend, *Teri dhoom har kahi, tuzsa yaar koi nahi* (your jingle is everywhere, there is no friend like you) is addressed to a coin as the duo move across the city that is a market of goods and labour. Similarly, the film industry is also a signpost of the city's commercial and commoditized character. It can provide a kind of livelihood to black marketeers, as also a 'more honest' if poorer living to a reformed Raghu, as when he tries to sell song booklets outside the theatre. In a scene that shows the real life premier of the Mehboob Khan film *Mother India*, we see one star after another, Dilip Kumar, Nargis, Rajendra Kumar, Lata Mangeshkar, etc. getting out of cars at the Liberty cinema and walking to its doors amidst waving, screaming fans. A man standing in the rush of the queue for tickets says he had been advised to 'see the Liberty from inside'. By inscribing the city and it charms; theatres, stars and opportunities as commodities *Kala Bazar* fashions a modernity of cosmopolitan lifestyle and choices. Here, a new romance can be imagined, one that makes possible an easy, comfortable and adult selection of a life partner, a romance that, at the same time, is shaped by the sensorial magic offered by the city. Raghu and Alka's meeting again is, as it should be in the city, accidental. Finding themselves on a bus stop in the proverbial Bombay rain and not finding a taxi, they walk the windswept, rainy streets under one umbrella, with the

song *'Rim zim ke tarane leke aayee barsaat, Yaad aye kisi se woh pahli mulakat,* (The rain has arrived with the songs of pit-a-pat, I remember that first encounter with someone) playing on the soundtrack. Interestingly, the hero and heroine do not 'sing' this song, it plays on soundtrack as scenes from the past fill the screen like memory images. Although they have 'sung' songs to/with each other in Ooty, the realist picturization of *Rim Zim* as silent and secret 'thoughts' and 'feelings' construct memory as a shared space between the two would be lovers.

Kala Bazaar's selective encoding of 'the real' the non glamorized underworld, the mature relationships, is, in certain ways, in tandem with its implicit nationalist imagination. Raghu's aspiration and desire for respectability, grafts him on to the national body, as his transformation assumes, 'the unseen uncited figure….of Mahatma Gandhi' (Mishra 2002:18).[40] Raghu's 'Nehruvian' teacher moves into his home, becoming one with the family; taking care of Raghu's mother, and developing an interest in Raghu's sister. Raghu himself starts wearing a kurta that attracts attention to his new '*samaj sevak*' avatar. Raghu's prevailing on his racketeer friends to give up their current business and start anew in the 'White Bazaar' is staged with clear allusions to Gandhian methods. The climax shows Madan Puri, a rebellious gang member, opposing Raghu's emancipatory plans and attacking him. Raghu takes the beating without resistance. Towards the end of the film, when he is being tried for his crimes, Raghu is a penitent in the court of law; draped in a white shawl he accepts his guilt and punishment, only to eventually emerge out from the jail doors, a legitimate leader

[40] According to Vijay Mishra, the use of a nationalist agenda as a part of the aesthetic of Bombay Cinema, at times harnessed the 'uncited' figure of Mahatma Gandhi, 'who had effectively glamorized the figure of the ascetic renouncer, and had grafted social action onto the new symbolic alignments and associations (ibid.)

of the people. Interestingly, *Kala Bazar's* staging of the conflict between the world of petty crime and that of petty business, Raghu's past and his desired future, the anti-social and the 'truly national', also mobilizes a critique of certain generic features and pleasures of 1950s films. A sequence in the black marketeers den, after Raghu's return from Ooty, showcases Helen's performance amidst the men under Raghu's disapproving and censorious gaze. The picturization of this sequence certainly refers to its antecedents in the numerous 'crime and sex' films of the early 1950s. The shadowy den full of men around the dancing figure of Helen, as she sings '*Sambhalo aapna dil dilwalo'* functions in the tradition of scenes the audience has seen before. However, its difference from them is precisely its attempt to distance itself from that spectacle of ambiguous sexuality. Helen's dance has none of the studied languor and seductive ennui of the vamps of the early 1950s. Instead her performance 'swings between grace and awkwardness' (Mazumdar 2007:87), heralding the transition to the 'cabaret' that was to become widespread in the seventies. Also, the men as a whole group, unlike their earlier counterparts, are active and mobile participants in the performance, darting and making obvious passes at Helen and the group of girls dressed in plain western frocks, who dance and mingle with them. Raghu has just come from meeting his ill mother in a domestic space marked by piety; a little temple and burning incense in the background adorns the sick room. Raghu is burdened with guilt arising from a sense that his mother's illness is possibly a punishment for his black deeds. He sits amidst the noise and movement of the den with a look of total discomfort and revulsion, until the dance ends abruptly with a figure looming between the viewer and Helen's frightened face. The sequence then continues, without any reference

to, or explanation for the interrupted performance and Raghu announces that they have to put an end to their black business. Quite clearly, Raghu's disapproval of his comrades' behaviour comes from a moral high ground adopted by the film itself that also divests the mise-en-scène of the vamp's space and performance of allure. The absence of any substantial personality and presence to Helen's vamp underscores *Kala Bazar's* thematic criticism of the criminal lifestyle as it visually blocks spectatorial pleasure in this popular spectacle of vice and sexuality.

Towards the end of the film Alka is a mere observer to the drama of Raghu's transforming subjectivity, though we need to remember that she defined the new modernity that spurred the change in Raghu. An extraordinary sequence between the two in Ooty, stages Raghu's desire as a heady mix of class aspiration and sexuality. In an effort to woo her, Raghu offers to get Alka an exotic flower blooming at the edge of a precipice. Taken aback by his bravado, Alka looks on apprehensively as Raghu climbs a difficult terrain of loose rocks on the side of a steep fall. The scene refers back to the one in the garden in the city when Nand had first refused to pluck a flower for Alka from a tree overhead and then played at trying to get it, falling down in an attempt to amuse her. Raghu's behaviour draws on the traditions of romance, of masculine daredevilry in the service of feminine whims, and is also indicative of his cultural class against Nand's casual and urbane good humour. Torn between the two worlds, Alka's reaction reveals the ambiguity of her own feelings. Suddenly afraid of the danger to Raghu's life, as also his desire for her, she turns her back on the scene and walks away only to return, pulled back by her curiosity and fear. Raghu is triumphant, having reached the top of a huge rock but then slips as he reaches for the flower. As Raghu hangs

precipitously over the cliff, Alka first calls for help, her voice echoing as the camera scans the empty valley and then climbs on top of the rock, strips her sari, throws down one end to Raghu and pulls him up by the other end. The image of Alka; a low angle shot of her silhouetted on the rock against a vast sky, without the sari translates the lure of modern personhood that so attracts Raghu and over which his hold seems precarious at the moment. Alka's uninhibited body would have been, for an audience that had not seen the female form of a heroine in a state of 'public' and voluntary undress, a 'visible' marker of a new gender discourse as well as a new pleasure of the cinematic.[41] When he reaches the top and the safety of Alka's arms, Raghu makes his plea; 'Is it not possible, Alka, for you to save me from my falls forever?' But Alka is betrothed to another and their romance comes to fruition only later, when Alka is free to love him and Raghu has graduated to deserve it.

Kala Bazaar's suturing of romance into a nationalist narrative tries to contain the pleasure of the crime -form through its realist configuration, as it makes way for a suavely urbane sensibility. Ironically, its welding of romantic and nationalist aspirations reflected cosmopolitanism clearly associated with a growing confidence in the lifestyle choices of the urban upper classes and required a female subjectivity unimagined by earlier Nationalist imagination. Alka might flaunt a principled stance about the black market, but she is also frankly fickle and assertive about her inclinations in matters of love. The feminine agency of Alka, at variance from the patient, suffering, and self-sacrificing woman valorized by

[41] In an interview Waheeda Rehman talks of this scene as something of a challenge and her initial unwillingness to remove her sari on an outdoor location shoot. She finally agreed to do this publically, only after being convinced 'that the purpose of the scene was to save a life, and not to exploit sex appeal' (Encyclopedia of Hindi Cinema, 2003:510).

nationalism constructs a new identity that stakes a claim on the Nation in making.[42]It is evident, however, that the state was not entirely convinced of the film's ability to mount a drama that effectively drew 'the anti-social' elements of the city into the folds of the national modern. Apparently, the film had run into trouble with the censor board and had its end changed to fit in with the board's expectations (Padhye, 2005: 81). Vijay Anand had first ended *Kala Bazaa*r with Raghu being acquitted of all charges leveled against him and honorably discharged in consideration of his subsequent socially useful actions, with only a token punishment of a day in jail. However, the board required a longer and more severe punishment that was finally incorporated into the film. The chief of the board is reported to have said that *Kala Bazaar,* in fact displayed ways and means of practicing the skills of black marketing (ibid:82). Clearly, its narrative closure was not considered sufficient guarantee for containing and curtailing the pleasures of identifying with criminality offered by the film. *Kala Bazar's* investment in and disavowal of the adventure and romance of the crime city, coming at the end of the decade indicates an attempted distancing from the genre's plebian aesthetic. However, the fissures in the cinematic city of the 1950s, which imbricates Raghu's narrative in *Kala Bazar* and finds resolution through a reaffirmation of the Nehruvian vision had actually been questioned earlier in the decade to produce a more damning and dystopic city in Guru Dutt's *Pyasa* (1957).

[42] For instance Ketu Katrak (1991) has demonstrated that Gandhi's methods and practices of Satyagraha and non-violence were effective in mobilizing men and women for the nationalist project not only by his own feminization through 'the image of the Mahatma sitting before the "Charkha" patiently spinning "Khadi" but also by drawing on 'tradition' and on mythical figures like Sita to espouse an ideal of Indian femininity as an 'embodiment of sacrifice and non-violence' (397).

Pyasa

In terms of its mobilization of the genre elements of epic melodrama and as registering the disillusionment and engagement with the making of a new society and national identity (Vasudevan 1994, Chakravarty 1993 and Doraiswamy 2008), *Pyasa* has been one of the most iconic of films of the 1950s. Critical interest in *Pyasa* has been wide ranging and sustained, even though contemporary reviews were either lukewarm or openly hostile.[43] Most discussions of the film have quite naturally focused on Vijay, its poet protagonist, whose experience of modern urban alienation the film traces. In Vijay we see a reworking of the renouncer figure by (Vasudevan ibid.) an aesthetic construct of the romantic suffering artist (Mishra 2002), and a melodramatic figure who is significant for the way the social is mapped onto the individual (Griffiths 1996). Drawing on these insights, in the context of this exploration of the 1950s cinematic city I will attempt to enter *Pyasa's* 'urban detritus' (Vasudevan 1994: 97) with a focus on the streetwalker, that figure essential to the imagination of the city.

The city is hostile, inhospitable and inhuman in *Pyasa'*s imagination, which maps Vijay, the poet protagonist's journey through its diverse spaces in search of an identity and place. At the end of the film, Vijay leaves the city taking his search elsewhere, a utopian elsewhere. Not only is this a final indictment of the city, but also of 'romantic love', which after all in our cultural context has largely been a cinematic construct. Guru Dutt himself, through films like *Baazi, Jaal,* and *Aar*

[43] *Filmfare* review was guarded in its appreciation, calling it a poignant story but warning against any generalization from its pessimistic vision. It is significant that the reviewer noted that the film, was unable to provide an escape from dissatisfaction and unhappiness of daily life to the audience, while also maintaining that 'for an average individual there is a wide field and vast opportunity to labour usefully and fruitfully' (March 15, 1957). *Filmindia* totally trashed the film calling it confused, pretentious and stupid (April, 1957, p.63).

Paar, contributed to the shaping of an urban imagination suffused with adventures of crime and love. *Pyasa's* bleak vision of a dysfunctional nation deploys the experiential city of the underprivileged; its peripheral spaces, parks and restaurants of scant repute, dark alleys in red light areas, in tandem with the offices, homes and spaces of privilege. This juxtaposition not only mounts a critique directed at social inequities and injustice but is also deeply skeptical of the possibility of romantic love. Here prostitution emerges as the key metaphor for the cold calculating business of the city and its inhabitants, but contradictorily, through a romaticization of the figure of the prostitute herself. Gulabo the prostitute, played by Waheeda Rehman, emerges as the only refuge for Vijay. She is a foil to Meena (Mala Sinha), his sweetheart from the past, thus, reversing the terms of the conventional split between the heroine and the 'other' woman. *Pyasa's* radical investment in the figure of the prostitute needs to be seen as an intervention and a questioning of the discourse of romantic love mobilized by the 1950s cinema through its urban imaginary.

Ranjani Mazumdar has drawn attention to the recurring motif that connected the city and the figure of the prostitute (2007:83). Poets, novelist, filmmakers, seem to have deployed the image and metaphor of the prostitute and prostitution to express the corrupt, dehumanizing experience of big cities. The fear and anxiety about women's sexuality and waywardness in the relatively liberating spaces of the city, found in the figure of the prostitute a readymade image for derision as also a 'receptacle' for masculine discontent. However, it is my understanding that the very availability of the prostitute, her colourful presence on otherwise drab streets, and the offer of momentary refuge and solace for a pittance

amidst urban lack explains masculine ambivalence towards this figure. If the city as a whore, on the one hand, makes the Marathi poet, Namdeo Dhasal, hopelessly nauseous (ibid.), on the other, his other poem '*Mumbai Mazya Priya Rande* (Mumbai, My beloved Slut), expresses 'a passionate paean to an intensely erotic yet faithless city' (Ganguly 2005: 186). Here Mumbai, 'a footloose hussy', 'churlish slut', 'khandoba's concubine' and a 'wanton coquette' is also a 'whore with the heart of gold' who holds an impossible promise to the dalit youth attracted by her lure. Interestingly, in his *Berlin Chronicles*, Benjamin too speaks of the exhilaration of crossing not only social but topographic frontiers, as 'whole network of streets… opened up under the auspices of prostitution' (1999: 600). Reflecting on the relation between modernity, the city and women, Deborah Parsons, paraphrasing the quintessential poet of the city, Baudelaire, notes the correspondence between the poet and the prostitute. According to her, the poet comes to see in the prostitute, 'a metaphor for the role of the artist as she walks the streets for the material of her profession and offers her constructed body as a commodity in the same way (as) the artist prostituting his work in publication' (2000:25). *Pyasa's* construction of the city and its economy as a red light area and the prostitute's redemptive love as the only saving grace in this debris arises from a similar dialectic of relationship between the prostitute and the poet.

Sahir Ludhianvi's words in the song *Jinhe naz he hind pe woh kahan hai* sung by Vijay in a drunken stupor as he lurches through the narrow lanes of a red light area, expressing total disillusionment with post independence achievement, is central to *Pyasa's* affective economy. Narratively occurring at a point after which suicide seems a foregone conclusion for Vijay, it mobilizes images of poverty,

desperation, disease and the exchange of human bodies, to call on a sleep- walking nation. Yet, immediately afterwards, Vijay finds himself outside Gulabo's place and is taken in by her. This scene as Vijay and Gulabo go up to Gulabo's room, ironically refers to the earlier instance of misrecognition when Vijay had followed Gulabo on hearing her sing his poem to lure him, taking him for a client, when he was solely interested in finding his lost sheaf of poems. Now, as they climb up the spiral of the staircase, Vijay loudly complains about a hostile world, his lonely meaningless existence, and Meena's faithlessness. Once again there is misrecognition. Vijay's words about Meena, 'she loves for fun and sells it for her comfort' are addressed to a professional prostitute Gulabo, who then confesses her love for him and slips out of the business of buying and selling altogether. Gulabo as a prostitute is always in excess of the trope that welds the city with prostitution and reconfigures the discourse of romantic love.

Pyasa constructs the city as a labyrinth where people run into each other in melodramatic coincidences. Even before meeting Gulabo, Vijay knows of her as the unknown, mysterious woman who left with his poems, having purchased them from the used-paper shopkeeper. After luring him through narrow dark alleys with a song, Gulabo, in turn is shocked to find in Vijay the very poet whose song she was singing. Gulabo's and the masseur Abdul Sattar's use of Vijay's songs for professional purposes actually give them an economic circulation that they are being denied by the publisher Mr. Ghosh (Rehman) who turns out to be Meena's husband. And after Vijay disappears and is believed to be dead; Gulabo must take Vijay's poems for publication, of all people, to Mr. Ghosh and run into Meena in his office. The close connection between urban modernity, its shock and

sensationalism and melodrama has been well documented. Life in a big metropolis, with its accidents, deaths, chaos, and extremes of emotions and experience is, it has been argued, itself melodramatic and chance encounters and coincidences, the very staple of its dramaturgy (Singer 2001). Describing the city itself as melodrama, Jonathan Raban says that the extremes of moral polarities, classes, physiognomies, and the constant need to make quick judgments as you rush through a flow of events and people forces a recognition of the 'intrinsic theatricality of city life' (1974: 29). In the city one must live on a 'perpetually inflated scale' and adapt to its 'spontaneous melodrama' (ibid: 32).

Pyasa's melodramatic urban imagination, dystopic as it is in the staging of 'the collision between two orders of experience- pre- modern and modern' (Singer 2001:69), dramatizes the conflict around Vijay's search for love and recognition. Being spurned in love by Meena, who married for wealth and respectability, Vijay has spiraled down into urban poverty and homelessness, drifting around its marginal spaces, wandering through red light areas and sleeping on park benches. His effort to publish his poetry is fruitless; again and again he encounters insensitive rejection until he is believed dead, when suddenly publishers, brothers and friends begin to see the economic worth of his poems. The city of Vijay's experience is a nightmare with prostitution emerging as its explanatory trope. The indifference and confusion that marks the experience of big cities, generating a sense of disquiet, anxiety and pathological disturbances in its inhabitants has been the object of concern since the expansion of urban lifestyles in Europe in the nineteenth century. Elizabeth Wilson, in her study of urban life, its disorders and women, draws attention to Freud's theories of sexuality, their connection with

urban uncertainties and the experience of the 'uncanny' (1991:88). Freud describes the experience of finding himself again and again in a place haunted by 'painted women' and being overwhelmed by a feeling that he terms 'the uncanny'. Freud's description of the nightmare experience of modern city life draws on sexual anxieties generated by the presence of women in the city. *Pyasa's* mobilizing of prostitution as the dominant metaphor for the city's heartless business needs to be seen as a specific fear of modernity's effect on female agency, amidst its more dehumanizing realities.

Meena, Vijay's college sweetheart is a modern girl who is free to choose her partner and chooses wealth and respectability over love. If modernity allows women agency and choice, the anxiety that they might not necessarily marry for love, had already found expression in Guru Dutt's *Mr. & Mrs.55*. Released in 1955, the year of the passing of the Hindu Code Bill that legalized divorce among other things, the film, in trying to be a satire on marriage of convenience, became an ill conceived critique of 'feminists', who were seen as shrill, calculating modern women merely interested in money. The Hindu Code Bill, which had taken over a decade to get passed in parliament, had generated massive controversy and debate about women and their role and place in the public sphere. Fear of the destruction of Hindu traditions, family and the institution of marriage, found passionate expression in and outside parliament. Writing on the history of women's rights in India in the context of the Hindu Code Bill, Rochana Majumdar (2003) notes that the poster image of the film *Mr.& Mrs.55* had 'starkly captured contemporary perceptions about the role of women' (2130). Divided into two parts, in one image the poster shows Madhubala in western attire and Guru Dutt sitting down buckling

her shoe, and in the other a saree clad Madhubala touching a standing Guru Dutt's feet. The film thus became a site for this debate, except that in a strange move, the elderly spinster aunt of the heroine herself emerges as the 'modern feminist'; an excessively caricaturized figure, who wanted her niece to marry a poor cartoonist and then divorce him, just so she would get her inheritance that would come to her only after marriage. We see here the ongoing social conflict between modern agency and traditional patriarchal structures deflected onto one between love, strangely squared with feudal and patriarchal relations, and modernity equated with wealth and independence. Even as romantic love was being valued, the modernity that made it possible was suspect precisely because of its liberating potential.

In another film, *Paying Guest* (Dir. Subodh Mukherji, 1957) the choice between love and wealth in the selection of a marriage partner is not only a topic in a debating event in a girl's college, but central to its plot. The opening sequence shows the two girls, Shanti (Nutan) and Chanchal (Shobha Khote) debate the issue, with Nutan winning the argument as she pitches her lot on the side of love. The narrative unfolds with Shanti falling in love with Ramesh Kumar (played by Dev Anand) who is a struggling lawyer and living as a paying guest in their house. Chanchal, choosing wealth over love marries a successful but elderly lawyer. However, bored with her husband's devotion to work and unromantic behaviour, Chanchal, starts lusting after the hero and subsequently kills her husband and her blackmailer. It is significant that both girls are not encumbered by parental or family pressures and are totally free to marry any person of their choice in this fantasy of urban modernity. In an interesting moment, for this argument, the lawyer hero argues the case of an eloped couple in the court of law by evoking the

maturity of Indian girls in contrast to their foreign counterparts as also the happiness and freedom of all lovers in India. This film, like most others, imagined an urban landscape peopled by youngsters free of the constraints of kinship and community, where the only threat to modern love was female intransigence and avarice. *Pyasa* partakes of this fantasy even as its questioning of it reveals a bleaker dread of female agency as also a skepticism of 'romantic love' itself.

The romance in *Pyasa* is memory, only accessed through flashbacks. Two flash back sequences take us back to the time when Vijay and Meena were in college. Both flashbacks of Vijay's memories are invoked when he suddenly runs into Meena near her husband's publishing office. This past constructed, visually, and aurally in lighter tones, draws on the conventions of 'filmy romance'; the college, the classroom, the 'first encounter', 'teasing', 'the badminton match' and 'the picnic song on bicycles'. The sequence of the second flash back occurs when Vijay and Meena find themselves again in the same elevator. Caged in the elevator along with a number of other commuters, Meena's face blurs and shimmers as Vijay's memory takes him back to the time of a social gathering on the college lawns; there are lights, lilting music and dancing couples. The elevator, a claustrophobic world of narrowed expectations, social constrains and everyday drudgery contrasts with the beauty of love and youth in the past. Significantly, this second flashback has a 'dream sequence' embedded within it. In the elevator, as Meena's face blurs and dissolves we are in the lawn scene, Vijay and Meena walk down some steps, then to a bench and sit, couples are dancing to gentle music amidst lights and soft sounds of laughter. Vijay looks into space and suddenly both of them are in a misty dream space, dressed in 'filmy' costumes, dancing and singing of love. At the end of the song, Vijay 'wakes up' from the dream only to

discover that he is alone, Meena is gone leaving a 'farewell' note on the bench, and they are back in the drab elevator. Pyasa's mobilizing of memory and a dream within that memory, routed through conventions of cinematic romance and juxtaposed against the greater 'realism' of the present, effectively represents 'romantic love' itself as 'unreal' and 'filmy' in a world dominated by the calculus of profit and loss, consequently, divorcing urban modernity from the cinematic fantasy of romantic love.

In *On some Motifs in Baudelaire,* Benjamin speaks of urban encounters; the shock, crowds, the strange anonymous figures, the outcasts and lost women that are the dominant motifs of Baudelaire's poetry. In the context of one poem that describes a fleeting glimpse of an unknown woman as she passes by the poet**,** Benjamin says, 'the delight of the urban poet is love- not at first sight but at last sight' (1973: 166). Is it possible to use Benjamin's brilliant observation, with a rather different inflection, to look at Gulabo the prostitute in *Pyasa,* the quintessential figure of the city, although typically avoided by the 1950s cinematic imagination focused on romancing the city? Love at first sight, often an essential trait of cinematic romance, is already a past and a memory as the poet Vijay roams the city and again and again runs into Gulabo, who he never thinks of loving until the very end. In the last scene, when Vijay comes to Gulabo almost as an afterthought, and asks to leave with him in a final rejection of the city, the relief on her face reveals that this was a close call - Vijay had almost missed her, a passerby in the crowded street.[44]

[44]Abrar Alvi in an interview with Nasreen Munni Kabir speaks of his disagreement with Guru Dutt regarding the ending of the film. Alvi wanted Vijay to stay in the city and fight the system, but was overruled by Dutt's vision of the couple walking away into the sunset which he thought would be 'emotionally satisfying for the audience (Kabir 1996:136).

Gulabo is a work of radical imagination. In a film that mobilizes prostitution as its major metaphor, ironically, she is bestowed with sensibility and sensitivity. Noting that there are 'few women characters in Hindi Cinema who actually walk the street', Rashmi Doriaswamy believes that she is 'cast as a kind of flâneur, a truly radical image in Hindi cinema' (2008:70). Framed in close ups that heighten the beauty of her face, with the light almost emanating from it - the only brightness in a drab place, indeed she is, as Alison Griffiths has observed 'heavily romanticized' (1996: 27). The role of close-up photography in constructing the idea of romance is well known. In the context of romantic love in Hollywood films, Wexman, for instance speaks of the use of the close-up for emphasizing the emotion and information of performance 'associated with romantic attractiveness' (1993: 18). Close-ups of heroines in the black and white era of the 1950s, particularly during song sequences as also during moments of intense drama, not only constructed their star persona but also gave visibility to a desiring and suffering feminine subjectivity.[45] For instance, in a scene in a shabby restaurant where she appears, as if out of nowhere, to feed the starving Vijay, the camera caressing her face in close-up, she is an angel who has come to save the narcissistic poet, the only one who understands him in the entire city. Gulabo sits here transformed from an ordinary, anonymous prostitute to a person negotiating the difficult and contrary reality of her sexual identity and desire for plenitude. Mukul Kesavan observes that the vamp of Hindi cinema has one 'bloodline' leading to the *tawaif*. Not just a prostitute the '*tawaif* was an accomplished courtesan, well versed

[45] Guru Dutt is supposed to have been the first to use the long focal-length lenses such as the 75mm and the 100mm for the purposes of his dynamic close-ups (Kabir 1996:130).

in music, dance, conversation and etiquette' (1994:253).[46] In Gulabo's spontaneous and sympathetic understanding of Vijay's poetic worth, something that slips past the elite of the city, we can notice the cultured *tawaif* and yet at the same time she is, undoubtedly, a part of the sexual economy of the streets of Calcutta. *Pyasa* does not mince in showing Gulabo's reality in all its visceral detail. In the scene, when she is thrown out of a passing car and refused payment for her service, Gulabo is drunk and has to run, chased as she is by a policeman. The dread of the lonely street and the punitive hand of law, as Gulabo tries to escape through narrow alleys, straight into Vijay's arms, construct the hypocritical city, where however much everything might be for sale, Gulabo's honest trade is only allowed on sufferance. On the other hand, whenever he runs into her, Vijay himself is deeply respectful of Gulabo, seeing in her a fellow victim in the city's commoditized calculus. The connection between the poet and the prostitute, originating in poetry and consolidated in the face of urban callousness, creates an alternative to 'romantic love' even as it installs a romance of a different order, more radical but ultimately utopian. If the 'unequaled fascination of publicly accosting a whore on the street' in Berlin was associated for Walter Benjamin, with the 'feeling of crossing for the first time the threshold of one's class' (1999:600), Vijay's arrival at Gulabo's doors can be seen as a crossing of class and caste ridden spectatorial context of the 1950s.

The full force of the contradiction at the heart of Pyasa's move of locating redemptive hope in a prostitute after calling on the nation to take a hard look at

[46] In this context it is interesting to know that Abrar Alvi, Guru Dutt's friend, collaborator and dialogue writer of the film, says that he wanted the character of Gulabo, based as she was on a chance encounter with a prostitute he had had, to be more realistic, harsher, because, according to him, 'Which prostitute reads poetry, is a connoisseur of literature?' (Saran 2011: 79).

itself (*jinhe naaz hai Hind par who kahan hai?)*, needs to be read in the context of the nationalist discourse that emerged in the wake of independence movement. Of relevance here is Partha Chatterjee's argument about the subsuming of the nineteenth century reform movements' women' s question in nationalist discourse by relocating the spiritual and truly national in the 'inner' domain of the home and family. It seems a different modernity for India could be imagined only by preserving Indian tradition within the home in the care of women who were to be saved from the forces of modernization and who in turn would be able to save the culture from western onslaught. If Gandhi's distrust of industrializing urban modernity had further essentialized this Indianness to the village, his politics of non-cooperation and charkha assumed and required women's participation in the national struggle for independence. Thus women's presence in the public sphere became a reality as women participated in rallies, demonstrations and picketing, and became active outside the domestic space. And yet the feminine qualities that even Gandhi called upon as especially useful for the nationalist cause were those of suffering, sacrifice and patience, qualities Indian women were supposed to be endowed with for the proper fulfilling of their role as wives and mothers along with an erasure of their sexuality.[47] However, as noted earlier along with nationalist modernity, the city was a site for other kinds of modernities, which not only actually ensured 'an overwhelming public presence of working women' (Mazumdar 2007:81), but as Srivastava (2007) points out, the emergence of other

[47] Gandhi's intense aversion to sexuality outside the precincts of marriage and home meant an intolerance of any form of transgressive sexuality. For instance, traditionally, prostitutes were recognized professionally but were relegated to the bottom of Hindu caste hierarchy. It is reported that many prostitutes 'responded to Gandhi's campaign against untouchablility, took up spinning and wore khadi; a few even joined as volunteers. Gandhi, on his part, refused to acknowledge them. (John & Nair, 1998:13).

discourses that advocated the reform of the family itself, specifically underscoring women's sexual pleasure for a healthy and fulfilling modern sociability. It is in this contentious and transforming cultural context that the figure of the prostitute emerged as emblematic of urban desires that had to be expressed and contained. For instance, Premchand's first major novel *Sevasadan* traced the journey of an unhappy housewife who is beguiled from domestic virtue into becoming a courtesan and then reforms as she opens an orphanage for children of the courtesan. If the evident anxiety about women's unbridled sexuality was answered by Premchand's reformist zeal that sought to recuperate it into the Nation, we also had an altogether different urban imaginary in Saadat Hasan Manto who gave an autonomous voice, agency and subjectivity to prostitutes; quintessential figures on the city's map, citizens without a place in the nation. When exactly a decade after independence, *Pyasa's* disillusionment with the new nation seeks a despairing hope in the prostitute Gulabo it seems to share Manto's sympathetic understanding of modernity's contradictions as also the limitations of the nationalist imagination.

The finality of Vijay's rejection of the city is made possible by an urban imagination that has no place for the rural/ folk /community space mobilized by other films. The song and dance sequence in the dhobi colony of *Solva Saal* is a recurring motif in the cinematic landscape of the 1950s. Even in *Shri 420*, the poor neighborhood, 'symbolic of the village' (Mazumdar 2007:85) provides a contrast to the corrupt city and its sexually promiscuous spaces. The song sequence *Ramaya Vastvya*, into which Raju (Raj Kapoor) drifts after leaving Nadira's sexualized performance at a gambling den evokes 'the lost life in the village' and critiques, through juxtaposition Nadira 's 'bad city' (ibid.), and connects the

values of rural loyalty and simplicity to the heroine on the other side of the city. Towards the end of the song, a milkman picks up the last refrain and seems to carry it on his beat - across the city space, to come riding to where the heroine, Nargis sits at her doorsteps and picks up the refrain. The heroine, in her simplicity, can still represent the pristine solace of the village home and community in *Shri 420* and Raju and the nation need only reform with her help. In *Pyasa's* imagination, however, the rural has been wiped out and the new community must be forged from within its precincts. When family, friends, and the establishment fail Vijay, other than Gulabo, it is only Abdul Sattar, the street smart masseur who stands by him. Abdul Sattar represents a possible community of the urban underclass, even as he embodies a fragile utopic hope in love in the midst of a city of want and suffering. A true romantic and madly in love with snappy Juhi, Gulabo's prostitute friend, Sattar offers to marry and make a home with her, confident that his meager earnings would suffice for both. Not only is Sattar's street smart cunning pivotal to the plot since it comes handy in saving Vijay at various times, but his confident presence, and romancing of Juhi keeps alive, however feebly, the possibility of romantic love, a possibility the film otherwise questions.

Finally, in order to return to romantic love, it is useful to look at the meaning of Abdul Sattar, a character type played by Johny Walker, and mobilized by Guru Dutt across a series of films. Johny Walkers' comic and lighthearted courtship of his smart and saucy ladies, assumed a generic significance. In staging a plebian romance that occurred as a parallel track in films like *Pyasa, Aar Paar, Mr. & Mrs.55* and *CID,* Johny Walker's comic genius gave his courtships an easy

naturalness as it harnessed streets, parks and even office spaces to mount a spectacle of love as a quotidian possibility. In *Aar Paar*, as the Parsi Rustom, he courts Lily's entire family of a mother and a number of siblings, and his words in the duet they sing tell her that she need not be afraid of love, *touba kahe ko karta, pyar se darta, aisa kisa hoga?* Similarly, in *Mr.& Mrs.55*, he sings *jane kaha mera jeegar gaya ji,* in the office lunch hour, pretending to look for his ' lost heart' under the chairs and tables in a room that suddenly affords them unexpected privacy. And in *CID* he is a pickpocket keen on a Maharashtrian panwali, and laments Bombay's heartlessness, as he sings *Ay dil hai mushkil jina yahaan* with the girl as they travel the streets of Bombay in a *ton*ga. Sudipta Kaviraj's observation about the lyrics' offering a 'critical sensibility of the city which sympathizes with the downtrodden, the fallen, the destitute' (2004:70), aptly describe the screen persona Johny Walker assumed in all these films. As the hero's sympathizer and friend he often belongs to the social underclass or the national minority; a Parsi, a Muslim or a Jew. Even as we notice the representational politics of this clean divide between the Hindu hero and his other friend, it is also the case that the cinema of this decade laboring, as it were, under the shadow of partition, reveals a desire for inclusivity that thematically downplays religious identities. Hence, the linguistic and stylistic variations in dialogue delivery used by Johny Walker in keeping with his screen persona, actually become markers of an individual style constructing a city type with a certain 'folk wisdom' which in turn *'thicken'* the urban landscape.

Speaking of the representational politics of Bombay cinema, Madhava Prasad (2004) suggests that Johny Walker as an 'emblematic figure' and

'lighthearted version of representativeness' at times functions outside the precincts of the city (88). Prasad's example is the film *Naya Daur* (B.R Chopra, 1957), where Johny Walker plays a journalist from Bombay visiting the village where conflict brews between the working people, mainly *tongawalas*, and the Zamindar's son, who with his bus service is trying to bring development to the village as well as destroy their livelihoods. According to Prasad, Walker, siding with villagers and *tongawalas*, is the benign representative face of Bombay, 'witnessing the drama on behalf of the Big other, the Nation' (ibid.). Although Prasad's reading of the Johny Walker persona partially explains his role in *Naya Daur*, it is also essential to note that the film's anti- technology narrative itself along with the final triumph of the struggling *tongawalas*, works to question the Nehruvian model of development, leaving the door open for an ambivalent representativeness. Whose nation does this character from the city represent? The song that Johny Walker sings, '*mai bambai ka babu'*, taking swipes at power and money, but essentially recommending a playful attitude to life -*yeh duniya hai uski, jo duniya se khele, sakti ho ya narmi, haste haste jhele* (this world belongs him…Who plays with the world, hard or soft, takes it with a laugh), an essential 'non- seriousness', along with his sympathies with the underdog, make him a free spirited urban type rather than a 'benign' face of the nation. This is even more in evidence in the other roles in the films mentioned above. Embodying certain irreverence for institutions and powers that be, Johny Walker's comic style and timing, dialect, street smart witticism that mark his social class are also projected as the secret behind his success with women. His successful and easy romancing of women in the framework of the myriad problems besetting the central pair

naturalizes 'romantic love' itself, giving it a quotidian experiential presence in the public spaces of cinema and the city and thereby offering a momentary respite from the burdens of representing the nation or constructing a national identity.

Commenting on the romanticism in popular American culture, Richard Dyer suggests that

> It gives us a glimpse of what it means to live at the height of our emotional and experiential capacities-not dragged down by the banality of organized routine life. Given that everyday banality, work, domesticity, ordinary sexism and racism are rooted in the structures of class and gender of this society, the flight from that banality can be seen as- is- a flight from capitalism and patriarchy themselves as lived experiences (1992:156).

In a context that makes survival from day to day a formidable challenge for most people, we need to add words like oppressive, distressful and crippling to Dyer's banality and domesticity in the description of 'the everyday' of the majority of audience of filmy romance. Their unequal access to capitalist modernity and the dominance of caste structures has meant that individual agency, the prerequisite for romantic love, is denied to most. Interestingly, this reality gets a nod in an unusually self- reflexive moment in *Aar Paar*, when after he has been ditched by Nikki, Kalu, a wry witness to the love talk of a couple who are promising the world to each other in the back seat of his taxi, sarcastically comments on the 'filmy' nature of this love, thus showing his complicity with an audience that would have had a somewhat similar attitude to these enactments of love.

Describing the metropolis as a 'concentrated site of narrative crossings that bears even deeper ties to cinema's own spatial (e) motion, Bruno observes that urban culture – 'an atlas of flesh- thrives on the transient space of intersubjectivity' (2002:67). The continuous, innovative, at times formulaic staging of cinematic

romance was a flight of fantasy that very rarely, reflected on love's difficulties or into a couple's transformative and conflictual relational trajectory. Instead, by suturing romance onto the urban fabric, the cinema of the 1950s constructed aesthetics of love, its spatial modalities, its feelings and its performative force within the transient spaces of the city. Films across the globe have taught their audiences ways of seeing and imagining urban life. In the 1950s Bombay film urban life and its imagination was enmeshed with that of love. Despite the decisive and powerful attempts by films like *Kala Bazaar* and *Pyasa* to redraw the map of Bombay cinema's dream city, they remained exceptional to the romantic endeavors that inhabited the fantastic streets, alleyways, detours and by-lanes of the cinematic city.

CHAPTER 2

THE SONG OF LOVE

The song, the most definitive feature of Hindi films, has only recently moved into the orbit of critical discourse. Studies have focused on the two distinct, although interlinked, lives of the film song. One involves the processes of the song's conception, production and participation in the making of cinematic meaning as it employs the combined labour of lyricist musicians, actors, set designers, cameramen and directors (Booth 2008, Morcom 2007). The second looks at its reception and dispersal via multiple technologies and across diverse geographical spaces (Larkin 1997, Gopal and Moorti 2008). These twin approaches have opened one of the most vital sites of Hindi cinematic culture to begin addressing the question–what kind of an object is the film song? Hoping to contribute to this discourse but with a specific lens on the 1950s, I seek to explore the role of the film song in the making of the modern sensibility of romantic love. In traversing through a variety of songs and their contexts; duets and solos, joyous and sad, comical and despairing from 1950s films, this chapter will delve on the song sequence as an event that erupts in an audio-visual spectacle of lyrics, music, performance and mise-en-scène to produce intense experiences of selfhood and self fashioning through love.

Lalitha Gopalan has alerted us to the role of song and dance sequences in Indian cinema; even when integral to the plot by 'interrupting' the narrative they fulfill a variety purposes of delay and distraction of its linear development (2002:19). On the other hand, Ravi Vasudevan terms the songs along with dance

and comic sequences, paranarrative units that 'work to create parallel pleasures and perhaps to problematise the work of the narrative' (1989: 31). Drawing on conventions of excess, in terms of emotionally charged lyrics and music, mise-en-scène and performative registers, songs can become a locus of that which cannot be contained by the narrative. If Vasudevan's and Gopalan's is a valuable insight into the role, place and workings of the song phenomenon of Hindi films, it also is, additionally, in tandem with the notion of the heterogeneous form of Hindi films where songs are seen to have an independent production- circulation and reception of its own. In relation to the 1950s though, the argument needs to be nuanced to take into account the singular realities of the period's film form. Thus it has been observed about the 1950s that songs 'played a significant role in the development of film narrative' (Arnold 1991:147). That is to say, unlike the more free floating presence songs were to assume later comparable to 'attractions' in later decades, in the 1950s they were relatively more integrated with the narrative and mood of the film. Hence, even as they functioned as paranarrative elements or interruptions, a significant number of songs played a pivotal role in propelling the narrative itself.

Additionally, on occasion the period not only saw films like *Baiju Bawra* (Vijay Bhatt, 1952) or *Barsaat Ki Raat* (P.L.Santoshi, 1962) narratively organized around issues of music and singing, but innumerable films like *Anokha Pyar* (M.R. Dharamsey, 1948), *Deedar* (Nitin Bose, 1951), *Babul* (S.U. Sunny, 1950) *Jogan* (Kidar Sharma, 1950) with nine to ten songs and more, were held together by these songs, which were like pillars to the tenuous bridges of fragile narrative elements.[1] At the same time, it also needs to be noted that some of the most well known film

[1] *Babul* and *Jogan* had twelve and fifteen songs respectively.

makers of the time like Raj Kapoor, Mehboob Khan and Guru Dutt exercised 'a strong creative and administrative control over all aspects of filmmaking' (Gopal and Moorti 2008:5). They took a keen interest in the composition, recording and picturization of the songs in their films. This compels us to rethink the place of the song in the overall film experience of the period.[2] One possible approach is to see, with Anna Morcom, a pivotal connection between the melodramatic mode of Hindi films and its songs. According to Morcom, songs make sense because films are 'more concerned with emotional realism and moral struggle than psychological realism' thus becoming the means of lending 'explicit voice to real emotions' and operating as the 'hyperbolic emotional expression of melodrama' (2007:14). However, it is also essential to note that along with the emotive and narrative value of songs in films, the production, reach and dispersal of songs as a cultural phenomenon creates a different kind of force. Film songs are heard in and outside of cinema halls. They are sung, imitated, and reproduced. And they circulate via a variety of ever evolving technologies and media. Songs operate within an affective regime that includes emotion but extends across spaces and bodies. Studies of affect emphasize its visceral force that is generally more than what is consciously thought of and more than emotion. Affect arises in the 'midst of *in-between-ness*: in the capacities to act and be acted upon' (Seigworth and Gregg 2010:1). This consideration of the 1950s film song does not venture into anthropological sites of film songs' affect, or the contagious processes connecting 'the heterogeneous networks of media and conversation, statements and images, and bodies and

[2] Writing in the eighties, Bhaskar Chandavarkar, insists that Raj Kapoor, a film director, was 'one of the most influential personalities in the (se) four decades' of film songs in India. According to him, 'It was Raj Kapoor's ear, his sense of music that guided the music directors who worked for him. And he got out of them what he thought would be most effective for his films' (1988:10).

things' (Gibbs 2010:187). Rather, given the sensorial reality and effect of film songs and their suffusion of the acoustic atmosphere, my reading is intensely aware of their affective registers even as I engage with their expressivity in the realm of love and romance.

The expressive function of songs is essentially connected to its ability to offer an audio-visual experience of the ineffable and the transcendent. Expanding on music's 'bath of affect' with reference to Hollywood films, Claudia Gorbman says that it has the ability to draw the 'spectator into the fantasy –illusion suggested by filmic narration' because it can immerse the spectator by rounding off 'sharp edges, mask contradictions, and lessen spatial and temporal discontinuities' (1987:6). On the whole, songs have always been considered one of the more fantastical aspects of films, not only here in India but even in the Hollywood musical. For instance the musical can be considered as carrying elements of the fantastic because in reality people do not go about the world 'breaking into song and dance on a continual basis' to the accompaniment of an unseen orchestra (Shobchak 1996:313). The unrealism of songs stemming from the material impossibility of their real life execution; the combination of inspired lyrics, voice and orchestration they assume is implicitly utopian in the sense that they give us the experience of 'what utopia would feel like rather than how it would be organized' (Dyer 1992:18). Outlining the contours of the utopian in entertainment, Dyer suggests that utopian solutions or fantasies of abundance, energy, intensity, transparency and community are answers 'to the inadequacies of the society which is being escaped from through entertainment' and in that sense, a

response to the 'real needs *created by society'* (ibid: 23-24).[3] To be sure, the song and dance in Hindi films, on the whole, allows the experience of exuberance, movement, intensity and expression as fantasies of liberation from the largely constrained and constricting social atmosphere and intercourse.[4] About the 1950s, however, the observation can be further nuanced to discover in its songs a fantasy of modern individuality.

That the 1950s saw the making of a novel sound in film music due to improved technology, complex orchestration, newer singing styles, has been demonstrated by scholars and commentators (Chandavarkar 1988, Ranade 2006, Jhingan 2009). If the versatility, innovation, unrestrained diversity of musical forms and styles of the golden era of Hindi film music are almost universally acclaimed, then the role of the lyrics in fashioning a new self needs emphasis. Often situated narratively at the moment of excess, when apparently speech or rational dialogue failed to communicate the delirious joys of new found love or the fathomless despair at its loss, the song gave voice to the subliminal and like the melodramatic body became 'the site of signification' (Brooks, 1994:18). Revealing the interior geographies of its subjects, the lyrics embodied in music, mise-en-scène and performance asserted the right of individuals to experience, feel and express in the realm of love and eroticism. As the poet-lyricists' words staged new and often complex subjectivities, songs giving expression to atmosphere, mood and meaning of characters and situations were a spectacular confluence of image and sound.

[3] Italics in the original.
[4] Speaking of the musical choices of Ghulam Haider, but implicitly suggesting its applicability to certain sounds and styles typical to Hindi Film songs generally, Ashok Ranade opines that 'there is no denying that abandon, lack of restraint, enjoyment of freedom and vitality etc. are associated with these and similar sounds in Indian culture and mind (2006:211).

Sound, it has been noted, has greater immediacy than the image and higher potential for the production of empathy because of its 'intimate relationship to our real physical bodies, via the vibrating air' (Stilwell 2001: 173). Michel Chion suggests that 'sound, much more than the image can become an insidious means of affective and semantic manipulation' (1994:34). By working on us directly, 'physiologically' and by influencing perception, sound, Chion argues 'interprets the meaning of the image' (ibid.). Seeking to redress the balance in film studies in favour of sound, Chion reminds us that films do not address the eye alone but rather place their spectators in 'audio-vision'. Enunciating the mutual transformative influence of sound and image on perception, he says, 'We never see the same thing when we also hear; we don't hear the same thing when we see as well (xxvi). The Hindi film song, like the rest of the film, is indeed a coupling of sound and image and yet the newer emphasis on the study of sound by Michel Chion, Rick Altman (1992) and others encourages this engagement with film songs to be especially attentive to their sonic values.

Love, Governance and *Barsaat Ki Raat* (1960)

In the 1950s, film songs more than the films had territorial mobility, because not only did sound have the ability to occupy and saturate spaces, but the technologies of sound allowed it to travel and reach distances. When the film song in the 1950s travelled via radio and gramophone records, floated down streets and entered tea shops and bedrooms, it was heard by 'millions in cities and crores in the villages of India' (Chandavarkar 1987a: 19). The film song's was a new and 'contemporary' sound, a product of the confluence of the Indian classical and folk traditions with

'Western instruments, western concepts' (Chandavarkar 1987b: 20). As noted in the introduction, this inflection by 'American jazz and Latin American rhythms' of Hindi film songs and their denigration as 'hybrid music' was also the reason, for the nationalist anxiety, evident in the Information and Broadcasting Minister, Mr. Keskar's ban on the film songs on All India Radio (Barnouw and Krishnaswamy, 1980:157).

A close-up of the acronym AIR inaugurates the song sequence *Zindagi bhar na bhule gi woh barsaat ki raat in* the film *Barsaat Ki Raat*.[5] We hear a female voice announcing a music programme as the camera moves up to reveal the radio announcer behind a glass partition of a sound studio in a radio station. Just as she announces the next presentation by the poet –singer Aman Hyderabadi, the camera cuts to Shabnam (Madhubala) lying on her bed reading a book, and then rushing to the radio on a table nearby to tune in to the song. This little sequence near the beginning of the film plays out to reveal Shabnam almost swooning as she listens to the song on the radio. In the narrative diegesis of the film, the song is recounting an encounter she has had earlier with the singer, Aman Hyderabadi (played by Bharat Bhushan), whose identity she is ignorant of during the encounter but who is indeed a well known poet and has been an object of her star worship. The picturization of this song, the girl with the radio in a room, the voice floating in and its high erotic charge plays with the memory of a romantic meeting and touches on what is possibly experienced by many a fan of film music. The pivotal role and place of the radio in mediating the two spaces of the studio and the bedroom as it effects the transport of sound through air replicates as it underscores

[5] All my life, I shall not forget that night of rain.

the spatial economy of the Hindi film song itself. In the film, of course, there has been a real encounter that is recalled in the song that claims lifelong memory. For the fans of Hindi film songs, experience, memory and affect is a complex phenomenon wherein the personal gets intertwined with interpersonal histories of film viewing practices. This song in *Barsaat Ki Raat* and its role in the film can be a productive site to begin an exploration of the role of film songs and their afterlife in the making of the idiom of love and romance in the 1950s.

If the ban on Hindi film songs on All India Radio in the 1950s was based on an equation of Indian with 'classical' or 'traditional' and of film music with an alien and corrupting culture, it also reveals the class bias of the cultural elite, because classical music, as is noted by one of the most successful musicians of the period, Naushad Ali, had historically been inaccessible to common people.[6] The discourse around this event confines itself to musical traditions, and refrains from commenting on the content of the lyrics in question. However, in all likelihood, the fact that 'most films songs expounded the singular theme of love in its various aspects' (Arnold 1991:147) was equally irksome to these would-be shapers of national culture. In another context, David Brackett, reflecting on the normative notions and ideas of music regulating the popular music scene in America in the 1950s onwards observes that 'social fears can be disguised as aesthetic criticism' because certain kind of sounds generate fear among those unaccustomed to them

[6] In a piece titled 'Lets smash these taboos' Naushad (*Filmfare* September 2, 1953) says 'from time immemorial music has been the monopoly of the '*usttads*' the musicians of the courts of kings and emperors and the '*Ganaiyas*'. Music belonged not to the people, but to the Maharajas, the Nawabs the potentates and zamindars. (p.19). Commenting further on the nationalist's dislike of Hindi film song, he says, 'The main reason why those who favour classical music detest film music is that its makers smashed the age-old taboo. Film music brought a great art out of the musty halls of the Nawabs, out of the possession of the few to the millions who were denied the privilege of enjoying it for centuries (ibid.).

and are 'actually inseparable from the social fears which are displaced onto them as aesthetic criticism' (1999:139). Similarly, we should probably see the criticism leveled against Hindi film song on the grounds of its distance from traditional Indian music as a cover for unspoken fears and anxieties about its cultural effect. The Hindi film song with its lyrics, forms of visual pleasure, 'alien' sound and its extra cinematic after-life ensured its use and circulation in everyday life, in the process installing a new sonic regime that fed into and constructed a social common sense about love and courtship. As Sudipta Kaviraj has pointed out, 'many of the most popular songs were capable of achieving a freestanding meaningfulness as a literary, musical object, as a rhetorical comment on life. They were also part of a story, but in a different sense, not the story of this particular love, but the essential story of love in general' (2004: 65). Is it not likely, therefore, that when the slogan for the popularization of classical music went around and film music was described as cheap and vulgar (Goswami 1996:77), it was precisely this normalization of love's idiom through film songs that proved to be threatening? Indeed, the unofficial discourse prevalent at the time gives us reason to think that this was precisely the case. In a long article in the Hindi magazine *Rajatpat*, a writer, one Shri. Nilay (probably a pseudo-name), holds forth on the dangers to the nation now standing at the edge of an abyss, from the 'lascivious', 'shameless' film songs.[7] Describing the 'immorality' and 'lustful debauchery' unleashed by the film song, Shri. Nilay uses colourful prose to undertake a textual exegesis of a number of lyrics in order to warn his readers of the danger to India's character because the deeply 'suppressed fire' in the hearts of young men and women was finding release

[7] Sensationally pronouncing doom the article in entitled, '*Jovan aur Javani ke vishaile geet, samaj ki maryada ko mita denge'* , roughly translated as 'These songs of lusty youthfulness will destroy social norms …'

through these songs (December 1949, p. 11-16). Clearly, the government was also responding to the public, if minority and probably elite opinion bent on keeping love at bay.

The film *Barsaat Ki Raat*, released three years after the embargo against the broadcasting of Hindi film songs on All India Radio was lifted and resumed on its Vividh Bharti service, invokes the role of the radio in the playing out the lead pair's love story. Considered a big hit that was also subsequently described a classic it is especially interesting at this juncture because of the peculiar role of songs and music in driving its narrative.[8] Because a poet-singer is its hero, the normal place and role of songs in films becomes spectacularly heightened and foregrounded in *Barsaat Ki Raat.* At the same time by making the radio and the broadcasting of songs pivotal to the romance plot, the film seems to tangentially intervene in the public discourse of 'filmy versus classical' as it played out in the mid-1950s around the broadcasting of Hindi film music on All India Radio. *Barsaat Ki Raat* hints at a subtext that remained submerged in the radio controversy.

Barsaat Ki Raat, a Muslim social, takes its title from a song that occurs early in the narrative-

> *Zindagi bhar na bhule gi woh barsaat ki raat*
> *Ek anjan hasina se mulakat ki raat.*[9]

The rainy night, and the romantic encounter is not only the refrain of this one song but recurs like a leitmotif throughout the film. In its first instant the song is sung by Aman (Bharat Bhushan) in Mohammad Rafi's voice but subsequently there is

[8] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barsaat_Ki_Raat
[9] All my life, I shall not forget that night of rain, the night of meeting a beautiful stranger.

another version, a duet by Lata Mangeshkar and Rafi. Even more interestingly, another song, 'sung' by Aman, from a stage with Shabnam in the audience and clearly addressed to her, *Maine Shayad* refers to the earlier encounter in the rain (*Barsaat*) in its second stanza-

> *Dekhakar tumko kisi raat ki yaad aati hai…*
> *aanch deti huii barsaat ki yaad aati hai.*[10]

Even later on in the narrative, when the lovers are eloping, Aman is recognized in a train compartment, as the one who penned and sang *Barsaat Ki Raat*. This repeated reference to the song, including in the title of the film, creates a textural excess that leads to a subversive reading of the film's narrative.

To begin with, the film tells the usual story of love that can, for once, be described as a 'feudal family romance', wherein a father in the form of a modern state functionary, Khan Bahadur (K.N. Singh), a police commissioner, tries to thwart the union of his daughter, Shabnam with Aman because of his lowly status. Aman Hyderabadi is a poet and a singer trying to make a career out of his poetry by singing on All India Radio. Singing *Zindagi bhar na bhule gi woh barsaat ki raat* is his first break on radio. The lyrics of the song recall a chance encounter Aman has had with Shabnam on a rainy evening when he was out walking in search of poetic inspiration. In the narrative diegesis, the song occurs after the 'encounter'. Clearly, love has struck and Aman has found words for a new *nagma* (poem), in the instant he recognized in Shabnam, the 'image; (*tasvir*) that has haunted his poetry!

> *Mere nagmo mein jo basti hai woh tasvir thi woh,*
> *Naujavani ki hansi khvaab ki tabir thi woh* [11]

[10] Seeing you is to remember one night, A night of warmth giving rain….
[11] She was the image residing in my verse, She was the promise of youth's beautiful dream.

The picturization of the song, in comparison with the 'real' meeting of the prospective lovers that has taken place earlier, is presented realistically. Thus the mise-en-scène during the earlier rain scene is actually the 'spectacle' ordinarily reserved for songs in Hindi films- the dark stormy evening, rain and lightening, the rain soaked body of Shabnam, her expressions of anxiety and embarrassment at being caught alone with a stranger in this lonely spot, her startled embrace of the unmoving and transfixed Aman. Conversely, the picturization of the actual song, that follows after a narrative interval is unspectacular, alternating between the everyday spaces of the radio studio where Aman sings on the microphone and the room at her home where Shabnam listens to its live broadcast. At the same time, the words of the song line by line, from one stanza to the next- through its lyrical excess along with the changing expressions on Shabnam's face and gestures- construct for us the rainy night as it dawns on her that what is being described is the scene of her encounter with the stranger, who turns out to be the poet Aman Hyderabadi. This sequence stages the aural equivalence of the experience of listening to a film song on radio, after having seen the film, as it were; the 'rain encounter' becoming 'the cinema' of Shabnam's memory. The camera alternatively shows Aman singing and Shabnam listening, settling on a close-up of the radio, which is the channel of sound connecting and separating the two spaces of the home and the studio. Curiously, there is no flash-back to the 'rainy meeting' during the song, and Shabnam's memory is not 'visually' given to us, rather, the words of the lyrics evoke an encounter with a plasticity that renders movement vivid, both physical and affective. For instance,

Dar ke bijali se achaanak vo lipatanaa usakaa
aur phir sharm se balakhaake simatanaa usakaa. [12]

or

surkh aanchal ko dabaakar jo nichoda usane
dil pe jalataa huaa ek tiir saa chhodaa usane. [13]

These lyrics suggest the coming together of bodies, and plays on the contrast of surface and depth, soft and hard, wetness and fire with a subtle eroticism that communicates within a shared cultural context. As the rain soaked 'anchal' is removed from her kurta, relatively exposing her body- the contours of her breasts, to be precise, a burning sensation goes straight to the poet's heart. Notably, the first encounter described in the lyric is not solely about the meeting of minds but also about an intensely experienced sexual attraction.

It is significant that the film clearly inscribes the radio in the narrative to play a pivotal role in bringing the lovers together as the romance plot is framed by the two songs, *Zindagi bhar* and the *qawwali- Yeh ishq ishq.* It is on Shabnam's listening to *Zindagi* on the radio that the identity of the stranger, as the very Aman she was a fan of, is revealed to her and she seeks him out by attending his stage performance. Similarly, towards the end, after having been long separated from him and on the verge of a forced marriage, once again the radio comes to her rescue, when she hears the broadcast of the *qawwali*, hears Aman's voice, and rushes to the venue of the competition.

In discussing the limitations of the on-screen/off-screen binary in the description of sound, Chion maintains its use but suggests that there is a need to

[12] Frightened by lightening, her rushing to embrace me, and then overcome with shyness her withdrawal.
[13] When she squeezed her wet stole, she send a burning arrow to my heart.

'enlarge the scope, recognize, define and develop new areas' to include variations like 'on-the-air' sound (1994:75). On-the-air sound is sound emanating from electronic devices like telephones and radios, sound whose source seems to be visible on-screen, but suggests a different space of origin off-screen. 'Situated in the scene's real time' on-air-sound enjoys 'the freedom of crossing cinematic space' (ibid: 76). It is interesting that the *qawwali* starts in the space of a *muqabala*, a contest, where it is being performed for a diegetic audience in the voices of Manna Dey, S. Batish, Asha Bhosale and Sudha Malhotra. It is only when Shama (Shyama), a traditional *qawwali* performer in love with Aman, begins to falter mid-way through the contest when she realizes that Aman will never be hers' that the latter enters the fray to support his friend. The moment Aman starts singing in Mohammad Rafi's voice, the camera cuts to Shabnam's bedroom and we realize that the performance is being broadcast live on the radio. Instantly, recognizing Aman's voice Shabnam becomes aware of Aman's location and starts moving out of her home. Once again, the on-the air sound emanating from radio creates a channel that will drive Shabnam from the security of the home and out into public space. Not surprisingly, towards the end of the *qawwali*, Khan Bahadur comes into Shabnam's room, hears the last notes of the *qawwali* on the still playing radio and at once knows where to find his daughter. His last gesture before leaving with a gun in search of Shabnam is to smash the radio to the ground.

The *qawwali* is a bravura weaving together of the traditional repertoire of love, both Hindu and Islamic, and a devil may care modern sensibility that defies traditional constraints on expressions of love -*ishq naa puchchhe diin dharam nuu, ishq naa puchchhe jaataa* (Love doesn't care about religion, love doesn't care

about caste). In speaking of love's power, dangers, difficulties, sacrifice and triumph, Sahir Ludhianvi's lyrics seem to draw on all available tales and stories of love. Interspersed with the manic refrain *yeh ishq ishq, ishq ishq* (this is love) the singers traverse across love's repertoire; from the defiance of Laila Majnu- *Ishq Majnu ki woh aawaj hai, jisake aage, koi Laila kisi diwar se roki na gayi* (love is that voice of Majnu, armed with it no Laila was ever stopped by any wall), to the playful eroticism of Radha Krishna- *jab jab Krishna bansi baaji nikali Radha saj ke* (whenever Krishna played his flute, Radha dressed up and took off). The devotion of Meera -*darshan jal ki pyasi Meera pi gai vish ka pyala* (thirsty for his darshan, Meera drank the goblet of poison), finds a place here along with the assertion of love's freedom from religious constrains -*Ishq aazad hai, Hindu na Musalman hai Ishq* (Love is free, love is neither Hindu, nor Muslim). The final assertion- *intaha ye hai ki bande ko khuda karata hai ishq* (the final test is that love transforms man and makes him divine), triumphantly declares the divinity accrued by love.

Francesca Orsini, discusses the inflections and valence of Arabic words for love, and contrasts *ishq* from *mohaabat*. The later, says Orsini, stood for love between parents and children as it did for one between God and the believer, while the former, *ishq*, is the love 'particularly held for the beloved' and also a 'synonym for passion'. Orsini also points to the mystical connotations *ishq* was to gather in the course of time (2007:16). The unparalleled foregrounding of this word by Sahir's lyric, clearly draws on this 'structure of feeling' as it makes this very *ishq* the true message of God, *Quraan ishq hai, Gautam kaa aur Masiih kaa aramaan ishq hai, ye kaayanaat jism hai aur jaan ishq hai* (Quraan is love, Gautam's and

Messiah's desire is love, the cosmos is body and its spirit is love). The word *ishq* is repeated approximately hundred and fifty times in the twelve minute long *qawwali*, making the *qawwali* a battle cry rather than a mere celebratory assertion of love. Significantly, the *qawwali* as well as *Zindagi bhar* song is a performance; the actors are not 'singing' as they normally do in films but are are in fact playing at being 'singers'.The characters in a sense could be 'playback' singers and their performance for the diegetic audience creates spaces for spectatorial recongnition and identification in excess of what is normal. As Ravi Vasudevan has argued, such narrative layering allows for a 'play of knowledge' which then inserts the 'film and the spectator into a larger field of coherence, one that streches beyond the immediate experience of viewing the film' (1989: 46). In the context of the Keskar and the radio controversy, this battle cry of ishq can be seen as affording a knowing pleasure, of having recaptured an aural territory. Finally, the *qawwali* not only unites the lovers, but even Shabnam's father, Khan Bahadur, relents and allows the union. Shabnam's father, let us recall, is a police commissioner, thus representing the Indian state in its complicity with feudal patriarchy. Hence, the happy end of the film can be read not only as the triumph of love aided by modern entertainment technology of the radio but also the defeat of the state's authority and claim over the dispersal of the message of romance and thus a provocative reassertion of the Hindi film songs' popular appeal and message of love.

During the ban on All India Radio (1952 -1957), the audience could only listen to classical and/or folk songs. However, there was also an attempt made to substitute film music with the broadcast of good quality 'light music produced by AIR' (Goswami 1996:78). Further, it had been decided that 'the lyrics composed

for AIR's light music would be of *high literary and moral quality* and these would be set to tunes based on ragas or folk songs and would avoid the influence of western jazz so prevalent in film music' (Awasthy 1965: 51).[14] The *qawwali*, a distinctive genre of Muslim devotional music embedded in the syncretic Indo-Muslim practices of Sufi mysticism with considerable secular reach is identified with the cosmopolitan Muslim urban culture of North India and Urdu/Hindustani speech communities. Dating back to the fifteenth century, the *qawwali*, a performative genre, has undergone many thematic, formal and sonic mutations in tandem with new technologies of dissemination like the gramophone, radio and cassettes (Qureshi 1999). Significantly, Keskar's cultural nationalism affected even the *qawwali*, which, in contrast to its 'regular appearances during the first decade of All India Radio', 'virtually disappeared from programming' in the post-independence decade (ibid: 83). When the ban was lifted in 1957, and by the time *Barsaat Ki Raat* was released, that is in 1960, the broadcasting of film songs had resumed. Therefore, when the film has the radio programme of the poet Aman Hyderabadi, the film is probably gesturing to AIR's historic attempt at molding public taste in music when countless artists, singers of classical and light music were recorded and broadcast by AIR under the new 'nationalist' regime. However, the film also includes *qawwals* and a *qawwali* broadcast from the radio, despite AIR's ban on the genre. Rather than ascribing this to Hindi films' normal non-realist sleight of hand, is it possible to read in the inclusion of the *qawwali* a willful teasing, nose-thumbing gesture at the gate keepers of 'national culture'? The manner in which the songs are placed and 'performed' in the film meticulously

[14] Italics added, quoted in Goswami 1996

frames them as *not* 'film songs'. For instance, Aman does not spontaneously burst into *Zindagi bhar* instead pens it down and sings it from a radio station. Also the picturization of the song tries to disavow its 'filmy' quality by temporally separating its visual excess (the rain scene) from the lyrical and aural excess of the actual song. Similarly, the *qawwali* is sung by characters who are professional singers, 'real' *qawwals.* At the same time both the songs with their unabashed eroticism and celebration of 'ishq' perhaps do not quite live up to the 'literary and moral' ideal of AIR. Thus, *Barsaat Ki Raat* appears to playfully cite 'that moment' when an attempt was made to erase the Hindi film song from the acoustic environs of the nation while simultaneously reiterating its role in the production of the modern sensibility of romance.[15]

If Minister Keskar's attempt to control the 'air' revealed a nationalist zeal in promoting classical music as 'truly' Indian, it was equally a result of an incomprehension of a phenomena that had no precedence and 'was unlike anything that had ever happened anywhere in the world' (Chandavarkar 1988: 21). Referring to it as an experimental synthesis of musical cultures spanning centuries and continents so as to coalesce 'tala, raga and samba!'(ibid.), Bhaskar Chandavarkar observed that the Bombay Film industry had 'attempted and almost successfully pulled of one of the greatest peacetime revolutions of synthesizing diverse elements in the music of the world' (ibid: 23). About the Hindi film music's ability to elide the very notion of 'Indian tradition' while casually using elements from the same, Biswarup Sen says it is 'promiscuous in its borrowings,

[15] Regarding this sonic moment in the 1950s, Shikha Jhingan (2011) demonstrates that the film industry fought spiritedly against Keskar's cultural policies. Through various media and forums, by writing articles, giving interviews and via films the film industry contested the state's attempt to control and regulate the cultural force field.

nonchalant in the way it combines forms, (and) unconstrained by the rule of dogma' (2008: 88-89). In producing a music that appealed to a diverse people across the length and breadth of the country, the Bombay industry gave expressivity to the desire for a modernity, that was, if not totally at variance, then at least tangential to the Indian state's blue print for a modernity contained by its nationalist vision.[16] Along with the confluence of musical traditions, the film song, through its excessive focus on the thematic of love released in the air, an affective cadence, that was radically new, making available the experience and pleasures of romance in an ever evolving popular idiom.

Erotics, Gender and Space

Ravi Vasudevan's valuable insight into the 'parrallel pleasures' made available by 'paranarrative units' like song, dance and comic sequences and their ability to 'problamatise the work of the narrative (1989 :31) is useful to enter into aural environment of love and romance constructed by the film song in the 1950s. If film songs are a testimony to the non-realist drive of the Hindi film, then by bringing together star performances and mise-en-scène along with playback voices, lyrics and music, they also provide intensely affective experiences and pleasures of identification and knowledge. Vasudevan's argues that paranarrative units while being integrated with the narrative, provide parrallel pleasures. This can be taken further to assess how the song becomes the space to literrally 'say' what is other

[16] Geeta kapur, reflecting on modernism in India, has argued that the 'Indian modern' evolving with its own set of canons, on the one hand , signals in the 'direction of western (towards the high or canonical) modern' while encouraging 'living traditions to flourish as well'. (2000:293) Clearly, in the context of the radio controversy, the Western influence that was found problematic, was not 'high' but the 'popular' music such as Jazz and the like, which was seen as contaminating the traditional, pure sounds of India, classical or folk.

wise unspoken, by the narrative even in the domain of love. By this I do not simply mean that songs give expression to the characters' inner state, feelings and thoughts, which they do, but that it is the film song that becomes the singular and transgressive space for the expression of the erotic in love. Giving voice and form to a whole spectrum of feelings and situation in the experiantial universe of romantic love from attraction, desire, seduction, rejection, ecstacy, joy , loss and longing , the song brings to fore what would otherwise never find an outlet in a film viewing culture regulated by cesorship codes along with an unwritten ban on the kiss that curbed the display of sexual desire itself. [17]

Given that the representation of erotic intimacy was severely compromised due to censorship norms and film makers could automatically expect that scenes of kissing and of passionate cuddling and embracing would be cut, the song become a site where certain conventions; linguistic, poetic and visual, constructed a language of intimacy that was richly suggestive if at times formulaic. The film song's reliance on the vocabulary and imagery drawn from Urdu poetic forms allowed the production of a profane discourse of love. Words like *mohaabat, ishq, nigahain, nazarein, dil, dawa, shama, parvana, diwane, katil*, created a known universe of expressive affect. Explaining, what he terms the 'heterogeneous form of manufacture' in the Bombay film industry, Madhava Prasad also notes the literary style and the recurrent motifs adopted by the film songs, and its consequent 'frozen

[17] In the Report of the Filn Enquiry Committee 1951, the Bombay Boards of Film Censors' list of probable objections to films include excessively passionate love scenes, men and women in bed together, first nights, illicit sexual relations,incidents suggestive of incestuous relations and so on (p. 292). Censorship was an ongoing concern through the 1950s and film magazines continued to debate its pros and cons. For instance *Filmfare* (March 4, 1955) ran a forum on censorship for a couple of months that began by providing an official, that is the Board's position and that of the industry's, followed by reader responses. Thus the Board was seen to censor what were seen as women's obscene clothing, as also 'scenes of passionate cuddling and embracing' (p.19) Many respondents, on the other hand, called for a more 'adult' attitude in this matter.

diction of romantic Urdu poetry' (2008:45).[18] Here, the poet or the lyricist, according to Prasad, figures like a 'traditional artisanal' supplying songs as one of the elements of this heteronomous form. However, not only is it essential to factor in, as mentioned above, the special place and role of songs in the 1950s but the immense popularity of these songs also alert us to this music's almost sub-cultural status, questioning the critique that ascribes a certain 'deadness' to its vibrant magic. For instance, the tremendous popularity of Radio Ceylon with more than sixty million listeners, many of whom active participants in its various programmes suggests that far from being frozen, the idiom of love in songs successfully produced new sites of pleasure and involvement.[19] The film song not only drew on a traditional repertoire of love but also constructed its modern common sense. It was set to the tune of an eclectic and versatile global music that was eminantly suited for the articulation of the lovers' discourse.Thus the film song of 1950s constructed an everyday usable idiom of love by intensifying the romance thrust of the narrative itself, even if at times the song became a site for the unspeakable, that is of its sexual and erotic elements. In doing so, the song provided pleasures that ran prallel to the narrative, particularly by allowing a spatial and affective expansion of the self-an excess that was often saught to be contained by narrative closure. I now undertake a close reading of a representative sample of song texts in tandem with film naratives within which they are embedded, to explore their role in producing the affective universe of modern love.

[18] Harish Trivedi, who otherwise contests the ubiquity of Urdu in Hindi Film, while conceding that songs have been 'the most 'Urdu' part of Hindi films' approvingly quotes Prasad, to make a point about the conventional, familiar vocabulary of romance. (2006:63).

[19] Nalin Shah's celebratory story of Radio Ceylon's popular broadcasting of Hindi film songs in the 1950s gives a glimpse of the imaginative programming and creative energy of the various announcers that catered to and cultivated a public taste and involvement in a music culture, thus keeping ' alive, (what) AIR made every conceivable effort to kill (1987:66).

In the film *Jaal* (Guru Dutt, 1952), the song *Yeh raat yeh chandani phir kahan* occurs at an important juncture in the narrative. Clearly a song of seduction, it follows upon the hero, Tony's (Dev Anand) claim/ threat that the heroine Maria (Gita Bali) would be unable to resist him and would come to him in the night. The song, the words of the lyrics, its picturization and Hemant Kumar's rendition, provides the high point of the film and has ensured its continuing valorization decades after its first popular circulation. Thus for example, in a book length discussion with Nasreen Munni Kabir on the Hindi film songs, scriptwriter, lyricist Javed Akhtar, opines that *Yeh raat yeh chandani kahan*, is an example of a perfect song along with *Jane Kya tune kahan* (*Pyasa*) and *O sajana* (Parakh) (Kabir 2005: 2). Similarly, Gulzar, in his discussion of Sahir's poetry, politics and choice of words, quotes the lyrics of this song from *Jaal* (2003:289).[20] In the film, the song is sung by a hero, who is, unusually for the times, an anti-hero. A smuggler amidst the simple folk of a fishing village in Goa, Tony (Dev Anand) is a man from the big city, bringing its corruption to the world of simple joys of community, piety and labour. *Jaal* is also unusual in its construction of a semi-rural, Christian community for this tale of love that meanders towards making a point about the redemptive and moral power of love. While Tony only seeks to use Maria for his illegitimate criminal designs, Maria's love for him at the very last minute holds the promise of deliverance. Significantly, the film deploys a visual register that constructs the landscape as 'romantic'. The sea, the waves breaking against the shore, the sky, the fishing boats and the moon produce a romantic atmosphere that is underscored by other songs in the film. Thus for example, the song sung by

[20] Gulzar is discussing the journey of Hindi film songs in 'A Song Travels' in *Encyclopedia of Hindi Cinema: An Enchanting Close-Up of India's Hindi Cinema* (2003).

Maria, as she swings around a rope in the boat, '*pighala hai sona door gagan par* (gold melts far on the horizon), clearly presents the life of the fisher folk as in harmony with the natural beauty of the place. It should be mentioned that although songs in films can be about a variety of situations and emotional/psychological states, very rarely have they been purely celebratory of nature.[21] In this sense, *phigla hai sona* is possibly exceptional in the way in which the words of the lyrics speak only of nature without any reference to love, desire or longing etc. As Maria sings, the camera frames the evening sea and sky from different angles while her body and face become a focal point of return, again and again, visually inscribing her as a part of this sublime landscape. The romanticism implicit in this connection between the female figure and the landscape eroticizes her, an eroticism that becomes singularly pronounced in *yeh raat* later on in the narrative. Here it is important to draw attention to Sahir's lyrical versatility.

Sahir Ludhianvi, a poet writing in Urdu, also wrote songs for Hindi films. The influence of English Romanticism on Indian poets and poetry during the pre-war decades and later is well known (Dharwadkar 1992). As a result poets, both; those who wrote in Hindi and regional languages like Marathi and Bangla, often revealed a progressive, at times a Marxist world view along with a romantic sensibility. They produced work that spoke of social concerns such as exploitation and injustice. They talked about individual and personal reflections on nature, love, desire and so on, emphasizing the uniqueness and intensity of human experience, sensibility, feeling and sentiment. These personal explorations stood in contrast to 'the public rhetoric of Nationalist poetry' and contributed to the construction of a

[21] Even the much better known *Suhana Safar* from *Madhumati* (1958) inscribes the self of the singer into the landscape and his fear that he will be lost- be seduced by the wild beauty.

'distinctive modern Indian self and even an alternative to national identity' (ibid: 220). It is significant that Sahir Ludhianvi through his lyrics for Hindi films brought these concerns and sensibility into popular circulation. Thus, if he wrote the despairing *Jinhe naaz hai Hind pe* for *Pyasa*, he could also celebrate nature in *pighla sona* and more importantly, eroticize the idiom of love through lyrics like *Yeh raat, yeh chandani kahan* (*Jaal*)

The lyrical eroticism of *Yeh raat yeh chandani phir kahan* is projected via the mise-en-scène and Maria's performative energy. Indeed, its place in the narrative diegesis, along with the visual imagery that is unleashed into the mise-en-scène makes Maria's body a site that registers and produces a transgressive identity. Tony has already been marked as an outlaw, and when Maria, through the course of the song is seen to succumb to his seduction it creates a space for feminine transgression that is excessive and remains unaccounted for. Moreover, throughout the song Tony looks devious and scheming as he plays the guitar and essentially sings to lure Maria with words that speak of the need to grasp the fleeting moment of passion. The song begins with the night sky and the sound of the strumming of a guitar, the camera moves to a closed door on a balcony, fluttering leaves throw a shadow on the wall and then the first notes from a male voice can be heard. Hemant Kumar has used an unusual style for the introduction- a 'yodeling' alap, if one may say so, that produces a strange acoustic effect suggestive of mystery and foreboding. The door opens because of the breeze but coincides with the sound of these initial trembling notes as they reach Maria seen to be sitting at a table just inside the room. Framed in *point of audition*, she gets up on hearing the sound, looking stricken and comes out on the balcony, her eyes

searching for the singer.[22] An air of mystery saturates the atmosphere because the source of the sound of the guitar and the singing voice is yet to be revealed. In the next shot the camera turns and seems to follows Maria's search and moves slowly closer down to Tony who is now seen singing as he plays the guitar.

The lyrics that follow create a landscape of night, trees, moonlight and the girl who is addressed, such that nature becomes a force, which is also the force of desire.

> *Pedon ke shakhon pe soyee soyee chandani,*
> *Tere kyayalon me khoyee khoyee chandani,*
> *Aur thodi der mein thak ke laout jayegi,*
> *Raat yeh bahar ki phir kabhi na aayegi.*[23]

Tony sings, 'the moonlight sleeps on the trees, immersed in your thoughts', but also goes on to say that the moonlight is likely to get tired of waiting and would go away never to return again. The moon as a symbol of eroticism and female sexuality has an extraordinarily universal valence but has also had considerable presence in Hindi, Urdu and Asian literature (Damsteegt 2001). Here too moonlight is obviously a metaphor for desire, a desire that emanates from the singer, saturates the atmosphere, and hence becomes almost a natural force seducing Maria from the safety of her space. The boundaries between man and nature dissolve in a sensuousness that is universal. Similarly the next stanza of the

[22] The term 'point of audition' used as an aural equivalent for the more common 'point of view' is helpful here to describe Maria's position as a hearer of the sound whose source is elsewhere. Despite the slight varying emphasis among scholars about point of audition's defining aspects ; Rick Altman (1992) seeming to suggest that the 'physical characteristics' of the sound are its necessary features (251), and Michel Chion (1994) maintaining that it is the *visual* representation of a character in close up that, in simultaneous association with the hearing of sound, identifies this sound as being heard by the character shown(91), its effect in producing a subjective sense of the sound is unequivocal

[23] Moonlight sleeps on the branches of the trees, Moonlight lost in the thoughts about you. But soon it will grow tired and turn back. This night of spring will never return.

lyric invites Maria to burn in the cold fire that permeates the air and change the very tune of her existence.

> *Bhigi havao mein, thandi thandi aag hai*
> *is hasin aag mein, tu bhi jal ke dekh le,*
> *Zindagi ki geet ki dhoon badal ke dekh le.*[24]

Hemant Kumar's rendition of the song gives it a persistent wave like quality, rising to higher pitch at the beginning of the stanza and coming down lower towards the end, a pattern once again repeated in the following stanzas. The slight tremble in Hemant Kumar's voice and the up and down movement produces a sound resonant with the romance the night sea and the lyrics.[25] In commenting on Sahir's 'romantic songs', Javed Akhtar, notes the way he juxtaposes nature with a sensuous description of the beloved (Kabir 2005:13). Probably using the word 'romantic' to merely mean songs about love in its varied aspects, Akhtar, actually puts his finger on a tendency or aspect of romanticism as a movement, that of seeing an organic and primordial relationship between human beings and nature, or between human nature and nature out there, entailing a commonly held 'response to nature as a means of self-discovery' (Vaughan 1978:153). In this lyric Sahir is very much within this tradition, seeing in nature a resonance of human sexual desire.

However, even more significant is the manner in which the song positions female desire. Firstly, its extraordinary beginning gives the spectator access to

[24] In the moist air, there is a cool fire, You too should try and burn in this fire, Try and change the tune of the song of your life

[25] Along with the lyrics, the music by S.D Burman plays an essential role in creating this effect. Pankaj Rag, in his chapter on S.D Burman, speaking of this song's historic significance and timeless charm , draws attention to Burman's composition, choice of singer (Hemant Kumar) and its ability to effectively create the dead -of –the-night haunting quality that was absolutely 'new and modern' (2006: 310). The Hindi film songs' construction of a totally new soundscape probably played a significant role in making 'love' the 'modern' possibility in post- independent India.

Maria's subjective space via sound that is meant for her ears. As Rick Altman suggests, *point of audition*, locates 'us in a very specific place- the body of the character who hears for us' (1992:60). Secondly, the subsequent camera movements, riding as it were, on the wave like rhythm of the song, reproduces the lyrics' associative logic by framing nature- alternating between trees, waves, sky and Maria. Significantly, Maria is never a passive object of admiration. Tony's song has a powerful effect on her and we see extreme desire, longing, resistance and conflict, not only in her expressions but in her body and gestures. To begin with, she steps out on the balcony recognizing Tony's challenge in the words that float up to her. As the song continues, in keeping with the words, Maria's face registers the lure of a promise as also the fear of its loss and we can see the struggle between temptation and resistance in her every gesture. Towards the end of the first stanza, she sinks down to the floor and then sits back almost defeated reclining against the door. She gets up from this position at the end of the second stanza to the words asking her to try a different tune, again sinks back to the door, and moves inside pulling the door behind her. Once again nature in the form of a strong breeze drags the doors open and Maria is pulled back to the balcony. The last stanza is even more insistent about the temporality of youth and desire and Maria looks pained on hearing of the possibility of missing the 'caravan of spring' (*qafile baharke*) and responds by finally leaving the balcony, walks indoors, down the staircase and as the song ends, out of the house. [26] The last image of the song is a top angle shot of Maria standing outside her door when suddenly palm fronds fall

[26] Jaatii bahaaren hain uthatii javaaniyaan
taaron ke chhaaon mein pahale kahaaniyaan
ek baar chal diye gar tujhe pukaarake
lauTakar na aaenge qaafile bahaar ke

between her and the audience like a net, prefiguring the actual fishing net that will fall in the next scene as she is seen moving to the beach near Tony. The net (*Jaal*, of the film title) that fall's on Maria, a sign of her entrapment by Tony's promise of love is an excessively melodramatic visual reminder of the dangers of the desire it seeks to contain. Maria's performance, her expressions, gestures and movement, along with the black and white mise-en-scène of the night saturated by the insistent sounds of the song give spatiality to desire that is cinematically spectacular and provides parallel moments of pleasure and identification.

Yeh raat yeh chandani is unusual for the 1950s in its' staging of a scene of seduction that frankly appeals to female sexual desire. Maria's body in registering and responding to this appeal produces a sexualized feminine subjectivity. The spectacle of nature that frames the drama of this seduction marks Maria's sexuality as natural. At the same time the obvious struggle that gets a 'bodily' form in Maria's performance, inscribes her desire as illegitimate. Not only is the object of her desire, Tony, a smuggler and thus outside the precincts of law, but sexual desire itself in the context of Hindi film is 'un-representable' and therefore illegitimate. Maria's body becomes a site where this drama gets played out and ambiguously resolved. Maria succumbs to the call of this desire, but is also punished; the visual metaphor of the net dropping over her suggests her entrapment; her desire for Tony and the latter's manipulation of her being for criminal activities. However, by the end of the film, Maria's love acquires a kind of legitimacy, when the law, aided by her, catches up with Tony and he is offered a deferred citizenship. Maria promises to await his release from jail in a hastily wrapped up ending. Thus the song *Yeh raat yeh chandani kahan* stages a fantasy of

seduction, which allows a transgressive feminine identity to find expressive space. Also, Maria's vulnerability here needs to be seen in the context of the film, which presents her as a woman who is in control and at ease in the masculine spaces of labour and market. Almost tom boyish in her charm, she is seen as physically strong and in charge of her family's fishing business and the only solace and support for her blind elder brother.[27] That Maria has no bigger, patriarchal family is in keeping with the family's marginal role in the 1950s Hindi film. At the same time, Maria's economic and social independence is probably also predicated on her Christian identity. This affords a certain association with westernized modernity, in dress and even sexual mores, that this minority community has been popularly imagined to have benefited from. Thus, even if the fishing community is almost rural, or semi-urban, located at a distance from a big city like Bombay, it is unlike any filmy 'village', and in life style; eating at a dining table, wearing skirts, going to church, creates a world that slips between the city-village binary of Hindi films. When the whole drama takes place on this unnamed island like location, along with the cultural 'strangeness' of its characters and protagonists it produces a fairytale world that probably allows greater freedom in its imagination of feminine desire, autonomy and agency. *Yeh raat* draws on this freedom to produce a spectacular eroticism that can feed into the female subject's stake in modernity.

It is significant that Maria's religious identity, westernized dress, and bold demeanor actually aligns her with the seductresses of 1950s Hindi films - the 'club

[27] Geeta Bali, who acted in a number of films through the 1950s was at ease playing the demure or tom-boyish heroine, a night-club singer or even a bandit . If well known for her tom-boyish charms, she was seen to have a 'special brand of gypsy femininity' and although she mostly played urbane roles, she could also be seen to have the simplicity of 'a rustic belle'(Katrak 1976: 21). This hybridity seen in Gita Bali's roles and presence is a feature she possibly has in common with most other female actors of the period.

singers/dancers' who inhabit the dark world of 'sex and crime' as we have seen in *Taxi Driver* (Chetan Anand, 1954), *Baazi* (Guru Dutt, 1951), *Aar Paar* (Guru Dutt, 1954), and *Howrah Bridge* (Shakti Samanta, 1958) etc. Sylvie and Edna in *Taxi Driver* and *Howrah Bridge* respectively, are Christians. Gita Bali, playing the club dancer, Nina in Baazi, who, though not a Christian, is similarly sexualized with an ambiguous narrative function.[28] It can be productive to look at the fluid feminine persona of the actresses when looking at the film song because meaning is not created by lyrics and music alone but intertextually, within a larger cinematic context. The songs 'sung' by these women, typically in a club setting, were often invitations to 'love' warnings of 'life's temporality' and exhortations to 'grab the moment'! Thus, the club singers/dancers, denizens of the city's underworld not only sang to seduce the hero, but more significantly and often impersonally, also spoke of love's fragile evanescence. For instance, Sylvie (Shiela Ramani) in *Taxi Driver*, equates 'living' with 'loving' when she sings *Dil jale to jale* (let the heart burn) and *Jine do aur jiyo* (live and let live). In *Aar Paar,* Shakila as the club dancer sings of the dangers of love, only to entice the hero down its path as also of the need to grab its fleeting pleasures.[29]And in *Baazi*, in a reversal of the *Jaal* scenario- Nina sings as she plays the guitar exhorting Mangal (Dev Anand) to throw the dice, and once again, in another song hails him as the one who lives as she urges him to listen to the ticking clock and ignore the 'spring of love' at his own peril![30] The ambiguous charm and dangers of the love that is proffered here,

[28] See chapter on city.
[29] *Babuji dhire chalna, pyar mein zara sambhalna* (walk gently, tread carefully in love) and *Hun abhi mein jawan aai dil* (I am young yet)
[30]a) *Tadbir se bigdi hui tagdeer bana le* (throw the dice and change your fate)
b) *suno gajar kyaa gaaye samay guzarataa jaae*
o re jiine vaale o re bhole bhaal sonaa naa, khonaa naa

in all these instances, seems burdened with a sense of its temporality. Love, when offered by a charmer from the world of crime, is short lived but promises to be a highly desirable experience! When Tony, in *Jaal* seduces Maria with *Yeh raat ye chandani* we are seeing the hero, uncharacteristically, in a role reserved for the vamp or the club singer/dancer.

If Maria, in her minority religious status, dress and demeanor, seems to share certain features with the club singer/dancer of the contemporary cinematic city, it is equally significant that this figure from the city's darker precincts has antecedents that emerged much earlier. Priti Ramamurthy (2006) traces the emergence, popularity and demise of the modern girl in India in her filmy avatar, in 'Modern Girl' films of Bombay cinema's silent era. Ramamurthy argues that with her 'interracial origins, … fluid minority religious affiliations and the international economic contestations she indexed' (197), the modern girl was 'single, sensual, sexy, and "free," her hybrid body (…) a zone of contact where the global inhered in the intimateness of a body language of dress, make-up, deportment, and fashionable accessorization as much as new ways of being and belonging' (218). That by the 1940s the modern girl phenomenon was on the wane is normally seen to result from changes in technology, the arrival of sound and better cameras. It is understood that the modern girl, played by Anglo – Indian girls like Sulochana etc., had poor command over spoken Hindi and hence the coming of sound led to their exit from the film industry (Ramamurthy 2006). Also better cameras meant that you did not necessarily require the fair skinned *sitaras* that had ruled the 1930s. However, Ramamurthy draws attention to the influence

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Listen to the clock, time is passing by
O living one, O innocent, don't sleep, don't get lost.

of Nationalist discourse, where feminine agency had to serve the cause of independence. This had a substantial influence on subsequent constructs of female beauty, role, and presence in Bombay cinema. Even as non-western and unambiguously 'Indian' heroines took center stage, the 'Modern Girl' iconography was increasingly displaced onto the narrowly 'Westernized' and excessively sexual 'Other' woman; the vamp or anti-heroine of the 1950s and after. Thus the club singer/dancer of the 1950s city films occupies an uneasy relation to nationalist modernity. On the one hand, with clear visual affiliations to the hugely popular 'Modern Girl' of an earlier time, she is probably a sign of the desire for a cosmopolitan urban modernity that has been manfully overcome or rejected for a more 'nationalist' identity. On the other, her songs of love's fragile pleasures continue to speak of that one possible route to modern selfhood, even yet available to everyone- even the most out-of -luck struggler in the city's labyrinthine networks of markets and opportunities.

However, Maria's resemblance to the Modern Girl, alerts us, not insignificantly, to the cultural politics of gender as it plays out in the figure of the heroine as well. Thus although the 'westernized' vamp, at first glance, seems to be the sole trace of the Modern Girl, a closer look at the female figures of the decade reveals a more nuanced picture. Here, I propose that the Modern Girl actually, but subliminally continues to inhere in the 1950s female figure, not only in the club singer/ dancer as we have seen above, and in the Anglo-Indian/Parsi/ office/working girl as we will see next but in some ways also in the heroine herself as will become evident in the following discussion. It was not only her appearance and extra-filmic background that set apart the 'Modern Girl' of the thirties, but also

through the metropolitan professions and roles of the characters she played in films as doctor, teacher, cinema star, college girl, in narratives of love and love triangles, she gave shape to a distinct and gendered modernity. To the extent that urban mobility, access to professional spaces and a fluid feminine identity and agency in love can be seen in the heroine as well as other female characters, the Modern Girl's persona continues to be explored and contained even after her official exit.

Thus a figure very akin to Maria, not only in her religious identity and westernized demeanor but also in the economic independence she clearly possesses as a working girl, can be spotted in certain figures in the cinematic city of the period. Often paired with Johnny walker, this modern girl is marked not as much by her overt sexuality as her frank, spontaneous and flirtatious romancing of Johnny Walker that often provided a counterpoint to the more difficult love of the lead pair.[31] Thus Lily in *Aar Paar* singing *na na na tobau tobau, mai na pyar karungi kabhi kissise* with Rustom (Johnny Walker) brings a mischievous coolness to her seeming rejection of his advances. Significantly, this song also transforms ' the garden', which has often provided the spatial and visual register for the performance of courtship in Hindi films, into an everyday crowded place of family outings with its ice creams and camel rides. Similarly, the lyrics, as Rustom sings of his imminent 'heart fail' and Lily asks him not to fake ('*thoko nahi bandal'*) makes of courtship a no- nonsense quotidian occurrence. More importantly, Lily's claim that she is uninterested and her sleep unaffected, (*soti hu mein majese mein*

[31] I have discussed the Johny Walker persona in the chapter on the city. Here my focus is on his romantic partners and the songs they sing.

sari sari raat)[32] at once makes romance ordinary while acknowledging the girl's agency and choice in matters of love. The song *Jaane kahan mera jigar gaya jee* from *Mr. and Mrs. 55* (Guru Dutt, 1955), sung by the office girl (Yasmin), and Johnny Walker, transforms the mundane office with its clutter of tables and chairs into a space where love and courtship is possible, playful and naughty. Yasmin and Walker move around in easy choreographed movements, now between the tables, now from under them, as the lyrics stage a hunt for Johnny Walker's 'lost heart'. Yasmin's presence, her 'western' but casual dress, and her cool confidence as a working girl, not only constructs the office as a utopic, easily accessible space of love, but the end of the song, appears to run contrary to, if only momentarily, the film's overall anti-feminist thrust.[33] Both these girls, in *Aar Paar* as well as Mr. & *Mrs. 55,* are marked, through their dress and work, with a minority religious identity, but the hypothesis that the 'Modern Girl' had a far more ubiquitous presence, not just confined to a type; the club singer or the working girl, can be tested by looking at Johnny Walker's 'girl friend' (Kum Kum) in *CID*. Here, a Maharashtrian in a nine-yard saree, she runs a small pan shop. She is sassy and smart. In the *Bambai meri jaan* song, it is her voice that projects an urban subjectivity that has come to terms with the difficulties and inequities of modern city life. To Johnny walker's complaints about the city's heartless commerce, it is

[32] I'm not ailing…strange are your words
I sleep deeply through the night.

[33] *Mr. & Mrs. 55* was clearly responding to the long extended debate in the parliament over the Hindu code bill that was finally passed in 1955, and which, among other things, made divorce legally possible for Hindu couples. The anxiety and fear about women's runaway freedom stemming from an access to divorce, central to the film, possibly echoes the hysterical reporting of the parliamentary debates by newspapers that described women parliamentarians as feminist. Newspapers sometimes carried front-page news sensationalizing the debates. For instance, headlines such as 'Give Women Alone Right of Divorce for Next 10 Years' (Dec 9, 1954) or Women Oppose Alimony to Men, Want Equal Rights in Property' (Dec 8, 1954) made the front page regularly in the *Bombay Chronicle.*

she who sings '*bura duniya ko hai kehta, aisa bhola tuna ban, jo hai karta, woh hai bharta, hai yahaan ka chalan*'. [34]Sudipta Kaviraj, in his reading of the images of the city in this song, draws attention to the feminine counterpoint that asserts that it is easy to live here (in Bombay) - *ay dil, hai aasan jina yahaan,* and asks if this is probably because an accommodation with the city 'allows a lowly kind of freedom', a freedom that allows people to hide and 'to fall in love in its vast and comforting anonymity?' (Kaviraj: 70). Thus, the feminine stake in this freedom is imagined and articulated by this cinema, which had evidently preserved aspects of the Modern Girl even in native/indigenous garb. Coincidentally, all three songs, (*jaane kahan, arre na na na*, and *Bambai meri jaan*) have the playback singing voice of Geeta Dutt along with Mohammad Rafi. If according to Ashok Ranade, the slight tremble in Dutt's voice made it eminently suitable for the 'night- club songs' then also the 'wide emotional spectrum' that she had an easy mastery of (Ranade 2006:353) made it possible for her to bring to her singing, when needed, a droll flirtatiousness, as in the above songs. Above all, the dramatic quality of the playful dialogue between Rafi and Dutt in these songs not only gives them a contemporary youthfulness, but more importantly, a gender equal aural space, where momentarily, the feminine can take on and spar with the masculine, seemingly on an even terrain.

As a matter of fact, not only in the duets discussed above, but more generally, we can say that the song often afforded a space where gender inequalities dissolved in the exploration of love's erotic and affective universe. Thus for instance, the song *Do ghadi woh jo paas aa baithe* (few moments that she

[34] You are some innocent – calling the world evil. People pay for their deeds, that is the norm here.

/he sat near me) from the film *Gateway of India* (J. Om Prakash, 1957) can be seen to construct an intimate space, visually and aurally, when an exercise in creative collaboration between Anju (Madhubala) and Prakash (Bharat Bhushan) as they write the lyrics of the song they sing quickly metamorphoses into an emotionally charged erotic moment. The song is 'performed' in Prakash's one room tenement where Anju has taken refuge from her pursuers. The events leading up to this song, nearly at the end of the film, have taken Anju all across the city of Bombay as she is on the run, trying to evade the goons sent by her murderous uncle who is after her inheritance. In her adventure through the city, she has also encountered a series of unsavory characters; men, who evince an amorous interest in her. To evade them she has arranged a rendezvous with all of them to meet her at six in the morning at the Gateway of India, a location where she expects to catch her uncle red handed in his criminal enterprise. Prakash, sitting under a lamppost in the early hours of the morning and attempting to write a poem, is Anju's last encounter. Just before she meets him, there is a long chase sequence, as Anju runs through solitary dark lanes pursued by the two hoodlums on her track. Expecting this stranger, struggling with the first line of a possible poem, to be far safer than her pursuers, she coaxes him to his own room under the pretext that they could do some poetry, '*sher-o-shairi*' there. And it is here that the song *Do ghadi woh jo pas aa baithe* unfolds as a result of their joint creative effort.

In the playback voices of Lata Mangeshkar and Mohammad Rafi, the song performed by Madhubala and Bharat Bhushan constructs romance as 'love at first sight' while the lyrics emphasize its ability to transport them away from the everyday world, the *zamaana*. In terms of its place in the narrative and its

performative location, the song begins like an impersonal exercise of writing and singing a song. Soon after the couple reaches Prakash's room a preliminary exchange between them reveals that Prakash is a poor struggling poet living alone in the city. Anju, who looks tense, and is clearly afraid of being discovered, shuts the door under the pretext that the minutest sound can disturb the flow of poetic inspiration. Prakash then invites her to start and Anju requests him to go first. When he 'speaks' the line he was struggling with under the lamp post- *Do ghadi woh jo paas aa baithe*, Anju requests him to 'sing' it instead. At the start of the song, Anju is sitting perched up on a table a little away from a round table and chair occupied by Prakash in the centre of the room. As Prakash starts the first line, Anju moves to his table bends over and picks up a paper and pencil and takes it back to her perch, while singing the second line, that had occurred to her back on the pavement "*hum zamane se door ja baithe* (we moved away from the world). Then she writes a few lines on the paper and returns it to Prakash, who then sings them. Unlike the duets discussed earlier, *Do ghadi* does not stage an argument; instead, the two singers seem to develop on each other's contribution to this seemingly uninterested exercise in describing the affective universe of intimacy. However, as the song proceeds it becomes clear through their looks and gestures that what is being described is indeed what is being experienced by the singers who are at that very moment falling in love. In his discussion of romantic love, Anthony Giddens, distinguishes the romantic from other, sexual/erotic compulsions and observes that the instantaneous attraction implied by romantic love is not so much sexual as a communicative gesture that stages through looks and glances, the lover's 'intuitive grasp of the qualities of the other' (Giddens

1992: 40) Indeed at the start of the song, Anju looks almost wary, after all, for her this is one more in a series of encounters she has had through the night, thus, just another role to play, another man to humour as she stalls for time. However, a little into the song and almost immediately, as Prakash sings the words she has written we see a transformation in Anju's expression.

Bhuul ki unakaa hum nashin ho ke
royenge dil ko umra bhar kho ke
haay! kyaa chiiz thii ga.Nvaa baithe [35]

Anju looks at Prakash who is singing with his eyes closed, as she sighs with an intense look of yearning.

To be sure, this duet gently reverses the amorous economy, we have discussed in the duets earlier. Even though they sing lines written one another, the feminine voice here assumes a more assured position and undertakes to convince the masculine of the rightness of this 'trading of hearts'. In answer to Prakash's worry about a lifelong suffering - *royenge dil ko umra bhar kho ke,* Anju replies,

dilako ek din zarur jana thaa
vahi pahuncha jahan thikana thaa
dil vahii dil jo dil mein jaa baithe [36]

The heart, according to Anju, has only reached its rightful destination. The complex trajectory charted by the lyrics, moves from initial discovery, to remorse at the loss of sovereignty in love, to a playful assertion of its inevitability. Thus, Prakash speaks of his heart as his sole friend and sympathizer that has been given over to the 'other'.

[35] What a mistake to be enamoured by her
I'll regret this losing my heart all my life
O, to lose such a precious thing.
[36] The heart had go sometime or other,
It has reached where it was destined to
Only that is a heart which resides in another

ek dil hi tha gamagusar apanaa
meharaban, khaas raazadar apanaa
gair ka kyon ise banaa baithe [37]

Essentially, what is being feared by Prakash is the loss of sovereignty and self–sufficiency entailed by love's difficult transaction. Since, falling in love, as enunciated by Paul Gregory, in his philosophical engagement with eroticism and love (1988), entails a 'suspension of the personality' (342), the danger to love is not only from the world outside, indeed, the autonomy of one's self itself seems to be threatened by the possibility of its merger with the other! However, Anju replies with,

gair bhi to koi hasin hoga,
dil yun de diya nahin hogaa
dekh kar kuchh to chot khan baithe [38]

These lines playfully deflects Prakash's concern by putting a finger on the individual agency essential for romantic love- we are in it because the other is attractive to oneself and by the force of our own desire we 'abandon our sovereignty'(ibid :341). By hinting at the complex dialectic of loss and gain- the exercise of choice and agency only in order to lose your autonomy, Anju's words, describes the difficult but exhilarating possibility of modern selfhood in the processes of couple formation, independent of societal arrangements and strictures.

Through gesture, movement and mise-en-scène, *Do ghadi*, creates a 'world -away -from -the -world' of its lyrics with a tantalizing self-reflexivity. As Anju and Prakash sing of escaping this world momentarily- *do ghadi*, the closed room

[37] My heart was my sole friend/ empathiser,
It was my only confidant
Why did I give it over to the other?
[38]The other must have been beautiful
Else you wouldn't have lost your heart,
One look and it was bruised ….

they occupy truly becomes a refuge from the world outside, the *Zamaana*, the goons being its concrete manifestation at the moment. Throughout the song, the camera cuts intermittently to the two men standing outside perplexed at the sound of music emanating from behind closed doors. The role of sound in 'producing' space is a critical truism. On hearing the sound of the song, the men standing in the alley outside Prakash's rooms have on their faces the proverbial question we ask on hearing any unknown sound, '"where does it come from?"' (Chion 1994: 69). The spectator, on the other hand, finding herself in between the two singers is privy to their location and thus in a position of perceptual superiority. If within the narrative context, Anju's uncle and others are the *zamaana* the couple escape, the larger connotations of the word, referring to the world with its social hierarchies, family and community norms that strictly regulate young people's interactions and choice continues to resonate. The erotic charge of this sudden discovery of each other in the secrecy of the room is clearly heightened in the context of the usual cultural opposition to a young couple's private rendezvous. In contrast with the impotent search outside the room, Anju and Prakash sing about their hearts, fears and beauty, the expressions on their faces and the movements of their bodies towards and away from each other within the room, provide desire with spatiality. At the same time, the egalitarianism at the heart of romantic love is underscored by a subtle reversal of roles that is evident throughout this entire sequence. For instance, Anju dressed in short trousers and jacket, has not only got the better of all the men she has met through the night, but actually proves herself more than equal to Prakash in versification as well. Her body and performance testifies to the continued, if metamorphosed presence of the Modern Girl even in the heroine, as it

becomes a site for a productive hybridity that suggests the coming together of contemporary casualness and a confident mastery of a poetic forms that have traditionally been a masculine mainstay. Additionally, the close-ups of her face and eyes frame her subjectivity as desirous of a specific 'object'; her staring at Prakash, with a startled discovery, has the context of her rejection of all the other men she has met through the night. A contemporary appraisal of Madhubala's 'performance' of femininity by one David Cort in *Theatre Arts* noted that

> She uses a typical stare in her love scenes that is both confiding and questioning, as if she is challenging the hero to be all she is supposed to think he is. With a look she defies the Hindu dogma that a man is superior to a woman (1952:25).[39]

Indeed, her various looks in the course of the song- bashful, yearning, hurt, playful, construct a femininity worn lightly like a mask over a tom boyish persona effecting a fluid erasure of gender boundaries and hierarchies. To be sure, Prakash himself is a study in contrast to the men - tough, suave, crass, manly, that Anju has met until then. His soft, gentle, unsure masculinity is a match for Anju's fluid ambiguous feminine self and their song transforms the little sparse room in the middle of the big ruthless city into a temporary sanctuary of erotic intimacy.

Do Ghadi uses or builds on associations of intimacy with privacy and secrecy to eroticize space. However, it is to be noted that the use of a closed room for a duet is extremely rare in the 1950s and probably even later. Conventionally, Hindi film duets 'sung' by couples in various stages and moods of love are picturized in open spaces that are not particularly private – a living room, a street, a beach, a garden, a monument or even a ruin. In those rare instances, when a closed interior becomes the mise-en-scène of the love song, it is narratively regulated to

[39] Accessed on 13/09/2010 at http://films.hindi-movies-songs.com/madhubala-biggest-star-o.pdf

disallow any suggestion of sexual intimacy. Thus, in *Do Ghadi* Anju ventures into Prakash's room and even shuts the door because she is perceived as someone looking for a momentary asylum from hostile enemies. More commonly, the unwritten ban on kissing and the censor's punitive control of the representations of sexual intimacy ensured that duets between couples whose romance has been narratively established could not be staged in the privacy of a room. Since a duet expresses desire, in lieu of its actualization, it could not be performed within a closed interior, which in fact offers a spatial setting for its possible consummation. Madhava Prasad's formulation of the feudal family romance of Hindi cinema includes the 'blocking of the private' as its corollary. According to him, the continued role and influence of pre-capitalist patriarchal enclaves, and the need to rein in the forces of democratic transformation, prohibits the construction of the private space of desire that would allow autonomous subjectivities to take shape in opposition to traditional structures of family and community. The unwritten ban on the kiss, and the regulation of the representation of intimacy is thus not 'meaningless' but ideological. Agreeing with Prasad, in as much that a certain interpretation and construction of Indian cultural norms seem to influence the regulation of images of desire, it is essential to also see that in 1950s, the dispersal of the 'feudal family' limits a strict ideological reading of the phenomenon. Instead, it is possible to read the spatial and visual conventions of intimacy deployed, constructed, and reinvented by Hindi films as affording a complicated negotiation of the pleasures involved in the transgressive.

In this regard, the song *Aaja panchhi aakela hai* from *Nau Do Gyarah* (Chetan Anand, 1957) can be seen as a tongue-in-cheek dalliance with the

prohibitive code regulating visual pleasure. The song is picturized in an outhouse where Madan (Dev Anand) and Raksha (Kalpana Kartik) are staying together under the pretext of being a married couple. After a long journey together they have reached Mahableshwar with the intention of getting hold of an inheritance that rightfully belongs to Madan but has been appropriated by a vile aunt, played by Lalita Pawar and her son Kuldip (Rashid khan). Madan the rightful heir pretends to be a married man in search of employment and assumes managerial responsibilities of the property. Madan's and Raksha's living together is a 'performance' as they play at being husband and wife. The long sequence on the road, before they reach Mahableshwar has established their growing intimacy through a series of situations and songs, from total strangers to a couple in a romantic relationship. However, their stay in the outhouse of the Mahableshwar property is meticulously framed to underscore that even as they live together, they refrain from sexual intimacy since they are in reality unmarried. The song *Aaja Panchhi* is a part of this very staging. Madan, who is forced to sleep in the bathtub by Raksha, sings that he is alone and asks her to join him *Aaja panchhi aakela hai* (come here the bird is alone). To this she replies by asking him to go to bed since its time to sleep-*soja nindiya ki bela hai*. The lyrics are cleverly indirect and loaded. The phallic innuendo of Madan's 'bird' is met by her 'innocent' reminder that it is bedtime. If he hints at sexual urgency, her talk of a dream holds the promise of a union in the future. Quite obviously the feminine voice assumes a regulatory role that will guard against sexual transgression. At the same time, the song's picturization and the couple's performance become suggestive of erotic possibilities held in check and just under the surface.

Madan is locked inside the bathroom and thus has very limited spatial mobility between the door, the bathtub and a window that looks out into the garden. Raksha is teasing and frolicsome as she moves in the larger room outside, on the bed and then out in the garden. To Madan's complaint from the bathroom about the stifling air; *Oho kitni ghuti si hai ye fizaa* (how stifling the air is), she retorts, taking obvious pleasure in the open air of the garden, that it is indeed lovely; *Aha kitni suhani hai ye havan.* The contrast between their words and situations unfold visually as the camera alternates between Madan's closed space and Raksha's free movements from the room to the garden amidst the trees and the night breeze. Discussing the 'ways of music in films', Claudia Gorbman (1987:20) details the role of diegetic music in fleshing out space. She suggests that as 'the camera eye searches out the sound source, cinematic space "naturally" unfolds' (ibid: 25). In this song sequence the usual spatialization of music is heightened and acquires depth. Its specific thematic of barriers and obstructions to desire is visualized through spatial contrast. At the same time the performative force of this contrast is underscored as masquerade when Madan finding a *pagdi* in the bathtub playfully tries it on his head.[40] The *pagdi*, a sign of traditional masculinity and patriarchal authority reminds us of the weight of social strictures against sexual experience outside marriage as also Madan's helpless masculinity against Raksha's willfulness. Towards the end of the song Madan, leaning out of the window sings of his loneliness, and standing in the garden under his window, Raksha, gently touches his face, making a veiled promise of fulfillment by alluding to a gathering

[40] A *pagdi* is a traditional masculine headgear.

of dreams.[41] At the end of the song, Raksha's playful expression gives way to one of intense longing and regret as she caressingly rests her face and hands on the closed door of the bathroom. If according to Prasad, 'the invention of the private, the zone of intimate exchange and union' is prohibited to stall the emergence of bourgeois feminine subjectivity (97), *Aaja panchhi aakela*, seems to in fact toy with the possibilities of the private, wherein, even though the feminine performs and mouths its denial, the changing expressions on her face from joyous flirtatiousness to earnest remorse, is a template of complex negotiations of societal pressures via a divided subjectivity. Interestingly, the door dividing the lovers becomes a sign of the controlling presence of the censor's eye spliced smoothly with repressive socio- cultural norms.

If *Aaja panchhi* stages a tantalizing, but a rare glimpse into the possibilities of 'the private' the feminine agency that does emerge to thwart it should be seen in the context of Raksha's narrative persona as constructed earlier in the film. *Nau Do Gyarah* unfolds like a road movie and as Ranjani Mazumdar argues, establishes a geographical form 'using a travel mode' (2009:19). Drawing attention to the cosmopolitan imagination of the film, she observes that 'travel, curiosity and discovery are central to its style' (ibid.). The meeting of Madan and Raksha, and their subsequent intimacy is a part of this adventurous travel, which imparts an exploratory and liberating spatiality to their romance. Raksha is running away from her marriage because the groom has demanded unreasonable dowry. Disguised as a man, and packed with jewels, money, food, water and a bundle of clothes she

[41] *bin tere kaisiin adhere ye raat hai*
aa dil mera dhadakan merii tere sath hai
rat tanha hai phir bhi dil tanha hai
aa laagaa sapanonka mela hai
o aajaa panchhi akela hai

seems strangely equipped for any contingency. At one point she is even coolly ready to sleep next to Madan in the tiny space behind his truck even as he is shocked to discover that she is in fact a girl. The songs of courtship and flirtation the two sing during the journey, constructs romance as spatial exploration. The duet *kali ke roop chali hon dhup mein kahan* (like a bud, where do you venture in the sun) has Madan in the truck wooing a defiant Raksha as she perversely braves the heat and refuses to climb onto the truck. The camera, in following Raksha in her rebellious stride over road and bridge, is equally engaged with framing wide open spaces, woods and the sky from a variety of positions and angles as the sound of Madan's song seems to stretch across the distance that separates them. Similarly, in the duet *Ankhon mein kya ji* (what is in your eyes) an active and restless camera follows the pair up and down ladders, culverts and haystacks, as a chiaroscuro of the nightlight flirts with the cavorting, flitting bodies of the couple. The spatial dynamic mobilized by these songs eroticizes landscape, as it maps an experiential novelty on the bodies of the singing couple. Throughout this entire section, Raksha's performance, in keeping with the willfulness of her initial defiance of patriarchal authority, is also marked by a sense of freedom and unconventionality that is specifically the result of the expansiveness of the landscape it maps as it makes it 'private'. The physical proximity of the lovers, their uninhabited use of outdoor space, is one of the best examples of the Hindi film song's move to the 'privatizing' of 'public space' via duets. Notably, even when the narrative place of a duet's 'performance' was not a particularly private one, it succeeded in constructing a private space of intimacy, a 'his' and 'her' space. It would be interesting to think, along with Aniket Jaware, about the effect

of the film song's figuration of this 'private' in 'public' space. Jaware's observation that these love-scenes are *validated* by 'the awareness that this is a presentation merely, without an experienced and experiential *referent*' (2009:166) suggests that the audience's willing suspension of disbelief is predicated upon the absence of a similar public experience in real life. This can be roped in to support my larger point that film songs made available a fantasy of the 'occupation' of the public sphere for 'non-public', personal ends.

Finally, the integral role a song can play in driving the narrative and its causal link with the story needs to be exemplified. The song *Dum bhar jo udhar mooh phere,* from the very popular *Awara* (Raj Kapur, 1951), is an instance that stages a moment of intense eroticism, at once complete and self sufficient as well as a song that becomes a conduit for the advancement of the narrative. As such, the song not only mounts a fantasy of utopic union but also allows a complicated articulation of gendered modernity. *Awara* has been pivotal to film studies as an example of an epic melodramatic narration of national identity. In the light of its current relevance in scholarly discourse it is interesting to note that its advertisement, perhaps guided by commercial compulsions, focused mainly on its love angle. For instance, the poster has Nargis prominently in the foreground, dressed in what looks like a strapless gown, with Raj Kapoor behind her with his lips to her bare shoulder.[42] The expressions on their faces, Nargis is haughty but yielding with a faraway look and Raj Kapoor has a passionate gaze, present the couple as they negotiate the barriers of class and culture. Similarly, a half page advertisement in *Hindustan Times*, shows Raj Kapoor's looming back with Nargis

[42] NFAI archive.

in his embrace, with the words 'was he free to love with the shadow of the past?'(*Hindustan Times*, February 21, 1952, p.2).

Given that in the film, the obstacle to Raj and Rita's love the father, Judge Raghunath, who objects to Raj's criminal present, the advertisement's reference to a shadowy past was possibly a way of capitalizing on the public knowledge about the extra-filmic, real life affair between Raj Kapoor and Nargis. Neepa Majumdar (2009), in discussing the intersection of the Raj Kapoor- Nargis star text with that of the filmic says that in their love scenes 'the rival forces of film and star narratives were completely reconciled' so that the match between the 'visible on-screen love scenes and the imagined off-screen relationship'(154) provided a form of authentication.[43] A duet, such as *Dum bhar jo udhar mooh phere,* that stages a love scene in a romantic mise-en-scène; the couple singing and cavorting in a boat gliding gently under the full moon, clearly drew its erotic charge from the 'authenticity' of the couple's real life love affair. At the same time the song, woven tightly into the narration of the characters, Raj and Rita, creates a productive tension around the subjectivities it helps imagine.

In an extended sequence leading up to the song we see Raj and Rita having a day on the beach; Rita in a swim suit, and Raj in rolled up trousers, flirting, horsing around in the sand, running after each other, competing at diving in a pool, their bodies suggesting radical forms of physicality, desire and pleasure. Towards the end of this sequence, however, we see Raj walking towards Rita changing into dry clothes behind a makeshift curtain. The conversation between them suddenly appears strained and an abrupt change of mood follows. Rita playfully calls Raj

[43] I focus on the issues of star personas and stardom in relation to love in chapter 3 of this dissertation.

'*Junglee*' (uncivilized) because he barges onto her when she is changing and Raj reacts violently, slapping her across her face as she slides down on the ground. The audience knows what Rita does not, that Raj is indeed a thief and therefore a '*Junglee*' in the sense of being outside the law. Raj's violence, since Rita has touched a raw nerve, also seems to punish her for her boldness and the exuberance of her speech and gesture. Raj continues to sulk in the boat, but now when Rita once again calls him '*junglee*' he does not react, seemingly understanding its 'teasing' import. The song starts as Rita, in response to Raj's attempt to kiss her, asks the moon to turn away.

Dum bhar jo udhar mooh phere
O chanda…
Mein unse pyar kar loongi,
Batein hazar kar longi [44]

Shailendra 's lyrics while clearly drawing on the erotic symbolism of the moon and moonlight give it a twist as the feminine voice expresses desire while making the moon itself an intruder in the couple's space; if only it would turn away its face, she could make love to him, and say a thousand things.[45] Dressed in a casual shirt and pant and with hair tied in two girlish plaits, Rita prances around Raj. As the girl-woman, Rita invokes a desiring subjectivity, one who can be intimate with

[44] If you'd turn away for a moment
O moon
I will make love to him
talk to him of a thousand things.

[45] *Mein unse pyar kar loongi/loonga* in this context perhaps does not exactly mean 'making love'. It probably only suggests 'making out', which includes kissing and necking. It is no surprise that the lyricist' contribution to the production of the idiom of love actually causes embarrassment in nationalist circles even today. In a programme celebrating the fiftieth birth anniversary of Shailendra, (Shailendra Smriti Samaroha, Venue FTII, Date 30/08/10) the lyricist's social and political songs were the focus of discussion. In talks clearly dealing with his contribution in terms of its politics and social consciousness an attempt was made to claim him by the centrist (Nehruvian- Gandhians) and the leftist .Interestingly, no one spoke of his love songs although a few songs from Anuradha etc. were cited. One Mr. Vishnu Khare, a strident apologist for the left, referred to his first songs for the film *Barsaat*, as *behuda* (shameless?)

'him' if the moon looked away. Interestingly, in a context where censorship norms strictly regulated representations of intimacy, the moon, the traditional witness to love making, is refigured as the censorious eye, perhaps playfully standing in for both the camera and the audience. Gradually, emerging out of his sulk, Raj, asks the moon to turn towards them, so that he can boldly make love to her and look deep into her eyes.

Dum bhar jo idhar mooh
O chanda …
Mein unse pyar kar loonga
Nazarein do char kar loonga.[46]

'Looking', the pivot of this song, organizes 'gazing' as an erotic relay between the couple and the moon as the onlooker. The moon is a privileged because he has been looking at her moon, *chand* (Raj) every night, while for her, it is the very first time, Rita sings.

Chand ko chanda roj hi dekhe,
Meri pehli raat…
Badal mein tu chup ja re
O chanda…

The 'voyeur' moon, possibly also a stand- in for the camera, gets in the way of Rita's desire that nonetheless succeeds in finding an oral, performative expression. It is significant that when visual representations of sexuality were severely constricted by censorship codes, the desire for the same could find expression in the song in the explicit language of 'making out' and 'first night' in the song. In the next stanza, Raj speaks of himself as a thief whose job it is to steal hearts and asks the moon to be his alibi.[47] This tangential allusion to his 'real' criminal self

[46] If you look that way a moment, I shall make love to her, and lock eyes with her.
[47] *mai chor hun kaam hai chorii*

activates a network of associations and an excess of knowledge that is siphoned in from the larger narrative. Raj's reference to his thievery, the surfacing of his 'guilty' secret, not only explains his anger and violence in the previous sequence, but also Rita's earlier line about the moon watching him every day. This assumes an added valence as it harnesses through the moon/camera, audience knowledge into the erotic commerce staged by the song. The 'look' here is a back and forth between multiple positions, where looking and being looked at, includes not only the intense gaze of the lovers at each other and the moon, but also assumes the moon's erotic investment in the scene of love. Woodman Taylor (2002), in his study on the notions of visuality familiar to the audience of Hindi cinema, has pointed to the continuing centrality of *Nazar*, the intense exchange of gazes by lovers to represent romantic desire on screen, and specially deployed in song sequences. Terming it a 'poetics of sight' and tracing its origin to Persianate poetic paradigms employed by Urdu poetry, Taylor says, they were to become 'the most important visual signifier of fully engaged love' in Hindi popular film (309). Thus *Nazar*, implying a penetrating look or the meeting of gazes, is according to Taylor a kind of visual foreplay, which also acquired currency because of the restrictions on the depiction of physicality and the unwritten ban on the kiss. Not surprisingly, the end of the song captures the faces of the couple reflected in the rippling water with the moon between them. The climactic kiss can only be guessed at in keeping with the visual conventions that have been tantalizingly underscored by the lyrics and the performative dynamics of the song. However, instead of a climax, the

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duniyaa mein hun badanam
dil ko churaata aaya hun main
yehii mera kaam, ho yehii mera kaam
aana tu gavahi dene o chanda
mai unase pyaar kar lun gaa,

sequence continues as Rita runs to the end of the boat and stops Raj's advance with the words 'If you come any closer I shall capsize the boat'. In response to Raj's counter question- 'so then?', Rita answers, 'then let it sink'. The scene ends as the couple embrace behind the sail, the curtain coming down, as it were, on this sensuous staging of mutual desire.

Along with the on-screen chemistry between Raj Kapoor and Nargis, Raj Kapoor's 'sexualized' framing of Nargis has attracted some attention. Drawing on Western Feminist discourse about the 'male gaze' and its 'voyeuristic camera', Vijay Mishra (2002), for instance, asserts that in an effort to create an 'Indian sexual fantasy' Raj Kapoor exploited the camera in ways that were designed to objectify the woman and annihilate her threat (110).In his close reading of the song sequence, he observes that Nargis 'sings and gyrates' for Raj Kapoor while he remains 'sullen and unappreciative' thus inscribing himself as the desired man for the woman and the woman his possession (111). Apart from the fact that this reading, contrary to Mishra's own assertion about the objectification of woman, grants Nargis a desiring subjectivity, it is necessary to see that the visual aesthetic deployed in this song and possibly generally in Hindi films cannot be theorized within the Laura Mulvey's (1975) psychoanalytic and ideological reading of the 'male gaze'.[48] For example, throughout this song the shifting point of view of the camera alternately frames the faces of Rita and Raj in close-up as they intently

[48] Western feminist film theory itself has problamatized Laura Mulvey's understanding of the role the image of women plays in regulating cinematic experience. Christine Gledhill(1992)for instance, questioning the psychoanalytical mechanism triggered by the figure of woman, opines that in Mulvey's model the 'very act of representation ipso facto involves the objectification of women and the repression of female sexuality' (106) That such a focus on a psychologically determined production of meaning leaves no room for individual, social, economic, political and cultural differences and practices of film production and reception is the most damning critique of the determinism at the heart of Mulvey's approach.

gaze at each other and on the night sky, as both become subjects and objects of mutual gazing or '*Nazar'*. Also in tandem with the lyrics, the moon and the cloudy sky are repeatedly inscribed into the frame, the camera often moving out to give us a top angle shot of the couple cavorting in the boat, from the moon's point of view, as it were. More to the point, Rita's words constantly give voice to her desire and her gaze in tandem with them, directed now at Raj and now at the moon gives us a glimpse into a feminine subjectivity, laying claim to an erotic experience ordinarily denied sanction in our extra cinematic social context. If the excess of Raj's violence before the song and his sulking can be read as stemming from his insecurities, Rita's assertive and articulate sexuality emerges as an aspect of her independent modern selfhood that is taking a defiant stand opposite Judge Raghunath in the very next sequence. Thus, while it can certainly be considered, 'one of the softest, most lyrically romantic songs ever' (Chandavarkar 1988: 8), it is to be noted that *Dum bhar* is an apt example of a 'music scene' (Booth 2000:127) that acts as a conduit of narrative meaning via a mobilization of its characters' difficult negotiations with individual agency and choice.

Self in Separation

If duets in the 1950s staged the spectacle of the affirmative and liberating aspects of attraction and desire that worked as love's announcement, then equally significant and powerful are songs that explored the tragic and disempowering side of love's failure. This is a decade that possibly saw the greatest number of sad, heartrending numbers in the history of Hindi Film songs. The obstacles to love, the separation of lovers and their distress are as important to the affective universe of

the 1950s as is its subsequent triumph. The melodramatic spectacle of the hero or the heroine singing alone, often with tears in eyes, over the loss of love dramatizes this agony through a temporary disruption in the narratives of romantic love. Indeed if love has always been thematically essential to Hindi film, what possibly distinguishes the 1950s is the systematic and excessive investment in such scenarios of heartbreak and longing. The obstacle in love's trajectory is often internal to the lovers' contract, stemming from misunderstandings, illness, and willful insensitivity on the part of one or the other partner (*Anokha Pyar* (1948), *Aah* (1952), *Barsaat* (1949) *Taxi Driver* (1953)). However, in films where 'family' in some form has a narrative play, it could as well be the cause of temporary and at times permanent (*Devdas* (1955), *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960)) disruption in the lovers' movement towards a happy ending.

In the introduction to a study of romance writing, Lynne Pearce, notes the significance of 'separation' in the narrative of romance (2007:2). Speaking essentially of the romance tradition in western culture and literature, Lynne notes that the 'interludes of misunderstanding, separation and enforced absence have been *endemic* to the romance narrative ever since the texts of Arthurian legend' (ibid.). It is significant that in the studies on love, in literature or film, scholars inevitably attempt to read their texts in tandem with the socio-psychological experience of love in western societies. Here too, Lynne connects these interludes to 'the traumatic, invisible moment of rejection experienced by most lovers at some point', thus suggesting that it is the actual experience of separation endured by lovers in real time that gets 'converted into a spectacular adventure with a

happy ending' (3).[49] If Lynne's and other such observations attempt to connect love as 'experienced' to love as 'narrated', in our context of the 1950s, the songs of separation can possibly be seen as hinting at, if not 'representing' the real obstacles to love in the larger social context. It is possible to read in these melodramatic song situations, along with Thomas Elsaesser (1987) an 'element of interiorisation and personalization of primarily ideological conflicts' (46).

Discussing the relation of melodrama and modernity in the postcolonial moment of Bombay cinema, Ira Bhaskar notes that the 'intense pressure that modernity placed on traditional conceptions of self and community, gender and identity, released desires the historical moment could not fulfill' (2012:162). For Bhaskar, the distinctive feature of this melodrama is its emotionalism, the 'key to subjectivity' as it embodies 'the individual's most intense condition of felt selfhood'. She notes the centrality of the song 'as the language of ineffable' in the performance of individuality (163). Since film narratives only rarely dwelled on the structures of the patriarchal family and almost never on barriers of caste, community and religion, I suggest that this social reality that made romantic love and individual agency impossible as an actual experience for most people possibly bleeds as affect into the song situation of separation. In other words, it is essential that the solo songs of estranged lovers be seen with a different lens than the duets. While the duets produce a fantasy of easy togetherness and communion, it is possible to read the solo songs, with their mounting of a spectacle of individual heartbreak in the melodramatic mode as giving voice to a keenly felt social anguish

[49] Noting that the separation /obstacles are so intrinsic to the resolution of romance, Lynne refers to Denis de Rougemont (1983/1940) who 'elected to turn the formula on its head and search for theories that explain romantic love *as a quest for* (spectacular) *obstacles.* The resulting (and equally spectacular) *love story*, argues Lynne, is what has most commonly come to be understood by the term 'romance'(ibid.)

at the impossibility of love in a hierarchically ordered world where individual freedom was far from the norm. The emotional excess of these songs can be seen to carry the additional burden of a thwarted modernity that constrained the emergence of autonomous individual identities.

Unlike duets, which mostly unfolded in open 'public' spaces, the solo song of a distressed lover was often visualized and performed indoors even though at times slightly wild and remote landscapes were also used to provide spatial expressivity to the lover's solitary sorrow. Thus, for example the song *Yeh shyam ki tanhaiya* from the film *Aah (*1952) has Nargis standing in the balcony of the house as she begins to sing and then slowly moving indoors and finally to her bed where she throws herself as the song ends. Nargis' movements from the relative openness of the balcony to indoors construct a feminine space of lack and entrapment; a spatial imaginary recurrently used across films in similar song situations. Thus the heroine's 'occupation' of a domestic interior space in times of doubt and distress, either in a state of immobility or traipsing from room to room contrasts with duets of happy love in their claim to 'public' spaces. Early in the narrative of most films, we see lovers sing amidst expansive landscapes of city streets, parks, woods or waterways. Now, in these moments of separation and loneliness the 'outside' can only be looked at from windows or balconies that now function as markers of the boundaries that separate the lovers. Heroes too can be seen singing in similar situations but not as frequently as the heroines, in whose case the significance of the 'privacy' of their own space for the performance of

their sorrow seems over determined.[50]If visually a closed interior is suggestive of confinement or even imprisonment, it is also a space of refuge, especially for a gendered negotiation of a new affective terrain. The transgression implicit in love and romance in our societal context has always meant far greater strictures and punishments for women. If the utopic drive of the 1950s seem to have released filmy lovers from the shame and fear attendant on those who ventured to explore its mysteries in real life, these moments of love's failure are also moments when the 'real' is acknowledged; the heroine's crying and complaining in the privacy of her room gets an additional charge from the extra-filmic, punitive context that disallowed the experience and expression of love.

Drawing a connection between women and domestic spaces in the Hollywood family melodrama, Thomas Elsaesser (1987) has noted the themes of 'victimisation and enforced passivity of women' in recurrent scenarios of 'women waiting at home, standing by the window, caught in a world of objects into which they are expected to invest their feelings'(62). A similar melodrama of victimisation, but also that of resistance can be read in the way heroines inhabit bourgeois interior spaces in scene's of separation. Along with lyrics that continually draw attention to her psychic state to produce interior geographies of female subjectivity; the song site asserts a richly complex selfhood through 'suffering'.[51] Interestingly, the lyrics of another song, a duet, from the same film,

[50] It is important to note the connection between class and a private space to perform feminine suffering. Heroines who are poor in films' diegetic world can be seen singing the songs of separation in the open, and this difference becomes evident in films that have love triangles, with one rich and one poor girl like *Anokha Pyar* and *Amar* (1954). In these films the poor or rustic girl can sings of her pain in streets, or amidst nature. Clearly, poverty, bestows a freedom from bourgeois constraints on feminine movement and expression.

[51] The songs of suffering in love and separation (*viraha)* have had a long presence in the country's popular oral and folk traditions. Describing these as women's songs, Francesca Orsini says that they are expressive of 'intense yearning for love, affection and security'(2007: 14). The women's voice

Aaja re aab mera dil pukaraa, speak of the 'reputation' of love, hinting at the scandal usually associated with it. The lyrics of the song speak of sorrow and pain, but also express a strange anxiety. The lover is beseeched to come, *aaja re, aab mera dil pukaraa* (come now my heart calls), 'sorrow' itself has lost the battle- *ro ro ke ghum bhi hara*; lest the name of her/his love is tainted- *badnaam na ho pyar mera*. The excess in these song situations 'open up moments that cannot be uttered at the diegetic level' (Jha, 2003: 48). They draw attention to the contradiction inherent in the deployment of the cinematic fantasy of romance. For instance, the words of the song express a fear of stigma or disrepute in a perversely contrary fashion. When, in the extra-cinematic cultural context, love itself is considered disreputable, in *Aah* Neelu and Raj feel themselves answerable to an idea and ideal of love, which is now felt to be endangered because of its imminent failure, and would earn their love a 'bad name', a stigma- - *badnaam na ho pyar mera!* However, by the time Neelu sings *Yeh shyam ki tanhaiya* almost immediately after *Aaja re* the burden of this anxiety of failure seems to give way to an immersive abandonment in despair that is no longer concerned with societal codes or norms.

Yeh shyam ki tanhaiya has Neelu traversing the short distance from the balcony to the bed. The opening notes of the music coincide with Neelu's moving to the edge of balustrade in a long shot of the house and the balcony. Having lost all contact with her lover Raj, Neelu has been in a state of disarray for sometime

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of intense longing was taken over by saint poets of the Bhakti movement, as it became the central trope of much devotional poetry expressing the desire for a union with the divine. *Virahani*, the female figure embodying keen suffering is encountered in the devotional poems of both, male and female saint poets. Detailing the multiple shades of significance afforded by the trope of *Viraha* in Mirabai and Kabir , Kum Kum Sangari suggests, that in the transformative, and indeed transgressive mode of *viraha*, not only does a 'woman becomes an agent of her passion' but also that it effects the spreading of 'femaleness across the boundary of gender' (1990:1547). *Viraha* continues to be evoked in film songs, some times explicitly as when the song is directly borrowed from the Bhakti repertoire (Bhaskar 2012), but also implicitly in the performative registers deployed in these scenarios of separation and suffering.

before the song. In fact her hysterical state has been a cause of concern for her parents who even summoned a doctor. The sympathetic and liberal attitude of her parents is unambiguous. But Neelu cannot speak of her love, not only because Raj has disappeared without a word, but also because initially, Neelu's sister Chandra was expected to be betrothed to Raj. The romance between Raj and Neelu in *Aah* developed when Neelu started answering Raj's letters to Chandra, who couldn't be bothered to correspond with someone who seemed to prefer living in the wilderness. Subsequently, Raj has been diagnosed with tuberculosis, and has chosen not only to hide this fact from Neelu but also hide himself from her because he wants to save her the suffering that will come from an entanglement with a dying man. Thus Neelu is both heartbroken and ignorant, her ignorance the direct result of Raj's paternalistic attitude, which in its bid to 'protect' her, seems to obviously infantilize her.

And yet, the song *yeh shaam* constructs Neelu's selfhood as staking a claim on a subjective space in excess of what the narrative allows. Neelu's performance along with the lyrics gives form and body to longing and desire while providing access to feminine interiority.[52] Thus in Neelu's song, images of the evening, the wind, the stars are mobilized to construct her sense of lonely despair-

ye shaam ki tanhaaiyan aise mein teraa Gam
patte kahinn thadke havaa aaii to chaunke ham[53]

[52] That the correlation between an 'interior' and interiority cannot be seamlessly assumed or naturalized has been demonstrated by Supriya Chaudhuri (2007) in her reading of the interrelation between space, interiority and affect in *Charulata.* Discussing Ray's production of interiorities, she observe that Ray's camera does not construct the detailed opulent, bourgeois setting of Charulata's home to 'coincide with an interiority', instead, as in the opening scene when Charulata occupies the space but trains the telescopic glasses on the world outside, 'implicitly produces the domestic interior as a rich, substantial, but alienating setting for a subjectivity not yet fully understood'

[53] The loneliness of these evenings, and in that the pain of you leaves and the sudden wind startled me.

The desolation of the evening is only heightened by Neelu's longing for Raj and points to the state of her mind that is startled by every little move of leaf and breeze. Neelu's suffering is self- conscious and in the next stanza by protesting that 'you did not come hundreds of times even as seasons came and went - *aaye na tum sau sau dafaa aaye gaye mausam*, she is not merely complaining about his absence but about her protracted waiting. Neelu's bodily inscription of domestic space as she sinks on the floor, languishes and holds her head, cries and bends over Raj's letters and finally throws herself on the bed is a performance of abject femininity. Aided by lyrics that reflect on her own pain, and are confident of the empathetic allegiance of even the moon and the stars - *haalat pe merii chaand taare ro gaye shabanam* (the moon and the stars cried dews over my state), Neelu is more than the 'teenage' girl the narrative seeks to contain. It is interesting how the normal behaviour of sound; its ability to spread, to slip into any available space, and not be confined to the screen like the image but occupy the auditorium and our very bodies, destabilizes the perception and experience in song situations such as these. Nina is spatially confined to her room, but her song seems to escape the edges of the frame. Lata Mangeshkar's rising voice claims a friendship with the stars to spill over and beyond the image. The excess of the song situation effects an amplification of the female self beyond the confines of domestic space as well as ordinary human attachments and into a cosmology of affect. It is to be noted that Neelu's diegetic persona, despite Raj's superior paternalism, is striking in its impetuous agency. Not only has she been shown to initiate the romance by pretending to be Chandra in her letters to Raj, but she also takes off on an adventure to meet him out in his 'wilderness' – an initiative that eventually leads to

the formation of their romantic alliance. Love becomes the conduit for Neelu's modern personhood that finds expression in her willful agency. The songs she performs, mourning her loss in Lata Mangeshkar's playback singing voice, mounts a spectacle of the formation and consolidation of the self and a locus for empathetic identification.[54]

It is essential at this juncture to reflect upon the relevance of sound, particularly the playback singing voice in the construction of this feminine space. Recent scholarship has drawn attention to the relevance of the playback singer's voice in the consideration of Hindi film songs. Significantly, female singing voices, particularly that of Lata Mangeshkar and to an extent Asha Bhosale have been scrutinized, while the quality and effect of male singers is yet to receive critical notice. (Srivastava 2007, Majumdar 2001, Deshpande 2005, Pavitra 2008 and Jhingan 2009).Lata Mangeshkar's near dominance of the Hindi film music scene since the 1950s has intrigued scholarly interest and has been variously explained and/or interpreted. For instance, Neepa Majumdar in discussing the disembodied stardom of playback singers points out that because Mangeshkar's playback singing was ubiquitous as well as was not associated with specific acting stars, it 'easily lent itself to appropriation as the norm of ideal femininity'

[54] If the most successful songs owed their effect and popularity to the seemingly effortless convergence of lyrics, music, performance and mise-en-scène, there is still no denying their formulaic nature. In a musicians interview - conference with the fans , organized and reproduced by *Filmfare* (March 28, 1958) , it is interesting to find musicians debating the creative challenges offered by various song situations. For instance, if Naushad felt that the 'sad song provides the greatest scope for composition'(21), C. Ramchandra disagreed, and describing it to be the most insipid for everyone concerned; from the director, to music director and the lyricist went on to describe its formulaic picturization – ' In the song the "*alaap*" comes first, then the "*mukhada*". In the next shot, she (heroine) walks into her bedroom, puts her head on the pillow and sings the first "*antra*". Then she goes and stands by a pillar, with the branches of a tree full of flowers overhead, and sings the second "*antra*" and in the long shot you see the hero going away on foot, in a bullock-cart, on horseback or train (ibid). The similarity of this scenario, with the one from *Aah*, reminds us, once again, of the near- industrial production practices behind some of the most affecting spectacles on the screen.

(2001:172).[55] According to Majumdar, 'implicit in the dual star reference of female song sequence is a moral hierarchy between female *voice* and female *body*'(173) and Mangeshkar's deglamorized, white-sari clad persona and pure voice signified traditional Indian purity that transcended and contained the westernized , eroticized persona of female acting stars. A similar argument has been made by Sanjay Srivastava (2001). If Majumdar notes the real versatility of Mangeshkar's voice, her masterful control over the microphone, as well as her manipulative business acumen, Srivastava is only intent on reading a post independence Hindu nationalist plot behind the promotion and nurturance of Mangeshkar by the film Industry. By associating Lata Mangeshkar's thin voice, with the controlled, sexually repressed ideal Hindu woman, Srivastava implies an ideological conspiracy that sought to construct an authentically Indian femininity. Contextualizing Lata Mangeshkar's thin voice in the larger national project of controlling women's presence in the public sphere, he argues that,

> at the same time the women's bodies became visible in public spaces via films, their presence was 'thinned' through the expressive timbre granted them. The heroines for whom Lata provided the singing voice may have been prancing around hillsides and streets while performing the song sequence, widely dispersing their sexual selves, but this gesture which otherwise threatened the male dominance of these spaces was domesticated through the timbre and tonality which marked that presence. The potentially powerful image of the heroine enjoying the freedom the public space in equal measure to the male hero and singing in a voice that may express an ambiguous femininity was, through Lata 's voice undermined'(ibid:86).

The deterministic slant of Srivastava's sweeping formulation ignores the dense, textured and contrary processes at work in the production of cultural meaning, as it occludes, to quote Mariam Hansen, not entirely out of context, ' the textual

[55] Like Mukesh's with Raj Kapoor, Dev Anand's and Shammi Kapoor's with Mohammad Rafi and Kishore Kumarwith Rajesh Khanna etc.

use value of film for actual spectators' (1983:180).[56] A complex cultural product, the Hindi Film song demands that performance, both of actors and singers, lyrics, music, mise-en-scène, the song's place in the larger narrative of the film, as well as the spectatorial/ music industrial context - all be seen as contributing to the production of meaning and affect. It would be, therefore, equally fruitless to even simply reverse the terms of Srivastava's formulation and ask, why then should the actress' body not be seen in its occupation of the screen and public space as 'thickening' and expanding the singer's 'thin' voice? The point is that any consideration of the meaning and effect of film songs that ignores this extraordinary convergence of sound, body, word and image in the song sequence is misleading. Defining the indigenous practice of manufacturing songs, Gregory Booth says, 'actors, dance, narrative emotions or tensions, scenery and so forth… make up the Indian term 'situation' (2008:260). Indeed, there are instances where a song heard apart from its filmic context can have a far greater sexual or emotional charge. For example, the much discussed, *aaj sajan mohe aang lagao* from *Pyasa* is essentially contained by the mise-en-scène and the narrative of Gulabo's contrite withdrawal at its end. The song *moraa goraa ang lai le* from Bandini, in Lata Mangeshkar's voice is another example. Simply heard the lyrics describe a young girl's eager desire for union with her lover-

[56] Hansen is addressing the issue of the public sphere constituted by early silent cinema. Contesting a deterministic reading of this cinema's pleasures and audiences, she maintains that the complex of technology, cinematic space, public gatherings, visual and aural pleasures mobilized by films dissuade us from seeing cinema merely as in ideological terms. Although, films could function as tools of 'mass-cultural exploitation and manipulation' there was a case to be made for films as allowing 'experiential configurations (qualitative time, duration, boredom even; stream of associations, phantasy, passions) that are more than a mere reflection of economic principles' (ibid.).

Moraa goraa ang lai le
Mohe sham rang dai de
Chup jaoongi raat hi me
Mohe pi ka saang dai de [57]

This playful demand for a change in the colour of her skin, dark instead of fair, which will enable the singer to hide in the thick of the night for a secret rendezvous with her lover looks considerably innocent and tame on-screen when Kalyani (Nutan), dresses up purposefully in front of the mirror, wanders out singing across fields and woods to reach Bikash's (Ashok Kumar) house, where he is under house arrest, only to shyly run back from his gate at the song's end. To be sure, here too there is a libratory charge to the song as a young woman can be seen to venture out in the night, answering, as it were, the call of her desire- the shadows, the peeping moon, the woods and the pond mobilizing an erotics of anticipation. However, the narrative and the image ultimately contain the overt desire for sexual union expressed by the lyrics and by Lata Mangeshkar's youthful voice.

In the essay, 'The singer, the star and the chorus', Shikha Jhingan (2009) not only draws out the complex play of sound and image in song situations wherein the star, Lata Mangeshkar's voice and the chorus come together to productively shape its meaning but also notes how the new modes of production in the 1950s allowed film makers and music composers the chance to use vocal orchestration and the 'intimate' voice of playback singers for the staging of modernity. Srivastava's grand design of a controlled and repressed femininity

[57] Take my fair body
Give me a darker shade
I will hide in the night
Give me the company of my beloved.

through the medium of a singer's voice is problematic because the voice is only one among the diverse and complex strands of creative and commercial agencies, effects, media and forms that made the Hindi film song. For the same reason, even if Majumdar's reading of Lata Mangeshkar's star persona is compelling; the case for its incontrovertible role in producing the 'traditional' in Hindi film is not. Thus, at the end of the decade, Shakeel Badyuni's resounding lyrics- '*pyar kiya to darna kya'* for K. Asif's *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960), set to music by Naushad in the playback voice of Lata Mangeshkar, sung for a defiant Madhubala as the lowly girl in Akbar's court, is perhaps the best if not the only example of a song effect spilling over any neat binaries of Hindu /Muslim, traditional/modern, to create the sound of a new affective regime invested in romantic love.

If it is essential to put on record the fact that Lata Mangeshkar along with Gita Dutt, Asha Bhosale, Meena kapur and many others contributed in creating a feminine experiential and subjective space, it is also to be noted that if in the 1950s their solo songs of love's loss provide especially intimate access to interiorities. This is so primarily due to lyrics centered on the self and its dilemmas. Thus the words of the lyrics, in song after song, speak of the singer's mental state, her heart and its awful despair, and her sense of alienation and helplessness. Significantly, the singer often seems to address her own self – for instance *uthaaye jaa un ke sitam aur jiye jaa Yuun hi muskuraae jaa aansu piye jaa* (Bear with his injustice, just love, continue smiling, swallow your tears) or *rasik balamaa, haay, dil kyon lagaayaa tose dil kyon lagaayaa, jaise rog lagaaya* (sophisticated lover, O how did my heart get attached to you, it's like a disease) are essentially lines probing

/questioning her own self. In the loneliness of separation the heroines of these tragic moments turn back to themselves and in the process assert thinking, feeling, and reflective subject positions. These are women who know and feel the constraints on them - *merii baat rahii mere man mein* (My thoughts remained with me), the limits to communicability with the other - *meraa dard na tum sun paaye* (you couldn't hear my pain), reflect upon the radical transformative power of love - *tum rahe na tum ham rahe na ham* (you are not yourself, I am no longer myself), as on the uncertainty of their search - *kyaa talaash hai kuchh pataa nahii* (We know what is our search). We have already noted 'interior' spaces that were the mise-en-scene for most of these songs. Another noteworthy feature was the obsessive use of the close-up in these song sequences. Thus throughout the song, the camera, as if attracted by the excess of emotion, again and again slides up close to the heroine's face, probing, as it were, the depth of the sorrow that is being articulated by the song. Discussing the relationship of sound particularly that of music to the close-up, the Hungarian theorist, Bela Balazs, had noted the mutual influence of one to the other, such that the music reveals the 'human soul' and the facial expression comments on 'the musical effect' (1985:120). Balazs says that music affects more by its association with the human face because, 'the emotion produced in a human being by music and demonstrated by the close-up of a face can enhance the power of music in our eyes' (ibid.). The intense focus on the faces of the heroines, registering and articulating their pain and despair through lyrics that turned song sequences into sites of sorrow with a distinct identity and individuality, affirming women's right to love, through an absorbed mourning of its loss.

The spatial logic deployed in songs picturized on heroes singing solo songs of love's loss is distinct from that of heroines in that the heroes continue to occupy 'public' or open spaces for their mourning work. Thus the sight of the hero sighing and singing on a river bank, a sea shore, on a bench in a park or on a roof top makes common visual sense in the 1950s. Unlike heroines, heroes seem to need open skies to register their complaint and express their distress.[58]Men's relative freedom and access to public spaces in the realm of the everyday, can possibly explains the difference in the way heroes and heroines are allowed to experience and express loss. At the same time, even in the case of heroes, it is no less an interior space that is being explored in so public a manner. Often the same song is sung by the hero and the heroine at different narrative moments. For instance, Mangal (Dev Anand) in *Taxi Driver* (1954) is seen sitting on a beach as he sings *Jayen to Jayen kahan*, a song that had been sung by Mala (Kalpana Kartik) directly to him as they parted at an earlier narrative moment. The lyrics speak of a radical loneliness that springs not only from a separation from the lover but also from a feeling that the language of love is not generally understood

Jayen to jayen kaha
Samaze ga kon a yaha
Dard bharen dil ki jubaan [59]

Interestingly, the song evokes space visually and through the lyrics. Mangal is seen sitting on an empty beach and the camera captures the sand, the waves, and the horizon. The words of the lyrics ask for a place that is home, where the pain of loss can be understood. The connection between landscape and the political space of

[58] When men sing alone indoors it is likely that their immobility is narratively required. Thus, in the song *Aaja re*… the part with Mukesh's voice has Raj Kapoor in the sanatorium.
[59] Where do I go now? Who here, understands the language of heartache?

the nation is a matter of a sustained visual convention. Anustup Basu in an article on the music of *Dil Se* points to the post independence cinema's construction of national space trough travel (2008:159). In the 1950s and the 1960s, Basu suggests:

> Travels within the nation (were) largely interiorized into a grand domestic conversation of the nation with itself, by which the *landness* of the land passes from a geographical aesthetic into a political concept.[60]

There are many narrative instances of travel in the 1950s- by railway (*Solva Saal, Barsaat Ki Raat, Devdas,* and *Bambai Ka Babu)* and by road (*Barsaat, Nau Do Gyarah, Tere Ghar Ke Samne*) to substantiate Basu's observation about its role in the construction of the national space.

However, as in *jayen to jayen kahan*, the 1950s songs of sadness are peculiar in the immobility they force on the characters. Thus, during these song sequences, even if not confined to the four walls like the heroines, the hero remains fixed in a place, almost unable to move beyond the precincts of the particular locale he is seen to occupy. For instance, during the song Mangal sits in the same place on the beach, and other than lying back on the sand to address the sky, stays there till its end. Moreover, particularly in this song the lyrics articulate the lack, the absence of a place where the complaints of an aching heart will be heard. The national space formulated by Basu, and seen in the narratives of travel have no place, according to these lyrics, for the likes of Mangal, who are immersed in the sorrow of loss. If song spaces have been seen as articulating 'a particular narrative

[60] 1960s was in fact, as demonstrated by Ranjani Mazumdar in her essay, *Aviation, Tourism and Dreaming in 1960s Bombay Cinema* (2011), a time when Hindi films also began to explore foreign locations and global travel. Regarding the songs in these films, she notes that if 'Hindi Cinema has always negotiated the realm of sexual desire through songs, in the global travel films of the 1960s, foreignness and knowledge of sexual transgression associated with certain sites played a pivotal role'(ibid.).

of nationalism that is gendered in its composition'(2003:44), interestingly, in these songs from the 1950s, masculinity is homeless and stakes no claim on the nation it has helped visualize through its occupation of and travel across public spaces. The hero through his unrestrained immersion in the world of feelings, particularly feelings not of ambition, patriotism or triumph but of defeat and hopelessness treads on ambiguously feminine territory. Most accounts of the melodramatic in Hindi Films that focused on the construction of the national subject, have bypassed the transgressive import of these song sequences. Indeed, in song after song, as the hero finds himself helpless and disconsolate, the lyrical and performative excess of the song situation effects his feminization. The natural landscape that hero inhabits not only underscores his isolation from the world of work and action but the connection of nature and femininity produces a masculinity that cannot be contained by the discourse of the nation.

Thus for instance, the song *Mitwa Mitwa*, in the voice of Mohammad Rafi, picturized on Dilip Kumar in *Devdas* (1955) can be seen to construct a subjectivity that exceeds the contours of the nation otherwise constructed by the narrative diegesis. Ravi Vasudevan in his close reading of a scene from the film between Parvati and Devdas has drawn attention to the role of point-of-view editing and the iconic framing of Dilip Kumar to generate 'new sources of authority' (2000:140). Indeed, his reading can be extended and ubiquitously applied to the rest of the film because throughout, via dialogue and mise-en-scène, Devdas' relationship to Parvati as well as Chandramukhi narratively re-inscribes traditional gender roles. The two women, who love him, persistently speak the language of *seva* (service) and desire a place at his feet. However, a song like *Mitwa Mitwa*, in contrast and

almost perversely fractures this diegetic logic by spelling loss and longing, to *afford* access to a masculine interiority textured like that of a woman in its sense of hopeless waiting and enforced silence. In this context Roland Barthes' observation is particularly apposite. In the *Lover's Discourse* he says,

> …in any man who utters the other's absence *something feminine* is declared: man who waits and who suffers from his waiting is miraculously feminized. A man is not feminized because he is inverted but because he is in love (2002:14)

Can the song situations of the sorrowing hero be read as just such a site of feminization? Here it begins with a dissolve from Parvati reading a letter from a friend from her village describing Devdas' distraught condition. As we hear the first notes of the *mukhda* on the soundtrack a dissolve from Parvati reveals a landscape- a river, trees, a gathering sky and in a long shot the lone figure of Devdas sitting hunched on the bank. A gun rests on his lap. Devdas, who had apparently come to the river-bank to hunt, is overcome by a longing for his childhood friend (*mitwa*) and dissolves into song and tears. The useless gun, also a reminder of an earlier encounter with Parvati on the same bank, when Devdas had lashed out at her with a stick in impotent rage, makes of masculinity a masquerade, an aspiration rather than certain identity.

The lyrics describe his abject condition as they speak of the eternal fire that will consume him – *Lagi re kaise ye anbooz aag* (I am consumed by this unending fire) because his friend hasn't come to him –*mitwa mitwa nahi aayen*. The camera moves to a close-up searching the depth of the sorrow on the surface of his face. Here we note an audio-visual phenomenon that is commonly seen in many songs and is perhaps exclusive to song picturizations. As in this case, a sound of

instrumental music begins to seep into the frame as Parvati reads the letter, and the opening words of the *mukhda- mitwa mitwa* are heard. Parvati lowers the letter and raises her eyes, thus creating minor suspense about the source of the sound. Even as we move to a pan of the sky and clouds in the next shot and eventually to the figure of Devdas, the *mukhda* continues on the sound track. Hence, the sound/image match in the form of a close-up of Devdas singing happens only at the opening line of the *antra, Lagi re kaisi anbhujh aag.* As the song continues, the camera is mobile and not fixated on the sound source that is Dilip Kumar's face and lips. The sound/image match which has become a convention whenever speech is concerned based on the appeal to the 'natural relationship' that exists between 'a speaking person and the voice associated with it' (Altman 1992:49) is simply not followed in song picturizations. Sound, particularly the sound of music can connect disparate shots and to act as a bridge. In song picturizations, the camera is freed from its bondage to the speaking face and sent roving into surrounding spaces, effecting an expansion of the singer's self on the wings of music, suffusing the atmosphere with the mood of the song.

After the first stanza, as Devdas gets up from his place, the camera pans over the darkening landscape, the branches of a tree and comes back to him as he rests against the tree. The gun is still in his hand, a support to the ground as he leans against the tree. The lyrics speak of his desperation–*byakul jiyara, vyakul naiyna* (desolate heart, desolate eyes), and the hidden meaning of his speechlessness– *ek ek chup mein sau sau baina* (in every silence, a hundred complaints). It is significant that Devdas does not think of his silence as a single amorphous mass but distinct; singular acts of keeping quite – *ek ek chup mein.* He

has not said anything to Parvati, to his parents, to Chandramukhi, or to the world, and each act of silence is loaded with unsaid. Since, Devdas is also one of those rare films of the 1950s that narratively incorporates pre-capitalist feudal order in the form of Devdas' family and their opposition to his love. The melodramatic plot is thematized in its hero's inability to stand up against his father's authoritarianism and his failure to grasp the freedom offered by modern individualism, the 'pathos of an unsuccessful struggle against an existential condition' (Bhaskar 2012: 164). The silence 'named' by the lyrics within the excessive space of the song is therefore all the more charged, and would resonate with the frustrations of a truncated modernity. Interestingly, the muteness of nature captured by the camera that pans across the landscape compliments this silence. Like the weight of the unsaid, each instance of silence of the lyrics seems burdened by the memory of the lovers' past meetings. Specifically, at one point in the song, when Devdas comes to the tree, the camera tilts up to frame a bird, clearly citing the bird we have seen in an earlier song sequence when Devdas and Parvati as children sang to it.[61] That Devdas should sing of his suffering amidst nature in the village of his childhood love and not in the city that houses him as an adult becomes meaningful not only because it spatializes memory but also because, nature, with its associations with primordiality, universality and femininity, cannot neatly and automatically, signify the nation. In fact, the spatial logic mobilized by such songs can, in general, be seen to skirt issues of nationhood as they produce suppressed and rarely glimpsed performances of abject masculinity not thematized by the nationalist imagination. What is significant about the affective regime produced by this masculine

[61] *O albele panchi tera door thikana hai* (O strange bird, your home is far away)

investment in solitary suffering is that in its feminization it constructs a space, which is totally at variance with the national imaginary. If the space of the city, the exhilaration of speed and the libratory energy of romance gave heroines a performative access to masculinity, these moments of love's loss are no less transgressive, because in allowing heroes an escape into private sorrow on the edge of the nation, a utopic space where they could immerse in the rare freedom of performing femininity.

The melodramatic charge of the film song, the joy and exhilaration of its spectacle, the cunning of its lyrics and the staging of the self it afforded, mobilized a subversive toying with the possibilities of love by 'producing a new common sense about how love looked and about what was required to overcome the manifold dangers that threatened it' (Cooper 1998:86).[62]Additionally, the film song's ability to travel beyond the cinema hall, to glide into and structure the acoustic environs of cities, small towns and villages and to circulate unhindered in private spaces as well as in public forums, gave it an unusual pedagogic value in popularizing the lesson of love as it democratically allowed its listeners and singers nimble access to the performance of modern individuality.

[62] Cooper makes this observation about Hollywood films in respect to what he perceives as the indispensability of movies to American culture.

CHAPTER 3

LOVE AND STARDOM

The August 4, 1957, issue of the *Illustrated Weekly* carries on its cover, an image of a couple under an umbrella in the rain on a Bombay street.[1]Clearly the reference is to the Raj Kapoor – Nargis song *Pyar hua ikrar hua* from the 1955 film *Shri 420*.The *Weekly's* use of this image is interesting not only because it testifies to the star status of the Raj-Nargis romance but also because stylistically it draws on a register different from the original. The film song with its poor couple and black and white mise-en-scène, constructs love as the first and last refuge of the wretched and this is what gives it a romantic charge.[2]The painted image on the *Weekly* cover, however, is not only in colour but also carries a bright, light hearted, elite signage that is altogether at variance with the somberness of the original. We have the couple's back, their heads completely hidden by the umbrella with the man's hand tightly grasping the woman's shoulder. Dressed in long raincoats, the man in gumboots and a puddle on a leash by the woman, the picture presents an openly intimate couple on a crowded Bombay street. A clock tower, the red bus at the edge and a crowd of people with umbrellas, some of them in dhotis form the background the couple is walking towards. The picture at once seems to refer to the couple in the film song but also to the off- screen romance between them that was an open secret during this period. If Raj Kapoor and Nargis played poor

[1] I am thankful to Sabina Gadihoke for not only telling me about this image, but also emailing it to me.

[2] Raj Kapoor justified his own exploration of the theme of love because, according to him love was 'very often all that the dispossessed possesses. The capacity to love and be loved is his only link with other human beings'. (*Filmfare*, 1959, February 13)

disadvantaged characters in *Shri 420* and some other films, the *Weekly* couple's bright accoutrements align them with the upper class lifestyle of the stars in real life. Through a clever stylistic variation, the *Weekly* cashed in on the rumours of the stars' romantic relationship to produce a 'romance in the rain' for its educated middle class readership.

Discussions of the star phenomenon and stardom have variously focused on its dual nature – the complex play and tension of the stars' on-screen and off-screen persona, their public life and private selves. Film actors are not stars by virtue of their film roles alone. In fact, an actor becomes a star when the 'real' self outside of film and the private self and/or personal life is factored into the image. Film scholarship has pointed to Hollywood's careful construction of stars, whereby the various screen roles of a star are put into play with their off screen 'reality', which includes life style as well as 'personal' information regarding family, marriage, love affairs and so on (Ellis 1991, Dyer 1986a, 1986b, Gledhill 1991, Stacey 1991, 1994). Stardom depends on the publicity machinery that meticulously manages a star's image through interviews and cover stories in newspapers. Film and fan magazines, appearances on radio and television, advertisement as well as gossip, rumours and scandal play an equally important role in the construction of the star. Although Richard Dyer (1986a) has emphasized the significance of the private lives of the stars along with their public image and presence, he cautions that traces and marks of the constructedness of stars, the manipulation of their images through mass media, may become a barrier to the true knowledge of his or her real, "authentic self". According to Dyer, despite the continuing effort to discover the sincere, authentic self of the star amidst the hard sell and hype of

media, the 'star phenomenon is profoundly unstable' (16), allowing for multiple, often contradictory, readings of individual stars.

The extraordinary popularity and fan following attained by stars of Bombay cinema has ensured that individual stars are written about in popular as well as more serious formats of dissertations and books. However there has been very little attempt to theorize Bombay cinema's stardom itself.[3] In this regard, pioneering a much needed theoretical engagement with stardom, Neepa Majumdar's *Wanted Cultured Ladies Only* (2009), offers a critical lens to view Bombay films' female stardom in the decade around independence. Arguing for a locally specific concept of stardom, Majumdar situates the distinctive process of star formation in India within an overarching argument about the cultural status of Indian commercial cinema as a form of 'guilty pleasure' and a site of 'public and governmental disavowal' (9). Majumdar says that this cultural ambivalence towards cinema resulted in the female gendering of stardom and a star discourse that made an implicit equivalence between 'cinema, stardom, femininity, and nation' (10). Because cinema and its stars were intensely attractive and engaging and yet were constantly vilified and scorned, the extra textual material about stars circulated not through a well oiled publicity mechanism which planted stories and ran interviews revealing the private self of the star, but through a mode of journalism which relied on gossip and innuendo (Majumdar 2009). Noting the distinctive processes of star construction and stardom in early Bombay cinema, Majumdar points to the near absence of the 'private' in the emerging star discourses of the 1930s. For instance, the coverage of film stars in 'respectable' English language

[3] The mega star-politician celebrities of South and its specific brand of stardom and fan following is a cultural phenomenon inviting distinctive scholarly engagement. (See Pandian 1991, Dickey 2001, 2008 , Srinivas 2000)

magazines emphasized only the professional aspect of star personalities, while showing little curiosity about their private or 'inner' selves. Majumdar further notes that the changes in the industry in the 1940s and through the 1950s along with the growing importance of stars led to considerable changes in the way stars were projected. Now, there was greater access to the private and an expansion of the machinery of stardom to include 'fan clubs, advice columns by stars, beauty tips, advertisement for cosmetic products featuring stars and explicit gossip-based articles' (ibid:132). However, the focus remained the professional aspects of star personalities and overtly intimate or 'secret' information about their personal lives, affairs, or sexual exploits remained out of bound.

In the absence of, what Majumdar (2009) terms an 'official' discourse on the private lives of stars, she suggests a reading of the star phenomenon by localizing the contours of its discourse. She suggests that 'Bombay cinema, particularly in the 1950s, worked by ploughing in oral gossip and privately circulating information of the star, onto the screen roles of the stars' (147). This replication of gossip within films that at once legitimized as well as contained it, reverses the processes of star discourses, which in the Hollywood context, worked from surface to depth. Instead, in the 1950s, the movement is in the opposite direction, which led to the conflation of the star persona and the film role. Thus in the instance of the Raj Kapoor and Nargis love affair, Majumdar argues, 'their on-screen identity functioned to overwrite, legitimize, and contain all extra-filmic information about them' (ibid.). Through a close reading of Nargis' double role in the 1952 film *Anhonee,* Majumdar substantiates her argument that 'the extra-textual gossip and biographical information (was) channeled back to the surface of

the screen' (2009:149). In her reading of the film, Majumdar maps the gossip, information and anxiety about the multiple transgressions implied by the Nargis star text, most particularly her courtesan origins and her affair with a married man onto the complicated narrative of two identical looking sisters (played by Nargis) in love with one man. Majumdar sees the double role of the star as a strategy for 'managing anxieties about the circulation of female bodies and private identities' (2009:13), to effectively refute or rewrite the star's image.

Majumdar's insight about film texts as carriers and containers of real life love affairs of stars is a significant methodical intervention that allows a reading of a number of films where stars are paired together. Thus, it is possible to demonstrate that *Mughal-e-Azam* (K. Asif, 1960) draws on and reworks the Dilip Kumar and Madhubala affair and *Kagaz Ke Phool* (Guru Dutt, 1959) is informed by and comments upon the Guru Dutt-Waheeda Rehman relationship. I read both these films closely later on. My reading is also influenced by the interesting equation Christine Gledhill finds between stardom and melodrama in their congruent investment in 'personality'. Stars 'enact ways of making sense of the experience of being a person' as they 'represent typical ways of behaving, feeling and thinking in contemporary society' (Dyer 1986a:17). Extending this notion of personhood to melodrama, Gledhill notes the 'centrality to both systems of the 'person'' (1991a:208). According to Gledhill, the importance of gesture, the expressivity of the body and externalization through performance of the melodramatic character based on exaggerated personality traits are features similar to the construction of stars. She says, 'Star personae' like the melodramatic characters, 'offer similar pictorial beings, staged for the camera both off- and on-

screen, with appropriate settings, dress and accoutrements' (ibid: 211). Thus we will see the melodramatic mode of the films I read in the course of the chapter- *Arzoo* (Shahid Lateef, 1950) *Sone Ki Chidiya* (Shahid Latif, 1958) *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960) and *Kagaz Ke Phool* (1957) operate as vehicles for the stars and their affairs, accentuating the 'personifying' processes already implicit in stardom. More importantly, according to Gledhill, similar to the excess of melodrama, the star system has a paradoxical relation to reality (1991a). Hence, the quite ordinary reality of the star's love life, under the auratic eradiation of the dual systems of melodrama and stardom, can be seen to assume extraordinarily iconic significance as transcendental statements about love itself.

At the moment, however, in looking at stardom, especially with an eye on its role in shaping the overall discourse of love, it becomes necessary to investigate those sites, images, and stories that spill over and beyond the filmic text or exist in the recesses of, what Majumdar calls, the official discourse of stardom.[4] If in the 1950s the English language respectable magazines elide or skirt intimate or personal details of the stars, magazines in the vernacular like *Rajatpat, Sushma* and *Chaya* were not so squeamish, suggesting the presence of a dual and indeed conflicted nature of the prevalent star discourse.[5] When the 'official' discourses of

[4] As a matter of fact, the few surviving issues of *The Motion Picture Magazine* available online could call into question the very equation between English language and 'official' or respectable; the magazine was in English, and along with film reviews, news about Hollywood films and stars as well as pieces on Eisenstein or Pudovkin and serious film related articles by B.D. Garga, carried gossip. To be sure stars were not named, but hinted at – thus in the 'Gossip' column a ' well known director, who is also a producer' in described as losing interest in India's only singing star and transferring his affections towards a new heroine, along with a picture of Raj Kapoor and Suriaya from the film *Dastan* (February1951, p.24) One can also see a keen investment in the salacious under the veil of anonymity. Another item in the same column warns about some stars who are propagating lesbianism(*sic*) both among males and females' and goes on to moralize about this new 'cult' (ibid).

[5] *Rajatpat* in Hindi and *Chaya* in Marathi are examples of inexpensively and casually printed film magazines devoted to gossip and discussion about stars and film related issues. If *Rajatpat* did not

Indian stardom which appeared in 'respectable' mainstream press steered clear of the extra- cinematic private details of star personas, the vernacular press, as is evident from a few surviving issues of some magazines, churned out gossip as their main fare. Indeed some film magazines in Hindi and Marathi seemed to revel in reporting, discussing and commenting on star affairs, while the films themselves got a short shrift. Without doubt these magazines were far from 'respectable', but proof enough that gossip circulated not just orally. It is also the case that precisely because these magazines were considered culturally inconsequential they have slipped through the archive of the 1950s stardom. However, some of the surviving issues of *Rajatpat*, *Sushma* and *Chaya* in Marathi provide a glimpse into an animated, even anxious engagement with stardom, particularly with the stars' love lives.[6] Assuming these to be merely a fragment of what must have been a popular print culture in the decade, it is possible to enter a parallel world of star discourse that along with the films and other, respectable English language film magazines produced varied, contradictory, conflicting and heterogeneous stories of love. Often, star affairs were followed diligently to track its advance from week to week. For instance, a news item in the Marathi magazine *Chaya*, reading like an advertisement for a hit film, announced, '56th week of the Suriaya- Dev Anand

confine itself to gossip and scandal and carried occasional pieces on films or film music, its overall tone was moralistic like that of *Chaya*, which pontificated on the immorality of films and female film stars in particular. *Rajatpat* also carried short fiction; stories of love and romance written in the filmy style. *Sushma* was more of a literary magazine, which, nonetheless carried some news, gossip and articles about films. All these magazine invariably entertained letters to the editors, not exactly fan mail, but asking a myriad questions about the world of cinema but also about life generally.

[6] This material is unevenly preserved in NFAI, Pune so that full citational information is lost, particularly regarding pagination. Rajatpat has no page numbers as a rule, although it is possible to randomly come across an issue that has some numbered pages. Rajatpat was also not consistent in printing the date of publication, so that often only the month of publication is available. The top and/or the bottom of the pages of *Chaya* is often torn, or lost in the process of digitization, erasing the page number. Attempt has been made to provide as much information as is available.

affair'! (June 2, 1950, p.9).[7]Along with day-to- day gossip and editorial pieces these magazines commonly carried features dealing with readers' and fan mail. Revealing intense curiosity about stars generally, and stars' love lives specifically, queries about films and stars along with the replies to them provide a rich archive of the engagement in and production of a star discourse, albeit in the realm of the disreputable.

A disparate and contrasting discourse was, thus, produced between the official, respectable English language magazines, on the one hand, and the vernacular press, on the other. The sympathetic and interested engagement of the one was distinct from the salacious yet censorious attitude of the other. Making a distinction between promotion and publicity in the Hollywood context, Dyer suggests that promotion is deliberately manufactured to project an image, while publicity is the unmanaged circulation of images and stories about stars which are accidently discovered by the press or inadvertently mentioned by stars in interviews and circulated in gossip columns (1986b). Drawing on Richard Dyer's distinction, Anne Helen Peterson says that star promotion depending upon gossip outlets '"friendly" with the star's agenda' are 'invested in the construction of stars as upright citizens and moral exemplars; their overarching tone (being) soft, inviting, supportive and generally feminized'(2011: 7). In contrast, publicity outlets are 'unfriendly' to the stars and largely invested in exposing scandals in a tone that is 'hard, accusatory, inflammatory and masculine' (ibid: 8).

The difference in style and engagement of the English language periodicals and their vernacular counterparts in the Bombay film industry can also be seen as

[7] Rough translations for all the quotes from vernacular magazines are being provided by the writer.

friendly promotion of one and unfriendly publicity of the other. Additionally, in this context, it was possibly also reflective of the editors' and readers' class and cultural alignment with the world and lifestyle of the stars themselves. For instance, Baburao Patel of *Filmindia* was an insider to the Bombay film industry, having many friends among the stars and often sharing their social life and family space. *Filmfare* too established close links with the industry as is evident from the report on the 'Filmfare Party' that brought together the general manager Mr. J. C Jain, editor, Frank Moraes, journalists and the stars of the industry. The report quotes Mr. Jain promising that the magazine will advance the interest of the industry and its personnel (August 22, 1952, p. 8-9). Earlier, an editorial of magazine had claimed that it was the 'first serious effort in film journalism' committed to 'serious study and constructive criticism and appreciation of the industry' (*Filmfare* March 7, 1952). By carrying features that dealt with the style and glamour of the stars- their clothes, cars, homes and leisure activities, *Filmfare* for instance, showed itself privy to the consumerist values and lifestyle prevalent in the film industry. At the same time in insisting that readers keep their questions to stars' professional lives, the magazine was being protective of their reputations.[8] The gossip and scandal circulating in the vernacular press had no place in the English language magazines even if their publishers, editors and reporters had firsthand knowledge and access to stars. Film reviews in *Filmindia* could be scathing, but the magazine steered clear from the intimate details of the stars'

[8] The *Filmfare* 'Question Box' (July 4, 1958, p.63) came with a rider, 'Only questions of an informative, factual nature soliciting information about the film industry and its principal figures will be entertained'. Although this line was not reproduced in every issue, it fairly demonstrates the magazine policy about gossip and salacious knowledge. And when despite this warning, readers asked a question about the private life of stars they were deflected with a 'funny' answer. For instance, Q-Why didn't Dev Anand marry Suriaya? A- But both had to agree to the marriage (March 5, 1954, p.33)

private lives. It was not only in material terms that Bombay stars lived extraordinary lives; the film industry was an alien world in terms of the social norms and sexual mores it produced and allowed. It is probably safe to speculate that along with shared material values, the English media also shared or was sympathetic to these newer socio-sexual values and norms being produced in the industry. As against this it is important to read in the pitch and the slant of vernacular magazines, in the prurient curiosity of their tone, the substantial distance that separated their readers from the world of stars and cinema.

Behroze Gandhy and Rosie Thomas state that as in every other cinematic culture, stars offer to 'audiences whose lives are limited in various ways- materially and emotionally- the vicarious pleasure of identification with and exploration of the realm of the extraordinary' (1991:107).While this is undoubtedly true, it needs to be reiterated that the limit on the realm of the emotional, in case of Indian audiences, also sprung from the absence or lack of romantic love in most people's lives. Stars who performed romance on the screen, no doubt felt free to fall in love and have affairs and relationships in their real lives as well, and in this they were truly extraordinary. Reflecting this experiential lack, the discourse in the vernacular press, often bordered on the incredulous. Through an engagement with stardom, this was a discursive attempt to grapple with and negotiate the possibilities of individualism and personhood promised by love. Simultaneously, the vernacular discourse clearly contributed to the dispersed and contrary imaginary of stardom in Bombay cinema.

The 1950s film magazines, as well as the stories that have survived to become a part of the collective memory of the period reveal an intense engagement

with issues of love and romance. In the context of American stardom, Dyer observes that all fan magazines tend to be about love, possibly because of a sense that in the world of cinema all material problems have been settled and all that is left are relationships (1986b). He also notices that most articles in these magazines are about the '*problem of love'* - the difficulties, quarrels, divorces and so on (ibid: 52). In the Indian context, however, and particularly in the 1950s, it is possible to argue that the magazines' excessive interest in love was because of a number of related issues. Firstly, since the films of the period were overwhelmingly preoccupied with love, they fuelled a similar obsession in the magazines. Secondly, the dominance of the love trope in films led to an identification of the film industry as a whole with a new affective regime centered on love. Thirdly, and most importantly, unlike in the West where the audience could potentially experience love outside of films, for audiences and fans here, love was still a novelty being delivered by films as entertainment. The 'fact' of love itself was new and interesting, the *'problem of love'* yet to be experienced. Not surprisingly, love in its strangeness became central to the audience's engagement with stardom. It is noteworthy that the emergent star discourse was fraught with anxiety in reaction to these films and its star personalities. In trying to come to terms with the films' transgressive imagination and the behavior of stars, probably considered 'subversive of the strict social mores of Indian society' (Gandhy and Thomas, 1991:108), audiences and fans had to negotiate entrenched prejudices as they tried to explore and contain the possibilities of the new. It is not unusual in these magazines to find, along with queries about stars' private lives, questions about love itself- thus, 'Is it a sin to love?', or 'why is it said that love happens, rather

than planed?' or 'What must one do to fall in love?'(*Rajatpat*, November 15, 1954).[9] The naivety of the questions indicates the strangeness of this thing called love for the audience as well as its extraordinary attractiveness.[10] At the same time, the fantasy of romance that did not, 'realistically' have a 'feudal family' thwarting the lovers was received with equal distrust as is evident in readers' questions, one of which asks 'How is it that these lovers meet so easily, fall in love and start visiting each other's home and the parents have no objections?' (*Chaya*, May 20, 1950, p.6).

With cinema as an immensely popular avenue of entertainment and film songs suffusing the urban atmosphere, did star discourses of the period partially 'articulate' the uses to which this experience was put? Following Stuart Hall, it is possible to look at the engagement with stardom as a cultural practice whereby films, magazines, audiences and fans not only contributed to the making of star images but also articulated their hopes and fears about issues of individuality, gender, love, tradition, and modernity. Hall has argued that the meaning of a text is not fixed, but is 'always caught in the network of the chains of signification which over-print it, inscribing it into the currency of our discourses' (1984).[11] Instead of thinking of individual star texts, it seems appropriate, in this context to look at star discourses itself as a cultural practice that articulates and negotiates multiple meanings of love and stardom. The on–screen and off –screen romance of stars

[9] Interestingly, *Rajatpat's* 'fiction' section also carried 'stories' with explicit titles like – *Aadarsh Prem* or *Darna Mohaabat Karle*. Interestingly, even literary magazines like *Sushma*, which carried stories, poems, essays as well as film news, had in their readers' question section , queries like- what if one falls in love with a girl?, Which is a good season to fall in love? Is love blind or the lover? What is to be done if one is cheated in love? (February, 1962, pp. 88, 90, 91respectively)

[10] Questions about love are so ubiquitous that one irate reader queried – Why are all the questions asked by youngsters in film magazines only about love and lust? (*Rajatpat* September 1949, p.31)

[11] Quoted in Lawrence Grossberg (1996: 157) 'History, politics and postmodernism: Stuart Hall and Cultural Studies', in David Morley and Kuan –Hsing Chen, (ed.), *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*. London and New York: Rutledge.

seems to be the pivot in the star discourse of the 1950s revolving around themes of love affairs, marriage, work, tradition, nation. The discourses question and brings into play conflicting ideas and ideals about 'what it is to be human in contemporary society' (Dyer 1986a: 8). That the stars not only had affairs but were also seen as models or authorities on matters of love is a consideration that drives this investigation of stardom in the 1950s. Interestingly, we also notice the crystallization of 'the actress' as a discursive site of this engagement. Neepa Majumdar, in her work on the 1930s, has referred to the 'female gendering of stardom in India' which was 'connected to the disavowal of cinema' (2009:9). By the 1950s, even though stardom is no longer identified specifically with femininity, the female star's freedom to make movies and love continued to be of concern and was a flashpoint for engaging with star affairs.

The Affairs

Raj Kapoor - Nargis, Dev Anand - Suriyya, Dilip Kumar - Madhubala and Guru Dutt - Waheeda Rehman, all had affairs that were well known, talked about, discussed and commented upon by the media, but the affairs were ultimately unsuccessful. This lack of fruition was in each and every case due to inability on the part of the stars, in different ways, to overcome the stranglehold of tradition, social mores, and patriarchal ideas and beliefs. In almost direct contrast to the utopic fantasy of romance of the films, these off- screen romances, in fact, illustrate the illusion and power of this fantasy in a context where love had, on the whole, no social sanction.

After being in a relationship with Nargis for nearly a decade, Raj Kapoor was unable to get out of his marriage, and Nargis had to find her happiness elsewhere. As far as his film making practice was concerned Raj Kapoor took credit for intensifying the imaginary of love. Indeed according to him, with his first directorial debut *Aag* (1948), a great new wave swept the country because 'it signified the passionate seeking of youth for more intense loving, more intense living' (*Filmfare*, February 13, 1959, p.4*). Aag* was also Nargis' first film with Raj Kapoor, beginning a series of hits. The on-screen chemistry between Raj Kapoor and Nargis is legend. They are said to have introduced a 'new idiom of romance' on the screen, and their performance is said to have accrued an authenticity because 'it reflected their real-life emotions' (George 1994: 75). The love scenes between the two are supposed to have had the natural spontaneity and intensity of real life lovers, so much so that at times, as at the end of the song *Dum bhar jo udhar mooh phere*, from *Awara* , there is a suggestion of a kiss that seems to simply happen from the actual experience of passion. The kiss has played an important role in the depiction of love in films from Hollywood, and it has been celebrated, according to Violette Morin, for being a 'profound expression of a complex of love which eroticises the soul and mystifies the body'.[12] However, in the face of the unwritten ban on the kiss in Indian films, the hint of a kiss between Raj Kapoor and Nargis is an excess that would have been scandalous but for the knowledge of their off-screen romance (Majumdar 2009).[13] Indeed, according to

[12] Quoted in Dyer (1986b:52)

[13] The disappearance of the kiss from the screen is something of a mystery. Since it was clearly present in early cinema, attempts to account for its subsequent absence have popularized the formulation 'unwritten ban' of the kiss. The Report of the Film Enquiry Committee 1951, Appendix viii, *Bombay Board of Film Censor: Suggestions Indicating Probable Objections to Films*, includes among the many suggestions, under the section vi on Sex, at number 12- 'kissing or embracing by

Majumdar, the knowledge of their off –screen romance might have even legitimized the kiss, because after all it was between real lovers and not a 'pretend kiss'. However, despite being 'the high priest of love on the Indian screen' (Reuben 1988: 77), Raj Kapoor proved unequal to the promise of love in real life. It is a matter of lore that later on he is reported to have dismissed their relationship with the words, "his wife was not his actress and his actress was not his wife".[14]

Guru Dutt's relationship with Waheeda Rehman was as well known if not as celebrated as the Raj Kapoor - Nargis affair. That Guru Dutt like Raj Kapoor was married and in the end unable to leave his wife, Geeta Dutt, for his lover is perhaps indicative of the shared cultural values of these two very dissimilar actor-directors. If Raj Kapoor brought a flamboyant romance to the screen, Guru Dutt as an auteur could be identified as the romantic artist par excellence.[15]Often identified with the characters he created, as the sensitive, suffering, marginalized poet Vijay

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adults exhibiting passion repugnant to good taste, shall not be shown. Though common in Western Countries, kissing and embracing by adults in public is alien to our country'. However, the ban on the kiss was clearly resented as is evident from B. D. Garga's article 'Kisses and Misses' in *The Motion Picture Magazine*, November 1950, available online http://hindi-films-songs.com/books/Motion-Picture-Magazine-November-1950.pdf). Garga presents a brief critical history of the kiss on-screen. Criticising 'the vagaries of our senseless censorship' as far as kissing was concerned, Garga maps the disappearance of the kiss which was boldly present even two decades ago and asks, 'Did we have more sensible view that time? Or has the moral code changed since then?' Conceding that Indians don't kiss in public he points out that 'lovers in India do kiss in privacy', Garga goes on to argue a case for a greater liberality and ends the article by suggesting that directors be allowed to exercise discrimination, and that 'none can endorse the silly fads and fancies of the censors'(pp. 15,16, 20). Throughout the 1960s the kiss was intensely debated in the magazines as demonstrated by Ranjani Mazumdar (2011). It is against this backdrop that the Khosla Committee, set up by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting rendered its report in 1969. Stating that the prohibition against on-screen kissing was based on an 'unwritten rule', the Khosla Committee Report, in fact, actually allowed the depiction of the kiss if necessary (Mazumdar ibid.). Madhav Prasad opines that the informal ban on kissing could be related to 'a nationalist politics of culture' (1998:88). However, Mazumdar reads the playful dalliance with the kiss in foreign location films of the 1960s as 'working creatively to generate alternative maps for the articulation of desire (ibid: 142)

[14] Quoted from Neepa Majumdar (2009) who notes that the veracity of these words and sentiments is not known (155).

[15] The idea of the 'romantic artist' as a man of feeling and passion but also a lost soul , carrying the burden of times is the result of the bunching together various discursive stands in European thought in the late eighteenth, early nineteenth century. *The Portable Romantic Reader* (1957) is an old but handy compilation of romantic thought.

of *Pyasa,* the talented but misunderstood and failed director, Suresh Sinha of *Kagaz Ke Phool*, Dutt epitomized 'the figure of a romantic artist who is riddled by philosophical doubts'(Mishra 2002: 113). His tragic suicide also consolidated his image as a romantic.[16] And yet it was not in Guru Dutt, in the true 'romantic spirit' to rebel against the norms of bourgeois respectability and break away from the security of his troubled marriage to Geeta Dutt. Interestingly, despite the similarities, his romance with Waheeda did not have the same resonance in popular perception as that of Raj Kapoor and Nargis. Probably, because of its greater secrecy, it was more of a scandal and did not quite acquire the iconic status of the latter. When magazines reported on the pair, it was to announce the so called rumour regarding the imminent divorce between the Dutts because of Guru Dutt's affair or romance with Waheeda (*Rajatpat,* November 1958). Guru Dutt's posthumous reputation as one of India's finest directors has also meant that biographies skirt the issue of his relationship with Waheeda.[17]Abrar Alvi is possibly the only person who unambiguously discusses their relationship in its various stages and he does this casually as he recounts his years with Guru Dutt.[18] And yet, of all the star lovers of the 1950s, the Guru Dutt-Waheeda affair is probably the only one to acquire an after–life in fiction. Ismat Chugtai's unusual novel *A Very Strange Man* (2007) is supposedly about 'a film producer who committed suicide after the dance he had made into a big star left him in the

16 In a tribute to Guru Dutt, 'the man who immortalized romance', Anirudha Bhattacharya, says that Guru Dutt's suicide ended an era of the sensitive romantic protagonist pitted against a materialist world' (*The Saturday Statesman*, October 20, 1990).

17 For instance Nasreen Munni Kabir's *Guru Dutt : A Life in Cinema* (1996) barely mentions Waheeda Rehman, although one presumes that the relationship would also have had relevance even to his film making.

18 Sathya Saran's, *Ten Years with Guru Dutt: Abrar Alvi's Journey* (2008) is based on conversation with Alvi.

lurch'.[19] That this so called producer was indeed Guru Dutt is reiterated in the introduction to the novel by its translator, Tahira Naqvi (ibid.)

Both Dev Anand and Suriyya and Dilip Kumar and Madhubala were openly in love, although in their case the obstacles to their love stories are easily understandable in the Indian context, particularly in the constraining social milieu outside of films and the film industry. The narrative logic of romance is known to require obstacles (Pearce 2007, Bottom 1993) and in both these cases parental objections provided the necessary foil. However, if it is expected that the 'romantic couple proves the strength of its love by the vigour with which it overcomes adversities' (Bottom 1993: 103) then this love ,in fact, proved to be a failure. Suriaya's grandmother put up a stiff opposition to her relationship with Dev Anand and sabotaged it at every turn, so that in the end the lovers seem to have capitulated. In the other case it was Madhubala's father who opposed her alliance with Dilip Kumar, and the relationship ended in acrimony and scandal in the court of law, where Dilip Kumar is known to have announced, infamously, 'I shall always love her till the day she dies! (Reuben 1993: 172). It is interesting that in both these instances it was the parents on the girls' side who opposed alliances which they saw, for various reasons, as unworthy of their wards. Also both the affairs attracted intense media speculation and gossip. Thus for example the vernacular press routinely 'reported' on the couples' wedding plans, plans of elopement, and even actual weddings.[20] Although much of this must have been

[19] The back cover of the novel refers to this line from Chugtai's interview in the journal *Mehfil* in 1972.

[20] At different times *Rajatpat* reported - Dilip Kumar and Madhubala were secretly married nearly a year ago and that now the couple's relationship was on the rocks because of the return of Kamini Kaushal in Dilip Kumar's life (August 15, 1954), - Dilip Kumar was married to an English girl and

pure speculation, the gossip industry seems to have got the broader contours of the blossoming relationships and the obstacles thereof quite right. When years later Dev Anand penned his autobiography, *Romancing with Life: An Autobiography* (2007), his account of his relationship with Suriyya is not very different than what one gleans from reading *Rajatpat* and *Chaya.*[21] In the end, the men moved on, and in a way, so did the women- Suriaya never married, and Madhubala did but died almost immediately.

These gossip magazines were rife with stories about the love affairs of numerous stars of the Bombay film industry. However, we will look at the discourse generated around the four iconic love stories mentioned above in order to read the construction of the popular grammar of love and romance in the 1950s. As these young and famous film stars tried to explore the experiential world of love, how far did the discursive engagement with stardom go towards legitimizing romance itself? Can it be suggested that these star affairs ultimately succeeded in making love quotidian? Indian audiences were not alien to love, having encountered it in songs, folk tales, theatre, novels, stories and poems. They were now experiencing it in films. However, when the stars, who performed love on screen also had real affairs and relationships off – screen, they were indulging in

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Madhubala was upset (October 15, 1956), the wedding between Dev Anand – Suriaya was impending and some 'communal reporters' had reacted adversely (February 15, 1950, p.17).

[21] Although Dev Anand writes about numerous affairs and sexual encounters, Suriaya was the first and the greatest love of his life. About their break up Dev Anand says, 'my heart sank, and my whole world shattered. There was no meaning to existence without her' (2007: 105). That this feeling was mutual is evidenced in Suriaya's memory of the 'first and last love' of her life (*Nayi Duniya*, 1990). Recalling the difficulties of this love she says that even after falling in love the duo could not meet in privacy for nearly year and a half and it was only then, when her grandmother was forced to leave the sets and go home to fetch a necklace that Suriaya had to wear for the sake of continuity that the lovers were able to be alone in her makeup room(56). Suriaya also maintains that more than Dev Anand being a Hindu, the real reason for the objection to their marriage was the fact that she was the family's financial support, whose loss was feared (57). In an interesting aside Suriaya also recalls that Kamini Kaushal who was in a relationship with Dilip Kumar always gave her fresh tips about how and where to meet your lover (56).

practices that had no social sanction, no precedent as a cultural practice and hence no generally agreed upon conventions of courtship etc. The star economy is said to depend upon a paradox- 'the star is at once ordinary and extraordinary, available for desire and unattainable' (Ellis 1991: 303). In the 1950s, a love affair most likely compounded the star's extraordinariness. At the same time it also made love more ordinary and possible. In the past, it is safe to say, love had been the exclusive prerogative of mythical or legendary figures like Radha-Krishna, Liala-Majnu, Heer-Ranza, or of the entirely fictional characters in novels and stories. By bringing it down from a purely imaginary and textual realm to that of the everyday, star love, in its extraordinariness, ironically, made love itself less extraordinary. Since in all their extraordinariness, stars were still persons and not gods or kings and queens and lived in the same contemporary times, their affairs suggested possibilities of an autonomous selfhood that could potentially be accessed by anyone. Since this new possibility had to contend with prevalent beliefs and practices that disallowed even casual social intercourse between young men and women, the negotiation with stardom was anxious and complicated.

Films have been star vehicles as well as sites for a dialogue on stardom, performance and the movie business. In the 1950s, films like *Albela* (1951) *Kathputli (1957), Sone Ki Chidiya (1958), Kagaz Ke Phool (1959),* displayed varying degrees of self-reflexivity in their engagement with performance, celebrity culture, and scandal. Also, as Majumdar argues, in the absence of an official discourse on stardom, the film screen could double up as a space where gossip about the private lives of stars was acknowledged and contained. Understandably, with romantic love as the ruling trope, it is no surprise to find films ploughing into

'real' stories of the stars' love affairs, consequently, becoming discursive sites to weigh and comment on love itself. An example of this is *Arzoo (*1950), with Dilip Kumar and Kamini Kaushal. Directed by Shaheed Lateef and written by Ismat Chughtai, the film sets out to tell a tragic tale of love, separation and death. Ismat Chughtai's work in films, except for *Garam Hava*, has largely gone unnoticed, probably, because many of the films she was involved with as a writer did not strike a chord or simply flopped.[22] However, at least three of her texts- two film scripts and one novel directly intervene and draw upon the film industry and hence provide a vital lens on star affairs. The film *Sone Ki Chidiya* (1958) on the life of Nargis and the novel *A Very Strange Man* on Guru Dutt will be referenced later on in the chapter. In the present discussion on film stars' extra-cinematic love affairs, *Arzoo* is significant because not only is it a star vehicle for the popular pair, but in drawing on a central aspect of the Dilip Kumar–Kamini Kaushal relationship, namely, the married status of the latter, it was engaging with the proscribed theme of adultery.

Kamini Kaushal was already married when she entered the film industry. Born in an upper class, educated, wealthy family, her profile was different from that of many other actresses in an industry, which was until recently, closed to women from 'cultured' backgrounds. Kamini Kaushal was married to her sister's husband Mr. Sood, after her sister died leaving behind two children. That her husband allowed her to enter the film industry is itself a surprise in a context where

[22] For instance the introduction to *Ismat: Her Life, her Times* (2000) makes a passing reference to her film career. Having married Shaheed Lateef against the wishes of her family, she is said to have joined him in setting up *Filmina* -a film company for which she wrote scripts while he directed the films.

fears about straying wives and gullible husbands were openly expressed.[23]Dilip Kumar and Kamini Kaushal acted in four films together and fell in love.[24]Stories about their 'intense, excruciatingly emotional and hopeless love' are well known (Reuben 2004:104). The vernacular press regularly reported on the rumours of the affair worried that Kamini Kaushal worked exclusively with Dilip Kumar (*Chaya*, January 1949, p. 10), or announced her return back into the industry and in Dilip Kumar's life (*Rajatpat*, August 1954).[25] On the ground, efforts to keep the lovers apart had all the elements of a filmy drama. Kamini Kaushal's brother is said to have stormed the sets threatening to shoot Kamini Kaushal, and soon after she had to withdraw from the film industry. (Reuben 2004*:* 107). It is significant that it is during this period that Dilip Kumar's image as a 'love legend' was in the making, and his films with Kamini Kaushal appear to have contributed to it. There is no doubt that the real life passion between the couple was consistently and spectacularly played out on screen. A review of *Shabnam* (Bibhuti Mitra, 1949) remarked, 'Their love scenes give glimpses of realism and both the artists seem to enjoy their romantic sequences' (*Filmindia*, September 1949, p.51). Similarly, a year before, although *Saheed* (Ramesh Saigal, 1948) had been criticized for 'diluting a political theme with inconsequential romance' the review nevertheless praised the two stars for performing 'some of the tenderest, most intimate and most moving love scenes that have ever been seen on the Indian screen' (*Filmindia*,

[23] The 'nationalist' slant of these concerns is evident in readers' queries worrying over how heroines could marry and remarry despite being 'Hindustani' women (*Rajatpat* January 15, 1958) . Also discussions or reportage of heroines' marriages had inevitable sarcastic references to henpecked or cuckolded husbands (*Chaya*, February 1950, p.8 April 1956, p.4)

[24] *Shaheed* (1948) *Shabnam* (1949) *Arzoo* (1950).

[25] This piece in Rajatpat was particularly vicious. Appearing long after the relationship was over, it suggested that Dilip Kumar was two timing Madhubala with his former lover and wondered at his ability in keeping both the ladies happy!

September 1948, p. 59-60). *Arzoo* was the last film they did together and its narrative of doomed lovers, literally points to the pair's extra-cinematic affair. In real life, the lovers had parted ways when the opposition to their relationship took a deathly turn and Kamini Kaushal's brother 'threatened to take Dilip's life' but ended up taking his own in a suicide bid because of 'his inability to put an end to (the) love affair'(Reuben 2004 : 108). In the film Kamini Kaushal plays 'Kamini', although Dilip Kumar's character's name is Badal. Can it be suggested that the retention of the female star's name aids the fixing or containing of her star persona within the frame of the film, while allowing the male star, appropriately named 'Badal' an effervescent presence and reality above and beyond the particular film? Aware of Dilip Kumar's desperate desire to marry Kamini Kaushal, Chughtai is supposed to have asked him, 'How can you marry an already married woman? A Hindu at that! Your family will never accept her' (Reuben 2004: 108). In the film, however, in keeping with the narrative conventions of Hindi Film, Chughtai does not present the heroine as already married. Kamini is a village damsel in love with Badal and an extended section at the beginning of the films has the childhood sweethearts Badal and Kamini frolic, sing songs, and romance each other. The passion and commitment of the lovers is underscored through successive scenes, so that when Badal is considered dead in an accidental fire, it is a devastated Kamini who succumbs to her father's insistence that she accept a local landlord's proposal of marriage. However, Kamini continues to pine for Badal and his return after a period of time destroys the tenuous peace of the landlord's household. Badal is unaware of the circumstance of her marriage and thinking her to have betrayed him, is bent on destroying her happiness. To that end

he starts visiting the family and also pretends to court Kamini's sister in-law. The film climaxes to an excruciating end as secrets spill out and a bullet aimed at Badal by her husband is intercepted by Kamini. Kamini's death between the two men as they hold her hands was seen as the only satisfying end to this story of doomed love. *The Times of India* review, which praised the film for its 'aplomb, ebullience and youthfulness', also said that 'the electric finale is the picture's crown, providing the most *satisfying solution* of tangled love yet offered in a film' (February 1950, p. 10) (italics added).[26] Kamini's dying words justify her death as the only possible solution to an existence that split her in two, her body belonging to her husband and her heart to Badal. Supposedly a major hit, the film, however, was not universally appreciated. In an unusually long, three page review entitled 'The Lateef's make a Mess of "Arzoo"! Distortion of Hindu Married Life!', Baburao Patel trashed the film makers for not understanding the spiritual bond between a Hindu married couple, which would not allow a woman to be disloyal to her husband even in words, let alone in deed. Patel indirectly blamed the writer-director team, and probably Dilip Kumar's 'Muslimness' for their lack of understanding of Hindu marriage norms (March 1950, p.53). It is interesting that Chughtai herself had pointed at the difference in their religions as one of the obstacles the extra-cinematic love would face. Obviously, Patel's outrageous charge misses the mark. In keeping with conventions of melodrama, 'realistic' obstacles in the form of familial and religious constraints are displaced in the film into misunderstandings and misrecognitions and are engraved on the writhing trembling body of the heroine, caught between the two men and shot dead at the

[26] The advertisement for the film in this paper announced, 'Indian National Picture's 'Love Classic'- So true, so thrilling, so tantalizing- It's the greatest love story of our times'. (January 28, 1950, p.10)

end. Arguably, *Arzoo* is a rare instance of film in this period in which the contradictions of modernity are enacted, in another but related cinematic context, through the figure of the woman (Mariam Hansen 2000). [27] That this enactment is 'literally**,** across the body of the woman, who tries to live them but more often than not fails (to) become a corpse by the end of the film' is also in this case the film's attempt to provide a solution to an intractable problem (ibid: 15). In the absence of social sanction, love could occupy the screen as romance, fantasy and sweet transgression, but extra- marital star affairs was an impossible love for which cinema had yet to find an acceptable idiom. Such love defied the logic of modernity's promise and even a progressive writer like Chughtai enforced a punishing regime on the body of her heroine.[28] Bizarrely, Baburao Patel even suggested that Kamini Kaushal must have suggested this particular ending to the film since it had some 'germs of reality'! That despite the gender bias and censure implicit in the film and reviews like that of *Filmindia*, these stars appropriated the pleasure of performing their love on screen is evident in Patel's grudging admittance that 'the embracing situations between the two are, however, quite effective' (ibid, p.52). Here, as in their other films, the on-screen performance of love, was, for the star pair as well as the audience, utopic moments snatched from the vice grip of social norms.

[27] Hansen's context is the Chinese silent films, which seem to have responded to modernity's many pressures in a more forthright fashion than could be seen in the fifties' Bombay films. The greater ambivalence and mobility of the female figure in these films, at once invoking and challenging traditional binaries, noticed by Hansen (2000:16), cannot be noticed in Bombay films to this extent and with as much thematic clarity.

[28] It should be noted that at this time the public sphere was engaged with the passing of the Hindu Code Bill and the *Bombay Chronicle* and *The Times of India* regularly reported on heated debates in the parliament, as well as about demonstrations on the streets against the passing of the bill. The Bill, that also legalized divorce, would be passed four years hence, in 1954.

When vernacular magazines like *Rajatpat* and *Chaya* reported on star love affairs- the ups and downs, the obstacles encountered, they did so in a casual matter-of- fact tone that gave their reportage a ring of authenticity. Thus, stories about Nargis' plans of moving out of her brothers' house to her own flat (*Chaya*, March 6, 1953,p.10), of Raj Kapoor's father, Prithviraj Kapoor's anger over their affair (*Rajatpat*, December 1949), of Raj Kapoor's wife , Krishna's indignation in response to the stars' affair (*Rajatpat*, November 1954), or of the strange confrontation between Nargis and Krishna (*Rajatpat* July 1954), about Suriaya's mother's objections to the shooting of a kiss by Dev Anand to the star during the shooting of the film *Afsar* (*Chaya*, April 1950, p.6), of the great love between Madhubala and Dilip Kumar, of the discord between the two and so on featured regularly (*Rajatpat* January 13, 1958).[29] At times the magazines also reported that these star pairs were secretly married or were about to be married.[30] Simultaneously, the readers too were relentless in their curiosity, and insisted on knowing whether or not rumours of the affairs /marriages were true or false. Interestingly, this curious probing into the private lives of stars reveals a wary

[29] The story about Nargis quaintly recounts her inviting herself to a party at the Kapoor's and Krishna's jealousy at Nargis' attempts of ingratiating herself with the elders in the family. Dev Anand's autobiography corroborates the story about the kiss except that it was Suriyya's grandmother who accompanied Suriyya on the sets and objected to the said kiss on the sets of Afsar. The long piece in *Rajatpat* titled 'Madhubala Dilip Kumar ka Romance' recounts the various stages of the story of romance between these two very beautiful and talented stars. It begins by describing Madhubala's career, her family's dependence on her and the affair between her and one of the most popular contemporary stars. It details how in defiance of her father's strict code which demanded that she returned home from shooting before sun down, Madhubala spent long hours in the night cuddled up with Dilip Kumar in his car. Then it details a very curious incidence of Dilip Kumar, goaded by friends, turning up drunk at Madhubala's door demanding that she accompany him then and there and beating her up mercilessly because she refused. Then the subsequent anger of Ataullah Khan and refusal to allow Madhubala for the *Naya Daur* shoot is described as resulting in the end of their relationship.

[30] The news of secret marriage of Nargis and Raj Kapoor was in fact gathered from an international source. *Rajatpat* reports that the magazine *Star* from London referred to the pair as married, and so did a Russian magazine (January 15, 1957).This magazine also reported the imminent wedding of Dev Anand & Suriaya (February 17, 1950).

interest in something that was essentially seen as scandalous and immoral and specific to the world of cinema even by the magazines themselves. An article in *Rajatpat*, for instance, discussing 'filmy' romances in extremely derisive terms, produces an inventory of the numerous affairs of various stars, to comment on their fickleness, lack of commitment, entrapment, adultery and so on. (July 22, 1956).[31]The film industry in this imagination was in fact a den of vice, and its romantic alliances mere debauchery. Clearly, the love or romance that emerged in the pages of these gossip magazines was greatly at variance with what was being projected on the cinematic screen. Indeed, often the gossip about the off- screen romances, was framed, as it were, by articles that lampooned or lambasted 'filmy romance'. An example of this sneeringly lists various kinds of love- 'love at first sight', 'London returned love', 'Socialist love', 'Progressive love', 'Sorry love', even 'Dilip Kumar love'(*Rajatpat*, February 15, 1956). But, equally on-screen love could also receive scathing criticism for being lustful, depraved and nothing but a 'cheaf romance' (*sic*) (*Rajatpat*, November 1949) in the pages of these unfriendly magazines.[32] Richard Dyer's view of publicity as the more likely source of the 'authentic' or the 'real' self of the star persona allows us to see that the unmanaged publicity received by the stars of the 1950s, through these gossip magazines, seemed to reveal what the stars 'did' behind the screen, even if not the 'real person' behind the star persona. The transformative, utopic fantasy of romance on screen thus gave way, in these magazines to stories that foregrounded the predicament of romance in a social context that was predominantly stratified along the lines of class, community, religion and gender.

[31] *Parde ke piche: taak zaak* (Behind the Curtain).
[32] Ironically, while talking of the sexual economy of filmdom this article was titled, '*Manasik Vyabhichar Ke Adde'* (Dens of Mental Vice)

If this discourse around star affairs variously reveals the 'reality' of the stars- lack of courage in face of parental pressures, hypocrisy and/or chauvinism then the tone and texture of this discourse is also revelatory of the fans' complicated negotiation with a practice that probably was, at one and the same time, attractive and alarming. For instance the question of caste, which was mostly irrelevant to the cinematic imagination of romance, regularly crops up in the numerous queries about the stars. Given the complex reality of caste in India (Dipankar Gupta 1991, C.J. Fuller 1996) and its continued importance in matters of marriage (Béteille 1996) it is not surprising that readers, who were consumers of cinematic romance, would be intrigued by the transgression implicit in these off-screen romances to inquire about the caste of various heroes and heroines. *Rajatpat* and *Chaya* regularly received queries about this or that heroine's caste, and their replies - 'woman' or 'an actress has no caste' etc., essentialized the actress as an outsider in order to neutralize her transgression (*Rajatpat,* August 15,1954).[33] The freedom accessed by the stars in forming alliances across rigid lines of community and religion that thwarted the audiences' own reality also caused much chagrin. Questions like- 'What do you make of Sunil Dutt's and Nargis' Hindu- Muslim marriage?' , or 'Will Nargis marry according to Muslim rites or prefer a civil marriage?' (*Filmfare,* June 25, p.32) or 'Will Nargis marry me, since I too am a high class Muslim?' (*Chaya,* April 7, 1950 p.8) reflect the fans' struggle to understand and contain the meaning of these new desires and aspirations that conflicted with traditional certainties.

[33] But it's not only the heroines. Even Lata Mangeshkar's caste in a matter of interest as is her 'impending' marriage to C. Ramchandra! (*Rajatpat,* August 15, 1954 , April 1 1957)

At the other end of the spectrum, even though star love affairs were never directly mentioned by the English language magazines, they clearly capitalized on the gossip circulating orally and in the vernacular press by running features that tacitly assumed the knowledge of the affairs. Thus, in keeping with the magazine's focus on the 'professional' aspects of stardom, *Filmfare* for example ran features that assumed as they consolidated the connection between stars and romance. For instance, 'Romantic teams of the Indian screen', was a series that started with Raj Kapoor and Nargis in the first issue in 1954, devoted to stars, who had been famously paired together on screen. That many of them were real life lovers, some even married, was probably a strategic selling point of a feature, which was purportedly only about the professional teaming of the stars on-screen. What interests us here is the way in which the cinematic pairing of these stars was used as a ploy to acknowledge and reiterate commonly shared knowledge regarding the relationships. At the same time, the magazine stayed close to the screen image. The setting, clothes, accessories, and pose of the stars photographed for these features suggested the 'casual' glamour and sophisticated conviviality associated with films and the film industry while disavowing the rough and tumble of the affairs, the torrid ups and downs, that were actually being played out in full public view.[34]

[34] For example the Romantic Teams number six was Dilip Kumar and Nimmi, and since they were not rumoured to be in a relationship, we have one picture on the sets with some props- a bundle of a large rope against which the stars pose, Nimmi in a blood red dress and Dilip Kumar in a rich blue cape like over coat/gown. But the next picture is a black and white photograph of the pair standing against a car, dressed casually in everyday clothes, chatting happily, seemingly oblivious of the camera (*Filmfare*, November 12, 1954). However, the best in the lot is the team number one, featuring Raj Kapoor and Nargis (August 20, 1954). In one picture, they seem to be on the set-Raj Kapoor's green shirt matches the background of dark foliage and Nargis is in a white saree embroidered in red and a matching ethnic red blouse, both sitting on a boulder back to back at a slight angle, turning to each other in conversation. The line under the photo reads –' To millions of boys and girls, Raj and Nargis are the perfect lovers- two happy people in a care worn, war torn world of sighs and heart breaks' (6). Other pictures show the couple in more casual attire, sitting

Stars as Models

Along with being attractive and engaging the stars of the 1950s like celebrities elsewhere, were considered models and authorities in certain areas of behavior and practice such as fashion, consumption and life style as they provided sites for identification with ideals of femininity and masculinity. Stars are known to function as stylistic and ideological signifiers in a capitalist economy based on consumption (Dyer 1986b, Herzog & Gaines 1991, Stacey 1994). In the context of Bombay cinema of the 1950s, what set the stars apart from the rest of the world, along with wealth and life style was the extraordinary liberty to perform love on screen and practice it off- screen. In accessing an affective regime and a cultural form associated with romantic love, the stars were availing of modernity's heady promise of individual choice and agency. Along with a certain life style associated with emergent capitalism, stars' love life indicated the allure and dangers of modern selfhood, and stars were mobilized as authorities on matters romantic. Consequently, they also became models to be emulated or, in certain contexts, shunned.

Given that romance dominated the screens in the 1950s and the extra-cinematic discourse too looped around that theme, writings about films and film personalities in interviews, features even essays focused on issues of romance and love. Thus, stars' performance of romance in films was a topic of interest. Since the manner in which romance was depicted in films had undergone change and kissing and the explicit physicality of 1930s had given way to an idiom that

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intimately in homely setting 'discussing a script', etc. The accompanying write-ups in all the issues discuss the stars as professional actors who are successful romantic pairs on-screen.

mobilized poetic lyrics, mise-en-scène, and camera work and underplayed but intense emoting, stars were seen as performing a difficult and exciting act.[35] Capitalizing on audience interest in stars' acting talent in *Filmfare* ran a feature 'Romantic scenes' across many issues to which stars contributed by recounting their awkwardness, shame, or thrill in performing romance for the first time in their film careers.[36] Essentially, stars addressed the issue as professional actors in terms of spontaneity, mechanicalness, prudery and so on. There were no parallel articles or features about, say, performing action scenes, domestic scenes, court scene, rural scenes or any other. This is a measure of the cultural significance of the phenomenon. It indicates the industry's self understanding in terms of its investment, thematic and financial, in this commodity it manufactured and consistently profited from and for which the stars were 'brand ambassadors'.

However, the performance of love alone was not the source of the star's expertise in matters of love; her off-screen experiences also certainly played a part. An example of this is a piece entitled, 'This thing called love' by Madhubala written at a time when her romance with Dilip Kumar was at its height (*Filmfare*, March 30, 1956, p.4).A similar essay entitled 'Love' written by the 1930's star Sulochana, is an example, according to Neepa Majumdar, of the title promising insight into the private self but turning out to be mere 'decoy to lure readers' to read only about the professional life of the actress and the value of good friendly

[35] A *Filmfare* feature started by stating , 'Movie styles have changed, "silent" love scenes were torrid, "talkie" love scenes became wordy, and in this feature four of the film land's top romantic stars rehearse – ' My first love scene' (April 25, 1958, p.5)

[36] For instance, Nimmi, who is featured first, said 'Tantalising, intriguing and difficult to film, the love scene, which is so emotional on screen is a painstaking combination of mechanical work and imaginative writing (January 16, 1957, p.4). Nutan addressing the issue next saw the limitation in filming love scenes in the 'prudery and a wrong sense of values and their combined expression, that is, censorship' (January 30, 1957, p.4)

relationships therein. Love in Sulochana's essay is "not the elemental, self-conscious love between man and woman" (quoted in Majumdar 2009:47). In a striking similarity to Sulochana's 'Love', Madhubala's 'This thing called love', rejects the idea of love as 'merely a romantic attraction between men and women', and goes on to eulogize it as a great gift to mankind, something one essentially receives from parents. To the extent that Madhubala speaks of love in a generalized way, it was similar to Sulochana's refusal to publicly share her private self. However, by speaking of love only in the context of parental obligations and sacrifice, it reveals, despite itself, the pressures she must have experienced and tried to justify. Almost all news in the vernacular press about Madhubala consistently referred to her father's interfering and authoritative presence (*Chaya*, June 12, 1950, p.8 and *Rajatpat*, September 15, 1951) His influence and control over her was well known and commented upon.[37] Could Madhubala's claims of holding 'old values' to her heart and of being 'old fashioned' be read as, actually, even if obliquely, reflecting the pressures she felt? It is significant that she was expected to have something to say about love because as a heroine starring in romantic roles as well as a modern woman rumoured to have a romantic liaison, she was considered something of an authority in matters of love. At the beginning of the piece she demurs that she is expected to write on a subject that has 'confounded thinkers and made philosophers tongue-tied' (ibid.). Arguably, by valuing traditional bonds over and above freely and equally formed relationships of love, Madhubala, at once disparaged the significance of the emergent practice of romantic love along with her own representative authority as a 'practitioner'. Little

[37] In his biography of Dilip Kumar, Bunny Reuben says that Ataullah Khan 'was known to position himself as spectator-cum- guardian-cum-censor-cum- what not whenever his daughter's love scenes with any leading man in any film were to be filmed' (2004 :256)

wonder that what was possible as filmic imagination came up against prosaic obstacles created by familial constraints, reinforcing the sense of cinematic romance as, at best utopian, at worst inauthentic.

Notwithstanding the conflicted and contrary imagery of love produced by the stars' engagement with its discourse, they consistently ruled its discursive space. For instance, six to seven questions out of the eight or nine addressed to stars in '*The Stars Advise You'* columns in *Filmfare* (1958) were pertaining to love, romance, marriage, parental and social obstacles to romantic unions, agency in regard to choice of partner etc. By and large, stars answered these questions with authoritative equanimity although at least one star, noticeably, displayed some annoyance at the ubiquity of queries about love. Thus, before going on to answering the questions addressed to him, Balraj Sahani complains, 'it is depressing to note that most letters are about love. No doubt, love is an important part of life, but there are other important things as well. There is one's country, one's society, one's creative interest. It is a poor reflection on film stars that young people should ask them only about love' (*Filmfare*, June 1958, p.33). Evidently, in trying to contain the influence of the romantic paradigm seen as a private concern, Sahani's leftist and progressive politics and association with IPTA sought an expansion of the self in realm of the social. Even so, the very same politics seems to have informed his advice to a young girl, who was in a quandary about whether she ought to obey her parents or follow her heart- 'I believe that one should marry only for love. I don't believe in arranged marriages. They are a relic of the past' (ibid.). Contrastingly, Dilip Kumar's advice to a wife, who found her husband straying, was to be patient, considerate and self –sacrificing in order to win him

back (*Filmfare*, November 1957, p.13). Interestingly, he says, ‘‘the other woman’ by the very nature of her position in the ‘triangle’ sooner or later will make her meanness evident’ (ibid.). Considering, Dilip Kumar had played the ‘other man’ in a number of films like *Devdas* and *Arzoo,* wherein he continued to love his married, former beloved, and *Sangdil* (1952*)*, a rendering of Jane Eyre, in which he portrayed an already married man in love with a another girl, his ‘advice’ painfully reveals the unthinking reproduction of ‘traditional wisdom’ by an actor who was considered ‘the love legend’ of the 1950s. In many ways such columns are sites that afford an unexpected glimpse of the ‘private’ ‘real’ selves of the stars who performed modernity on screen. For instance in an interview to a group of youngsters, Dilip Kumar said, ‘I certainly do not approve of these ‘modern’ girls- with due respect to present company’ (*Filmfare*, April 26, 1957, p.77). Once again we see the disavowal of modern selfhood by an iconic personality, who was certainly looked upon as a model for certain kind of practice and agency. His notion of the modern girl as a partying socialite, who manipulates her husband, once again shows a severely compromised understanding of even the limited world of the film industry itself , which depended on the labour, performative and otherwise, of numerous working girls. At the same time there is no denying the fact that this star discourse on love is a multivalent site of contrary positions. Hence, Dev Anand’s answer to a young Hindu girl whose Muslim boyfriend had succumbed to parental pressure is revealing - ‘No matter what pressure is brought to bear by parents, I do not think a young man of today can be forced in a marriage

he does not like' (*Filmfare*, January 13, 1958, p.19). This reveals openness to the possibilities of forging a new self, as it does the star's own liberal persona.[38]

It is not surprising that the construction of stars as models or authorities in matters of love was in tandem with the idea of romance that was produced by films. The ubiquity of the romantic trope as well as its formulaic structure was reflected in film advertisements, which often announced the romance, fantasy, dramatic, and adventure aspects of film narratives. Simultaneously, these narratives, which could be complicated if not complex, were often described reductively as 'boy-meets- girl' story, not only for the purposes of advertisements but also for commentary and criticism. An editorial in *Filmindia* for instance, warned film producers against attempting a biopic on Mahatma Gandhi because they were not capable, 'temperamentally, culturally and intellectually' to handle anything more than 'boy-meets-girl pictures'.[39] This did not stop film makers from advertising their films using the same terminology, and it was common to see something like 'When Boy (of Today) Meets Girl (of Tomorrow'.[40] Even a film with purportedly 'social' content on the issue of caste and untouchablility is advertised 'Boy-meets-girl story: Girl- daughter of a sweeper, Boy-Zamindar's son' (*Bombay Chronicle*, December 25, 1948, p.4). Since the possibility of romance itself rather than its difficult progress, the fact of youngsters meeting each other, without parental control or supervision, instead of the complex story of their evolving relationship was the focus of films, 'boy-meets- girl' was a formula

[38] That Dev Anand was indeed libertarian and not merely liberal is revealed by his autobiography, *Romancing with Life: An Autobiography* (2007).
[39] The editorial was titled 'Don't 'murder' The Mahatma Again! A warning to the 'Godses' of the film industry. (April 1948:3)
[40] Advertisement of *Aaj or Kal*, *Filmindia*, May 1948, p.5

deployed to promote as well as criticize.[41] What is most interesting for the present discussion is that the stars' authority in this matter was also used to commoditize the 'boy-meets-girl' formula as life style. Thus over a number of issues during the year, 1961, *Filmfare* deployed the new rising stars of the film industry in an extensive photo feature entitled 'Boy- meets- Girl'. Dressed in modern clothes, posing variously on beaches, gardens, parks and other outdoor spaces, with cars, bicycles, horses, camels, the stars modeled as 'couples' in physical proximity and easy intimacy. Notwithstanding the fact that actual star affairs were not mentioned in the magazine, the creation of these fictitious 'couples', drew on the visual idiom of film songs to advertize a new cultural form. The stars here were models for a life style of wealth and luxury as also for an idea of romance that publicly allowed young boys and girls the chance to meet freely and independently to choose their own partners. On the other hand, the vernacular press too cashed on the formula and filled its pages with boy-meet-girl stories and photo features, albeit with a tone of derision. A photo feature entitled, 'Beginning and end of modern love!' tracks, via pictures, the various stages of the meeting and, finally, the parting of boys and girls (*Rajatpat*, December 15, 1955). The pictures, purportedly stills from a film, *Shikar*, are arranged to tell a story, not of the utopic romance of films, but of the supposedly fickle, casual love affairs of film stars that end with parting as both look for new 'prey' (Shikar). Here, modern love was the frivolous indulgence of film stars and mere filmic entertainment for the readers. In reaction to films and its stars, the two spaces of discourse, English and vernacular, thus constructed at least

[41] A review in *Filmindia* damns "*Mulaqat*" for being "Yet another "Boy-Meets-Girl" picture, August, 1948, p. 57.

two different imaginaries of love. What was elite life style for one was licentious fashion for another.

Amidst this discourse that mobilized stars as models, examples or experts in matters of romantic love, it is possible to usefully consider the surface of the screen as the space that absorbed, reflected, and reinvented the idea of an 'ideal romance' while it utilized specific stories of star affairs. One of the most extraordinary and singular examples of this is *Mughal-e- Azam*(1960), a film that appeared to have mobilized the knowledge of its star pair's extra-cinematic relationship, to retell the legend of prince Salim's love for Anarkali, to spectacular effect. *Mughal-e-Azam's* significance at this juncture is due to two interrelated features, its cinematic ambition and success, and the nature of its engagement with love. With a production history that spanned the 1950s, along with its record breaking box- office success at the end of the period, this spectacular, 'larger than life' story of an 'ideal' or 'model' love, performed by real life lovers is a cultural phenomenon, which can productively be seen as recording as well as refiguring the meaning of love and romance for the decade.[42] To be sure, despite its incredible success, contemporary elite opinion was not unequivocal. The *Filmindia* review had criticized the film severely for being a historical without being true to history. According to the review, Salim's many marriages as well as the exact contours of the legend of his rebellion against Akbar over Anarkali are ignored by the film, which instead gives us 'the usual film romance between Dilip Kumar and Madhubala' (August 1960,p.45).

[42] Popular opinion has maintained that K. Asif worked fifteen long years making the film (Warsi 2009:32), the *Encyclopedia of Indian Cinema*'s entry states that it was nine years in the making. Financed by Shapoorji Pallonji, it was to be one of the most expensive films ever made in India.

Up until *Mughal-e-Azam*, stories and gossip about the star pair, who acted in only four films together, starting with *Tarana (*1951) had been duly noted by the vernacular press and ignored by the English. *Filmfare's* 'Romantic Teams of the Indian Screen' feature, bizarrely, portrayed Nimmi with Dilip Kumar (November 12, 1954). However, Dilip Kumar and Madhubala's love was visible to all, and even the *Filmindia* review of *Tarana* abandoned its usual sourness to praise the pair's performance for their 'realistic' romance with the words, 'Both have almost lived their roles and their romantic sequences seem to take the hue from the real canvas of life. Incidentally, Madhubala gives the best performance of her screen career (she) seems to have discovered her soul in Dilip Kumar's company' (November 1951, p.53). Dilip Kumar's brother, Ahsan, is quoted to have said about the film, 'The man was deeply involved at the time, it is natural to have come across on the screen' (Lanba 2002: 82). The screen thus, once again, become a transparent medium, allowing a glimpse into real love between the pair, as their performance of romance seemed to acquire its affective charge, ironically, from being a 'non- performance'. Nevertheless, the love that was so 'spontaneously', 'genuinely' and 'authentically' visible on screen in all their films(Akbar 1997: 126), was in fact severely compromised in real life. Almost all the gossip about Madhubala surfacing in the vernacular press also featured her father, Ataullah Khan. Ataullah Khan had played a significant role in molding Madhubala's life and career, starting from bringing her to Bombay in 1942 to act in films at the age of seven. Since then until her early death in 1969, Khan is said to have managed her career, choosing films and directors, deciding the terms of the contracts, and laying down rules regarding the time and place of shooting (Akbar 1997, Reuben,

1993, 2004). Crucially, he seems to have also played the villain in the blossoming love story between her and Dilip Kumar. On the face of it, theirs was a relationship that could have led to marriage because both were single, and more importantly, both were Muslims. The vernacular press bristled with stories of their affair and impending marriage with Ataullah Khan playing an important role in all these narratives (*Rajatpat*, December 15, 1955). Apart from stories about Khan's many arguments and fracas with directors, journalists and others, his hostility to Dilip Kumar was also reported (*Rajatpat* , September 15, 1951, June 15, 1952, January 13 1958). Khan's excessive control of Madhubala's life and movements, and his entire family's financial dependence on her, seems to have driven a wedge between the lovers, whose break up was a spectacle played out in full public view in the court of law (Akbar 1997, Reuben 1993). It is reported that during the making of *Naya Daur (*1958) Ataullah Khan refused to allow Madhubala on the outdoor shoot because he wished to prevent the relationship between the two lovers from developing further. An incensed B.R Chopra pulled him in court for breach of contract and it is said that Dilip Kumar, who was, by then, at the end of his tether over Madhubala's indecisiveness, took a stand against her, thus ending their relationship once and for all (Akbar 1997, Reuben, 1993, 2004).

Significantly, the trajectory of the star pair's affair seems to have unfolded in parallel with the making and production of Mughal-e-Azam. K. Asif had started planning the film in the late 1940s, had made several starts, aborted casting choices and decisions before he finally settled on the star pair. On the whole, Bombay film stars' off-screen romances and relationships seem to have played a role in the casting decisions of many films. For instance, it was a rule with Raj Kapur that

Nargis worked with R.K studio alone, and he was expressly against her working with Dilip Kumar. Thus when Dilip Kumar was chosen to play Salim, Nargis automatically opted out and was eventually replaced by Madhubala, who is said to have been Dilip Kumar's choice for the role of Anarkali. However, by the time the film was completed and released in 1960, the rift between the two had taken place, and in fact portions of the film were shot when they were no longer lovers. If in the 1950s, the on-screen performance of romance could authenticate off-screen star affairs, perhaps the pleasure afforded by Mughal-e-Azam was more complex? May I suggest that in presenting a spectacular, legendary tale of death –defying love through the performative bodies of stars, whose love was far from steadfast, the film, concurrently, underlined the contrast between the quotidian and the ideal, between fact and fiction, between reality and fantasy? One example, among the many in the film of this dual effect, is the scene where Emperor Akbar confronts the pair for the first time in the course of their encounters. Salim and Anarkali are sharing an intimate moment when they are alerted by the sound of the emperor's approach. Salim tries to hold back the frightened Anarkali, with the words, '*Muhabbat jo darti hai , woh Muhabbat nahi, gunah hai, aaiyashi hai'*, but she nevertheless tries to escape and runs towards the door, only to be stopped at the entrance by the wrathful emperor's colossal figure. Anarkali runs back to Salim's arms and faints. Legend has it that Madhubala truly fainted during the shooting of this scene. The strange equivalence of this scene with the known reality about the affair meant that when Salim articulates an ideal of love; *love which is afraid is not love, but an abomination, an indulgence instead!*, the knowledge that in real life Madhubala was in fact afraid of her father and therefore unable to exercise her will

would have allowed a complicated reading of the scene that plays with this contrast between the ideal and the real. Stories abound about the stars' visceral experiences during the shooting for the film. (Reuben 2004, Akbar 1997, Narwekar 2006, Warsi 2009).The painful weight of real iron chains Madhubala had to endure, and the similar endurance demanded of Dilip Kumar in the battle scenes with heavy eighty kilos iron armour, the scars and abrasions on their bodies, erase the distinction between experience and performance as the actual physical suffering of the stars layers the performance of suffering and pain. Simultaneously, the pain endured and performed by the stars for the characters, Salim and Anarkali can be imagined to acquire its affective charge from the real separation experienced by them as their relationship was ending in the process. For instance actor Ajit recounts an incidence when in a scene where Salim slaps Anarkali; Dilip Kumar had hit Madhubala hard, bringing tears to her eyes. K. Asif is said to have consoled her that this was a sign that Dilip Kumar was still in love with her (Warsi 2009: 92). By now, the stars were not on talking terms, and the excess of this gesture momentarily reveals the reality of the stars' love underlying the screen image of ideal love and lovers.

Structured around a series of standoffs and showdowns between the lovers and the patriarchal figure, Akbar, Mughal-e-Azam brought to the screen in the most straight forward way the unambiguous story of love's impossibility in a patriarchal context. Akbar brings the weight of his power and authority to bear upon Salim's desire to love and marry Anarkali, a lowly court dancer. Patriarchal power, which was sparingly imagined and visualized in the 1950s, finds a full throated, monumental presence in Prithviraj Kapoor's performance as Akbar. The

pre-modern, aristocratic setting of the film allows for the articulation of this power in its most visceral ruthlessness. At different narrative points Anarkali is chained and imprisoned, ordered to be killed, just as Salim is almost killed at the mouth of a cannon. Although both lovers show exemplary courage and sacrifice, and both physically survive Akbar's wrath, their separation at the end of the film asserts the ultimate victory of authority and patriarchy. Interestingly, after the initial few sequences devoted to the formation of the couple, among them the famous erotically charged sequence where Dilip Kumar caresses Madhubala's face with a feather, the rest of the film plays out the extended conflict between the lovers and the emperor. Again and again, one scene after another, the confrontation between either or both the lovers and Akbar is staged and articulated through highly charged dialogues and performance. Thus the narrative momentum and affective charge of the film depends not as much on scenes of love as those of conflict, pain and separation. Also Anarkali's delicate, wilting, lovelorn act with Salim is short lived and overshadowed by her defiant stance opposite Akbar, in and out of chains, the most spectacular instance of which is her dance to the song *Pyar kiya toh darna kya.*

The song in colour, in the otherwise black and white film, is central to the film's diegesis as it stages the open rebellion of the lowly court dancer. After spending a night in prison tied by heavy iron chains, Anarkali is released by Akbar on the condition that she distances herself from Salim after convincing him of her faithlessness. She is then allowed, as a concession, to perform one last dance in the court. Salim quickly assumes the worst and in a highly charged scene berates and slaps her. Following upon these encounters, Anarkali's dance, the lyrics and the

performance, is a shock to both Akbar and Salim, the one being smug and the other in despair, as her opening words declare the courage of love – *pyar kiya toh darna kya.* Staged with spectacular mise-en-scene; the multiple reflections of the dancer in the mirrors on the ceiling, the song announces the ultimate triumph of love- *chhup na sakegaa ishq hamaaraa chaaro.n taraf hai unakaa nazaaraa*.[43] As Anarkali proclaims the fearlessness of the lovers in the face of any mere worldly power, her defiant words, *parda nahi jab koin khuda se, bando se parda karna kya* directly question Akbar's authority.[44] Underscoring the fault lines of this oppressive relationship, the song is also the site of Anarkali's transformation as she stakes a claim on personal autonomy and freedom. That this staging of the arrival of the individual via love has resonated as an anthem in 'Love's Republic' is evidenced by its unflagging popularity down the decades since the 1950s. However, contemporaneously, Madhubala's off-screen dependence and subservience to Ataullah Khan, in ironic contrast with the song's affect and effect, would have exercised a reverse pull on its meaning, while simultaneously allowing a knowing pleasure due to its impossible idealism. If through her film roles Madhubala acquired an image of, 'an ideal of free Indian woman, or what India hopes the free Indian woman will be …a symbol of the advance guard of a revolution' (Cort 1952: 25), publicity had exposed a 'reality' which contradicted that image. Perhaps *Mughal-e-Azam*'s incredible success, owed something to the contradictions it helped mobilize, and the dialectic of reality and fantasy it sustained.[45]

[43] Our love will not be silenced, it is visible everywhere.
[44] When there is no hiding from god, why be afraid of mere mortals.
[45] I refer to David Cort's piece on Madhubala, 'The biggest star in the world, and she is not in Beverly hills' in the chapter on song. If the hyperbole of the title suggests a certain kind of

Simultaneously, it is essential to note that for all its success, *Mughal-e-Azam* has slipped through the folds of critical discourse and although it received a book length tribute written in the popular mode as well as a book devoted to reproducing its original dialogue in Urdu, it has found little place in film scholarship of the 1950s.[46] A chapter in Ira Bhaskar and Richard Allen's *Islamicate Cultures of Bombay Cinema* (2009) and a chapter in Ramna Walia's dissertation on Bombay film remakes are signs of growing interest in this 'celluloid monument' (Walia 20ll:70). The disinterest in *Mughal-e-Azam* evidenced by the scholarship on 1950s is probably due to the film's period form; the fact that it is a historical love story makes it difficult to accommodate it within the canon organized around a negotiation with the nation and the construction of the modern citizen-subject (Chakravarty 1993, Vasudevan 1994, 1995, Prasad 1998). Arguably, the film's narrative structure is that of a classic feudal family romance, albeit with a twist. Thus, as described by Prasad (1998:30), we have the 'high-born figure' indeed 'a prince', who undergoes 'trials that test(ed) his courage', but in the end instead of returning 'to inherit the father's position and to marry', Salim is defeated by his father's superior power, and his beloved, Anarkali, allowed to survive on the condition that she agrees to be exiled from Akbar's kingdom. Notably, the film's epic narrative of love is, in fact, threaded with not only 'a radical critique of power' (Bhaskar & Allen 2009:35) but of the nation state as well. Thus, even if the 'Hindustan' of the film is Akbar's kingdom and not

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engagement with stardom generally, the fact that Cort should compare Madhubala with Hollywood stars is intriguing. Also, this fortuitous archival find points to the presence of international circuits of media and stardom even in the 1950s

[46]Warsi, Shakil (2009) *Mughal-e-Azam: An epic of Eternal Love*, New Delhi: Rupa and Kabir, Nasreen Munni & Akhtar Suhail (2006) *The Immortal Dialogue* of K. Asif's *Mughal-e-Azam*: With a foreword by Javed Akhtar, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

modern India, Salim's will in being relentlessly pitched against the demands of this Hindustan, speaks to and of the concerns of an emergent democracy. The film opens with an image of a map of Hindustan, and the voice–over proclaims the greatness of the land and Akbar' love for his kingdom. Salim, however, despite Akbar's efforts to train him in appropriate masculinity, remains a poet at heart, indifferent to matters of warfare, statecraft and, dare one say, calls of 'citizenship'. He desires only Anarkali, and at one point says to his mother, 'I want nothing of your Hindustan, except Anarkali. To Akbar's jibe, '*Hindustan koi tumhara dil nahi, jis par ek laundhi raaj kare,* Salim's reply, '*mera dil bhi apka Hindustan nahi, jis par apki hukumat chale'* implicitly questions the right of the nation to dictate to the individual in matters of heart.[47] Ira Bhaskar and Richard Allen opine that the film's conflict speaks of 'the unresolved issues of caste and class grievances' dogging our democracy and Akbar's forgiveness of Anarkali suggest, particularly 'in the context of the Nehruvian state' that 'there is a place in Mughal-e-Azam for a merciful conception of justice' (152). It is important, however, to emphasize that the film's imagination of an ideal love, in fact, projected the national space as barricaded and hierarchical and as such unable to deliver the more fundamental justice; namely the individual's right to self-determination. The idealized image of love, which asks of individuals a near impossible exercise of agency, Mughal-e-Azam bleakly suggests, is contrary to the larger project of the nation. Finally, coming back to the star discourse how did individual stars' inability to live this ideal, even as they performed it masterfully, affect their cultural status as models of this practice? Richard Dyer suggests that the tension

[47] Hindustan is not your heart that a mere girl should rule over it! My heart also is not your Hindustan that you could rule over it!

between ‘star-as-person’ and his or her image itself become ‘crucial to that image’ (1986b:69). *Mughal-e-Azam* mobilized this tension to articulate an ideal of love and simultaneously announced its impossibility.

The Actress

The web of articulations and meanings of love produced by 1950s cinema and the contemporary star discourses, crucially, also came to focus on the term and phenomenon of ‘the actress’. The investment in romance had already meant that thematically heroines were pivotal to the films’ narrative and performative energy. The extraordinary place and importance of heroines within the cinematic economy and the knowledge of their extra-cinematic affairs and lifestyle caused intense speculation and anxiety because it quite obviously offended established and prevalent norms and values about women and their role and place in society. The many taboos, prejudices, obstacles and challenges routinely and universally encountered by women as they entered the public sphere as actresses, first in theatre and then in films is legend (Goodman and Gay 1998, Gale and Stokes 2007). Neepa Majumdar has delineated the cinematic and extra-cinematic discourse of respectability in the 1930s and 40s that tried to regulate and produce a normative femininity. Female stars from lower classes and from ‘disreputable’ backgrounds were seen to bring disrepute to cinema leading to calls for ‘cultured ladies’ for cinema. At the same time, as noted by Debashree Mukherjee in her dissertation on early cinema, a discursive double bind had fashioned the female actress as ‘a sexual predator as well as a potential victim of exploitation’(2009 :23). In the 1950s, if a few actresses came from upper class, educated and

'cultured' background, most struggled to achieve respectability in the face of the persistent 'negative iconicity' associated with the female star (Majumdar 2009: 144). If, on the one hand, the female star could emerge as an idol of fashion and life style, her perceived sexual license and amorous freedom intensified the anxious probing and discursive engagement with the figure of the female star or 'the actress' in the vernacular press.

Acting in the films for most actresses was as much a financial compulsion as it was an artistic pursuit. Actresses like Suriaya, Nargis, Madhubala, and Meena Kumari had entered the studios as child artists.[48]All of them were at times sole earners and financial support of their families as were Waheeda Rehman, Shyama, Nimmi and Geeta Bali, who started working in films as teenagers. If Nargis and Nimmi, daughters of courtesan mothers had the benefit of a family background in the entertainment profession and mothers who had 'groomed them to be successful stars' (Mukherjee 2009: 94), Shyama had risen to stardom from the ranks of extras.[49] The female stars' life style and public persona gave visibility to their identities as independent, working women. Stories of Madhubala's punctuality and devotion to work or Nargis' total commitment to film making gave visuality to women's modern self-construction outside the domestic sphere.[50] More importantly, their work in films, which allowed them a performative exploration of romance, also was a conduit to a spatio- physical expansion of their selves. For

[48] In an article, 'What price this stardom?' Meena Kumari says 'I became a star out of sheer necessity. At a time when other children go to school and do not have to choose a career, I was forced to do a living for myself' (*Filmfare*, August 22, 1952 p.10)

[49] In her 'Self Portrait' (*Filmfare*, December 1956, p.6) which declares her rise from the ranks of 'extras', Shyama says ' life has not been easy for me and I am proud I have been independent'. She also says ' I knew that for the things I wanted I had to fight and fight hard'. Extras were performers employed by the industry to appear in marginal roles as dancers or as faces in the crowd around the main heroes and heroines.

[50] The *Parde Ki Pariyan* special issue of *Nayi Duniya*,(1990) reiterates these aspects in the features on Madhubala (66) and Nargis (72) respectively.

example, in an interview to *Filmfare*, Shyama, claiming that she enjoyed hard work, went on to say, 'because of my work, I have been able to learn things I would ordinarily never had the chance of learning. Swimming, driving a car, cycling and dancing are some of them. All have been part of my film work and I earned the money to be able to learn them (December 7, 1956, p.6).[51] Naturally, not all actresses endorsed the spaces and opportunities of fashioning a new self and there were those like Kamini Kaushal, who, after retiring into domesticity actually maintained that she preferred the space of the family home and duties of a housewife to acting (*Filmfare,* October 12, 1956, p.7).There was also Meena Kumari, who continued to feel alienated in the film industry and would rather have 'fled the sophistication and glamour of films' (*Filmfare,* August 22 1952, p. 10).

More importantly, despite the wealth they had earned, actresses continued to be supervised by their parents. The total management of Madhubala's affairs by her father Ataullah Khan and of Suriaya's by her grandmother is well known.[52] Even Jaddanbai, suspicious of her daughter's blossoming relationship with Raj Kapoor, is known to have objected to Nargis' travel to Kashmir for the shoot of *Barsaat* (1949*)* (Desai 2007: 117). Caught between two worlds, one that offered and demanded agency and independence and the other that asserted family and patriarchal authority, the heroines of the 1950s embody and pay the price of these contradictions of modernity. Working in a realm, which in opposition to the social norm of gender segregation, required men and women to work together in physical

[51] Similarly, Madhubala took lessons to learn English and was proved to be an assiduous and successful student (Akbar 1997).

[52] Khan, it appears, not only decided 'who she acted with , what films she signed, what she paid and where and how her money was invested' (Akbar 1997 :65) but 'was known to position himself as spectator-cum- guardian-cum-censor–cum–whatnot whenever his daughter's love scenes with any leading man in any film were to be filmed (Reuben 2004:256).

and creative proximity to produce romance on screen, the female stars availed of the freedom to love in real life as well. That a majority of them did not succeed in bringing their love to fruition is a measure to the resilience of older power structures. Even though Madhubala is known to have boldly declared, 'Nobody in the world has any right to interfere with one's choice of husband. I would marry only the man with whom I am very much in love', she was unable to break away from her family's and father's dominion.[53] Suriaya too never married after she gave up on her relationship with Dev Anand due to her grandmother's opposition to him on account of his religion. In this context an open letter by a lesser known star, Shyama, is instructive. Reacting to the rumours about her relationship and prospective marriage to Fali Mistry, who was a cinematographer and director of photography for several films, Shyama bluntly declared that she was in love and was determined to marry her lover. Complaining bitterly about her parents' financial dependence on her, she says that had they not sent her to work in the film line she too would have remained obedient and like a *Sati-Savitri* tearfully gone to any husband of their choice. Now, however, it was beyond her to obey her father's wishes (*Rajatpat*, November 7, 1954). That unfortunately, Fali Mistry, himself was unable to muster courage to marry outside his community made Shyama one more actress to be defeated by the power of entrenched structures and prejudices.[54]

The performance of romance by actresses in films along with the news of their affairs continued to fuel fears of social disruption and domestic discord. The bodily enactment of romance by an actress was deeply troubling, precisely because of its transformative potential. In a *Filmindia* editorial, Baburao Patel astutely

[53] Quoted in Akbar (1997: 209).
[54] A piece about broken relations in *Rajatpat* casually mentions that there are rumours of Fali Mistry's being secretly married two years ago (May 15, 1957).

points out that 'the *very emotions* which a woman is expected to portray vividly in romantic situations on screen in the intimate company of strange men often bore (*sic*) a hole in her own heart and she soon learns to detest the conventional affections of her husband and hankers after the passionate outbursts of her screen lover' (October, 1947). Patel goes on to ascribe the disruption of families, as also the destruction of traditional barriers against Hindu –Muslim alliances, to the performance of romance on screen. The enactment of romantic intimacy on screen not only went against the most fundamental cultural stricture against social and physical intercourse between unmarried couples, it had the potential to destroy the social fabric of caste and religious segregation as well. A query in *Rajatpat* asking 'had Suriaya *felt* no compunction when Raj Kapoor passionately embraced her as if she were his legitimate wife, in the film *Dastan?*', received a reply which first assured the reader that acting is mere imitation of the real, but also went on to assert that Suriaya had no cause to complain because she had been financially compensated for the performance (*Rajatpat* April 15, 1951,). Another query in *Chaya* (April 13, 1956, p.4) wondered if actresses like to act with men other than their husbands, and what did they *actually feel* during an intimate love scene (emphasis added). Decades after women had started acting in films and had been popular stars, questions and attitudes such as these reveal the gap between the cultural life world of the audience and the fantasy of romance that entertained them. More importantly, on-screen body of the actresses indexically suggesting their 'real' presence and participation in the enactment of romance fractured the normative idea of physical intimacy as the exclusive prerogative of the 'married couple'. This also raised concerns about her 'feelings' which could be expected to

transform the acting body! It is significant that *Rajatpat*'s reply attempts to assuage concerns about the actress' feelings by hinting at the commercial logic of prostitution, the actress will not mind, it replies, because she had been adequately paid! (*Rajatpat* April 15, 1951).

The female star is quite clearly a conflicting site of engagement, at once pleasurable and dreadful. For example, the cover page of each and every issue of the gossip magazine *Chaya* carried a photograph of an actress, indicating, not only the persistence of 'the gendered construction of cinema itself' (Majumdar 2009: 62), but also, the visual pleasure invested in the face and the body of the female star. However, disavowing this pleasure and its own investment in the commoditization of desire, the sanctimonious discourse that animated the pages of this magazine revolved around their affairs and constructed the actress as a willful, house-breaker. The family in this imagination was threatened by the actress' immoral ways and entrapping gullible husbands of other women. Little pieces entitled 'The Actress' fancy', 'The Actress' fees' or ' The Actress and the wife' (*Chaya*, March 10, 1950, P 2-4) suggest the intensity of anxiety aroused by her independence and wealth. Curiously, the male actor's fees, affairs or wealth had no place in this discourse. A recurring theme was the many affairs of an actress. Thus, 'Suriyya has had many romances but …' (*Rajatpat*, September 7, 1951) or "Nargis has had many affairs but…' (*Rajatpat* September 15, 1954) were routine, but never complemented by pieces about Dev Anand's, Raj Kapoor's or Dilip Kumar's affairs. While an interest in the female stars' love life reflects an awed attraction for the unusual in a context where the majority of women, or men for that matter, had no agency in the choice of lovers or spouses, the hold of patriarchal

orthodoxies made this interest prurient and the discourse moralistic. One of the most recurring questions from readers was about the similarities between an actress and a prostitute, which always got ingenious replies hinting at the similarities in the act of selling, of talent or beauty in one case and of body or honour in the other. Actresses have universally encountered resistance when entering the public space of the theatre or the screen (Davis 2003, Majumdar 2009, Mukherjee 2009, and Niazi 2011). Tracy Davis notes about the actress on the Victorian stage, 'the fact that she lived a public life and consented to be hired for amusement' meant that 'for a large section of society, the similarities between the actress' life and the prostitute's were unforgettable and overruled all other evidence about respectability' (2003:70). In the context of the split discourse of the 1950s, if one section of society, evidenced in the English language discourse, had conferred respectability due to the professional achievement of actresses, the other section, represented by the vernacular press continued to identify actresses with disrepute. If here, as in Victorian England, actresses as 'symbols of women's self- sufficiency and independence' (Davis 2003) threatened the status quo, they did so because this self-sufficiency and independence was evident not only in their wealth and life style but also in their love lives.

Expectedly, the films' own engagement with actresses and female stars reproduced and reconfigured the anxiety associated with them. The 1958 film, *Sone Ki Chidiya*, once again by the Chughtai-Lateef team, drew on contemporary gossip and rumours about actresses generally, and Nargis specifically.[55]Praised for providing a 'fairly incisive picture of the film world and the rot beneath the

[55] There are various indications in the film suggesting the connection with Nargis. But even the introduction to Chugtai's *A Very Strange Man* , (2007) which one assumes, is written by the translator Tahira Naqvi, mentions that the film was based on Nargis' life.

glamorous exterior' (*Filmfare*, June 1958, p.26), the film's strategy was to tell a generic story of 'the actress' and yet to cue the audience to the Nargis persona. With hardly any biographical or factual similarity to Nargis' star persona the film worked through tangential references and cryptic markers associated with Nargis. This way Nargis becomes an example, a sign in Chughtai's telling of 'how heroines were treated' (2007). However, reversing the terms of the moralistic discourse about actresses, the film makes Laxmi, the film star, played by Nutan, the axis around which revolves the corrupt economy of the film industry. Moreover, the melodramatic drive of the film requires that not just the film industry alone but the film star's extended family and her lover Amar (Talat Mehmood) be pitched against the star, who is presented as a victim of their exploitative machinations. Early in the film, Laxmi's status as an orphan left in the care of relatives is established; a burden to the household that is mean minded and already facing financial hardships. Subsequently, her cousin's attempt to 'sell' her misfires as she escapes the man pursuing her onto a stage in a theatre and gives a spontaneous performance. Her singing is noticed, thus beginning her film career. The excess of the film's Manichean vision, contrasts the world's calculus and greed with Laxmi's continued innocence and child like trust even as she transforms into a popular star. However, for her extended family she is merely a source of wealth and luxury, and even Amar pretends to love her only to get a lead role as her hero in the films. Extra-cinematic discourses identifying the actress with the prostitute had a corollary in the concern and sympathy expressed for women who were entrapped by predatory directors and producers or exploited by their own

families.[56] Each and every person and institution in *Sone Ki Chidiya* is motivated by mercenary interest in the star and she can be saved from this unhappy fate only by an outsider in the form of the other-worldly writer, Shrikant (Balraj Sahani) and by leaving the film industry in the end.

Not surprisingly, the Nargis star persona was too complex to be contained by the Manichean vision of *Sone Ki Chidiya*. The extra-cinematic discourse around Nargis was split and irreconcilable. In the vernacular press she was an intractable youngster, a wild woman who had numerous affairs before she got into yet another relationship with a married man. Stories of her attempts to squeeze herself into Raj Kapoor's home and family as well as her fights with her brothers were fodder for gossip magazines. The English discourse, on the other hand, constructed a fun loving modern girl who was also an efficient professional. Her relationship with Raj Kapoor was not mentioned while her creative collaboration with him was highlighted. In fact in an extreme denial of the 'private' of Nargis, the feature, *Stars in their Home*, which featured all stars, big and small, including Raj Kapoor, in their homes, amidst its luxury, art and décor, showed Nargis alone at her work place in the R. K Studio. Here the studio is her home and she is seen in a simple white saree, working, reading, busy. The feature maintains that Nargis is an 'active partner in the studios, loved and respected by the entire staff a guiding spirit to all workers' (November 11, 1955). Arguably, the complexity of reality goes counter to the simple binaries required by the melodramatic aesthetic, as is evident in *Sone Ki Chidiya's* cryptic engagement with the Nargis persona. In a not-so-subtle

[56] Worrying about the actress in the film industry, *Chaya* at times warned that on entering the film industry even girls from educated cultured families acquired unexplainable cunning and twirled producers '*shethji*' around their little fingers (July 2, 1950, p.3) and at other times cautioned educated girls from entering the industry because directors and producers were just waiting to sexually exploit them (July 7, 1950, p.6)

reference to Nargis' pet name Baby, Laxmi's name is also changed to Baby on attaining stardom. The name then works as a camouflaged reminder of the underlying similarity between the film's actress and the famous film star Nargis. In a similar vein a scene in the film gestures towards the oft repeated story of Nargis' first meeting with Raj Kapoor when she was caught unawares with flour stained hands by Kapoor's unexpected visit. Here too Laxmi walks out to meet a film producer with flour on her hands and face. If as Majumdar says, the story as it circulated 'romanticizes the meeting by appearing to deglamorize it with the markers of domesticity' (153) then in *Sone Ki Chidiya* the romantic register is in fact completely dismantled by reconfiguring it as commercial exchange. Indeed, the picturization of a romantic song between Laxmi and Amar as they perform for the camera during a film shoot is diegetically framed to underscore its inauthenticity, because Amar is, after all merely 'acting'. On the whole, the broad strokes of Chughtai's pen in the film equates Nargis' financial support of her family and work with the R.K. studios to the dastardly greed and exploitation of Laxmi's stardom by her family and lover. The film's melodramatic form seems to require a Manichean configuration of relations and conflicts quite at variance with the real contours of Nargis' life situation. In a sense the film's melodramatic excess conflicts with the excess of the image of Nargis the star, so that in narrating the real story of actresses behind the screens, the demands of a melodramatic imagination lead to the 'actress' being reduced to an abject victim and love to mere calculus. As a matter of fact, Nargis, the person and the star, including her romantic involvement with Raj Kapoor was too complex to be contained by the trope of victimhood. Apart from being pivotal to the success of R.K. Studios

(George 1994, Desai 2007, Khubchandani 2003), Nargis' relationship with Raj Kapoor, despite its ultimate failure, was clearly liberatory in many ways, not the least being that as a daughter of a courtesan launched in a performing arts career, she had probably been willed to be 'wealthy, ambitious and independent' and also taught to be 'wary of love and marriage' (Mukherjee 2009: 94). In falling so passionately and openly in love, Nargis had transgressed more than one boundary. In its haste to condemn the film industry for victimizing the female star, *Sone Ki Chidiya*, failed to give voice and shape to the exhilaration as well the price for agency, performance and love experienced by female stars generally and Nargis particularly.[57]

The role of films in interpreting and commenting upon star love and affairs cannot be underestimated. In contrast to the extra-cinematic engagement with stardom, which revolved around and remained with individual stories, films could become a site where the varying strands of star discourses, filmy romance, and concerns about societal and patriarchal norms and values came together in play and conflict. A film, like *Kagaz Ke Phool* could draw on the individual story of the stars it featured but in the process of interpreting, adapting and retelling make an ideological intervention in the discourse of love and romance. In the following and final section, I shall discuss *Kagaz Ke Phool*, marked as it was by the difference in

[57] Nargis's spirited participation in the 1955 Film Seminar is just one more example of her accomplished and multihued personality. Speaking in response to Durga Khote's presentation in the panel on 'The Actress and Her contribution To The Cultural and Social Life of India', she said that she loved her profession, but also held the right to criticize it if necessary. Identifying wholeheartedly with Nehru's socialist vision, she called for film roles portraying people's struggles to educate themselves and their fight against poverty, superstition etc. Further, taking the example of advertisements- 'I use this cream, that powder, this furniture' she demanded , why the actress be considered a model and authority on beauty and consumerism ,instead, she wondered, can the actress not be an example of hard work, since she works on the sets 'for eighteen hours a day', or the efforts she takes not only to learn 'to read and write' but also 'learn music and dance and to master the art of acting?'(173).

its contemporary and subsequent reception and popularity, as an instance of a film that became the site for a difficult negotiation with stardom but tangentially ends up offering a lens into the discourses and emergent culture of love initiated by films and the film industry.

Kagaz Ke Phool (1959)

The autobiographical mode of Guru Dutt's *Kagaz Ke Phool* makes it a vital document of contemporary star discourses. With a narrative that focused on the success and failure of a film director, Suresh Sinha, Guru Dutt gave voice to his understanding of and disillusion with the 1950s film industry by engaging with issue of creativity, agency, celebrity culture and scandal. Although the film was a box office failure, Guru Dutt's posthumous reputation as one of India's most talented and creative directors and his rise to eminence in later decades meant that even *Kagaz Ke Phool* has received serious critical attention (Kabir 1996, Griffiths 1996 Mishra 2002, Cooper 2005, Doraiswamy 2008). Considering it a part of the trilogy along with *Pyasa* and *Saheb Bibi aur Ghulam*, Darius Cooper (2005) suggests that *Kagaz Ke Phool* is an example, like his other films, of Guru Dutt's radical new practice of altering 'viewer's enjoyment and understanding' by actively constructing 'meaning and significance for his audience'(18). Guru Dutt's difference from other film makers is thought to be his careful orchestration of mood and meaning through camera movements, evocative use of light and shadow, and song and comedic moments that were not arbitrarily planted but functioned as 'tributaries from within the central narrative itself'(Cooper 2005:18). However, the relevance of *Kagaz Ke Phool* in this discussion of love and stardom is not only

because it is a cinematic negotiation with stardom by one of the most eminent directors of the period but also because it appears to radically question notions of romantic love and filmy romance itself. Cooper argues that *Kagaz Ke Phool* was rejected by contemporary audiences because of its overindulgent morbidity that prevented a more acceptable utopic ending. Even though it is virtually impossible to measure the contours of audience reaction, particularly of cinematic moments of the past, it is possible to enter into an unorthodox dialogue with the film, to read it against the grain as it were, by teasing out its play and brush with contemporary star discourses. Reading *Kagaz Ke Phool* with reference to Guru Dutt and Waheeda Rehman's extra-cinematic off-screen relationship affords a rare glimpse into the star director's attempt to rewrite his own image on the surface of the screen. It is essential to read in film's realist drive, Guru Dutt's questioning of cinematic romance as well as an attempt at authenticating his own star persona.

In contrast to the Raj Kapoor and Nargis relationship, Guru Dutt and Waheeda Rehman's love affair was not celebrated in the 1950s or even later. Although both Kapoor and Dutt were married men, the latter's affair was more of a scandal, probably because unlike the former it was much more secretive and shamefaced. Also, again unlike Raj Kapoor's traditionally arranged marriage to Krishna, Guru Dutt had married for love and Geeta Dutt, herself a star singer, was probably more famous, at least initially, than her husband.[58] That Guru Dutt could never openly acknowledge his attraction and relationship with Waheeda was doubtless because, vitally, he continued to be attached to his wife and children.[59]

[58] Rumour reporting often took a conciliatory tone, advising the married couple to forget differences-'which marriage doesn't have problems?'(*Rajatpat,* November 15, 1957) and reconcile
[59] Guru Dutt's intimate letters to Geeta Dutt , presented by Nasreen Munni Kabir (2006) are a testimony of his passionate and troubled relationship with his wife.

Nasreen Munni Kabir in her introduction to the collection of Dutt's letters to his wife says 'The Dutt-Rehman relationship was the subject of much gossip and speculation as the idea of loving two women was inconceivable and seen as immoral in India in the 1950s' (2006:12). However, as we have seen gossip was in any case essential to star discourses and the Dutts and Rehman, getting their share of it were not in any way exceptional.[60] More importantly, as stated earlier the gossip about the Dutts and Rehman found its way into a fictionalized account of their lives and times in a novel *A Very Strange Man (2007)*, by Ismat Chughtai. Part memoire, part fiction Chughtai's novel, according to Tahira Naqvi, is 'a scathing account of the topsy-turvy world of the Bombay film industry' (2007: vii).[61] If *Kagaz Ke Phool* provides a subjective lens on the travails of stardom and love, *A Very Strange Man's* caustic, cynical tone is clearly a contrast. By focusing on a specific star story, both texts reflect and reconstruct the larger story of Bombay cinema's traffic of love.

The contemporary reception of *Kagaz Ke Phool* echoed its box office debacle. *Filmindia* savaged it with the tagline 'Dismal tale proceeds at funeral pace' (November 1959, p.59). Even though *Filmfare* appreciated Guru Dutt's direction, V.K Murthy's camera work and Alvi's dialogue, it complained about its 'negative and pessimistic approach' and suggested that a 'more hopeful and positive climax' would have helped the film considerably (November 6, 1959, p.47). Guru Dutt is said to have been devastated by the audiences' reaction to the film and was never able to get back to filmmaking again. In feeling misunderstood

[60] It is noteworthy that a gossip columnist, after reporting on the possibility of a breakup between the Dutt's on account of Waheeda, actually advises Guru Dutt to refrain from allowing 'domestic discord' to affect his creativity!(*Rajatpat*, April 1, 1957)

[61] Naqvi is the translator of the novel, and the above assessment occurs in her introduction to this English edition.

and rejected Guru Dutt replayed, as it were, the fate of Suresh Sinha, who dies a defeated, broken man at the end of the film. If the subsequent estimation of Guru Dutt as an auteur, allowed for more favourable evaluation of the film, commentators have also tried to account for the film's box office failure. Reminding us of *Kagaz Ke Phool*'s narrative impasse, Dairus Cooper points to its dystopian vision, 'excessive self - indulgence, and inappropriate narcissism' as the cause for audience impatience (2005:21). But others have blamed the immaturity of the audience itself and their general inability to relate with 'films that demystify the world of cinema' (Kabir1996: 158).[62] Until *Kagaz Ke Phool*, Guru Dutt had been a successful and in some respects a pioneering director. One of the first to visualize and articulate narratives of the city's underworld with its scenarios of sex and crime, peopled by gangsters and their molls, Guru Dutt had also given an adult, sassy and mischievous slant to the picturization of romantic love in films like *Jaal*, *Baazi*, *Aar Paar and Mr.& Mrs. 55.* The realist turn of *Pyasa* was not only a turn away from the 'noirish' site of crime but as I have argued at length in the *Love in the City* chapter, a turn away from the fantasy of romance as well. In turning its lens behind the scene, on the love and life of a director and the film star he discovered, *Kagaz Ke Phool* would have no use for 'romance'. However, in trying to produce an authenticating discourse about Guru Dutt's star persona on the surface of the screen, the film's recourse to the melodrama constrains its engagement with the complexity of reality of both, love and stardom. Interestingly, both *Kagaz Ke Phool* and *A Very Strange Man* respond to and reconstruct and fictionalize the extra-cinematic gossip and scandal about Guru Dutt and Waheeda

[62] Raj Khosla is supposed to have said, " How does one play the flute for buffalos" (Quoted in Kabir 1996:158)

Rehman in opposing ways. Both fictions deny the romantic, one by lifting it from the earthiness of lived experience to reconfigure it as an unspoken, asexual spiritual bond, the other, by draining it of any meaningful experience of love to highlight its instrumental sexuality.

The modes of fictionalizing the Guru Dutt and Waheeda Rehman affair adopted by *Kagaz Ke phool* and *A Very Strange Man* are key to understanding the contradictory discourse of love they produce. Clearly, the gossip surrounding not only the affair, but their individual personas, films and domestic life is the material that is narrativized, both cinematically and in the novel. Christine Gledhill's discussion of the connections between stardom and the melodramatic imagination need reiteration in this discussion. Observing that 'stars function as signs in a rhetorical system which works as melodrama'(1991:207) and noting the various points of convergence between melodrama and star texts , Gledhill reminds us that the 'star represents a maximized type of person', 'monopathic presences, who hold up to their audiences magnified yet deeply personalised identities and states of- frequently contradictory- being' (ibid:219). If Guru Dutt's melodramatic imagination is much commented upon, then its singular deployment in reconstituting the discourse around his own star persona in *Kagaz Ke Phool* needs to be revisited. Similarly, Chughtai too, although writing a novel, instead of giving us 'the subtle, differentiated, multilayered character of the realist novel', constructs her protagonist out of 'endlessly circulating 'facts', dicta and gossip' (Gledhill 1991: 219) about the film stars, to produce a melodramatic 'story of an ill-fated genius'(Chughtai 2007: viii).

In spite of similar melodramatic techniques a far greater degree of fictionalization is evident in the film compared to the novel, which seems to stay closer to the 'facts' that were circulating, and have since been corroborated in memoires and interviews. It is common knowledge that in the film, Suresh Sinha, the famous and successful director, played by Guru Dutt, is drawn in broad brush strokes by picking and choosing autobiographical details from Dutt's own life. Most importantly, the difficulties of Dutts' marriage are referenced by Sinha's estrangement from his wife Veena, who lives in Delhi with her parental family, the Varmas. Dutt's discovery of Waheeda Rehman is also played out in Sinha's discovery of Shanti and her rise to stardom. However, despite these autobiographical elements, the mise-en-scène, characters and period, steers clear of the factual and experiential universe of the 1950s. Thus, the story is situated in the past in the studio era of 1930s and Veena and her family are presented as elite, westernized and Jewish. This historical displacement helps mobilize nostalgia for a past era but also muddles the socio-cultural contours of the story so that the pressures on the film's protagonist in terms of social norms, individual freedom and agency are equivocal. For instance, as mentioned earlier, by 1955, divorce was legal and Suresh Sinha would have been hard pressed to continue a marriage and family as dysfunctional as his had the film's story been situated contemporaneously.[63]In the film Sinha has been separated from his wife for several years while his daughter Pammi lives in a school hostel in Dehradun. More over it is not only his wife that Sinha is alienated from, but her parents too are projected as

[63] The Hindu Code Bill passed in 1955, among other things, made a uniform legal provision for granting divorce to Hindu married couples. Guru Dutt was aware of the Hindu Code Bill and his reaction to the new possibility of divorce had found a cinematic expression in *Mr. & Mrs. 55*, a film I discuss briefly in the chapter on City. His anxiety about the 'feminine' exploitation of the new law as evinced in the film is clearly significant.

hostile to him and his work in the Bombay film industry. In contrast, the minimalist narration of *A Very Strange Man* reproduces the story of its filmy protagonists in the style of an exposé. Set in the 1950s, the story of Dharam Dev, Mangala and Zarina closely follow the facts known about the stars. Here the wife, Mangala, is like the original, a famous singing star, and the difficulties in their marriage arise, because Dev falls in love with Zarina and becomes sexually involved with her.

If the elisions, amplifications and displacements of both texts are central to their melodramatic drive, they also assist in evading the parameters of a messy, complicated or awkward reality. For instance, the caricature of Sinha's upper class in-laws, who are shown to snort and mince at the film industry; referring to it as 'cheap', not only produces laughter but also effects moral polarization. Jacky Bratton has demonstrated the importance of comic elements for the production of the bipolar moral world of melodrama. Comic characters and caricature have been usefully deployed to make 'class statements' and 'to direct and modify audience response' (Bratton 1994:40). Here, the Vermas' disdain for Suresh and the world of films and the film industry is framed as an aspect of their privileged, westernized, 'non-Indian' and therefore, laughable oddity. At the same time, this allows the film to configure the ground for Suresh and Veena's estrangement in terms of a moral polarization. By staging a conflict between the world of film and that of cultural snobs, the blame is placed on the emotional- cultural dissonance between a snobbish wife and her sensitive filmmaker husband. This way the complicated reality of the growing distance between the Dutts, two people who had been in love and had shared; creatively and professionally, the world of Bombay

cinema is elided. The Bombay film had in any case not evolved a language by the 1950s that could articulate the story of adulterous love, or the betrayal of married love. The recourse to melodramatic figuration helped to skirt complex and morally ambiguous reality. It is equally noteworthy that this melodramatic polarization in the film with nationalist overtones is not narratively sustained so as to eventually undermine the hollow superiority of the Varmas and their cultural position. In fact, by the end of the film, the purely commercial, heartless and fickle nature of the film industry itself stands exposed and embodied in Suresh's failure and defeat, thus, ironically, legitimizing the Varmas' cultural superiority and point of view.

Despite the fact that the Varmas' articulate the elite cultural view of cinema as the bad object, the central conflict in the film is in fact between Suresh Sinha, the committed , creative , sensitive director on the one hand and the mercenary, heartless industry on the other. Crucial to *Kagaz Ke Phool*'s narrative of the melodramatic rise and fall of the star director is the staging of this conflict through performance, music and affect. Indeed Guru Dutt's legendary play with light and shadow is the mise-en-scene of this world of extremes of moral and psychological states and fortunes wherein the film industry itself emerges as an inauthentic space as is suggested by the title of the film 'Paper flowers'. Even the song that intermittently plays on the soundtrack, '*dekhi zamane ki yaari*, underscore the friendless, lonely struggle of the individual in a world where profit and mediocrity rule. However, the affective force of this conflict too is not sustained and built to its melodramatic climax; instead the narrative derails from its expected trajectory. The villainous producers, who seem excessively hostile to Sinha after one failed film are soon shown as willing to give him a second chance ,

while it is Sinha , who seeing in their invitation an affront to his 'dignity' refuses to go back to work. At one level, Sinha's downfall into alcohol and poverty appears to be because of a hostile industry. But the real trigger for Sinha's demoralization has in fact been the loss of Shanti who has left him and the film industry, persuaded to do so by Sinha's young daughter, Pammi's misguided efforts to bring her parents together, as well as Sinha's own resistance to their love relationship. It is possible that the film's inability to keep on track and produce a critique of the film industry's crass commercial logic is because of the endemic problems of a heterogeneous film form. However, it can be argued, as I do, that the extra-cinematic 'reality' that Guru Dutt attempted to overwrite exerts a pull on the melodramatic fabric of the film leading to its narrative impasse. The subtext of the unspoken love between Suresh and Shanti fractures the narrative of *Kagaz Ke Phool,* because on the one hand it is central to its movement and yet it must be constantly underplayed.

The discovery of Guru Dutt's genius was posthumous and contemporary appraisals of his films as well as the star discourse surrounding him did not single him out as extraordinary. If successful films like *Jaal*, *Baazi*, *Aar Paar* and *Mr. & Mrs.55* received positive reviews; *Filmindia* also consistently criticized his acting skills. At the same time gossip about his relationship with Rehman, continued to circulate as a part of the generalized, salacious discourse on stardom.[64] It is possible to read in Kagaz *Ke Phool's* intervention in the star discourse, an attempt to rewrite both these stories. For instance, Suresh Sinha is from the beginning

[64] *Rajatpat*, November 15, 1958 announced 'Geeta- Guru Dutt divorce, misunderstandings on account of Waheeda'. The news item then goes on to reject this news by calling it just a rumour and adding , which household doesn't have its share of disagreements? Yet another news item explicitly mentions the pair's licentious behavior (*rang raliya*) during a trip to Delhi which wasn't hidden from the Delhi press (April 1, 1957).

projected as filmmaker who strives for a degree of realism, and in fact his first brush with the industry is over his wish to mold the film star to fit the character rather than the opposite. Early in the film, Sinha refuses to allow a female star to wear make-up, jewelry and other accoutrements of fashion associated with on-screen image of heroines. Sinha insists that the norms of veracity require the actress playing 'Paro' to dress simply and fires the stubborn unyielding film star, thus inscribing the question of realism on the body of the female film star.[65] Even later, on her way to stardom, Shanti, who has now replaced the earlier 'shallow' female star in Paro's role, dresses up for a promotional party, only to be castigated by Sinha for spoiling her simple looks. Sinha clearly values Shanti's naturalness and innocence and also sees it as a requirement for Paro's role. It is interesting how the argument for realism is gendered and the female star's body comes to stand for the artificiality, pomp, and the inauthentic in cinema. According to Darius Cooper, these scenes reveal Guru Dutt's commitment to reform the star economy. Not only did he not want established stars in his 'realist' films, *Pyasa* onwards, but also tried to effect an erasure of the actor's star qualities on the screen. The day after the above party scene, Shanti tells Sinha that she spent the entire night washing and mending her hair, thus 'removing the star features that had angered him so much'(Cooper 2005 :20). Curiously, an incident recounted by Waheeda Rehman and even fictionalized by Chughtai in *A Very Strange Man (*40*)* describes a totally opposite scenario. Waheeda Rehman, new on the sets of Guru Dutt films, was expected to wear a rather revealing tight dress and had refused to comply and it

[65] Suresh Sinha is directing 'Devdas' at this narrative juncture.

was Guru Dutt, who had to finally capitulate.[66] In wanting to recreate his star persona, was Guru Dutt also reformulating the aesthetic and ideological terms of his earlier film making practice? After all, films like *Baazi* and *Aar Paar*, which he directed and *CID* which he produced, not only revelled in the assertive sexuality of its 'other' women but had refined the cinematic idiom of the city and its underworld. Suresh Sinha's insistence on the simplicity of female dressing for the sake of realism, in the light of the actual dress debacle on the sets and Guru Dutt's previous cinematic practice is probably indicative Dutt's attempt to distance himself from his earlier star persona and overwrite it in ideal terms. That the pressures on him to do so must have been extreme is evident from the acid tone of Chughtai's text. Accounting for director Dharam Dev's success she writes that he 'increased the ratio of sex appeal in his films, packed them with dances, fight scenes and girls' (27). The censure implicit in Chughtai's tone, whose progressive credentials are otherwise not in doubt, is a pointer to the moralizing discourse that cinema inevitably generated. Can it be suggested that after the first flush of his cinematic success as director and producer, Guru Dutt's confidence in matters of technique grew in proportion to his growing alienation from the dominant idiom of cinema? Consequently, in order to manufacture an 'authentic' image of himself, Guru Dutt had to reject certain aspects of his former film practice as well as his experience of love.

[66] The story about Waheeda Rehman's costume is not entirely unequivocal. In her own words, in one place (in an interview reproduced in *Geetmala Ki Chhaon Mein*, presented by Ameen Sayani, 1955, part 1) Waheeda merely speaks of a saree she wanted to pin up and Guru Dutt allowing this. But in another place (Ragoonwala, 1973:125-126) she details how she held up a shoot by refusing to put on a particular dress during the making of CID. Apparently she had a clause in the contract protecting her freedom regarding the costumes she could be made to wear. Interestingly, she says that Guru Dutt was not on the sets when this incidence took place and he was later informed that he had 'signed a very difficult girl'. Later, she continues, Guru Dutt simply asked her, 'I am told you created some trouble about that dress?' To which she replied, 'Yes it was not decent', and there the matter was closed.

Both, *Pyasa* and *Kagaz ke Phool*, underscore the asexuality of the relationship between Vijay and Gulabo and Suresh Sinha and Shanti respectively. Cooper suggests that the audience allowed *Pyasa*'s narrative resolution because it lent a moral leverage to the marginalized figures of the poet and the prostitute, while in the latter film, where the case is of modern, emancipated successful characters like a film director and his discovery, a talented young woman on her way to stardom, the asexuality was 'disturbing' making 'the audience very uneasy' (2005: 26). In the light of the gossip and rumours about the stars circulating in the vernacular press (*Rajatpat,* April 4, 1957), salaciously hinting at rendezvous and licentiousness, the self-imposed asexuality of these on-screen characters becomes doubly significant. Abrar Alvi, who was a close associate of Guru Dutt, both professionally and creatively, recalls the blossoming of Guru Dutt's relationship with Rehman, which grew to be intimate, passionate emotional and probably sexual. Alvi also says that the reason Guru Dutt became involved with Rehman was because of his disaffection with his own marriage and alienation from Geeta Dutt but also that in the end, he got out of this extra-marital relationship because he wanted to save his marriage. According to Alvi, Waheeda Rehman was unceremoniously dumped by the director who had 'discovered' her and had been responsible for inaugurating her career.[67] In Chughtai's version, Dharam Dev is a womanizer, Zarina replete with feminine cunning and their sexual liaison reflective of the instrumental logic endemic to the film industry itself. *Kagaz Ke Phool*'s unspoken love between Sinha and Shanti thus needs to be read against the grain with reference to the extra-cinematic discourse about these stars.

[67] Alvi's memories of work and association with Guru Dutt are reproduced by Sathya Saran in *Ten Years With Guru Dutt: Abrar Alvi's Journey*(2008)

The series of scenes in the film that establish the exact contours of the relationship between Sinha and Shanti, significantly, also include the extra-cinematic gossip about the star pair. On their way to a shoot, following the scene where Sinha scolds Shanti for putting on make-up and turning into a 'she-monkey'(bandariya), a song is sung by picnickers following their car with the words *Sun sun sun chali hawan (hear hear… the wind).*Sinha's and Shanti's looks and gestures establish their growing mutual attraction. The song is immediately followed by a sequence in which we see Sinha incapacitated from an accident. In the absence of anyone from his family and Veena's indifference to appeals for help, Shanti stays back to nurse and look after Sinha through the night. Her words and gestures foreground her love and deep understanding of his habits and needs. But Sinha sends her away in the middle of the night, ostensibly, as his words suggest, to save her reputation. The following scene shows Pammi getting into a fist fight with her classmates, who are giggling over the crude reports in a magazine about the supposed affair between the couple. This scene is then followed by the scene, which is now famous for its mise-en-scene, in the dark space of the studio. Knowing Sinha's habit of arriving hours before a shoot, Shanti comes early to the empty studio, presumably to find him alone. The dark studio, cut in half by a shaft of light, is a fragmented space, suggestive of the barriers between the characters who occupy it. To Shanti's hints about her desire for him Sinha responds by reminding her that he is a married man. Here as the song *waqt ne kiya kya hansee sitam (time has caused fair injury)* suffuses the atmosphere, we see the ghost-shadows of the pair meet momentarily and part in the shaft of light. The words of the lyrics '*beqaraar dil is tarah mile, jis tarah kabhii ham judaa*

na the (our uneasy hearts have met as if they were never separate) speak of the meeting of their hearts as well as the impossibility of any real meeting and fruition of their love.[68] The order and arrangement of all these scenes unequivocally emphasize the asexual, almost spiritual nature of their bond. In a later scene, when Shanti is packing her bags in order to leave the industry and the city and Suresh Sinha visits her, it is made abundantly clear through dialogue that this is Sinha's first and last visit to her apartment. Congratulating themselves for not giving in to their desire, Sinha says, 'Sometimes I wonder why it is that people understand each other so well!' Finding Sinha and Shanti's behavior immensely disturbing and Sinha's words 'a dash of cold water over her smoldering eros' (ibid 26), Cooper opines that their 'self-imposed' asexuality is indeed an 'unacceptable fabrication' (ibid 27). At this point it becomes essential to probe this elaborately spelled out asexuality and read it in the context of the censorious discourse about Guru Dutt's extra-marital affair. It is interesting that Guru Dutt underscores the falsity of the gossip-mongering press by placing the scene in Pammi's school immediately after the accident night scene where Sinha sends Shanti away in the middle of the night even when her staying and looking after him could not be construed as anything but innocent and necessary. Was Guru Dutt gesturing towards the idle, fortuitous nature of star gossip and its potential to destroy people and relationships? Acting on the rumours she hears, Pammi runs away from school to coax and threaten Shanti to leave her father. Although there is a lesson here about the spurious nature of gossip and rumour in general, it automatically also works to question and doubt the veracity of the gossip circulating about the pair's extra-cinematic affair. The

[68] Considering that it is Geeta Dutt's playback voice that sings the song Rashmi Doraiswamy is of the opinion that this is 'probably one of the most poignant moments of autobiographical revelation by a director in love with his heroine in cinema anywhere ever'(2008: 96).

pair's on-screen asexuality along with the film's discrediting of the gossip mongering press, can be read as an attempt to cinematically overwrite the stars' image as adulterous lovers.

As noted earlier, the tone of the star discourse in the vernacular press was consistently moralistic with 'adultery' being its dominant trope. Female stars were either cheating their husbands or stealing other women's husbands. Moreover, the censorious tone of the gossip about star affairs was irrespective of whether or not a particular relationship was adulterous. When Chughtai set out to describe why a film producer 'commits suicide, why girls run after him and producers like him, and the hell they make for these men and for their wives', the pitch and tenor of her narration had much in common with the popular discourse about actresses, which either demonized them or saw them as hapless victims.[69] For instance an 'opinion' piece in *Chaya* tried to answer the question, 'can girls from cultured homes enter the industry? ' in the negative, and went on to paint a scary picture of the industry in the throes of libidinal anarchy, where predatory directors and impudent actresses ruled the day (July 7, 1950). In Chughtai's retelling of Guru Dutt's life, Dharam Dev is a sexual profligate and his involvement with Zarina, even though intense, is not unique; she is one among the many in his life. More importantly, echoing the pervasive anxiety over the wayward sexuality of women located in the film industry and the threat they posed to family life and the institution of marriage, the weight of Chughtai's moral reprobation is on Zarina, whose innocent ways and talent merely mask a cold calculating attitude. It is interesting that the Manichean vision that animates Chughtai's fictional rendering

[69] This description is reproduced on the back cover of the novel, *A Very Strange Man.*

of the Bombay film industry, equates its mercenary logic with the sexual licentiousness of a successful director and the manipulative cunning of his female star. As a result, a nuanced, layered reading of an individual's compulsions, difficulties and complications in inter-personal relationships, as well as its socio-psychological coordinates remain unexplored. Allowing no access to the subjectivity of her characters, the narrative reports what Dev or Mangala said or did but never what they felt or thought. Chughtai's reporter's gaze sees Zarina flirting with Dev, but never once captures a truly private and intimate moment between the two. Similarly, their first sexual union, as narrated by the author, is the result of a rendezvous arranged by Dev's friends to satisfy his lust; an accomplishment for Dev and necessary investment for Zarina. Chughtai's inability to flesh out layered, complex, 'realist' characters, with a lens on their interiority means that the conflicts, contradictions as well as exhilaration of the self's encounter with love find no narrative and affective resonance in the novel. That love in this world of adult, married and professionally successful people is not 'romantic' is to be expected. Unfortunately, the pain and cost of these liaisons, as transgressive practice is not articulated either. In Chughtai's view, off-screen love is plain transaction and debauchery, with no redeeming feature.[70]

[70] *A Very Strange Man's* moralistic take on the Guru Dutt- Waheeda affair seems very much at odds with Chughtai's other, more famous and critically appreciated, work. The textured ,multi layered and autobiographical *The Crooked Line*, or the transgressive boldness of *Lihaf* , offer an altogether different and superior, creative engagement with modernities' many challenges. Describing Chughtai's work as a 'secret history of modernity' Priyamvada Gopal (2005) says that being profoundly aware of herself being a product of modernity, Chughtai had come to a 'complicated understanding' of her situation (87). About *The crooked line*, she says the novel form allowed her to draw together 'the universal and particular, self and society, and existence and imagination (ibid.). Unfortunately, *A Very Strange Man*, seems sadly unconscious of the betrayals and contradictions of this very same modernity that was elsewhere envisaged, in Gopal's words as a 'critical project that draws upon the dynamic of culture' (81). Perhaps here Chughtai remained an outsider and brought not a critical but an empirical lens to the world and culture of the film industry and its stars.

If Chughtai's novel gives us a glimpse into the prevalent moralistic discourse surrounding star affairs generally, and the Dutt- Rehman affair particularly, *Kagaz Ke Phool's* asexuality was probably Guru Dutt's way of lifting the story out of this murky context to imagine an alternative love. It is significant that in 'spiritualizing' the love between Sinha and Shanti, there is an implicit rejection of the dominant idiom of romance. Clearly, the fantasy of a liberating and transformative love that Dutt had utilized in films earlier was found unsuitable vehicle for this difficult adult love. In this context, Guru Dutt's directorial decision of deploying the Devdas trope assumes an added valance. *Devdas* (1955) had been made four years before the release of *Kagaz Ke phool*. When Suresh Sinha is seen making *Devdas* , a film which has been made and remade many times before and since, it more than merely reflects Dutt's 'appreciation of and perhaps nostalgia for the special quality' of the studio era (Kabir 153). In referencing a film that is one of the most representative examples of the 'anti-fantasy' negotiation of the dominant idiom of romance, Guru Dutt was drawing on a potent icon. *Devdas*' many remakes have brought to surface a cultural reality skillfully ignored or circumvented by most films invested in romance; the reality of patriarchal strictures against individual desire. Devdas boasts of an iconic Indian masculinity, not only because he comes face to face with the 'reality' of this massive hurdle in the path of love, but because in many ways he internalized the normative and structural obstacles to romantic love, and his tragedy was that of a man unable to take responsibility for his feelings and his life at a historically crucial moment.

Discussing *Devdas*' melodramatic form as responding to the 'intense pressure modernity placed upon traditional conceptions of self and community', Ira

Bhaskar (2012:162) views Devdas' self-destructive trajectory as arising from his failure to 'challenge family and patriarchal strictures' and indicative of the 'melodramatic crisis of individual identity' (166). Devdas is a constant reference in the first half of *Kagaz Ke phool*, as Sinha, in the process of making this film, discovers Shanti for the role of Paro and releases it to great applause and success. He also articulates his concerns and commitment to a certain kind of cinema and a certain kind of realism. However, it is in the second half of the film that the Devdas reference acquires connotative force. Sinha's trajectory; his downfall triggered by his disappointed love for Shanti, he taking to drink, losing his home and work, his starting to inhabit the underclass spaces- drinking joints and eateries of the city, mirrors that of the hero of his hit film. On the surface, Sinha, a successful film-maker has little in common with the inchoate Devdas, who is a social misfit right from the start. However, Sinha's subsequent journey into disrepute and poverty, align him with this figure he helped reconstruct on film. More to the point, when we see that like Devdas, Sinha's spiraling into alcoholism can be attributed to his inability to act on his desire and attraction for Shanti, the deeper connections between these two instances of dysfunctional masculinity become clear. The powerful iconicity of the Devdas figure, across time and many film versions has been because he embodies Indian masculinity's struggle to negotiate the difficult terrain between patriarchal authority and modern self-hood (Arora 1995, Nandi 2001, Vasudevan 2000). Guru Dutt's mobilization of the Devdas motif produces a web of meanings where several strands of concerns, aesthetic and personal, meet and crisscross. At one level, the burden of the 'real' as well as Guru Dutt's understanding of and commitment to 'realism' comes up

against the cinematic inadequacy of the idiom of romance. In the face of entrenched patriarchal power structures, the cinematic fantasy of romantic love seems inadequate and is unavailable to both, *Devdas* and *Kagaz Ke Phool*. At another level, there is a contradiction; Devdas is located in a feudal world in transition and bears the burden of modernity's inaugural trials, while Suresh Sinha, as conceived by Guru Dutt is an urban, urbane, successful man, who is seen to have courage of conviction in the matters of his art and profession. Hence, Guru Dutt's mobilizing of the 'Devdas' motif to explicate Sinha's downfall is indeed perverse and needs to be seen in the context of the star discourse which condemned Guru Dutt's private life and affair as immoral. In order to authenticate his own image on the screen's surface, as also to question the idiom of romance, Guru Dutt's recourse to the Devdas figure seems like 'self-indulgence' and 'morbidity' because Sinha has inadequate psychological motivation for 'becoming' Devdas. In the diegetic world of *Kagaz Ke Phool*, Sinha seems so burdened from the beginning that he does not allow himself to fall in love with Shanti, whose loss, it is not certain, he mourns.

Indeed, by the end of the decade, the fantasy of romance seems to have run its course and the reality of love's adult transactions, its promises and betrayals cried out to be visualized and articulated. In terms of cinematic practice, it was necessary to evolve a new language which could articulate modern life's complex challenges; the self's continuing negotiation and reformation of its lure, obstacles, and horizon of possibilities. However, Guru Dutt, who had, like his alter egos, Suresh Sinha and Devdas, internalized the moral and cultural proscription against love that circulated in gossip and fed scandal ,was unable to imagine an alternative

to the fantasy of romance. The aborted and crippled love of *Kagaz Ke Phool* was Guru Dutt's answer to the unfriendly gossip about his affair, but also signaled a failure of cinematic imagination in face of the real forms love could assume behind the screen and in real life.

If stardom in the 1950s was a complex phenomenon, I have identified romantic love as one of its main organizing pivots. Undoubtedly, an assemblage of media, technology, performance, images and expressions, stardom is an articulation of diverse, contradictory and often socially unacceptable desires and dreams. It is significant that the intense interest and speculation generated by the on-screen and off-screen romances of the stars produced a discursive force field that brought to surface desires and anxieties related to individualism, gender, sexuality, autonomy, agency, tradition, Indianness and so on. The fantasy of romance on-screen and its embodied if constrained reality off-screen enabled a play with ideas and imaginations of modern selfhood. That the cinema culture was probably the only space in the 1950s to allow a public dalliance with modernity's promise of individual freedom and choice in matters romantic makes it a cultural site of significance in the realm of entertainment as well as learning. After all, love is an art that demands to be learned with the help of models, conventions, commitment and practice.

CONCLUSION

A friend once warily observed that research projects are fired by compulsions not always impersonal, and so, he quized, why love? But love is something that engages and 'troubles' almost everyone, one way or other, and yet my friend was right in that I had become aware of the 'problem of love' socially, much before I came to cinematic love. Romantic love seemed the most natural thing in the myopia of early youth. Films, school crushes, flirtation, falling in love and marriage crystallized the illusion of its ordinary presence in our lives. It was when I started teaching, first in a rural college near Pune and later in the city that an inkling of a different reality began to dawn on me. Even as the absence of basic amenities like washrooms in the college in this not so remote a corner troubled me, I became aware of the poverty, the rugged peasant bodies of my students, their farm soiled clothes, and significantly, the fact that there was no interaction between the sexes. Boys and girls seldom talked to one another, let alone get into relationships. Teaching, *My Love is like a Red Red Rose,* or *Bright Star,* or even *Pride and Prejudice,* seemed to have no context here and often I seemed an alien in this world of daily grind and hard labour, talking of flimsy, irrelevant things.

However, teaching in the city, since the early 1990s changed all that, or so it seemed in the beginning. There was definitely greater intercourse between the sexes; hanging out together and participation in extra-curricular activities was visible, although, even now boys and girls occupied separate rows in the class room. Was teaching love poems easier, more immediate? Class room discussions revealed that most youngsters wanted to avoid the 'risk' of falling in love and were

looking forward to a marriage arranged by parents - parents, they argued, 'think of our own good' and 'allow us to choose even when the marriage is arranged'. At one point, Rose Day, Chocolate Day and Valentine's Day were occasions when, I presumed, overtures were being made to members of the opposite sex. Clearly, these very popular campus celebrations revealed the symbolic value these gestures held for the young. Then the Shiv Sena and the ABVP swooped down against Valentine's Day celebrations and started creating a yearly media event. Love, it seemed, had never been a part of our culture! It was a foreign import that came in via MTV. The right wing activists' invasion of college campuses in order to stop childish exchange of valentine cards, revealed, for the first time to me, that something greater was at stake. We could have McDonalds and Michael Jackson, but not romantic love. Evidently, the idea of love, stirred deep anxieties and fears of 'Western' contamination and the loss of Indian values and culture in a globalizing India. Indeed, if romantic love became a norm, inequalities, not that of class, but those of gender and caste would, if not disappear, begin to erode.

Watching films of the 1950s and reading their critical discourse, it was hard not to notice the ubiquity of romantic love in the one and the near absence of it in the other; a scholarly disregard matching the indifference and even hostility towards romance on the street and in the public realm. Of course, love has been and is a major cinematic trope in all times, not just the 1950s. However, as I have tried to elucidate, the 1950s investment in it was intense and special. If romantic love finds a degree of acceptance today in some quarters, might not one suggest that films play a pedagogic role in producing its cultural common sense, and that the 1950s film culture was pivotal in initiating its discourse? This dissertation has

demonstrated that the thematic, visual, lyrical and performative, immersion in romance was spectacular in 1950s cinema. If the introduction mapped the cultural context for the on-screen explosion of romantic love in the post-independence decade, the three chapters have explored three distinct but interlinked sites of its configuration –that of the city, the song and stardom. Steering through a number of examples, textual and extra-textual, I demonstrated the power of this fantasy to produces identities, spaces, experiences and pleasures of modernity, other than or tangential to nationalist modernity. The 1950s cinematic immersion in romantic love in the face of its disdain by the state machinery and by the nation's dominant cultural opinion, I argued, suggests that popular entertainment allowed an alternative, if not 'sub-cultural', flight of fancy, a momentary escape from the burden of 'tradition' and the borders of the new nation in the making. At the same time, it was revealed that an imagination so perversely divorced from the lived experience of its audience entailed its own cinematic containment. Structured by the ritual of film viewing as a new, communal and public practice reflecting a love of cinema as the experience of the new and modern, cinematic romance - its freedom and containment, was the most quotidian expression of the desire for modernity in the 1950s.

Despite the ebullience, however, love and romance are not specific to the 1950s and have in fact continued to occupy the screen down the decades of Hindi cinema up until the current moment. It is to be expected, that the role, value and aesthetic form of cinematic romance would have shifted and transformed in tandem with changes in technology, medium, economy, fashion and taste. Whether or not the changing form of love on-screen also reflected the transformation of

intimacy on the ground, it certainly continued to mediate desire on a parallel plane. For instance, Ranjani Mazumdar (2011) has demonstrated the role and play of the 'post-card imagination' in mobilizing a desire for travel in narratives of love and adventure unfolding at foreign locations in the 1960s film. Mazumdar locates these global travel films at the moment of social and cultural change marked by a move away from the Nehruvian paradigm, defeat in the 1962 war with china, foreign currency crisis, on the one hand, and a global surge in aviation and international tourism. Suggesting that the 'wild abandonment of the 1960s' travel imaginary shaped by the introduction of colour film, offered a mood lift to the middleclass by 'acknowledging their dreams of travel' (131), Mazumdar asserts that rather than being 'ideologically moored in the articulations of the nation', these narratives of love involving travel to foreign locations held 'possibilities of adventure and new ways of expressing desire' (142). Evidently, in registering, reacting as well as contributing to changing culture, fashion, sexual politics and gender dynamics, romance in films is an index to Hindi cinema's investment in the production of identities. Is it possible, however, to imagine an altogether different love in a way that challenges its fantastical popular form? As romantic love acquired a degree of legitimacy and greater acceptance as social practice, at least, in some sections of urban India, do we see its cinematic form engaging with the newer realities of love? In the face of globalization and the changing media scape, does love in films acquire a new configuration?

Film scholars and commentators have noted the splicing of romantic love with fantasies of abundance and consumption (Mazumdar 2007, Dwyer 2007) as well as the reinvention of 'tradition' (Kapur 2009) in neo – liberal times. The

opening of the market, the 'improving' life style of a small section of the urban middle-classes and the dreams of global expansion of the self through international travel and consumption as well as the investment in films by national and multinational corporate interests (Hassam 2009) drove cinematic imagination of romance towards fantasies that, once again, had very little credence in the lives of the majority. Significantly, this also meant recasting the city of Bombay by films with the iconography and signages of global lifestyles of affluence and consumerism (Kapur and Pendakur 2007). Hence, unlike the 1950s fantasy, which assumed merely a desiring body; promising nothing more than individual agency to even the most luckless straggler on the city street, the 1990s fantasy of consumption held in its orbit the aspirations of only a small minority that stood to gain from market reforms. In this regard the two remakes of *Devdas,* the one made in 2002 by Sanjay Bhansali and *Dev D* (2008) made by Anurag Kashyap are significant. Notably, registering the avid desire for material enrichment in the first flush of new economic realities, *Devdas* (2002) attempts to rewrite the highly popular trope of dysfunctional masculinity with the broad brush of opulence, imagined in lavish sets and luxurious living. Retaining the early twentieth century, feudal set-up, the infusion of a visual and performative excess transformed the largely realistic and restrained cinematic interpretations of Devdas into a period piece unable to convincingly address like the earlier films, the real and contemporary constrains on romantic love. *Dev D*, on the other hand, is not only a contemporaneous reading of the Devdas figure, but attempts to respond to the changing sexual politics in urban North India. The impediment to love is no more located outside the couple, in the larger structural forces of the family or the

community, but between the couple, and interestingly, in a dysfunctional masculinity which is out of tune with the times in holding on to a hypocritical value system based on a gender unequal sexual morality. Did *Dev D* signal the opening of a new chapter in Hindi cinema's narrative of romance?

The current moment in Hindi film is rife with diverse, unconventional, and sometimes contrary dalliances with love and romance, and in concluding this dissertation, I note a prominent trend, albeit briefly and necessarily superficially. Clearly, the role and value of the romance trope is determined by the simultaneous presence and popularity of competing or alternative stories, images, genres and media. The 1950s, for instance, which was overwhelmed by this particular fantasy, also reveals the significant absence of the 'action' film.[1] At the same time, romantic love in this period seems to have been only the prerogative of cinema culture and its related media, rarely finding life and expression elsewhere.[2] Contrarily, the contemporary moment is distinguished by, first, the greater popularity of films focusing on masculine bodies and pursuits; be they in the form of comedy or the action film and, second, the proliferation of ideas and images of love itself across multiple media sites and non-filmy genres. Is the relative fall in the popularity of romance in films directly proportional to its explosion in other mediums like, advertisement, television, mobiles and the multiple sites, personal, social and commercial, of the internet?

[1] Films like *Aan* (1952) were exceptions that prove the rule. Said to be India's first technicolour film, a 'historical' action film peopled by kings and princesses, *Aan* showcased duels, fights, horse riding and stunts. However, even this film revolved around love across class boundaries, as the young village boy Jai Tilak (Dilip Kumar) falls for Rajashree (Nadira), the princess of a kingdom and attempts to tame her into love.

[2] Film songs on the radio, gramophone, film posters and advertisement for film releases in news papers, song booklets, gossip magazines, some books dealing with stars and their affairs and literary writing seem to have been the only carriers of romantic love in the fifties,

Like never before, love is now a matter of news and entertainment. Star and celebrity affairs, relationships, break-ups, marriages and divorce as well as new relationships and remarriages are openly discussed and celebrated. Although, at times stars maintain that they are 'just friends', it is not from fear of moralistic condemnation but from the interpersonal and professional compulsions and/or the desire for privacy. And yet another reality of love also makes constant news. There is a regularity with which we get news of honour killings, of young run-away lovers and even married couples hunted down and violently murdered for having committed the crime of falling in love with each other. Along with this are events, often staged for the media, of the law swooping down on young lovers in public places like gardens to be publicly humiliated and broadcast on television. If these two realities and media events are two extremes of the cultural spectrum of romantic love, perhaps for a majority of people and audiences of cinematic romance, love is even now a matter of mere entertainment and not an experiential reality. Discussing the issue of contentious marriages, eloping couples and honour killings in Nothern India, Prem Chowdhry maintains that for most people marriage is 'a social rather than an individual act'. The findings of Chowdhry's sociological, interdisciplinary study of North India might require only local variables to be applicable across India; she says 'Desire, choice and love are (…) separated from the institution of marriage, which is about social reproduction and not about individual needs and their fulfillment. The dominant morality does not expect emotional and erotic satisfaction in marriage and regards love and sexuality with distrust and suspicion (2009:1).[3] In the face of this diverse and even fragmented

[3] Chowdhry notes, 'A series of surveys conducted among the youth of major cities of India showed an overwhelming majority (84 per cent) opting for arranged marriage. This is when they have ample opportunity to interact with the opposite sex. For the details of the survey, see Hindustan Times, 16 February, Sunday magazine,p.1 (ibid:3)

social reality of love, cinematic romance too assumes multiple forms across different films.

If most films continue to carry the story of the romance between the lead pair as one of the many elements in the unfolding drama, what is of significance to this project is the emergence in recent years of a particular formula of romance that is structured around a narrative of love that requires the couple, over the course and length of the narrative to come to an *understanding* of their love for one another. The format thus requires the pair to meet or to already know one another, be friends or develop a friendship, separate over misunderstandings or disagreements, and finally come together in realization of their love for one another. Love now is not certain knowledge, but a deferred understanding of the self and the other arrived after a narrative traversing across time, places and other relational possibilities. Films like, *Hum Tum* (2004) *Salaam Namaste* (2005) *Socha na tha* (2005) *Jaane Tu …Ya Jaane na* (2008) *Jab we Met* (2007) *Love Aaj Kal*,(2009) *Break Ke Baad* (2010) and many others play out variations of this formula that seems to have taken its inspiration from Hollywood romantic comedies. Discussing, what they see as the 'end of romance' in the American cultural context, Dowd and Pallotta (2000) note the changing form of relationships of love and intimacy in the present time and culture. Observing the change as evidence of an increasingly 'hedonistic, strategic, monitored, self- reflexive, rational and instrumental' attitude towards relationships, Dowd and Pallotta note the consequent alteration and demystification of 'the culture's romantic script' (500-553). They further see the substantial increase in romantic comedies in recent decades as against the certain decrease in romantic dramas as answering to a need

for entertainment that is light hearted and utopic but which also takes on board the changing reality of experience in the real world. Now there are no impediments to love due to differences of class, race and other large structural forces and thus no place for love as transgression or grand passion. Based on personality clashes or misunderstandings, the formula for the popular romantic comedy, say Dowd and Pallotta, 'mandates that the lovers achieve an initial rapprochement only to separate but, by the end of the story, to reunite as a romantic couple' (559). In these times of cynicism and disbelief, the possibility of love itself is the utopic fantasy offered by these films. With evident affinities with the Hollywood romantic comedy, what are the pleasures and promises offered by these Hindi films?

Leaving the complexities of economic and aesthetic negotiation of cultural meaning for another time, here I merely draw attention to *Love Aaj Kal* (Imtiaz Ali, 2009) because its self-conscious mobilization of the formula of romantic comedy is based on the belief that there exists an indigenous idiom of romantic love in Hindi cinema. If the plot proceeds along the initial friendship - separation-reunion route, it is spliced with the notion that love was not always like this. Meera Pandit (Deepika Padukone) and Jai Vardhan Singh (Saif Ali) are both professionals working in London and in a casual, affectionate relationship, which they decide to terminate when Meera moves to India to work on the restoration of heritage sites. Practical and professional consideration drives their break-up and the couple remains friends. Over the next few years, they get together once when Jai visits India with his new/current girl friend Jo. Meera gets into a relationship with her boss, gets engaged to him and eventually marries. All this time, Jai remains totally

unaware of his true feelings for Meera, while Meera senses their bond and yet never makes any claim on his affections. Realizing the extent of her involvement with Jai, Meera gets out of her marriage, while even now unaware; Jai takes off on a new, much desired job in San Francisco. Eventually, after the first flush of euphoria over the dream job, in the grips of loneliness, Jai realizes his need for Meera and rushes to India. There are no villains, no obstacles, and also no drama in the trajectory of this romance. Interestingly, however, a parallel story told in flashback by Vir Singh (Rishi Kapoor), a restaurateur friend of Jai in London, provides the necessary foil, in terms of an alternate narrative of romance. Vir Singh maintains that it is the rational, practical outlook of the present generation, the availability of choice and options that make them undervalue love to the extent that they do not notice its need and presence in their own lives. Vir Singh's younger self (played by Saif in Punjabi costume) is the epitome of a romantic lover; pursuing his beloved, spending a day and night under her window, getting beaten by the males in her family and finally eloping with her on the eve of her wedding. The two stories are interwoven in a way that highlights their similarity in terms of events and emotions as well as their essential differences.

Similar to the others films of this 'genre'; *Love Aaj Kal* is not so much about passionate love, as about a search for cool compatibility and comfort. Jai and Meera keep intermittently referring to that special feeling of easy comfort in the other's company. Stating that the film addressed 'real problems in the modern context', Saif Ali Khan maintained that external obstacles were not needed any more because there were internal problems that the couple needs to resolve –

> They are fighting within. They are fighting for a balance between the professional and the personal. There are so many choices and

> distractions that relationships and marriages are failing at an alarmingly high rate. The threat to the relationship is what our film is about--personal ambition, the changing role of women, and the fact that they are equal most of the time to men. The role of women has changed, so men need to be more evolved in their thinking' (2009).[4]

Love Aaj Kal indeed imagines a gender equal space, in the sense that both Meera and Jai are seen to be equally involved in their work and profession and are unencumbered by family or other constraints. Also the same standards of sexual morality apply to both. However, the couple actually inhabits a world that is socially and materially quite distinct from that of the majority of their audience. To be sure, Jai often says, 'we are regular people', thus mobilizing the everyday to suggest that the dramatic love stories of yesteryear were not for them and that they needed to negotiate the quotidian in order to successfully manage their love relationship. At the same time, in traversing the globe and flying across continents in search of work and love, the subjects of this romance partake of and produce the fantasy of the extraordinary through life style.

Love Aaj Kal is interesting not only because it speaks of the reality of love in the past and the present, but essentially, if unknowingly, about Hindi cinema's investment in romance. Romance as performed by the younger Vir Singh is essentially governed by cinematic codes. In this 'past romance', not only are the tropes of Hindi Cinema – the pursuing of the girl, the high passion, the rebellion from social norm, in tune with the melodramatic imagination of on-screen love, but its context of transgression in the face of social obstacles has the familiar larger than life quality to it. However, when love becomes acceptable socially, when its

[4] http://www.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?250429-0

imagination cannot take a melodramatic form on-screen, does it need to reinvent itself and evolve a new language for cinematic display? The love between Jai and Meera, two 'mature' professionals, has no obstacles and no villains, and therefore 'no story'. Even as the *difference* of their story from the romance of the past, in fact becomes the pivot for its narrative unfolding, it underscores the need for an evolution of a new grammar of on-screen romance for the present. In a way *Love Aaj Kal* stages a conundrum about how a popular form based on spectacle and excess transforms itself so as to embody the unspectacular story of love between regular people.

Significantly, as mentioned earlier, this new love is a reality only for a minority among the elite and the privileged. If love is often punished, as is evident from the almost daily events of honour crimes across the country, the rapid transformation in lifestyle and material culture in urban India, the loosening of social bonds, the increasing role of technology in mediating interpersonal relationships has created a situation that seems to make romance obsolete. Capturing this conflicted and contrary experience of love and sexuality, Dibakar Banerjee's 2010 film *Love Sex aur Dhoka* (LSD), is a cinematic intervention in the mediatized sexual economy of contemporary urban and small town India. Shot with a hand held video camera in a way that makes the camera itself a key player in the three stories of love, sex and betrayal, the film critiques and is complicit in our voyeuristic relationship to sexuality and much else today. Exploring the role and play of images and image making in the production of desire, *LSD* self-reflexively questions the possibility of love and commitment in these times of cultural change and chaos.

Most interestingly for this project, the first of the three stories in *LSD* stages the very contrast between the cinematic love and its experiential reality. The young couple, Rahul and Shruti; students of what appears to be a fly-by-night film school, meet and fall in love while making a film which seems like a spoof of the 1995 mega hit *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge* (DDLJ). Although their romancing of each other mobilizes their imaginative identification with Raj and Simran of *DDLJ*, very soon the contrast between the hard realities of one against the fantastical magic of the other becomes evident.[5] Firstly, unlike Raj, Rahul harbours no illusions of gaining Shruti's father's consent and blessings and therefore elopes with Shruti to marry secretly. Secondly, true to love's fate in reality, the young couple is brutally murdered by members of Shruti's family. The horrifying killing of the young lovers at the end of the first story, caught, like everything else, on the diegetic video camera that continues to record even as the camera obsessed Rahul and his lover die sordidly, is a dark comment on the absurdity of the techno-savvy, mediatized contemporary reality, whose modernity continues to mutate as it reinvents newer ways of accessing 'tradition'. *LSD*'s other two stories enter two distinct but interlinked zones of commercial and cultural spaces to record the evacuation of love that is in process in small town and urban India. As neo-liberal economic compulsions impel personal choice and aspirations, this is the other side of the reality imagined by *Love Aaj Kal*. Here too, there are no external barriers to love, however, the reduction of all social and interpersonal relations to the logic of the market has emptied it of all value and romance. Underscoring the role of technology and media in objectifying and distancing intimacy, *LSD* not only holds a gritty

[5] That is the difference between 'Bollywood love and real love' as Banerjee puts it here – http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zLe4ERizjds

realistic lens on the violence implicit in the contemporary sexual economy; it is also a refusal to ride along with the illusion of on-screen romance.

Decades after love entertained audiences with its specific promise of modernity; it continues to occupy the screen and resonates in songs, although seldom did it embody a similar radical hope. If love is at times mobilized to translate the dreams of border crossings and reconciliation as in *Veer Zara* (2004) or more recently, *Ek Tha Tiger* (2012), more commonly it is one among the many attractions in an assemblage of cinematic effects. In the face of a fragmented and contradictory experiential reality of love in our cities, small towns and villages, cinematic love and its forms remain unpredictable. This much can be said- as we reinvent ways of relating interpersonally even as we cope with the enabling as well as alienating effects of information and media technology, changing life style and unequal access to the reality and dream of personal fulfillment, love in films will continue to offer a glimpse into the fractured processes of self-actualization and identity formation.

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