

**LYRICAL RESPONSE TO “NEHRUVIAN NATIONALISM”: THE  
PROGRESSIVE-INSPIRED POETS IN THE BOMBAY FILM  
INDUSTRY (1947-1964)**

Dissertation Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of  
Philosophy in Arts, Jadavpur University

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2019

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I am indebted to Dr. Sudeshna Banerjee, my supervisor, for all her patience, her time and incisive insights that has helped me to develop this thesis. The long discussions with her have been thought provoking and a learning experience of great value to me. Without her guidance and persistent help this thesis would not have been possible.

Besides my guide, I would like to thank Prof. Anuradha Roy, for her immensely valuable comments and suggestions which enabled me to widen my research from various perspectives. I sincerely thank Prof. Amlan Dasgupta for his guidance and encouragement in carrying out this project.

I also wish to express my gratitude to the officials and other staff members of the National Library, Kolkata, the Departmental Library of the History Department, Jadavpur University, the Departmental Library of the Film Studies Department, Jadavpur University, West Bengal State Archive and I.B. Research Archive.

I must express my very profound gratitude to my seniors and friends like Anirban Mondal, Aryama Ghosh, Sayantani Maitra, Rahul Mitra Mustafi, Sanjana Ghosh, Sreya Mitra, Rayani Halder, Dwipayana Dutta Roy, and Prithul Ghosh for their constant support. They have provided me with solace and succour in difficult times.

Last but not the least, I would like to thank my parents and brother for supporting me spiritually throughout my research work.

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## Introduction

This present thesis seeks to document the transformation in the content of the Hindi film lyrics in the immediate post-independence era. During the time of partition, a considerable number of Urdu poets joined the Hindi film industry in order to earn their living. This thesis has focused on such poets who, in the late colonial era, were influenced by the Progressive Writers' Movement and themselves were active participants in the movement. Thus, influenced by leftist ideas, they always upheld the life-struggle of the common people through their literary endeavours. Their literary conviction coupled with their personal experience of the socio-economic circumstances of the contemporary India found its manifestations in their poetry, very often recited in the '*mushiaras*' of the Progressive Writers' Conferences. However, during the time of partition, as they joined the film industry as lyricists to earn their living, they had to compromise with their poetic entities according to the demand of the profit-driven Hindi film industry. Whereas, as independent poets they were free to portray the plight of the poor, the misery of the downtrodden and the oppressive nature of the capitalist society, after joining a capitalist industry, they could no longer strictly follow their literary conviction. Rather, their literary productions came to be considered as commodities, the nature of which was to be determined by the market demand. Thus, in a capitalist world, these poets got alienated from their own creative cultural productions and suffered from the crisis of commodification. Furthermore, in the post-independence era, as many of the filmmakers internalized the vision of nation-building, propagated by the architect of the infant nation, Jawaharlal Nehru, many of the films started upholding the Nehruvian nation making project. Thus, this present thesis is a humble attempt to historically contextualize the variety of responses of these lyricists towards the crisis of commodification of their cultural production within the Hindi film industry on the one hand, and the notion of the Nation-building agenda on the other.

## Main Questions

The main thrust of this thesis is to ask how with the advent of the progressive poets in the Hindi film industry in the immediate post-independence era, the film lyrics underwent a significant transformation. Influenced by socialism, lyricists like Sahir Ludhianvi, Shailendra and others turned pointed out the suffering of the common people in their lyrics. Instead of merely following the romantic-sad-bhajan triad, they also started portraying glimpses of socio-economic conditions of postcolonial India through their cultural production.

Along with this main question, certain other issues have also been considered in this thesis. It is important to note that the late 1940s and the early 1950s were ‘crucial years’ of ‘state formation’ for India.<sup>1</sup> The cultural production of the Hindi film industry was also influenced by the Nehruvian nation-building project as several film directors like Mehboob Khan, Raj Kapoor and others were inspired by Nehru’s vision of a ‘new India’. However, this thesis raises the question as to how far the Hindi film lyricists internalized this nation-building agenda of the postcolonial state. It may be argued that while lyricists like Kavi Pradeep, Prem Dhawan and others wrote many songs bearing this nation-building trend in their mind, the lyricists having a progressive background often responded to it in a unique way. Even, in their patriotic songs, they championed the cause of the empowerment of the downtrodden mass.

Moreover, a further question should be raised. As film lyricists, they could no longer write whatever they wanted to. Rather, the demand of the film industry often compelled them to produce such lyrics which would be beneficial for the industry. Thus, this thesis attempts to show how far were these progressive poets able to follow their revolutionary stance after joining the film industry. They suffered from a dilemma due to their contradictory role. As

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<sup>1</sup> Brigitte Schulze, “The Cinematic ‘Discovery of India’: Mehboob’s Re-Invention of the Nation in Mother India”, *Social Scientist*, Vol. 30, No. 9/10 (2002): 72.

independent poets, following their literary conviction, they always wanted to uphold the plight of the poor, misery of the common man and to raise their voices against the socio-economic inequalities of the society. However, as they were now working within a capitalist industry, they were obliged to reshape their literary endeavours according to the need of the industry. This thesis argues that in the midst of such dilemmatic situation, they did not respond in a homogenous way. Rather, it may be pointed out that while lyricists like Sahir, Kaifi or Shailendra followed their radical stance in spite of having several restrictions within the film industry, on the contrary, one of the greatest lyricists Majrooh Sultanpuri lost his rebellious character as a lyricist.

One technical aspect was also inextricably linked with this problem which should be kept in mind. Unlike an independent poet, a film lyricist had to master over certain special abilities as they had to remould their lyrics according to the nature of the film narrative, the meter of the tunes composed by the music director and the demand of the market. These restrictions often created severe difficulties for these poets who now tried to earn their living as lyricists. Thus, famous poets like Asrarul Haq Majaz, Josh Malihabadi and some others found composing film lyrics too difficult and retreated into poetry.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, this study takes into consideration the role of Government censorship as the censorship policy, since the late colonial era, played a crucial role in shaping the content of the Hindi films. In the late colonial period, many patriotic films and songs having anti-British sentiments were brought under the vigilance of censorship. For an instance, in 1936, M. R. Masani's film 'Pandit Jawaharlal's Message' was banned as in this movie, Nehru prescribed the path of socialism in a speech.<sup>3</sup> In the postcolonial India, this strict censorship policy was continued by

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<sup>2</sup> Ashraf Aziz, *Light of the Universe: Essays on Hindustani Film Music* (New Delhi: Three Essays Collective, 2003), 49.

<sup>3</sup> G.O.B. Political Department, Confidential, File No. 2/16/36, Poll., File Name- "Use of Cinematograph Screen for Speeches by Political Leaders".

the Nehruvian state. Sahir's songs '*Asman Pe Hai Khuda*' and '*Chin-O-Arab Humara*' were treated as too radical and thus, were banned by the government.<sup>4</sup>

## **Subject of Discussion**

The movies are basically produced for the purpose of business and entertainment. However, this does not indicate that they are 'merely trivial excrescence' of the film industry.<sup>5</sup> Rather, cinema often acts as an 'indicator of a nation's psyche'.<sup>6</sup> Thus, in the immediate post independent India, many Hindi films echoed the nation-building energy of the postcolonial state. The Nehruvian government urged to utilize the Hindi film industry in order to inculcate a sense of optimism in the minds of the citizens after the trauma of partition.

The postcolonial state had to encounter with severe socio-economic crises emerged due to the poignant partition. In order to remedy these crises and to achieve its declared aim of 'development', the postcolonial state adopted several politico-economic reforms like Five Years Plan, Industrial Policy Resolution etc.<sup>7</sup> But these were hardly sufficient to consolidate the infant state. Thus, Nehru attempted to utilise various forms of popular culture like literature, music, cinema etc. in order to upheld the project of nation-building and to reshape the minds of common people to accelerate the process.

It is important to note that national leaders like Gandhi, Patel and others were least interested about the film industry and its cultural production.<sup>8</sup> Rather, they were utterly critical about the

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<sup>4</sup> Ali Husain Mir and Raza Mir, *Anthem of Resistance* (New Delhi: India Ink, 2006), 112-113.

<sup>5</sup> Pradip Krishen, "Introduction", *India International Centre Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No. 1, Indian Popular Cinema: Myth, Meaning and Metaphor (1981): 3-4.

<sup>6</sup> Partha Chatterjee, "Indian Cinema: Then and Now", *India International Centre Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (2012): 45.

<sup>7</sup> Gaurav Gadgil and Sudha Tiwari, "Poetics of "Pyaasa" and Narratives of National Disillusionment", *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 74 (2013): 938.

<sup>8</sup> Ramachandra Guha, *India After Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy* (London: Macmillan, 2007), 721.

ill-effects of the Hindi films over Indian society. However, Nehru realized the significance of the Hindi films which could be used as an ideological tool to propagate his nation-making agendas. Scholars like Srirupa Roy point out the role of ‘non-state actors’ like Film Divisions in fostering such nation-building ideology. In the movie theatres, newsreels were used to propagate the developmental activities of the government.<sup>9</sup>

The Nehru government also established a Film Enquiry Committee in 1949. The Committee published its report in 1951, in which it asked to utilize the Indian movies as ‘effective instruments’ for ‘national culture, education and healthy entertainment’ in order to promote a ‘national character with its multifaceted aspects’.<sup>10</sup> The Film Enquiry Committee considered the Indian movies as the most important form of mass media. Brigitte Schulze also points out that in the early 1950s, Indian films enjoyed 1.6 million daily viewers, and having such large number of spectatorships, it certainly had a greater ‘psychological influence’ over the society than the print media or the radio.<sup>11</sup> Thus, unlike Europe, where print media played a catalytic role in the growth of national consciousness, in India, forms of mass media like films and songs played an extremely vital role in this matter. Thus, following the lines of Pradip Krishen, it may be argued that the popular Hindi films and their songs, in spite of being a part of a profit-driven ‘culture industry’, acted as a ‘channel for the transmission of ideas.’<sup>12</sup>

After the independence, many film directors, scriptwriters and lyricists of the Hindi film industry internalised Nehru’s vision of a ‘new India’. Lyricists like Prem Dhawan, Pradeep and some others started portraying a sense of ‘Indianness’ in their songs. They tried to promote idealism and hope in the minds of the citizen for a better future of the country. Moreover, during this time, lyricists of the Hindi film industry wrote many ‘Azadi Geet’ or freedom songs

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<sup>9</sup> Srirupa Roy, *Beyond Belief: India and the Politics of Postcolonial Nationalism* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2007), xi.

<sup>10</sup> Report of the Film Enquiry Committee, 1951, (New Delhi: Government of India Press), 46-47.

<sup>11</sup> Schulze, “The Cinematic ‘Discovery of India’: Mehboob’s Re-Invention of the Nation in Mother India”, 76.

<sup>12</sup> Krishen, “Introduction”, 3-4.



to glorify the bravery and sacrifice of the freedom fighters. These songs had a profound impact over the psyche of the citizens by raising their national awareness.

However, Nehruvian government failed to bring about a fundamental transformation from the colonial system and by adopting a reformist stance, it was only able to bring about some 'molecular' changes.<sup>13</sup> They also failed to achieve their declared aim of 'redistributive justice'. Due to the elitist nature of the developmental policy of the state, it also could not eradicate the problem of poverty, oppression etc. It is true that various aspects of the Nehruvian nation-building project found its reflection in the Hindi film lyrics of the contemporary era. But at the same time, these failures influenced some of the lyricists who upheld the contemporary socio-economic conditions of India through their literary production. While the majority of the songs remained confined within the romantic-bhajan-sad triad and other lyricists focused on celebrating the independence by upholding a national awareness, a few among them started shedding light on the struggle of the common people.

These lyricists were active participants in the Progressive Writers' Movement in the 1940s. Thus, this thesis also deals with various aspects of the Progressive Writers' Movement to understand their ideological background. Influenced by socialism, they always raised their voices against any kind of oppression in the society. Throughout the 1940s, these progressive poets waged a cultural war against colonialism, feudalism, fascism and religious fundamentalism. Such rebellious attitude continued to flourish among some of these poets even after joining the film industry as lyricists during the time of partition. After the partition, both in India and Pakistan, the Progressive Writers' Movement faced severe governmental oppression. Thus, many of these poets were now compelled to join the film industry in order to earn their livelihood and to disseminate their ideology. It is true that the peculiar nature of

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<sup>13</sup> Sudipta Kaviraj, *The Trajectories of the Indian State: Politics and Ideas* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2010), 114-118.

the film industry transformed the revolutionary approach of some of these poets. Nonetheless, poets like Sahir, Kaifi or Shailendra continued to follow their literary conviction even as lyricists.

As the thesis seeks to discuss the transforming nature of the Hindi film songs after the partition due to the advent of such progressive poets in the film arena, in order to clearly understand how far the nature of the film songs was changed after the partition, it would be essential to take into consideration the nature of the Hindi film lyrics in the late colonial era. As the content of the film lyrics was determined by the nature of the film narratives, we have discussed regarding the subjects of the majority films in the pre-independence era. Here, it may be pointed out that majority of the films produced in the 1920s and 1930s were based on mythological stories. Due to the strict censorship policy of the British government, patriotic songs did not appear until the late 1930s. However, due to the influence of the Quit India Movement, Second World War and the heroic achievements of the INA, lyricists started writing patriotic songs in the 1940s. These songs received huge applause from the audiences and helped to raise their nationalist sentiment. In the late 1940s, songs relating to the socio-economic inequalities also came to the forefront. Lyricists like Tanveer Naqvi, D.N. Madhok, Safdar Aah wrote several songs where they talked about the economic inequality of the society and the exploitative nature of the rich people. However, it should be mentioned that in the immediate post-independence era, the number of the songs portraying socio-economic inequalities became fewer as most of the lyricists now urged to celebrate the national unity through their writings.<sup>14</sup> Though, in the late 1950s, as the limitations of the nation-building project became prominent, some of the lyricists again started focusing on such issues like economic inequality, oppression, struggle of the downtrodden mass.

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<sup>14</sup> Pankaj Rag, "The Theme of Social and Political Consciousness as a challenge for Indian Recorded Music", *Social Scientist*, Vol. 32, No. 11/12 (2004), 87.

## Review of the Existing Literature

Film scholars have long been neglected the importance of the songs and background music in the Hindi film industry. Some scholars argue that the Hindi film songs did not have any direct connection to the film narrative.<sup>15</sup> However, this view has been challenged by scholars like Anna Morcom<sup>16</sup>, Ashok Da. Ranade<sup>17</sup> and others. They show how the film songs played a crucial role in the narrative structure in the Hindi films. Ranade documents the significant benchmarks in the evolution of the Hindi film songs by exploring the role of songs in the movies. These scholars mainly deal with the issue regarding film music and its evolution according to the need of the industry. However, they have provided us with little information about the changing character of the film lyrics over the years. There are some biographies of specific lyricists which partly deal with this issue.<sup>18</sup> However, these are mainly hagiographical works from which we get certain useful information in order to trace the evolution in the nature and characteristics of the Hindi film lyrics in the immediate post-independence era.

As the Hindi film songs were important elements of the film narratives, thus, with the changing nature of the content of the films, a significant change occurred in the lyrical production of the Hindi film industry. Barnouw and Krishnaswamy's book gives us hints about the changing

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<sup>15</sup> M. Madhava Prasad, *Ideology of the Hindi Film: A Historical Construction* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998).

See also Rachel Dwyer, *Filming the Gods: Religion and Indian Cinema* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>16</sup> Anna Morcom, *Hindi Film Songs and Cinema* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2007).

<sup>17</sup> Ashok Da. Ranade, *Hindi Film Song: Music Beyond Boundaries* (New Delhi: Promilla and Co., 2006).

<sup>18</sup> Akshay Manwani, *Sahir Ludhianvi: The People's Poet* (Noida: Harper Collins, 2013). Moreover, Ganesh Anantharaman, Manek Premchand and others also provides biographical information of several singers, music directors and lyricists of the Hindi film industry. See Ganesh Anantharaman, *Bollywood Melodies: A History of the Hindi film song* (Gurgaon: Penguin Random House India, 2008). See also Manek Premchand, *Yesterday's Melodies Today's Memories: Singers, Lyricists and Music Composers from Hindi Cinema's Yesteryear* (Chennai: Notion Press, 2018).

nature of the Hindi films since the late colonial era which enables us to grasp the cause of the transforming nature of the lyrics in the industry.<sup>19</sup>

Scholars focusing on the significance of the Progressive Writers' Movement in India often give a clue that with the advent of the progressive poets in the film arena, the norms of the culture industry were profoundly influenced by their radical stance.<sup>20</sup> Following their arguments, this thesis attempts to further argue that it was not only the progressive poets who influenced the film industry with their radical stance, rather in some cases, the restrictions of the film industry compelled these lyricists to compromise with their rebellious ideas. Thus, there were various kinds of response among the different progressive poets who joined the industry during the time of partition in order to earn their livelihood. This thesis will show that though some of the poets continued their rebellious stance, there were significant number of others who in spite of being one of the greatest lyricists of all time, decided not to follow their progressive antecedents while working as lyricists. Moreover, the art of lyric writing requires some special kind of abilities as the lyricists had to write according to the metre of the tune, the demand of the market and the nature of the film narratives. Thus, many successful poets found the work of the lyricists too difficult and too compromising and retreated into poetry.

Sudipta Kaviraj points out the dual roles played by the film songs during the time of partition, i.e., on the one hand these songs helped to progress the film narrative and on the other, these songs had a wider significance as they often portrayed the contemporary socio-economic circumstances.<sup>21</sup> This thesis argues that some of the lyricists were able to follow their literary

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<sup>19</sup> Eric Barnouw and S. Krishnaswamy, *Indian Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963).

<sup>20</sup> Ali Husain Mir and Raza Mir, *Anthems of Resistance* (New Delhi: India Ink, 2006). See Talat Ahmed, *Literature and Politics in the Age of Nationalism: The Progressive Writers' Movement in South Asia, 1932-1956* (London: Routledge, 2009). See also Rakhshanda Jalil, *Liking Progress, Loving Change: A Literary History of the Progressive Writers' Movement in Urdu* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>21</sup> Sudipta Kaviraj, "Reading a Song of the City: Images of the City in Literature and Films", in *City Flicks: Indian Cinema and the Urban Experience*, ed. Preben Kaarsholm, (Calcutta: Seagull Books Private Ltd., 2004), 60-81.

conviction in order to reflect their own experience in the postcolonial Indian society. They responded to the Nehruvian nation-building agenda quite differently from the other lyricists. Thus, this thesis attempts to reveal how far could the progressive poets, after joining the film industry, follow their revolutionary outlook. Moreover, another issue should be pointed out regarding their various kinds of response towards the nation-building project of the postcolonial state.

## **Sources and Methodology**

In this study, we try to marshal a variety of primary documents- both archival and printed- ranging from report of the Film Enquiry Committee, the Cinematography Committee report to several autobiographies, memoirs, film songs in order to extract important information from them after critically examining their veracity and varied interpretations. Secondary literature has been referred to for contextualizing the issues. By analysing and interpreting the film lyrics in terms of their socio-political background we attempt to have an idea regarding how the cultural production of a capitalist profit-driven industry was influenced by certain important socio-political circumstances. Moreover, sometimes by analysing the character of the tunes of some specific songs, this thesis tries to discuss how a specific kind of tune and lyrics was used to raise a sense of national awareness and patriotic feelings among the audience. In order to study the evolution of the nature of the Hindi film lyrics in the late colonial era and the influence of the freedom movement on the film songs, secondary sources written by Gautam Kaul, Ganesh Anantharaman were used which enable us to grasp the nuance of the picture. Archival sources like Indian Cinematograph Committee Report have been used to portray the role of British censorship. In order to trace the origin and to discuss the salient features of the Progressive movement, we have used memoirs, interviews, autobiographies of the leaders

associated with this movement along with the archival sources. From the autobiography of Sajjad Zaheer '*Roshnai: Taraqqi Pasand Tehrik ki Yaadein*' we not only get several valuable information regarding the basic traits, ups and downs and objectives of the movement but also find letters of luminous personalities like Rabindranath Tagore, Munshi Premchand and others. Apart from these sources, innumerable Bollywood songs ranging the period between 1940-1960 and particularly the songs written by these progressive poets helped us to grasp the nuance of the picture. Furthermore, their literary production, for an instance, Sahir's '*Talkhiyan*', we found to be an extremely valuable source in order to trace their revolutionary outlooks. *Talkhiyan* was of particular importance as Sahir used many of his poems from this collection as Hindi film lyrics after the partition. Finally, in our last chapter, we shall use the reports of Indian Film Enquiry Committee to understand how the infant nation-state tried to utilise the popular culture in the process of nation-building. Several film songs have been focused on to show the response of the lyricists in general and progressive poets, who joined the industry, in particular in this matter. Moreover, biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, interviews of contemporary film directors, lyricists and actors along with the collective works of some of the lyricists like Majrooh Sultanpuri, Kaifi Azmi, Sahir Ludhianvi have been used as significant sources.

## **Chapter Division**

The first chapter deals with the evolutionary nature of the Hindi film songs in the late colonial period. In the first section, this thesis takes into consideration the nature of the early silent films and argues that due to the abundance of the mythological films, the song lyrics also mainly followed the same genre. It is important to note that even during the silent era, music played a crucial role in the films. The next section has discussed how in the late 1930s, movies relating

to socio-political awareness started to be produced. The shift in the British censorship policy played a catalytic role in this matter. In the final section of this chapter, the thesis seeks to explain how the tumultuous political scenario of the 1940s due to the Second World War, Quit India Movement and the bravery of the INA influenced the cultural production of the Hindi film industry. This section has also considered the role of the lyricists like Pradeep, D.N. Madhok, Tanvir Naqvi and others to ignite a sense of patriotism among the spectators.

The second chapter deals with two major trends during 1930s to 1960s which directly or indirectly had a huge impact on the film lyrics in the post-independence era. The first section has focused on the origins of the progressive movement which would enable us to trace the ideological background of these poets. The second section explains the principal concerns of the progressive poets, reflected in their literary endeavours in the late colonial era. In order to answer the question how far they followed their progressive stance after joining the film industry, it is essential to focus on their writings as progressive poets. The final section talks about another important trend which influenced the Hindi film lyricists in the postcolonial era, namely the Nehruvian nation-building agenda. It is important to note here that many of the film makers, lyricists and scriptwriters in the 1950s internalized the Nehruvian vision of a 'new India'.

The third chapter first considers how after the partition, the Bombay film industry was able to gain the national status, having a far wider viewership compared to the other film industries in different regions of India. This would enable us to understand the reason why Nehru, though initially indifferent if not critical to the film industry, eventually realized the importance of utilising Hindi films to encourage a sense of national awareness among the Indians. The next section would focus on how the film songs performed a key role as tools of the nation-building by providing emotional justification to the nation making agenda of the postcolonial state. The final section takes into consideration the criticism of the failures of the Nehruvian government

through film songs, mainly written by some progressive writers<sup>22</sup> who joined the film industry after the partition. This thesis also seeks to raise the question as to how far these progressive authors were able to continue their revolutionary attitude while working in a capitalist profit-driven industry.

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<sup>22</sup> This present thesis, however, does not claim that it was merely the progressive lyricists who criticised the limitations of the Nehruvian government through their literary endeavours. Rather, in the final section of this chapter, it is stated that many other lyricists like Shailendra, Kavi Pradeep, who initially championed the nation-building agenda, in the late 1950s and early 1960s started portraying the miserable conditions of the poor people.



## **Chapter One**

### **The Hindi Film Songs During the Late Colonial Era**

As has been indicated in the introduction, the present thesis would focus on the issue how did the progressive poets after joining the Hindi film industry as lyricists respond towards the nation-building activities of the postcolonial Indian state through their cultural production. Whereas most of the lyricists were influenced by Nehru's vision and started reflecting various dimensions of the nation-making project, some progressive-inspired lyricists attempted to portray the contemporary socio-political circumstances through their lyrics. This resulted in a shift in the content of the Hindi film lyrics in the post-independent era. However, an assessment of this new characteristics of the Hindi film songs would be faulty if the concerned developments are not situated in relation to the orientation of the Hindi film lyrics in the earlier period.

In order to trace the shifting nature of the Hindi film lyrics after the partition and to address the point to what extent the issues raised in those songs took a new shape in the immediate post-independent era, we should delve deep into the characteristics of the film lyrics in the late colonial era. We shall divide this chapter into three subsections chronologically, each of which encompasses a particular time frame. Each of these sections would try to elaborate how with the passage of time in the late colonial era, along with the changing political scenario, financial condition of the industry and the socio-cultural environment, the nature of the lyrics used in the Hindi film songs along with the character of the film produced, witnessed a significant transformation.

## **The Silent Era: Dominance of the ‘Mythologicals’ (1913-1930)**

‘Mythologicals’ constituted the majority of the silent films.<sup>1</sup> Ashok Da. Ranade points out that between 1913-1920, as many as 78 movies out of 85 were based on mythological concepts.<sup>2</sup> Such dominance of one particular genre deserves special attention for our study, as the nature of the films always determined the pattern of the songs and lyrics to be used. Here, though we are focusing on the films of the silent era, the question regarding film songs can not altogether be overlooked as the movies of this period had never been completely silent.<sup>3</sup> In spite of the fact that these films did not have any dialogues, but background music and sometimes songs performed by a live band from the orchestra pit did have a vital role to play in these movies. The famous Indian music director Naushad Ali remarks that during the silent era, there were musicians in the theatres to play the background score on various instruments like table, harmonium, piano etc. and there was also one singer who would sing according to the given situation in the film.<sup>4</sup>

In 1913, Dhundiraj Govind Phalke, better known as Dadasaheb Phalke, made the first Indian feature film ‘*Raja Harishchandra*’. The first silent film was accompanied by various acts like the duet and dance of Miss Irene Delmer<sup>5</sup> implying the role of song and music even in the earlier cinemas. The film became so popular that it ran for 23 days, an unprecedented incident at that time, at the Coronation Cinema in Bombay.<sup>6</sup> The immense success of the movie inspired

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<sup>1</sup> Vamsee Juluri, *Bollywood Nation: India through Its Cinema* (Gurgaon: Penguin Random House India Pvt Ltd, 2013), 15.

<sup>2</sup> Ashok Da. Ranade, *Hindi Film Song: Music Beyond Boundaries* (New Delhi: Promilla & Co., 2006), 92.

<sup>3</sup> Jayson Beaster-Jones, *Bollywood Sounds: The Cosmopolitan Mediations of Hindi Film Song* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 29-30.

<sup>4</sup> Gregory D. Booth, *Behind the Curtain: Making Music in Mumbai's Film Studios* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 32.

<sup>5</sup> William O. Beeman, “The Use of Music in Popular Film: East and West”, *India International Centre Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No. 1, *Indian Popular Cinema: Myth, Meaning and Metaphor* (1981): 82.

<sup>6</sup> Rachel Dwyer, *Filming the Gods: Religion and Indian Cinema* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006), 22.

others to follow the path of Phalke. Initially, the Indian filmmakers mainly wanted to stick to the mythological themes for variety of reasons. If we discuss the reasons, we shall also be able to realize why the Hindi film songs mainly put emphasize on the devotional tunes and lyrics.

Some scholars have put forward the 'Auteur Theory' in order to explain the reason for the abundance of mythological films in this era. The theory sees the director as the 'primary auteur' whose personal creativity is reflected in his films.<sup>7</sup> Phalke was so mesmerised by watching the movie 'The Life of Christ' that he wanted to direct a film on the life of Lord Krishna. However, due to lack of funds, he was compelled to change the plan. Finally, he took a mythological theme based on the life of the Puranic king Harishchandra.<sup>8</sup> Gokulsing and Dissanayake have discussed this film in the light of the 'Auteur Theory'.<sup>9</sup>

However, the reasons behind the abundance of the mythological films were far more complex and could not solely be explained by this theory. The film industry was a capitalist sector aiming to maximize the profit. In the initial years, the industry was financially weak and it did not have any solid infrastructure. So, the filmmakers and producers wanted to choose such themes which, they thought, would appeal to the mass on a large scale. Reginald Massey argues that the masses now could witness the greatness of their deities of whom they only heard some poems or songs in the previous years.<sup>10</sup> Peasants enthusiastically went to the temporary moving theatres in the outskirts of Bombay to watch these mythological movies like '*Raja Harishchandra*', '*Savitri Satyaban*', '*Lanka Dahan*' etc.<sup>11</sup> The audience even made offerings to actors playing the role of any gods and they even entered the theatre barefoot to show their

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<sup>7</sup> K. Moti Gokulsing and Wimal Dissanayake, *From Aan to Lagaan and Beyond: A Guide to the Study of Indian Cinema* (Sterling: Trentham Books, 2012), 43-44.

In 1951, Andre Bazin popularized the 'Auteur Theory' in his film magazine 'Cahiers du Cinema'.

<sup>8</sup> Erik Barnouw and S. Krishnaswamy, *Indian Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 11-13.

<sup>9</sup> Gokulsing and Dissanayake, *From Aan to Lagaan and Beyond*, 43-44.

<sup>10</sup> Reginald Massey, "The Indian Film Industry", *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, Vol. 122, No. 5214 (1974): 370-371.

<sup>11</sup> Anirudh Deshpande, *Class, Power and Consciousness in Indian Cinema and Television* (Delhi: Primus Books, 2009), 73.

respect. Film actors were very often treated as the real gods and thus, the actors themselves used to meet their fans in the mythological dress, resembling the notion of ‘giving *darshan*’.<sup>12</sup>

However, it is not true that by concentrating on the mythological films the contemporary filmmakers altogether elided the nationalist and social themes. Rather, directors like Phalke were staunch nationalists by heart. They actually utilized the mythological films in order to ignite a sense of national consciousness among the audience.<sup>13</sup> Thus, the firm relationship between the projection of patriotic feelings and the movies began in these days, though in an indirect way. Phalke was influenced by the ‘discourse of Swadeshi’<sup>14</sup> which was evident in his attempt to establish an indigenous film industry. Tejaswini Ganti argues that Phalke linked the filmmaking with contemporary politics and ‘Indian statehood’ by claiming that India would not be fit for Home Rule until the indigenous filmmaking failed to get the support of the Indian political leaders.<sup>15</sup> Phalke was encouraged by Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Tilak’s newspaper ‘*Kesri*’ applauded his ‘*Raja Harishchandra*’ as the ‘first swadeshi feature film’.<sup>16</sup>

Then the next question arises- why did they have to project their nationalist sentiment within an allegorical veil? Why did they feel impelled to project patriotic emotion indirectly? We shall find the answer if we turn our attention towards the example of ‘*Bhakt Vidur*’, a mythological film released in 1921. This particular instance would also enable us to grasp the real cause why the lyricists of the earlier generation of the Hindi film industry avoided to use patriotic songs.

The owner of the Kohinoor Studio, situated in Bombay, Seth Dwarkadas Naraindas Sampat was heavily influenced by Mahatma Gandhi’s mass movement during the Rowlatt Satyagraha,

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<sup>12</sup> Juluri, *Bollywood Nation*, 33-40.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 18.

<sup>14</sup> Vijay Devadas, “The Shifting Terrains of Nationalism and Patriotism in Indian Cinemas”, in *Routledge Handbook of Indian Cinemas*, ed. K. Moti Gokulsing and Wimal Dissanayake, (Oxon: Routledge, 2013): 220.

<sup>15</sup> Tejaswini Ganti, *Bollywood: A Guidebook to Popular Hindi Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 9.

<sup>16</sup> Biren Das Sharma, “Indian Cinema and the National Leadership”, in *Indian Cinema: Contemporary Perceptions from the Thirties*, ed. Samik Bandyopadhyay, (Jamshedpur: Celluloid Chapter, 1993): 137.

launched against the autocratic Rowlatt Act in 1919. Sampat made ‘a swadeshi film’ named ‘*Bhakt Vidur*’ in 1921, based on the epic *Mahabharata*. But the film attained political colour as Sampat, who also played the central character of Vidur in the film, portrayed the symbol of Gandhian movements by using a Gandhi-cap and Khaddar-attire and carrying a bamboo stick. The movie became so popular also for a song, specially written to glorify Gandhi’s *charka* (spinning wheel), which was performed live with every show.<sup>17</sup> This movie was released at a time when the entire country was mesmerised by the charismatic leadership of Gandhi. It was the crucial period of the first all Indian mass movement, i.e., the Non-Cooperation movement throughout the country. Thus, this film and particularly that song became immensely popular and generated a new enthusiasm among the Indians. Initially, the film got huge success in Bombay.<sup>18</sup> Due to its apparent political colour, the Censor Board first banned this movie in Karachi and then in Madras.<sup>19</sup>

This particular incident partly explains why in the Hindi film industry, patriotic lyrics did not appear in the initial years. If we discuss the censorship policy of the Government in the 1920s, we shall be able to get a clear glimpse of the condition. The colonial government realized that Indian films had the ability to destabilize the prevailing power relation between the rulers and the subjects.<sup>20</sup> The Viceroy of India Lord Reading, in 1922, wrote to the Secretary of the State for India Viscount Peel about the aim of censorship. Reading emphasized that the duty of the Censor Board was not merely to prohibit the obscene films, rather it had to perform a more important responsibility, i.e., to restrict those movies which were politically harmful to the

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<sup>17</sup> Ashish Rajadhyaksha and Paul Willemen, *Encyclopedia of Indian Cinema* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 244.

<sup>18</sup> Gautam Kaul, *Cinema and the Indian Freedom Struggle: Covering the Subcontinent* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Limited, 1998), 32.

<sup>19</sup> Rajadhyaksha and Willemen, *Encyclopedia of Indian Cinema*, 244.

<sup>20</sup> M. Madhava Prasad, “The Natives are Looking: Cinema and Censorship in Colonial India”, in *Law’s Moving Image*, ed. Leslie J. Moran, Emma Sandon, Elena Loizidou and Ian Christie, (London: Cavendish Publishing Limited, 2004): 161.

colonial rulers.<sup>21</sup> This proves that the government utilized the Censor Board to prohibit mainly those films which tended to inculcate a nationalist sentiment among the viewers. Someswar Bhowmik maintains that the Censor Board mainly banned three kinds of films- 1) the American films having the spirit of independence, 2) the Soviet Cinema having communist 'propaganda', and 3) the indigenous films having a patriotic tinge.<sup>22</sup>

In 1920, Censor Boards were set up in different provinces like Bombay, Madras, Rangoon and Calcutta. It was stated in the Cinematograph Act of 1918 that Indian filmmakers had to receive a certificate from the Censor Board to exhibit their films.<sup>23</sup> This strict censorship policy was one of the main reasons for which the early Indian filmmakers mostly concentrated on mythological and in the early 1930s on the devotional films. That is why even after the advent of the Talkies, in the early 1930s, no songs concerning social or national consciousness were produced.

But apart from the fact that the films relating to patriotic sentiment were not produced in a significant way due to such governmental policy, one may wonder about the cause of the dearth of films relating to social issues in the 1920s. Between 1917-1922, only 8 films out of 33 were made which dealt with the social themes.<sup>24</sup> In order to explain this we shall now deal with two different examples.

After the withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation movement, the Hindu-Muslim unity collapsed due to certain incidents like the Moplah Rebellion, the cow protection riots and the activities of the religious fundamentalists of both camps. Dharendra Nath Ganguly, in 1924, made a film

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<sup>21</sup> Someswar Bhowmik, "Film Censorship in India: Deconstructing an Incongruity", in *Routledge Handbook of Indian Cinemas*, ed. K. Moti Gokulsing and Wimal Dissanayake, (Oxon: Routledge, 2013): 297-298.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* 297.

<sup>23</sup> Report of the Indian Cinematograph Committee, 1927-1928 (Madras: Government of India Central Publication Branch, 1928), 105-106.

The Act also mentions that certificates obtained for each board was valid for the entire country. However, any provincial government had the authority to ban a film which it felt to be unsuitable for the public exhibition in that province.

<sup>24</sup> Ranade, *Hindi Film Song*, 92.

named '*Razia Begum*' in order to reduce the Hindu-Muslim hostility by spreading the message of love and peace. But the subject of the film that the Muslim queen Razia felt in love with one of her Hindu subjects antagonized the Mohammedans. The film got considerable success in Bombay, but in Hyderabad, it faced huge protest from the Muslims. The Nizam ordered Ganguly to leave Hyderabad with his companions within 24 hours.<sup>25</sup> Even, because of the opposition of the Muslims, the Censor Boards of other provinces also refused to give the film a certificate.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, making a social film was considered to be risky by most of the producers. In 1925, when Chandulal Shah made a social film based on 'modern background' named '*Vimla*', the producer pleaded to him that he needed a mythological movie rather than a social one so that his film could at least run for an entire month.<sup>27</sup> Thus, the contemporary political scenario, strict censorship as well as the profit-driven mentality of the producers compelled the directors to make a certain kinds of films and consequently, the lyrics of the Hindi film songs also followed the same genre immediately after the advent of the Talkies.

Finally, we should also take into consideration the issue of public consumption. The capitalist industry in order to earn as much profit as possible often produces such things which have a huge market demand. If we study the demand and character of the filmgoers of the early 1920s, we shall be able to make out why instead of a social film, the 'mythologicals' or religious films were considered to be more profitable by the producers. Indian Cinematograph Committee Report of 1928 shows that while the affluent and socially distinguished Indians mainly liked to watch the American movies, the indigenous films were highly popular among the people of 'less cultured class'.<sup>28</sup> However, Indian religious films like 'The Birth of Krishna' attracted the

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<sup>25</sup> Barnouw and Krishnaswamy, *Indian Film*, 26.

<sup>26</sup> Mihir Bose, *Bollywood: A History* (New Delhi: Lotus Collection, 2007), 69.

<sup>27</sup> Barnouw and Krishnaswamy, *Indian Film*, 30.

<sup>28</sup> Report of the Indian Cinematograph Committee, 1927-1928, 21-22.

Hindus of all classes throughout the country. Generally, Indian women did not attend the cinema. But as far as the mythological films were concerned, the Hindu women, in a large number, went to the theatres to watch those movies. On the other hand, historical or social films had a limited appeal to the lower classes.<sup>29</sup>

### **The Advent of the Talkies: Nature of the Lyrics in the 1930s**

Ardeshir Irani's film '*Alam Ara*' (1931) made history as Indian audience first experienced the taste of talkies.<sup>30</sup> '*De De Khuda Ke Naam Pe Pyaare*', sung by Wazir Mohammed Khan and composed by Ferozeshah Mistry and B. Irani, was the first Indian film song used in the Talkies.<sup>31</sup> The sound film due to its songs, dance and dialogue generated such an appeal that tickets of four annas were sold for four or five rupees in the market.<sup>32</sup> This huge success of '*Alam Ara*' encouraged other filmmakers to follow the footsteps of Irani.

One of the astounding features of these early talkies was the large number of songs used in these films. Films like '*Shirin Farhad*' and '*Indrasabha*' are said to have 42 and 72 songs respectively.<sup>33</sup> Why did these early films have such abundance of songs? What were the character of the lyrics of these songs? In order to answer the second question, we also have to study the nature of the sound films as the songs were mainly used to popularise the film. In the early 1930s, according to Anna Morcom, these songs did not have any separate market value.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> It should be kept in mind that the advent of the talkies did not end the career of the silent films. Rather, in the early 1930s, the silent movies still continued side by side with these talkies. '*Alam Ara*' ran for two weeks at Chitra and at the end of the second week it closed its run, giving way to Charu Roy's silent film '*Chorekanta*'. See Samik Bandyopadhyay, "Introduction", in *Indian Cinema: Contemporary Perceptions from the Thirties*, ed. Samik Bandyopadhyay, (Jamshedpur: Celluloid Chapter, 1993): 6.

<sup>31</sup> Rajiv Vijayakar, *The History of Indian Film Music: A Showcase of the Very Best in Hindi Cinema* (New Delhi: Times Group Books, 2009), 7.

*Alam Ara* had seven songs. But these songs are no longer available and the name of the lyricist (or lyricists) remains unknown.

<sup>32</sup> Ranade, *Hindi Film Song*, 107.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. 109.



But they were extremely significant as they helped to enhance the popularity, and thus the market value, of the sound films.<sup>34</sup> Here, Morcom refutes the notion that the introduction of the radio network in India in 1927 was a catalytic event behind the growth of the popularity of the film songs. Terri Skillman argues that by the end of the 1930s, film songs were popularized across the subcontinent through radio broadcast which enabled those people to listen to the soundtracks who could not afford to watch a cinema.<sup>35</sup> However, Morcom argues that in the early 1930s, in spite of their popularity, the film songs were not played on the radio as they were still considered as an essential part of the movie, rather than a ‘separate entity’ or ‘an autonomous commercial product’.<sup>36</sup> This indicates that the songs were created to support the narratives of the films and due to this, the lyrics of the songs mainly reflected the themes of the movies. Thus, in order to understand what kind of songs were produced, and of course why, during this era, we should discuss in details about the nature of the films made in this period.

It is important to note that unlike the Western films, the Indian sound films were unique in the sense that it followed extensively the music-drama forms. Even the advertisements of the films also projected the ‘all-taking, all-singing and all-dancing’<sup>37</sup> characteristics of the early films. Even before the advent of the films, in India, songs have long been used to make a narrative more attractive to the audience. This tradition has been followed in different parts of India for a long time. Songs, music and dance have been an integral part of the popular categories of performing arts all over the country. Yves Thoraval provides several examples of such performing art forms where along with acting, singing and dancing have always played a crucial role. The most important of these genres are ‘Kuttiyattam’ of Kerala, ‘Yatra’ of Bengal,

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<sup>34</sup> Anna Morcom, *Hindi Film Songs and the Cinema* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007), 181-183.

<sup>35</sup> Terri Skillman, “The Bombay Hindi Film Song Genre: A Historical Survey”, *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, Vol. 18 (1986): 135.

<sup>36</sup> Anna Morcom, “Tapping the Mass Market: The Commercial Life of Hindi Film Songs”, in *Global Bollywood: Travels of Hindi Song and Dance*, ed. Sangita Gopal and Sujata Moorti, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008): 64.

<sup>37</sup> Barnouw and Krishnaswamy, *Indian Film*, 65.

the North Indian 'Nautanki', 'Ramlila' of the Gangetic Plains, Maharashtra's 'Tamasha', 'Terukkutu' of Tamil, 'Burukatta' of Telugu, 'Kathakali' of Kerala, 'Ojhapali' of Assam, Orissa's 'Lila', Karnataka's 'Yakshagana' and 'Bhavai' from Gujarat.<sup>38</sup> In that sense, it may be stated that the filmmakers followed the age old tradition of India by incorporating large numbers of songs in their films. Alison Arnold finds a similarity between the early Hindi film songs and the songs performed in these traditional art forms. The early film producers and music directors knew the popularity of such songs and often copied the melodies from these performing arts.<sup>39</sup> Lyricists also wrote according to the themes of such art forms as those themes were now being utilised by the directors to make their film popular.

However, such abundance of songs does have a market-oriented explanation which seems to be more appropriate. After the success of '*Alam Ara*' and '*Shirin Farhad*' the importance of songs increased rapidly. In the annual issue of the 'Moving Picture Monthly' (1935), it was stated that there was a tremendous demand for film songs among the moviegoers. As a corollary, songs actually took up almost 'half the length' of the film.<sup>40</sup> The filmmakers gave so much importance to the songs that they even used songs in a scene of sword fighting.<sup>41</sup> The producers realized it very well that commercial films could not get any success without the help of attractive songs, dance and music. The market value of the film songs and their importance behind the success of the films can be well ascertained by the fact that in 1937, when J.B.H. Wadia released his film 'Naujawan' it faced the protest of the spectators as it was the first Hindi movie ever produced without songs and dances.<sup>42</sup> The hall authority was obliged to temporarily withdraw the film due to such public protest. Later, in 1954, K.A. Abbas made

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<sup>38</sup> Yves Thoraval, *The Cinemas of India* (Delhi: Macmillan India Limited, First Published in 2000, Reprinted in 2001), 55.

<sup>39</sup> Alison E. Arnold, "Aspects of Production and Consumption in the Popular Hindi Film Song Industry", *Asian Music*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (1992-1993): 124.

<sup>40</sup> From the Editorial of the *Moving Picture Monthly*, Annual Issue, 1935, in *Indian Cinema: Contemporary Perceptions from the Thirties*, ed. Samik Bandyopadhyay, (Jamshedpur: Celluloid Chapter, 1993): 18.

<sup>41</sup> Quoted from the *Journal of the Motion Picture Society of India*, in Bose, *Bollywood*, 75.

<sup>42</sup> Ranade, *Hindi Film Song*, 116-117.

a film '*Munna*' which did not have any songs. However, in spite of getting international critical applause, it flopped in India.<sup>43</sup> These two incidents prove the key role that the songs played in the Hindi movie at that time. Furthermore, the use of songs gave the Indian directors an extra edge in their competition with the foreign films, especially the American films which were predominant in the 1920s, in the Indian market.<sup>44</sup>

In the early 1930s, lyricists of the Hindi film songs, unlike their Tamil, Telugu and Marathi counterparts, followed a cautious policy and used allegorical method to portray the sentiment of nationalism. Rosy Thomas points out the principal genres of 1930s Hindi films including mythologicals, devotionals, stunt films, fantasy films, social and historical films.<sup>45</sup> However, if we turn our attention to the most successful Indian talkies of the early 1930s, we would clearly see that the devotional and mythological movies still continued to dominate the market.<sup>46</sup> However, in the early 1930s, we do not find any patriotic films dominating the market. Thus, the Hindi song lyrics also did not get the touch of nationalist emotion. Among the lyricists of the early 1930s Veer Mohammedpuri and Agha Hashar Kashmiri were well known. Their devotional songs like '*Tore Prakash Se Naash Ho Sakal Ahankar*' ('*Chandidas*'), '*Hey Sambhu Hey Viswanath Kailaspati Hey Bholanath*', '*Bhaja Maan Rama Charan Nishidin*', '*Bhaju Main To Bhaav Se Shree Giridhari Hriday Mein Ab*' ('*Puran Bhakt*') etc., sung by the most popular singers of that time Kundan Lal Saigal or Krishna Chandra Dey, became immensely popular. There were some significant romantic numbers like '*Dekhun Main Unhe Kyu Na Mohabbat ki Nazar Se*', '*Main to Shirin Ka Hoon Deewana*' written by these

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<sup>43</sup> Booth, *Behind the Curtain*, 29.

<sup>44</sup> Massey, "The Indian Film Industry", 373.

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in M. Madhava Prasad, *Ideology of the Hindi Film: A Historical Construction* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 46.

<sup>46</sup> From the Editorial of the Moving Picture Monthly, Annual Issue, 1935, we come to know about the most successful Indian commercial films of the early 1930s. We also find how many weeks did they run in the cinema halls of Bombay. The most successful movies were- '*Amritamanthan*' (more than 20 weeks), '*Puran Bhakt*' (15 weeks), '*Harishchandra*' (10 weeks), '*Chandidas*' (7 weeks), '*Vir Abhimanyu*' (6 weeks). Some romantic films like '*Laila Majnu*' (12 weeks), '*Shirin Farhad*' (14 weeks) and stunt films like '*Toofan Mail*' (8 weeks) also got immense popularity.

lyricists which deserve our attention. Shanta Apte's songs like '*Kamsini Main Dil Pe Gham Ka*' from the film '*Amritmanthan*' and '*Suno Suno Ban Ke Prani*', '*Ab Maine Jana Hai Prem Kya Hai*' from '*Amar Jyoti*', written by P.N. Vyas, became extremely popular.<sup>47</sup> But now, we need to explain why there was such dearth of any significant social or nationalist songs.

In the early 1930s, the devotional films took the driver seat followed by the mythological ones. These '*Sant*' films were mainly based on the Bhakti tradition. We should keep in mind that the early 1930s was an era of Gandhi's second all Indian mass movement, i.e., the Civil Disobedience Movement. These vibes of freedom movement also influenced the filmmakers who used allegorical veil to indirectly project Gandhi's nationalism, clearly reflected in V. Shantaram's selection of the name '*Mahatma*' for his devotional movie.<sup>48</sup> The directors, inspired by the freedom struggle, started conveying 'messages in disguise' while they chose religious themes for 'greater appeal'.<sup>49</sup> Thus, in 1934, in the movie '*Amritamanthan*', the song '*Jayati Jay Ambike Dayadham*', written by Veer Mohammedpuri, also had a nationalistic tinge as it went on '*Jay Hai Mahadesh Jay Hind Ka*' in the *antara* portion.

But why did they have to convey their message in disguise? The answer partly lays in the colonial censorship policy. The British Government adopted a strict censorship policy during the years of the Civil Disobedience Movement. As many as 17 films relating to Gandhian Movement were banned.<sup>50</sup> Some of these movies were '*Mahatma Gandhi's March for Freedom*', '*Mahatma Gandhi's Historic March*', '*Bombay Welcomes Mahatma Gandhi*', '*Epoch-making Voyage of Mahatma Gandhi to London*' etc. Even V. Shantaram's film '*Mahatma*' did not get the censor certificate unless he changed the title of the movie to

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<sup>47</sup> Ganesh Anantharaman, *Bollywood Melodies: A History of the Hindi Film Song* (Gurgaon: Penguin Random House India, 2008), 3.

<sup>48</sup> Dwyer, *Filming the Gods*, 69.

<sup>49</sup> Ranade, *Hindi Film Song*, 103.

<sup>50</sup> Barnouw and Krishnaswamy, *Indian Film*, 117-118.

'*Dharmatma*'.<sup>51</sup> In 1936, M.R. Masani's film was also prohibited as it included a speech of Jawaharlal Nehru where Nehru raised his voice in the support of Socialism, freedom and against imperial power.<sup>52</sup>

While the Hindi lyricists adopted a cautious policy in the face of such repressive policy, the Marathi and Tamil/ Telugu<sup>53</sup> lyricists took the opportunity to express their patriotic concern immediately after the advent of the talkies. Marathi lyricists like Govindrao Tende, Lahari Haider, Bhalji Pendharkar, Acharya P.K. Atre and many others wrote several patriotic songs throughout the 1930s.<sup>54</sup> As early as 1933, in a film named '*Sinhagadh*' a patriotic song was used glorifying the soldiers. In the same movie, another was written in the praise of Shivaji.

S. Theodore Baskaran argues that many of the Tamil actors like K. Satyamurthi were directly involved in active politics as Congress members or supporters. Satyamurthi understood the potential of Indian films to propagate nationalist sentiments and he also wanted to utilize the film medium to bring about social transformation by raising the consciousness of the people.<sup>55</sup> Satyamurthi inspired other Congress leaders to encourage the filmmakers for utilizing their movies for political purpose. During the time of Civil Disobedience movement, Tamil lyricists like Baskara Das wrote several songs glorifying Gandhian movements by constantly focusing on Gandhian symbols like '*khadi*', '*charka*' etc. One of the songs from the first Tamil talkie '*Kalidas*' went like this- '*Rattinamam Gandhi Kaibanamam*' meaning the spinning wheel of

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<sup>51</sup> Dwyer, *Filming the Gods*, 69.

<sup>52</sup> G.O.B, Political Department, Confidential, File No.- 2/16/36, Poll., File Name- "Use of Cinematograph Screen for Speeches by Political Leaders".

<sup>53</sup> Movies of the Madras Film Industry were very often bilingual having these two languages. In the first Tamil/Telugu sound film '*Kalidasa*', while the heroine spoke in Tamil, the hero did so in Telugu. Even they also sang in different languages; the heroine in Tamil, and the hero in Telugu. See S. Anbalagan, "The Role of Tamil Cinema in the National Movement and Social Reform", *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 74 (2013): 675.

<sup>54</sup> Kaul, *Cinema and the Indian Freedom Struggle*, 100-101.

<sup>55</sup> S. Theodore Baskaran, "The Star-Politicians of Tamil Nadu: The Origin and Emergence", in *Routledge Handbook of Indian Cinemas*, ed. K. Moti Gokulsing and Wimal Dissanayake, (Oxon: Routledge, 2013): 129-130.

Gandhi is the path for life.<sup>56</sup> Another song of the film '*Indiargal Nammavarkul Yeno Veen Sandai*' attempted to spread the message of communal harmony. In 1933, in the film '*Valli Thirumanam*' T.P. Rajalakshmi sang a song- '*Aalolam Annam Koutharigal*' which indirectly indicates to drive away the colonial rulers.<sup>57</sup> Another song from the same movie pointed to the importance of swadeshi products. One of the eminent Tamil directors K. Subramanyam established the Madras United Artists Corporation in 1935. This helped him to turn his attention towards political and social reformist films by abandoning the mythological ones.<sup>58</sup> Regional Censor Boards often banned such movies. But unlike the Hindi filmmakers, they were not solely profit-driven individuals. Rather, as many of them actively participated in Congress politics, they considered it to be their nationalist responsibility to produce such films which would inculcate a sense of patriotism in the minds of the viewers.<sup>59</sup>

But even if because of the colonial censorship policy, the Hindi filmmakers avoided the nationalist themes, how would we explain the lack of social themes in the early 1930s movies? If we take into consideration the incident regarding the film '*Mazdoor*' (1934), we would see that the Indian capitalist class played a negative role behind the growth of these radical films relating to socially progressive issues. Indian filmmakers used to get huge financial support from the indigenous capitalist class. Thus, they could not take the risk of making such films which would antagonize their patrons. Anirudh Deshpande argues that in the late colonial era, these capitalist class projected their interests 'quite narrowly'.<sup>60</sup> The 1930s witnessed a rapid growth of working-class movement throughout the country. Thus, the Indian capitalist class refused to grant any films relating to the labour problem and class struggle.

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<sup>56</sup> Anbalagan, "The Role of Tamil Cinema in the National Movement and Social Reform", 676.

Here, we depend on the translations provided by Anbalagan in order to understand the meaning of these songs.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Thoraval, *The Cinemas of India*, 37.

<sup>59</sup> Kaul, *Cinema and the Indian Freedom Struggle*, 35.

<sup>60</sup> Anirudh Deshpande, "Indian Cinema and the Bourgeois Nation State", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 42, No. 50 (2007): 95-97.

Munshi Premchand worked as a scriptwriter of '*Mazdoor*', a film produced by the founder of Ajanta Movietone Moham Dayaram Bhavnani. The movie got huge success in Delhi, Punjab and U.P. In Bombay, almost 60000 workers went to watch the movie on the first day.<sup>61</sup> The film generated such excitement among the workers that it resulted in the outburst of a 'near-riot situation'. Bhavnani's movie was banned and later he had to change its title as '*Seth ki Ladki*' and then '*Daya ki Devi*' to get the approval of the censor board.<sup>62</sup> Bombay's industrialists like Sir Jijibhai were frightened by the radical nature of the film. Jijibhai, one of the members of the Millowners' Association, was the president of the Bombay Censor Board. Bhavnani requested Sir Jijibhai and Wilson, the Police Commissioner of Bombay, to allow the film to run in the market, but was refused.<sup>63</sup> Though he deleted some scenes from his film and changed the title of the movie according to the advice of Wilson, the Censor Board of Bombay still refused to certify it due to the objections of the industrialists. Thus, partly due to the harsh attitude of the colonial government and partly because of the step motherly behaviour of the Bombay capitalists, Hindi film directors and lyricists could not take the risk of portraying any radical issues in their cultural production in the early 1930s.

However, a slight change occurred in the mid-1930s. Even in the early 1930s, the Indian film industry suffered from financial difficulties. It did not have a sound infrastructure. Thus, the producers could not afford to take any risky stance and they more or less preferred to follow the traditional market-oriented path by concentrating on mythological, devotional or romantic pictures which would ensure them high profit. But with the changing financial and institutional structure, as the industry achieved more solidity and confidence in the latter half of the 1930s, the themes of the cultural production of the industrial sector also experienced a transformation.

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<sup>61</sup> Ashok Raj, "Pen and Camera", India International Centre Quarterly, Vol. 36, No. 1 (2009): 17-20.

<sup>62</sup> Manoj Sharma, "National Movement and Currents of Social Reform in Hindi Cinema: 1931-1947", Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, Vol. 66 (2005-2006): 945-946.

<sup>63</sup> Raj, "Pen and Camera", 19-20.

In 1935, the Motion Picture Society of India was established, followed by the regional groups of this society which founded their centres in different provinces like Calcutta, Bombay, Madras etc. in the subsequent years.<sup>64</sup>

After the failure of the Civil Disobedience Movement the Indian National Congress under the leadership of Gandhi put emphasis on the '*Harijan Movement*'. Socially conscious filmmakers and lyricists were profoundly influenced by this movement. They imbibed this ideology in order to build up a democratic society in independent India.<sup>65</sup> In order to mould public opinion along such line they started producing some socially relevant films. In 1936, a film was released from the Bombay Talkies named '*Achyut Kanya*', directed by Franz Osfen and produced by Himansu Rai, dealing with the problem of untouchability. J.S.Cashyap's lyrics showed the plight of the lower caste people as one of the most popular songs of this movie '*Pir Pir Kya Karta Re*' went in the '*antara*' as '*Ghayal ki Gati Ghayal Jane Aur Na Jane Koi*'. Even this film had some bhajans which actually upheld the notion of the Bhakti tradition and criticised any discrimination on the basis of caste, creed or religion. Cashyap in his song '*Hari Baase Sara Sangsar*' refuted the caste discrimination. Thus, religious themes were used to address a social issue. *Achyut Kanya* became one of the biggest musical hits of the 1930s.<sup>66</sup>

An essence of patriotism appeared in Hindi cinema with the film '*Janmabhoomi*' in 1936. Now the Himansu Rai- Franz Osfen -J.S. Cashyap trio turned their attention to hail the motherland through their film. Cashyap's lyrics along with Saraswati Devi's music and the melodious voice of Ashok Kumar and Devika Rani created such emotional effect on the screen that the spectators were overwhelmed by such nationalist sentiment. The songs like '*Jai Jai Pyari Janmabhoomi Mata*', '*Jai Jai Janani Janmabhoomi*', '*Maata Ne Janam Dia Jeene Ke Liye*'

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<sup>64</sup> Barnouw and Krishnaswamy, *Indian Film*, 111.

<sup>65</sup> Kaul, *Cinema and the Indian Freedom Struggle*, 61.

<sup>66</sup> Vijayakar, *The History of Indian Film Music*, 14.



etc. were big hits. In the song '*Mata Ne Janam Dia*', Cashyap showed how India in spite of being full of natural resources was facing the problem of poverty. He portrayed the necessity to emancipate the country from such malice through this song. In the movie, Ashok Kumar, the singing star, sang the inspiring '*Seva Ke Hum Bratadhari, Seva Se Nahi Hatenge*'. This song may be termed as a wake-up call for the Indians in order to regenerate the socio-economic condition of the country as it championed hard work like ploughing the field by clearing the forests etc which were essential factors behind the development of the country. The film got such popularity that B.B.C. started using the choral melody from this movie as the 'signature-tune for its Indian service'.<sup>67</sup> Even from this time onwards we find the songs started championing the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity which found its extra ordinary manifestation in Sardar Mansoor's song '*Hum Watan Ke Watan Humara Bharat Mata Jai Jai Jai*', penned by Pandit Gyan in 1936 for the movie '*Jai Bharat*', directed by Homi Wadia. In this era, Pandit Gyan wrote several songs of freedom movement. In 1938, again in Homi Wadia's movie '*Lutaru Lalna*', Gyan's lyrical excellence produced '*Jhanda Ucha Rahe Hamara*', sung by Master Mohammed and Sarita Devi. In this song, special respect was shown towards the Tri-Colour of India as the song went on '*Bharat Ka Sartaj Tiranga, Shaan Humari Jhanda Hai*'. Gyan asked his countrymen to sacrifice their everything to protect the honour of the Tri-Colour. Such songs bolstered a spirit of national awareness among the filmgoers.

Barnouw and Krishnaswamy have turned our attention towards an important political factor responsible for the growth of patriotic sentiments in Hindi film songs. In 1937, the colonial government changed its strict censorship policy to promote a cordial environment and released all the films concerning nationalism which were banned in the early 1930s.<sup>68</sup> It encouraged the directors to produce such movies and thus, the lyricists like J.S. Cashyap, Pandit Gyan and later

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<sup>67</sup> Ranade, *Hindi Film Song*, 115.

<sup>68</sup> Barnouw and Krishnaswamy, *Indian Film*, 117.

Pradeep started writing patriotic songs. Pankaj Rag argues that the overall socio-political atmosphere of freedom movement not only brought about a change in the form and nature of film lyrics but with the advent of such patriotic themes the nature of the musical compositions also transformed as the music directors now started emphasizing on a ‘high pitch and faster tempo’.<sup>69</sup> Along with the patriotic flavour, the lyricists also focused on economic inequalities, poverty and other socio-economic evils like untouchability. The songs like ‘*Dhanwano Dhanwano Gareebo ki Parwaa Karo*’ (*Nirala Hindustan*, 1938), ‘*Jago Jago Sonewale Ab To Hua Savera*’ (*Comrades*, 1939) etc. were the bigger hits of this genre.<sup>70</sup> It may be argued that the advent of talkies in India accelerated the process of several socio-political reforms in the subcontinent.<sup>71</sup> In this process, the lyrics of the songs played a pivotal role.

However, it should be pointed out that the majority of the songs remained confined within the traditional themes like devotion, god, love etc. Thus, in spite of the fact that the changing political scenario brought about a transformation in the lyrics of the Hindi film songs in the latter half of the 1930s, the dominance of the romantic-sad-bhajan triad continued to exist in the film arena.

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<sup>69</sup> Pankaj Rag, “Trends in Hindi Film Music with Special Reference to Socioeconomic and Political Changes”, in *Routledge Handbook of Indian Cinemas*, ed. K. Moti Gokulsing and Wimal Dissanayake, (Oxon: Routledge, 2013): 248.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> Sharma, “National Movement and Currents of Social Reform in Hindi Cinema”, 946.

## Hindi Film Songs in the 1940s: Patriotic Trend in the Pre-Independence Era

The necessity to move away from the mythological and devotional movies and to utilize the industry for producing films regarding the daily life and socio-economic problems of India was felt by a large number of eminent people in the 1940s. In an interview given to the *Filmindia* magazine, Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, after watching the mythological film '*Bharat Milap*', argued that instead of merely portraying the stories of mythological heroes, the film industry should also project the contemporary socio-political circumstances through its cultural production.<sup>72</sup>

The tumultuous political scenario of the subcontinent, the second world war, the zenith of the freedom movement with the outburst of the Quit India Movement and the heroic struggle of the INA influenced the filmmakers to turn their attention towards the patriotic themes. Thus, the number of lyrics of the Hindi film songs relating to patriotic emotion started increasing. Film lyricists like Pradeep, D.N. Madhok (also known as '*Mahakavi*' Madhok), Qamar Jalalabadi, Pandit Narendra Sharma, Zia Sarhadi and many others penned several nationalistic songs. Film lyricists like D.N. Madhok continued to glorify Gandhian symbol in their writings. In the movie '*Aaj Ka Hindustaan*' (1940), Madhok wrote a song about Gandhiji's '*Charka*'. The song went on like this- '*Charka Chalao Beheno, Kato Ye Kacche Dhage.... Charka Chalanewala Gandhi Hai Age Age*'. Gautam Kaul argues that the song was able to stir such nationalistic emotion among the audience that they also started singing the song whenever it was played on the movie screen.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> *Filmindia*, March, 1942. "Sir Radhakrishnan on Indian Films: Says Character of its Workers Lends Status to an Industry", in *Indian Cinema: Contemporary Perceptions from the Thirties*, ed. Samik Bandyopadhyay, (Jamshedpur: Celluloid Chapter, 1993): 147-148.

<sup>73</sup> Kaul, *Cinema and the Indian Freedom Struggle*, 103.

In the same year, Kavi Pradeep wrote a song for the movie '*Bandhan*' (1940)- '*Chal Chal re Naujawaan*'- which achieved the status of 'a national song' and was performed in the State Assembly of the provinces like Sindh and Punjab.<sup>74</sup> Plenty of such patriotic songs were produced throughout the decade. It may be argued that the contemporary political conditions triggered the nationalist sentiment among the audiences. Thus, film producers also considered the making of patriotic songs to be profitable. Lyricists thus got the opportunity to utilize their literary endeavours to enhance the patriotic feelings of the countrymen.

Thus, in 1942, Narottam Vyas wrote a song for the film '*Apna Ghar*', directed by Debaki Bose, in which Vyas urged for establishing cordial relationship among the Indians irrespective of their caste, class and creed. Vyas wanted his countrymen to raise the flag of the nation together by removing the barriers of caste and class division. Thus, his song went on- '*Apna Desh Hai Apna Ghar, Unch Nich Bandhan Tode, Prabhu Se Prem Ka Nata Jode, ... Jhanda Ucha Kar Desh Ka*'.

In 1943, Amirbai Karnataki and Khan Mastana's song '*Door Hato Aye Duniya Walon, Hindustaan Humara Haai*', the opening chorus of the movie '*Kismet*', penned by one of the most influential lyricists of that era, Kavi Pradeep and composed by Anil Biswas, triggered a tremendous patriotic sentiment among the audience all over the subcontinent. Hindi movie-goers of the country were so captivated by the bold poetry of Pradeep, and of course by the charismatic performance of Ashok Kumar, they also enthusiastically joined the chorus whenever it was played on the movie screen.<sup>75</sup> This particular song played a catalytic role behind the amazing success and popularity that the film achieved. Ashok Kumar's movie set a

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid. 102.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. 104-105.

new record by running continuously for more than three years at the Roxy theatre, located in the Dharmatala area of Calcutta.<sup>76</sup>

Songs of freedom (*'Azadi Ka Geet'*) became extremely popular during these days.<sup>77</sup> In 1941, Bombay Talkies produced film *'Naya Sansar'*, directed by N.R. Acharya and written by eminent progressive writer Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, had a freedom song written by Kavi Pradeep- *'Naya Zamana Aya Logo, Jaag Mein Jiwan Jyot Jagane, Azadi Ka Bigul Bajane, Aj Naya Sansar, Nayi Dhun, Nayi Zindegi Laya'*. In the Fourth AIPWA (All India Progressive Writers' Association) Conference, it was decided that the progressives should take active participation in the film industry to propagate their ideology.<sup>78</sup> As a consequence, Progressive lyricists like Qamar Jalalabadi played a significant role in producing such freedom songs. In the film *'Chaand'* (1944), Jalalabadi wrote a song- *'Watan Se Chala Hai, Watan Ka Sipahi, Woh Nare Lagata Hai, Woh Jhande Udata Hai, Karega Ye Aab, Dushman ki Tabahi'*- glorifying the Indian soldiers as the destroyer of the enemy. Even in the 'most successful war-effort film'<sup>79</sup> *'The Journey of Dr. Kotnis'* (1946), Deewan Sharar's lyrics fostered the notion of freedom. Jayashree's songs like *'Zingedi Zindegi... Desh Par Jaan De, Jaan Dene Ki Naam Hai Zindegi'* and *'Chal aa, Chal aa, Gulam Nahi Hai Tu Josh Mein aa, Yeh Desh Hai Tera Hosh Mein aa'*, penned by Deewan Sharar and composed by Vasant Desai, urged the Indians to sacrifice their lives for the emancipation of the country.

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<sup>76</sup> Nabendu Ghosh, *Ashok Kumar: His Life and Times* (New Delhi: Indus, 1995), 62.

To be more precise, from another study, we come to know that the movie ran for exactly 186 weeks. See Kaul, *Cinema and the Indian Freedom Struggle*, 105.

<sup>77</sup> Ali Mir, "Lyrically Speaking: Hindi Film Songs and the Progressive Aesthetic", in *Indian Literature and Popular Cinema: Recasting Classics*, ed. Heidi R. M. Pauwels, (Oxon: Routledge, 2007): 208.

<sup>78</sup> Fourth All-India Progressive Writers' Conference, "Call for New Writing to build People's Strength: Save Culture from Fascist Barbarism!", in *Marxist Cultural Movement in India*, ed. Sudhi Pradhan, (Calcutta: Roopa Mudran, 1960): 121.

<sup>79</sup> Barnouw and Krishnaswamy, *Indian Film*, 120-126.

The Indian National Congress, though opposed the Fascist powers, did not support the war effort of the Allied powers and maintained that until and unless India was given freedom, they would not support the British in the Second World War. In this condition, the colonial government wanted to mould the public opinion according to their demand and tried to utilize the film medium to do this work. A Film Advisory Board was established under the chairmanship of J.B.H. Wadia. The Board urged the filmmakers to produce more and more war-effort films.

During the Second World War, the British government again intensified the film censorship as many of the movies started using patriotic songs, congress symbols, Gandhian emblems to raise a nationalist awareness among the people.<sup>80</sup> Thus, the colonial government wanted to suppress those movies which supported Indian freedom movement by using words, songs, images or symbols.<sup>81</sup> Gautam Kaul provides the example of the song '*Door Hato Aye Duniyawalo Hindustaan Hamara Hai*' in order to show the repressive policy adopted by the Censor Board. The government appointed police officer Dharmendra Gaur, a member of State Government's Intelligence Branch, to examine this song as they thought it to be anti-British. But Gaur reported to the Police Superintendent of the Intelligence Branch, Parkins that the song was written against the aggressive impulse of the fascist powers like Germany or Japan as the '*antara*' of the song went on- '*Tum Na Kisi Ke Age Jhukna, German Ho Ya Japani*'.<sup>82</sup> Even, before the report provided by Dharmendra Gaur, the government released 'a detention order under section 26 of the Defence of India Rules' to imprison the lyricist Pradeep.<sup>83</sup> Manek Premchand argues that Pradeep intentionally used the line '*German Ho Ya Japani*' to evade the British censorship.<sup>84</sup>

Ali Mir argues that these songs became popular due to gramophone records. However, the quality of the recordings was not up to the mark. So, the lyrics were distributed with the records through 'cheap booklets.'<sup>85</sup> The colonial government banned several such nationalist songs but these songs continued to influence the minds of the Indians as the lyrics through such booklets were freely circulated.

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid. 118-119.

<sup>81</sup> Ganti, *Bollywood: A Guidebook to Popular Hindi Cinema*, 19.

<sup>82</sup> Kaul, *Cinema and the Indian Freedom Struggle*, 105.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Manek Premchand, *Yesterday's Melodies Today's Memories: Singers, Lyricists and Music Composers from Hindi Cinema's Yesteryear* (Chennai: Notion Press, 2018), 66.

<sup>85</sup> Mir, "Lyrically Speaking: Hindi Film Songs and the Progressive Aesthetic", 107.

Another important trend of the Hindi film songs of 1940s was that they upheld the middle-class values and virtues as the number of social films was increasing.<sup>86</sup> With the advent of the progressive artists like K.A. Abbas in the industry, films concerning class struggle, anti-imperialist feelings, economic inequalities and the plight of the poor due to certain ‘man made calamities’ like Bengal famine of 1943 were produced.<sup>87</sup> The success of ‘*Naya Sansar*’ (1941) inspired Abbas to produce more social related films.<sup>88</sup> Directors like Mehboob Khan projected the poverty and the plight of the peasantry in their films. Socio-economic exploitation of the British Government and its Indian collaborators found its manifestation as a relevant theme in several films like ‘*Aurat*’, ‘*Roti*’ etc. Lyricists started focusing on themes like ‘inquilab’, the misery of the ‘mazdoors’, ‘garibon’, the oppressive nature of the ‘dhanwan’ in their songs.<sup>89</sup> In the film ‘*Roti*’ (1942), directed by Mehboob Khan, Safdar Aah wrote a song (‘*Garibo Par Daya Kar Ke Bada Ehsaan Karte Ho*’) where he criticized the rich people who exploited the poor. Aah warned the rich people that these oppressed poor would take their revenge one day- ‘*Daro Us Waqt Se Jab Rang Badlega Zamane Ka, Yeh Tumse Lenge Badla Jinka Aab Apman Karte Ho*’. Thus, Safdar Aah held an optimism about the near future when the oppressed people would be able to get their rights. Safdar Aah in his other songs also dealt with the miserable conditions of the poor common mass. In the movie ‘*Bhookh*’ (1947), his song ‘*Is Jaag Mein Garibo Ka Nahi Koi Thikana*’ reflected the socio-economic inequalities of India. In the movie ‘*Anmol Ghadi*’ (1946), Tanvir Naqvi’s lyrics ‘*Tera Khilona Toota Balak*’ ridiculed the divine being due to the stark poverty of India, as the song in the ‘*antara*’ went on like- ‘*Le Le Bhola Sa Bhagwan, Le Le Bhookha Hindustan*’. Now, this song is of special interest as it marked a

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<sup>86</sup> Peter Manuel, “Popular Music in India: 1901-86”, *Popular Music*, Vol. 7, No. 2, The South Asia/ West Crossover (1988): 163.

<sup>87</sup> Gautam Kaul points out that Abbas made 22 ‘topical films dealing with burning social issues.’ See Kaul, *Cinema and the Indian Freedom Struggle*, 64-65.

<sup>88</sup> Barnouw and Krishnaswamy, *Indian Film*, 151.

<sup>89</sup> Pankaj Rag, “The Theme of Social and Political Consciousness as a Challenge for Indian Recorded Music”, *Social Scientist*, Vol. 32, No. 11/12(2004): 84-87.

relevant shift in the lyrical production. The lyricists of the Hindi film industry, previously dominated by mythological and devotional genres, now even started to question the significance of the deity.<sup>90</sup>

Ganesh Anantharaman points out that among the early generation lyricists of the Hindi film industry, Kavi Pradeep always championed the cause of the downtrodden mass. His lyrics very often reflected his concern about the misery of the poor.<sup>91</sup> Pradeep saw freedom as the 'first step' to establish a just society based on equality. Thus, in the movie '*Kismet*' along with the freedom song '*Door Hato Aye Duniyawalo*', he also penned down an anti-capitalist song to project the plight of the poor in a capitalist society- '*Charo Taraf Laga Hua Meena bazar Hai, Dhaan Ke Jahaan Pe Jeet Gareebo Ki Haar Hai*'. He wanted to burn this exploitative social order down- '*Ji Chahta Hai Sansar Mein Main Aag Lagaa Du, Soye Hue Insaan Ki Kismaat Ko Jagaa Du*'. Much before Sahir's '*Yeh Mehelo Yeh Takhto Yeh Taazo Ki Duniya*' (1957), Pradeep in this song urged for a revolutionary transformation of the existing social order. Pradeep was unique at that time to use his pen for the betterment of the society while writing for 'purely commercial' movies.<sup>92</sup> Pradeep also wrote several songs in the praise of the peasants, working class. The song '*Hum Hai Albele Mazdoor, Ghazab Humari Jadugari*' from the film '*Bandhan*' (1940) merits our attention as Pradeep applauded the hard works of the labours.

The only IPTA produced film<sup>93</sup> '*Dharti Ke Lal*' was the first movie to deal with the Great Bengal Famine of 1943. Prem Dhawan portrayed the gloomy picture of the starved Bengal through his song- '*Bhookha Hai Bangal, Nadi Nale Gali Dage Par Lasho Ka Ambar, Mutthi*

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<sup>90</sup> With the growth of the progressive sentiment in the subcontinent and in the later period, with the advent of the progressive writers like Sahir Ludhianvi in the film arena as lyricists, this trend continued to exist in the cultural production of the film industry even after the Independence. Songs like '*Aasman Pe Hai Khuda Aur Zameen Pe Hum, Aajkal Woh Is Taraf Dekhta Hai Kaam*', written by Sahir, became extremely popular in 1950s.

<sup>91</sup> Anantharaman, *Bollywood Melodies: A History of the Hindi Film Song*, 104-105.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Rajadhyaksha and Willemen, *Encyclopedia of Indian Cinema*, 305.



*Bhar Chawal Se Yaro Sasta Hai Yeh Maal*'. Dhawan turned our attention towards the inhumanity of the British government and the 'exploitative nexus of Sarkar-Zamindar-Sahukar'<sup>94</sup> which resulted in such massive calamity.

Throughout the 1940s, the Indian subcontinent was affected by an intense communal problem. The Pakistan demand of the Muslim League, the slogan for 'Hindi-Hindu-Hindustan' by Hindu Mahasabha, communal riots in Bengal the worsened the situation. But throughout the period, the Hindi film industry adopted a secular approach<sup>95</sup> and thus, a large number of songs relating to communal harmony were produced. Kavi Pradeep was one of the most significant lyricists of this era who always called for a 'free, secular and just India'.<sup>96</sup> In his song written for the film '*Naya Sansar*' (1941), Pradeep urged to reduce the communal hatred- '*Aaj Mandiro Ki Deeware Dol Uthi, Aaj Masjido Ki Minare Bol Uthi, Kehti Barambar Pukar, Bandh Karo Majhab Ke Jhagre Apas Ke Takrar*'. Pradeep, writing for the first time for Filimistan in the movie '*Chal Chal Re Naujawan*' (1944), adopted a secular approach and called for Hindu-Muslim unity in his song- '*Manzil Sabhi Ki Ek Hai, Raheen Alag Alag, Woh Ek Hai, Par Apni Nigahen Alag Alag, Mandir Mein Hai BHagwan, Woh Masjid Mein Khuda Hai, Kisne Kaha Hindu Se Musalman Juda Hai*'. Such songs of Hindu-Muslim fraternity were considered to be essential for the national unity. Thus, D.N. Madhok in the movie '*Pehle Aap*' (1944), championed this unity through the song- '*Hindustan Ke Hum Hai, Hindustan Hamara, Hindu Muslim Dono Ek Aankho Ka Tara*'. In the turbulent period of communal riots, it was felt that this religious fundamentalism would be detrimental to the growth of the country. Thus, in 1946,

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<sup>94</sup> Rag, "The Theme of Social and Political Consciousness as a Challenge for Indian Recorded Music", 86-87.

<sup>95</sup> Urvi Mukhopadhyay, "Communalism, Secularism and Indian Historical Films (1940-46)", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 43, No. 15 (2008): 63-66.

Mukhopadhyay argues that during 1940s, a considerable amount of historical films, focusing on the medieval period of Indian history, were produced where the intimate relationship between the Muslim ruler and their subjects were portrayed. Director like Mehboob Khan glorified the Hindu-Muslim fraternity in his film '*Humayun*' (1945) in order to challenge the growing communal hatred throughout the country.

<sup>96</sup> Anantharaman, *Bollywood Melodies: A History of the Hindi Film Song*, 104-105.

Ramesh Gupta penned his song- '*Aapas Ke Jhagdo Ne Dekho Bharat Ko Barbad Kia*' for the film '*Mera Geet*'.

The Second World War had a huge impact on Indian film industry. The nature of the industry was transformed with the breakdown of the studio system. Consequently, there was a rise of innumerable freelancers who just wanted to make more profits. Amrit Gangar finds an 'unprecedented spurt' in the film production after the war as the restrictions on filmmaking were abandoned.<sup>97</sup> Wartime also resulted in the growth of a black market. We here want to raise the question whether this changing financial condition along with the changes in infrastructure brought about any transformation in the cultural production of the industry in general and in the lyrics of the Hindi film songs in particular. Though this thesis does not take the responsibility to answer this question, rather only wants to raise this issue for further research.

However, it should be kept in mind that the socio-political genre of film songs failed to become a 'dominant trend' in the Hindi film industry.<sup>98</sup> Rag argues that Hindi movies produced in the late colonial era overall lacked such 'thematic contents' in spite of the attempts of some filmmakers who produced some 'progressive' films like '*Dharti Ke Lal*', '*Neecha Nagar*' etc.<sup>99</sup> Even, in many of such patriotic films, romantic songs or bhajans were equally prevalent. But apart from such romantic-sad-bhajan triad we can find three new genres of lyrics which rose to prominence during the late colonial era- 1) the '*Azadi Geet*' or freedom songs which became extremely popular in the 1940s, 2) songs concentrating on the miserable socio-economic condition of the population were used in films like '*Dharti Ke Lal*', '*Roti*' etc., 3) songs regarding Hindu-Muslim unity were given importance by the filmmakers and several lyricists

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<sup>97</sup> Amrit Gangar, "Marathi Cinema: The Exile, The Factory and Frame", in Routledge Handbook of Indian Cinemas, ed. K. Moti Gokulsing and Wimal Dissanayake, (Oxon: Routledge, 2013): 78-79.

<sup>98</sup> Rag, "Trends in Hindi Film Music with Special Reference to Socioeconomic and Political Changes", 248.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

like Pradeep, D.N. Madhok, Ramesh Gupta penned down such songs. Moreover, contemporary socio-political circumstances like the freedom movement, communal problem, the Second World War<sup>100</sup> had a huge impact over the population and these incidents eventually transformed the nature of the audiences to a certain extent. Thus, there was a growing demand in the market for this new kind of movies relating to the socio-economic and political issues of the contemporary era. This enabled the filmmakers and the lyricists to produce such songs even within a capitalist profit-driven industry. Finally, the advent of the progressive artists, writers, poets like K.A. Abbas, Qamar Jalalabadi facilitated such transformation as far as the contents of the films and their songs were concerned.

In the following chapters we shall discuss as to how far did the effect of partition and Nehruvian nation building process bring about a transformation in the content of the Hindi film songs. We shall also take into consideration whether these particular issues were still relevant as a theme of Hindi film songs after the partition and whether the lyricists focused on certain new themes according to the demand of the situation in the immediate post-independence era.

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<sup>100</sup> Gokulsing and Dissanayake, *From Aan to Lagaan and Beyond*, 61. They argue that Second World War changed the composition of the film audience which in turn affected the 'content and form' of the movies produced in the Hindi film industry.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Trends During the 1930s to the 1960s: The Progressive Writers' Movement and The Nehruvian Nation-Building Project**

As a backdrop of the several aspects of the Hindi film lyrics in the post-independence era, the previous chapter dealt with the characteristics of the songs in the late colonial era and sought to discuss the issue how the cultural production of the Hindi film industry in the late colonial period was determined by the contemporary socio-political circumstances. But the changes occurred in the content of the film lyrics after the partition were not to be observed simply by relying on the Hindi films of the immediate post-independence era. For that matter, we shall have to focus on the changing scenario in the intellectual as well as political sphere in the late colonial India which would inculcate a new kind of sensibility among the lyricists. Many Hindi film lyricists of the post-independence era were influenced by certain major trends which would enable them to bring about such qualitative transformation in the Hindi film lyrics after the partition. In this chapter, we need to reconsider the two most prominent trends of that time which helped to reshape the minds of the lyricists.

The first trend was the growth of the Progressive literary movement in the late 1930s in India. The progressive poets, writers, artists, during the eve of partition, started joining the film industry in order to earn a living and also to propagate their ideas. Thus, in order to discuss as to how far their advent in the film arena influenced the cultural production of the film industry, we have to deal with the basic traits of the movement.

The second trend was associated with the nation-building agenda of the postcolonial Indian state in the Nehruvian era. The partition of the subcontinent itself had a huge impact over the

Hindi film industry. Moreover, the different aspects of nation-building project directly or indirectly influenced the lyrical production. Thus, we should discuss the main traits of the Nehruvian nation-building project which found its reflection, to some extent, in the post-independence Hindi film songs.

## **The Progressive Movement in the Literary Sphere**

In the 1930s, the tumultuous politico-economic atmosphere – both in India and abroad – raised a revolutionary consciousness among some of the poets, authors and intellectuals of India who now felt the urge to use their artistic endeavours as useful weapons against various kinds of political evils like Feudalism, Imperialism, Fascism etc. In the 1930s, all Indian literary associations like PEN by Sophia Wadia and Hermon Ould and Bharatiya Sahitya Parishad by K.M.Munshi and Kaka Saheb Kalelkar were founded.<sup>1</sup> But a decisive moment took place with the establishment of the All India Progressive Writers' Association in 1936. The founder figure of the movement Sajjad Zaheer explained that the principal objectives of this literary movement were to establish cordial relationship among the progressive artists of different linguistic zones of India in order to combat imperialism, feudalism and religious fundamentalism.<sup>2</sup>

## **Origins of the Progressive Movement**

Some of the Hindi film lyricists in the postcolonial era reflected the life struggle of the common people and took up their pens in support of an egalitarian and just world. But the question arises what exactly influenced them on the intellectual level to reiterate such themes in their literary

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<sup>1</sup> Sisir Kumar Das, *A History of Indian Literature 1911-1956: Struggle for Freedom: Triumph and Tragedy* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, First Published 1995, Reprinted in 2006), 86-87.

<sup>2</sup> Sajjad Zaheer, *Roshnai: Taraqqipasand Tehrik ki Yaadein* (New Delhi: Bani Prakashan, 2000), 25.

endeavours. It is important to note here that many of these lyricists were profoundly inspired by the Progressive Writers' Movement. Many of them were closely associated with the movement as independent poets before joining the film industry. Thus, we need to trace the origins of the Progressive Writers' Movement in order to realize its impact on the minds of these lyricists.

The rise of progressive attitude can be attributed to the contemporary politico-economic as well as cultural factors. One kind of national awareness was also evolving among these authors who were initially highly influenced by the Gandhian mass movements<sup>3</sup> and also other peasant and working-class movements. Thus, these writers tended to distance themselves from the romantic idealism; rather, they tried to represent themselves as the spokespersons of the peasantry, workers and the subaltern people. A very specific socialist consciousness developed among the progressives, partly due to some national politico-economic upheavals and partly because of some momentous events that took place in the international arena in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – like the Bolshevik Revolution<sup>4</sup>, the growth of Fascist ideology, the Great Depression etc. Furthermore, many of the early progressive writers came to be directly influenced by European intellectuals like Ralph Fox.<sup>5</sup>

The Anti-Fascist Conference in Paris (1927) or the Peace Conference in Amsterdam (1932) clearly showed that the writers now decided to utilize their pens as the solely useful weapon to

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<sup>3</sup> Prabir Basu, *Sajjad Zaheer: Pragatir Pathe Ek Sangrami Jiban* (Kolkata: Mon Fokira, 2015), 30-32. In this book Basu shows how Sajjad Zaheer, in his early youth, was profoundly influenced by Gandhian ideology.

<sup>4</sup> K.K.Khullar, "Influence of October Revolution on Urdu Literature", *Indian Literature*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (1981) : 124-127.

Khullar talks about the voluminous impact that the Russian Revolution played in the development of social realism in Urdu Literature. Even a staunch Gandhian like Premchand also abandoned his romantic literary style and introduced such literatures based on social realism. Premchand turned our attention to the 'new heroes' of his writings in the early 1930s who mostly belonged either to the working class or to the peasantry.

<sup>5</sup> Zaheer, *Roshnai*, 328-333.

Moreover, Sajjad was also influenced by contemporary international politics. Hitler's conspiracy against the Bulgarian Communist leader Dimmitrov, the unsuccessful working-class movement of Austria, the plight of workers in France etc. played a catalytic role in the development of a socialist consciousness among the early progressive leaders like Sajjad Zaheer, Mulk Raj Anand and many others.

wage this cultural war against such dominating political forces. In 1935, Henri Barbusse with the help of Maxim Gorky, Romain Rolland and others convened the 'World Conference of Writers for the Defence of Culture'. Famous writers like Andre Malraux, Andre Gide, Aldous Huxley, Thomas Mann and others participated in this conference. Sajjad Zaheer talks about the historic significance of this assembly as it was the first instance where litterateurs, artists, poets from all over the globe, irrespective of their caste, class and creed, gathered together to organize one progressive front to rebel against the reactionary and fascist forces.<sup>6</sup> The threat of fascism thus made it necessary to build up a collective resistance by establishing 'an international bond among intellectuals.' This internationalism was one of the most visible traits of the progressive culture.<sup>7</sup>

The Indian authors were deeply influenced by the global solidarity of the writers who urged for an egalitarian world. As they had personal experiences about the colonial domination, such solidarity in the literary sphere resulted in the intellectual empowerment of these authors. They were able to realize that the British launched a disguised attack on their culture by depriving them of civil liberties through certain political means. Thus, they started to claim their rights as citizens and refused to be treated merely as subjects. It should be mentioned here that in the first PWA conference, R.S.Pandit in his resolution protested against any kind of governmental restrictions on the freedom of thought and expression.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, they were also concerned with the darker situation of culture in abroad due to the growth of such barbaric tendencies. Thus, they stood for the preservation of culture and raised their voices uniformly against any kind of war effort. For an instance, influenced by such international literary movement, Indian litterateurs sent a statement in the Peace Conference of Brussels in 1936 signed by eminent

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 335.

<sup>7</sup> Anuradha Roy, *Cultural Communism in Bengal 1936-1952* (Delhi: Primus Books, 2014), 28.

<sup>8</sup> G.O.B, I.B., File No. 233/36, 'Extract from Forty-Ninth Plenary Session of the Indian National Congress held at Lucknow during April, 1936', in File No. 426/36, "'Progressive' Writers' Association, Interception of Correspondence".

Indian intellectuals like Rabindranath Tagore, Jawaharlal Nehru, Nandalal Bose, Naresh Chandra Sengupta, Ramananda Chatterji and many others.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, influenced by such international literary movements, the Indian progressives now wanted to establish a pan-Indian literary movement by sweeping aside the regional, linguistic divergence. However, Mulk Raj Anand warned that it would not be sufficient to merely have a national culture against imperialism and fascism. Rather, the Indian writers should attempt to create a new progressive culture to combat not only the colonial masters, but also the reactionary ultra-nationalists and revivalists.<sup>10</sup>

However, when we consider the legacies of the Progressive movement for Hindi film lyrics, a significant development in Indian creative circle, i.e., the publication of 'Angarey' (1932) was no less important. The authors Sajjad Zaheer, Ahmed Ali, Mahmuduzzafar, Rashida Jahan, highly inspired by the socialism, wanted to revolutionize the orthodox Muslim society by criticising any kinds of inequalities, religious fundamentalism, gender oppression etc. While most of the stories written by Sajjad deal with the religious orthodoxy and even condemned the hypocrisy of the *Maulavis*, attacked the religious fanaticism and class oppression, Ahmed Ali altogether questioned the existence of the divinity. By portraying the misery of the poor people, Ali argued that in their daily life, they were badly in need of their daily necessities instead of such utopian vision of heaven and god. Mahmuduzzafar, Rashid Jahan in their stories and play deal with the patriarchal oppression on the women. Following the line of Rakhshanda Jalil, we may argue that in this sense, Angarey, though does not deserve to be categorized as a great literature, was nonetheless significant in the Urdu literary sphere.<sup>11</sup> So profound was the

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<sup>9</sup> G.O.B, I.B., File no. 426/36, "Progressive' Writers' Association, Interception of Correspondence", Extract from the interception diary of an officer of the C.I.D Department, Special Branch Allahabad, U.P, Dated 04.09.1936.

<sup>10</sup> Mulk Raj Anand, "On the Progressive Writers' Movement", in Marxist Cultural Movement in India, ed. Sudhi Pradhan, (Calcutta: Roopa Mudran, 1960): 17-18.

<sup>11</sup> Rakhshanda Jalil, *Liking Progress, Loving Change: A literary History of the Progressive Writers' Movement in Urdu* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 75.



influence of ‘Angarey’ on the writers who came to spearhead the Progressive Writers’ Movement that according to some, it was this anthology that accounts for the beginning of the movement.<sup>12</sup>

However, it was even more significant for posterity, especially for Hindi film lyrics in the Nehruvian era, that in its own publication time, the anti-establishment stance of ‘Angarey’ stirred the orthodox Muslim population as well as the governmental authorities. It wounded the entire Muslim emotion by ridiculing the God and his Prophets. The Central Standing Committee demanded that U.P. Government should proscribe this book. Under such pressure, the U.P. Government was forced to ban the book under Section 295A of the Indian Penal Code.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, the anthologies had stories which had the ability to inspire secular thought of a radical mind.

As a consequence, they were even given death-threats, apart from being ‘condemned at public meeting and private’.<sup>14</sup> But in spite of such hostility, they were able to spread their message in the society. People, though publicly denounced it, used to read this privately.<sup>15</sup> Despite such hostile enmity, Mahmuduzzafar, on behalf of the Angarey group, wrote an article – “In Defence of ‘Angarey’: Shall We Submit to Gagging?”- in which it was made clear that they stood for freedom of speech. They selected the field of Islam not because they bore in mind any typical hostility towards it, rather, being a part of this Islamic culture, they considered themselves to be in a position to justly mirror the miserable condition of the common people of their community due to several religious dogmas and orthodoxies.<sup>16</sup> In this particular statement, the

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<sup>12</sup> Ahmed Ali, “The Progressive Writers’ Movement and Creative Writers in Urdu”, in *Marxist Influences and South Asian Literature* Vol. 1, ed. Carlo Coppola, (Michigan: Asian Studies Centres, 1974): 35.

<sup>13</sup> Shabana Mahmud, “Angarey and The Foundation of the Progressive Writers’ Association”, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (1996): 448-450.

<sup>14</sup> Talat Ahmed, *Literature and Politics in the Age of Nationalism: The Progressive Writers’ Movement in South Asia, 1932-1956* (London: Routledge, 2009), 17.

<sup>15</sup> Ahmed Ali and N.M. Rashed, “The Progressive Writers’ Movement in its Historical Perspective”, *Journal of South Asian Literature*, Vol. 13, No. 1/4, Miscellany (1977-78): 91-92.

<sup>16</sup> *The Leader* (Allahabad), 5<sup>th</sup> April, 1933, in Angaray, ed. Snehal Shingavi, (Gurgaon: Penguin Books, 2014), 163-167.

first mention was made about the necessity of the formation of a league of Progressive authors in the near future.

They emphasized the plight of the downtrodden, subaltern people in order to create an intellectual environment in which each people of the society would be able to make out the perilous impact of the tyranny of the elite classes and the fanaticisms of the religious leaders. This emphasis on the lives of the subaltern people remained one of the major traits in the literary activities of the progressive authors in the upcoming years. Rakhshanda Jalil argues that this particular feature of the Angarey stories, i.e., to give voices to the unsung people was the most remarkable contribution of the early progressives.<sup>17</sup> Eminent litterateurs from Prem Chand to Saadat Hasan Manto and poets from Faiz Ahmed Faiz to Sahir Ludhianvi, all of them followed this particular characteristic.

## **Concerns and Considerations of the Progressive Poets**

The first conference of the PWA was organized on 10<sup>th</sup> April, 1936, in the Rifa-i-Am Hall in Lucknow where 75 delegates from Madras, Bengal, Punjab, Sindh, Gujrat, U.P. and other parts of the country took part.<sup>18</sup> Bhisham Sahni opines that this conference define ‘the social orientation of literature’ and ‘the role of the writer’.<sup>19</sup> Thus, they considered that their duty was to reflect this progressive change in their writings and thus, to raise their voice in the fight against ‘communalism, racial antagonism and exploitation of man by man’.<sup>20</sup> Munshi Premchand in his presidential address, delivered in Hindi, rejected the fairy tales or romantic

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<sup>17</sup> Jalil, *Liking Progress, Loving Change*, 152-153.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Bhisham Sahni, “The Progressive Writers’ Movement”, *Indian Literature*, Vol. 29, No. 6 (116) (1986): 178-183.

<sup>20</sup> G.O.B, I.B., File No. 233/36, ‘Extract from Forty-Ninth Plenary Session of the Indian National Congress held at Lucknow during April, 1936’, in File No. 426/36, “‘Progressive’ Writers’ Association, Interception of Correspondence”.

stories as useless for the contemporary circumstances and argued that literature must deal with reality. Refuting the ‘sentimental art’ he called for an art which would be dynamic in nature.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, in the later years, they got support and suggestions from eminent personalities like Jawaharlal Nehru<sup>22</sup>, Rabindranath Tagore and others. Tagore asked them to ‘mingle with the people’ as in order to produce great literature the authors must not isolate themselves from the society.<sup>23</sup> If we focus on the main works of the progressive authors, we would be able to see the articulation of Tagore’s expectation.

Initially, their notion of progress was by no means uniform and very often the term was used in a vague way.<sup>24</sup> Ahmed Ali’s narrow view regarding the basis of progressive literature, his harsh criticism of the writings of Tagore and Iqbal as ‘spineless literature’<sup>25</sup> did not get acceptance in the PWA. Ali talked about two kinds of emotion: the first one produces ‘static and lifeless’ literature which should be discarded. The second kind of emotion is dynamic which should be encouraged to produce progressive literature, ‘a literature of opposition’, by generating a passion leading to action to fight against the reactionary tendencies.<sup>26</sup> Mahmuduzzafar also argued that the progressive intellectuals should give voice to the struggle of Indian people against reactionary element and for national freedom. But he refutes the ideas of Ali as ultra-radical tendencies of shocking the beliefs of people ‘merely for the sake of

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<sup>21</sup> Munshi Premchand, “The Nature and Purpose of Literature”, in *Marxist Cultural Movement in India*, ed. Sudhi Pradhan, (Calcutta: Roopa Mudran, 1960): 52-59.

<sup>22</sup> Nehru delivered a speech at the 1938 Allahabad Conference in which he warned the writers that they should not allow politicians in such conferences as it would affect the creativity of the litterateurs. Problematic issues like the Hindi-Urdu controversy could only be solved through academic discussions and politicians could never be able to remedy this.

See Jawaharlal Nehru, “On the Role of a Progressive Writer”, in *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Volume Eight, ed. S. Gopal, (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1976): 859-860.

There is a confusion regarding the date of this conference. Sajjad Zaheer, in his autobiography, mentioned that this conference was held in March, 1938. But S. Gopal points out that Nehru gave the speech at Allahabad on 14<sup>th</sup> November, 1937. However, scholars like Rakhshanda Jalil, Khalilur Rahman Azmi mention that the date of the conference was March, 1938.

<sup>23</sup> Zaheer, *Roshnai*, 150-152.

<sup>24</sup> Roy, *Cultural Communism in Bengal*, 4.

<sup>25</sup> Ahmed Ali, “Progressive View of Art”, in *Marxist Cultural Movement in India*, ed. Sudhi Pradhan, (Calcutta: Roopa Mudran, 1960): 80.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

shocking' would result in the growth of a 'literary terrorism' and this would isolate the progressive literature from the common mass.<sup>27</sup> Rather, Mahmuduzzafar thought that the duty of the progressive authors was to inject hope of a better life in the minds of the youth and common people. He found two antagonistic forces in society which he termed as 'forces of conservation' and 'forces of change'. The progressives should represent the 'forces of change' through their literary endeavours to combat the other force.<sup>28</sup> In the following section, we shall see that Mahmuduzzafar's notion of progress was reflected in the writings of some of the greatest progressive poets like Majaz, Faiz, Sahir and others. Representing the 'revolutionary force' was one of the main features of their writings which was followed by Sahir, Kaifi even as lyricists of the Hindi film industry after the partition.

In the Allahabad Conference of 1937, a debatable issue was raised, i.e., what would be their attitude towards the traditional literature? Regardless their critical view of the escapist romantic nature of the traditional literature the question remained- were they going to abandon the legendary poets like Ghalib or Mir?

Maulana Abdul Haq in his presidential address emphasized the importance of reading the traditional literature in order to learn some positive artistic lessons from these. Thus, they concluded that traditional literature should be dealt with positively, yet analytically.<sup>29</sup> They tried to reinterpret the old values to make them suitable for their time. Mulk Raj Anand states that through a positive and constructive criticism of the past, they not only defended their old culture, rather, also paved the way for the development of a new one.<sup>30</sup> Sajjad argues that only progressives could be the 'proper inheritors' of the positive features of the classical literature.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Mahmuduzzafar, "Intellectual and Cultural Reaction", in *Marxist Cultural Movement in India*, ed. Sudhi Pradhan, (Calcutta: Roopa Mudran, 1960): 89.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* 86-89.

<sup>29</sup> Zaheer, *Roshnai*, 143.

<sup>30</sup> Anand, "On the Progressive Writers' Movement", 11-12.

<sup>31</sup> Sajjad Zaheer, "A Note on the Progressive Writers' Association", in *Marxist Cultural Movement in India*, ed. Sudhi Pradhan, (Calcutta: Roopa Mudran, 1960): 50.

As far as their attitude towards the legendary Urdu poets of the past was concerned, it can be mentioned that in 1942, the Bombay branch of the PWA celebrated the ‘Ghalib Day’ under the leadership of Sibte Hasan.<sup>32</sup> They actually criticized the dogmatic superstitious approach of some of the traditional literature which they thought as detrimental to the cause of national and social emancipation. Thus, while the traditional orthodox authors merely dealt with ‘*husn*’ (beauty), ‘*saqi*’ (lover), ‘*ulfat*’ (love), the progressive writers also focused on the plight of the ‘*mazdoor*’ (workers), ‘*muflis*’ (poor), ‘*jamhoor*’ (masses).<sup>33</sup> Faiz thus refused to confined himself solely in the genre of romantic poetry- ‘*Aur Bhi Dukh Hai Zamane Mein Mohabbat Ke Siwa, Rahate Aur Bhi Hai Vasl Ki Raat Ke Siwa, ... Mujhse Pehli Se Mohabbat Meri Meheboob Na Mang*’.<sup>34</sup> Simiar expression can be found in Sahir’s *nazm* – ‘*Zindegi Sirf Mohabbat Nehi, Kuch Aur Bhi Hai, Zulf-o-rukhsaar Ki Jannat Nehi, Kuch Aur Bhi Hai, Bhookh Aur Pyaas Ki Mari Hui Is Dunia Mein, Ishq Hi Ek Haqeeqat Nehi, Kuch Aur Bhi Hai*’.

From the beginning, the progressives were concerned with the cause of the downtrodden common mass.<sup>35</sup> Thus, on 16 August, 1936, they celebrated ‘Maxim Gorky Day’ and organized debates and discussions in different regions regarding the class consciousness of the peasantry and liberation from class exploitation.<sup>36</sup> Threatened by their activities and anticipating their link with the Communist International, M.G. Hallet, the Home Secretary of the Government of India, issued the ‘Hallet Circular’ (1936) to warn the Government about their activities.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Zaheer, *Roshnai*, 245-246.

<sup>33</sup> Akshay Manwani, *Sahir Ludhianvi: The People’s Poet* (Noida: Harper Collins, 2013), 63.

<sup>34</sup> Quoted from Javed Akhtar and Humayun Zafar Zaidi, “Progressive Writer’s Movement in Urdu Literature”, *Indian Literature*, Vol. 50, No. 4 (234) (2006): 150.

<sup>35</sup> Sahir Ludhianvi in the early 1940s even wrote that art would not achieve its goal if it failed to reach the people- ‘*Fan Jo Nadaar Taak Nehi Pahuncha, Apni Mayar Taak Nehi Pahuncha*’. See. Mir and Mir, *Anthems of Resistance*, 24.

<sup>36</sup> G.O.B., I.B., File No. 426/36, “‘Progressive’ Writers’ Association, Interception of Correspondence”, Extract from the interception diary of an officer of the C.I.D department, Special Branch, U.P., dated 10.07.1937.

<sup>37</sup> File No. 7/9/36, Home/Political, 1936, From the Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department to All Local Governments, in *Marxist Cultural Movement in India*, ed. Sudhi Pradhan, (Calcutta: Roopa Mudran, 1960), 344-345.

They raised their voice against the imperial aggression and capitalist exploitation and called for a revolution through their writings. Rakhshanda Jalil points out eight revolutionary nazms of Majaz in which he inspired his countrymen to fight against capitalism. These nazms are- ‘*Inquilab*’, ‘*Sarmayadari*’, ‘*Hamara Jhanda*’, ‘*Mazdooron Ke Geet*’, ‘*Ahang-e-Nau*’, ‘*Bol Ari O Dharti Bol*’, ‘*Bideshi Mehman Se*’ and ‘*Ahang-e-Junoon*’.<sup>38</sup> In his ‘*Inquilab*’, he hoped for the end of the rule of capitalism and the victory of the workers- ‘*Khatam Ho Jane Ko Hai Sarmayadari Ka Nizam, Rang Lane Ko Hai Mazdooron Ka Josh-e-Intiqam*’.<sup>39</sup> In his poem ‘*Do Rangi*’, Sahir offered a harsh criticism of the inequalities of society due to capitalist exploitation- ‘*Ye Duniya Do Rangi Hai, Ek Taraf Se Resham Ode, Ek Taraf Se Nangi Hai*’.<sup>40</sup> Sahir in his poem ‘*Kal Aur Aj*’ also talks about the economic exploitation that the peasantry had to face as the the landowners always deprived them of their deserved share of the crops they produced- ‘*Faslein Katke Mehnatkash, gal ley ked her lagayenge, Jageeron ke Malik Aakar Saab Poonji Le Jayenge*’.<sup>41</sup> We have already discussed in the last chapter that in the 1940s, many lyricists of the Hindi film industry through their songs started projecting the plight of the poor by portraying the ill effects of capitalist exploitation over the majority population of the society.

Terms like ‘*Baghawat*’, ‘*Inquilab*’ were frequently used by these progressive writers as they cherished the notion of a ‘red revolution’ which would bring about the emancipation of the workers and peasants. Thus, Majrooh Sultanpuri termed the workers as the enemy of darkness (‘*main ke teeragi dushman*’). Majrooh had an optimism that after the revolution (‘*inquilab*’), workers would get their rights and the factories would not be a place of oppression, rather, a

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Sudhi Pradhan points out that the Simla Correspondent of ‘The Statesman’ was so influenced by the Hallet Circular that it described the entire progressive movement as ‘Moscow-inspired’. See Sudhi Pradhan, ‘Forward’, x.

<sup>38</sup> Jalil, *Liking Progress, Loving Change*, 266-267.

<sup>39</sup> Quoted from Mir and Mir, *Anthems of Resistance*, 39

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 38.

<sup>41</sup> Sahir Ludhianvi, *Talkhiyaan* (Delhi: Rajpal & Sons., 2019), 69-70.

place from where beauty shall emerge- '*Ab Sanvar Ke Niklega Husn Karkhane Se*'.<sup>42</sup> Sahir openly challenged the oppressor in his poem '*Awaz-e-Adam*' - '*Kahaan Taq Hai Tumhare Zulm Mein Dum, Hum Bhi Dekhenge*'.<sup>43</sup> Faiz Ahmed Faiz provided the society with the courage to speak out the truth against all kinds of wrongs in his poem '*Bol*' - '*Bol Ke Laab Azad Hai Tere, Bol Zabaan Ab Taak Teri Hai*'.<sup>44</sup>

Sahir dedicated his poem '*Mere Geet Tumhare Hai*' to the poor peasants and labours- '*Aj Se Aye Majdoor Kisano Mere Raag Tumahre Hai*'. Sahir promised to continue his struggle until and unless the oppressed people got their rights- '*Jaab Taak Tum Bhookhe Nange Ho, Yeh Sholay Khamosh Na Honge*'.<sup>45</sup> Sahir in another poem '*Mere Geet*' bemoans the hardships of the poor, the starved peasantry, the deprived population. He laments that such grief would not allow him to write a song of eternal happiness- '*Mere Sarkash Tarano Ki Haqeeqat Hai To Itni Hai, Ki Jaab Main Dekhta Hoon Bhookh Ke Maare Kishano Ko, Gareebo Mufliso Ko, Bekaso Ko, Besaharo Ko... Main Chahu Bhi To Khawab Aawar Tarane Ga Nehi Sakta*'.<sup>46</sup> Progressives also made a close contact with the lifestyle of the peasantry, working class and common people to get a first-hand knowledge of their everyday struggle. It also enabled them to bridge their gap with the rural population. Authors like K.A.Abbas very often went to villages, tribal areas to study the life of the villagers.<sup>47</sup> This made them conscious in their struggle against all kind of exploitation, superstition, narrow sectarianism and communalism, argues Prabhakar Machwe.<sup>48</sup> They also performed the role of a dutiful citizen during the harsh time of Bengal famine. Sahir wrote his famous poem '*Bangal*'.<sup>49</sup> Their plays were staged by IPTA in different

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<sup>42</sup> Prakash Pandit, *Lokpriya Sayar Aur Unki Shayari: Majrooh Sultanpuri* (Delhi: Rajpal & Sons., 2018), 11.

<sup>43</sup> Ludhianvi, *Talkhiyaan*, 94.

<sup>44</sup> Quoted from Mir and Mir, *Anthems of Resistance*, 23.

<sup>45</sup> Ludhianvi, *Talkhiyaan*, 79.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. 34-35.

<sup>47</sup> Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, "Conversation with Krishan Chander", in *Bread, Beauty, Revolution: Khwaja Ahmad Abbas 1914-1987*, ed. Iffat Fatima and Syeda Saiyidain Hameed, (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2015): 38.

<sup>48</sup> Prabhakar Machwe, "A Personal View of the Progressive Writers' Movement", in *Marxist Influences and South Asian Literature Vol. 1*, ed. Carlo Coppola, (Michigan: Asian Studies Centres, 1974): 51.

<sup>49</sup> Ludhianvi, *Talkhiyaan*, 63.

parts of the country like Bombay, Punjab, Delhi and Andhra and from these they were able to raise nearly 2 lakh Rs. for Bengal Relief.<sup>50</sup>

The progressives also played a key role to bring about peace and harmony during the tumultuous period of communal riot by spreading the message of love and affection through their artistic productions. Krishan Chander's collection of stories named 'Hum Vashi Hain', K.A.Abbas's stories like 'Main Kaun Hun', 'Sardarji', poems of Kaifi Azmi, Sahir Ludhianvi, Ali Sardar Jafri and others helped to raise the consciousness of the common people. In the Urdu organ of the Communist Party of India 'Naya Zamana', Sajjad reminded that communal riots would result into a civil war at a time when a unite confrontation against the British imperialism should be the primary objective of the countrymen.<sup>51</sup> Majaz, like other progressives, also preached the notion of communal harmony by reminding the people of both community that they were the sons of 'Khalid and Bheema'.<sup>52</sup> Sahir also questioned the existence of god and condemned religious fundamentalism in his poem 'Mujhe Sochne Do' in which he wrote- 'Kaun Insaan Ka Khuda Hai? Mujhe Sochne Do'.<sup>53</sup> Instead of discussing about heaven or divine being, Sahir, in 'Kuch Batein', asked his countrymen to reflect on several materialistic issues of the mundane world which would be beneficial to the nation- 'Desh Ki Adbaar Ki Batein Kare, Ajnabi Sarkar ki Batein Kare, Agli Dunia Ki Fasane Chorkar, Is Jahannumzaar

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The poem portrayed the miserable condition of the starved people of the famine-ridden Bengal. It went on like- 'Pachas Laas Fasurda Galey-Sarey Daache, Nizamey-Zar Ke Khilaf Eheytaj Karte Hai, Khamosh Hoto Se Daam Torti Nigahon Se, Varhey, Vashr Ke Khilaaf Eheytaj Karte Hai'.

<sup>50</sup> G.O.B, I.B., File No. 426/36, "Progressive' Writers' Association, Interception of Correspondence", Copy of an English typed letter from Anil Sinhaw to Mahatma Gandhi with two enclosures dated 22.02.1945, intercepted at Intally P.O. on 23.02.1945.

<sup>51</sup> Kamran Asdar Ali, *Communism in Pakistan: Politics and Class Activism 1947-1972* (London: I.B.Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2015), 44.

K.A. Abbas also points out in his autobiography that during the communal riot in Bombay, the progressives along with the film stars took participation in a peace procession to spread the message of love and fraternity. See Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, *I am not an Island: An Experiment in Auto biography*, (New Delhi: Vikash Publishing House Pvt. Ltd, 1977), 288-289.

<sup>52</sup> Carlo Coppola, "Asrarul Haq Majaz: The Progressive Poet as Revolutionary Romantic", *Indian Literature*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (1981): 57.

<sup>53</sup> Ludhianvi, *Talkhiyaan*, 41-42.



*Ki Batein kare*'.<sup>54</sup> This outlook of the movement clearly influenced the Hindi film songs as the lyricists always followed a secular stance.

In his '*Ahang-e-Nau*', written during the Second World War, Majaz vehemently criticised the Japanese aggression in India. He warned the Indians to protect their 'sacred land' from the barbaric aggression of the Japanese, whom he termed as 'the savage beasts'.<sup>55</sup> Majrooh also wanted to establish peace by confronting such fascist powers- '*Aman Ke Jhanda Is Dharti Par Kisne Kaha Laherane Na Paye, Yeh Bhi Koi Hitler Ka Hai Chela, Mar ke Sathi Jane Na Paye*'.<sup>56</sup> Such anti-war themes were also articulated by lyricists like Pradeep in the 1940s. Even, in 1961, Makhdoom Moinuddin's poem '*Sipahi*' was used in the film '*Usne Kaha Tha*'.

Thus, the progressives attempted to establish a counter-hegemony in society through their artistic activities. Anuradha Roy points out that they knew it very well that culture itself would not be able to lead to a great social revolution but they wanted to assert their control over the cultural sphere in order to generate a necessary psychological background for that revolution.<sup>57</sup>

In the tumultuous 1940s, the progressives refused to confine their activities merely within the arena of art and literature. Rather, in such moment of crisis during the Bengal famine or the communal riot etc., they performed significant social roles. Sajjad finds that since 1943-1944, young talented poets like Ahmed Nadim Qasim, Sahir Ludhianvi, Zaheer Kashmiri, Abdullah Malik, Kaifi Azmi, Mumtaz Hussain and others like them played significant role in the movement.<sup>58</sup> In 1943, in the Fourth Conference of the All India Progressive Writers' Association, for the first time it was decided that the progressives should take part in films and radios in order to preach their ideologies.<sup>59</sup> As a result, many of the young progressive writers

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid. 47.

<sup>55</sup> Coppola, "Asrarul Haq Majaz: The Progressive Poet as Revolutionary Romantic", 57.

<sup>56</sup> Pandit, *Lokpriya Sayar Aur Unki Shayari: Majrooh Sultanpuri*, 11.

<sup>57</sup> Roy, *Cultural Communism in Bengal*, 11.

<sup>58</sup> Zaheer, *Roshnai*, 202.

<sup>59</sup> Roy, *Cultural Communism in Bengal*, 65.

like Krishan Chander, Saghar Nizami, Akhtarul Iman, Asrarul Haq Majaz, Kaifi Azmi, Jan Nisan Akhtar, Sahir Ludhianvi and Majrooh Sultanpuri, from 1944, gradually started participating in the film industry and many of them eventually settled in Bombay.<sup>60</sup> With the advent of the progressives in the film industry, the nature of the movies, their songs, lyrics, screenplays and many other aspects, experienced a qualitative transformation; about which we shall discuss in details in our next chapter.

### **The Nehruvian Nation-Building Agenda**

After the partition, the newly emerged state tried to relate itself with the ‘nation’. Partha Chatterjee argues that the post-colonial state tried to project itself as an institution which would provide the essential prerequisites for the material development of the nation. Thus, by emphasizing on ‘development’, it ascertained its legitimacy as an able representative of the nation.<sup>61</sup> In order to make this collective development possible, the state leadership adopted many politico-economic reforms like 5 years plan, Industrial Policy Resolutions etc. Moreover, Nehru himself acted as an intermediary between diverse interest groups like workers and industrialists by asking them to work jointly for the betterment of the nation.<sup>62</sup> This nation-building activity also influenced the cultural production of the Hindi film industry. Many directors like Mehboob Khan, Raj Kapoor internalized such Nehruvian vision of nation-building and reflected such themes in their films. This also brought about a shift in the content of the lyrics of the film songs. In this following section, we shall deal with some aspects of this

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<sup>60</sup> Akshay Manwani, *Sahir Ludhianvi: The People's Poet* (Noida: Harper Collins, 2013), 61.

<sup>61</sup> Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 200-205.

<sup>62</sup> Benjamin Zachariah, *Playing the Nation Game* (New Delhi: Yoda Press, 2011), 238.

nation-building project which directly or indirectly had a huge impact over the lyrics of the contemporary Hindi film songs.

In the midst of a crisis situation, the Indian National Congress inherited administrative responsibilities of the newly emerged state. The infant state succeeded the colonial state system and was also the inheritor of the Indian National Movement. Due to such ‘double’ and ‘contradictory inheritance’,<sup>63</sup> on the one hand, it followed some of the ‘modes of governance’ of the British era as it continued some institutions like bureaucracy, army, police etc., while on the other hand, it introduced many new features like national sovereignty, universal suffrage, parliamentary democracy, fundamental rights etc.<sup>64</sup> Replacing the colonial government’s declared aim of maintaining order and peace, the Nehruvian state declared its aim of achieving ‘growth with equity’ through an ‘idea of development’.<sup>65</sup>

There were divergence of opinions among the nationalist leaders regarding the conception of nation and the activities of the state after the partition. Even within the Congress, there was a group who wanted that the state should adopt a traditionalist stance and should defend the existing order. Thus, Nehru realized that in order to consolidate the state and to ensure its modern and secular approach, it should be represented as a ‘developmental agency’.<sup>66</sup> This developmental ideology gave the legitimacy to the infant state to intervene in various socio-economic spheres. The state started to use its administrative powers to initiate rapid changes in various socio-economic institutions of India.<sup>67</sup> The National leaders felt that the main reason behind the social backwardness of the country was ‘mass poverty’. Thus, in order to establish an egalitarian and just society, India must adopt the path of rapid industrialization which would

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<sup>63</sup> Sudipta Kaviraj, *The Imaginary Institution of India: Politics and Ideas* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 222.

<sup>64</sup> Partha Chatterjee, “Introduction”, in *The Wages of Freedom: Fifty Years of the Indian Nation-State*, ed. Partha Chatterjee, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998): 6-7.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Sunil Khilnani, *The Idea of India* (Haryana: Penguin Random House India, 2012), 30.

<sup>67</sup> Chatterjee, “Introduction”, 9.

remedy the problem of poverty. This massive industrialization could not be achieved by using private capital as the principal aim behind the industrialization was 'distributive justice'. Using private capital would enhance the financial inequality. Thus, the Nehruvian government represented the state as an agency of 'development' which could ensure the 'redistribution of wealth'.<sup>68</sup> Thus, the state undertook centralized planning system for the financial development of the country. Such themes of economic development through a welfare state found its reflection in several Hindi films made by directors like Mehboob Khan<sup>69</sup>, Raj Kapoor and others. For an instance, Mehboob Khan's 'Mother India' reflected the Nehruvian model of developmental activities.<sup>70</sup>

Nehru also had to confront the opposition of the reactionary elements of Congress. Khilnani points out the rift between the ideologies of Nehru and Patel. While Patel urged the state to reflect the existing social order along with its caste hierarchy and religiosity, Nehru wanted to reform the society through state activity.<sup>71</sup> Thus the state undertook many developmental activities which were expected to emancipate the country from the shackle of feudalism and 'archaic social practices'.<sup>72</sup> In order to do away with some traditional institutions like landlordism, caste differentiation, untouchability etc., the state directly intervened through legislation and adopted centralized financial planning. This enabled the government to establish the state 'at the core of India's society'<sup>73</sup>, one of the major success of Nehru's rule.

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<sup>68</sup> Kaviraj, *The Imaginary Institution of India: Politics and Ideas*, 223.

<sup>69</sup> Mehboob Khan always claimed to be a 'Nehruvian'. Moreover, Jawaharlal Nehru's vision of an industrialized modern India also influenced Raj Kapoor as he made films like '*Ab Delhi Door Nahi*'. See Priya Joshi, *Bollywood's India: A Public Fantasy*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

<sup>70</sup> Gaurav Gadgil and Sudha Tiwari, "Poetics of "*Pyasa*" and Narratives of National Disillusionment", *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 74 (2013): 939.

<sup>71</sup> Khilnani, *The Idea of India*, 33.

<sup>72</sup> Paul R. Brass, *The New Cambridge History of India, IV. 1: The Politics of India Since Independence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 12.

<sup>73</sup> Khilnani, *The Idea of India*, 41.

Moreover, See Chatterjee, "Introduction", 9.

Nehru's government thus laid the institutional basis and ideological prerequisites for the intervention of state into various social affairs.

Nehruvian nationalism found its manifestation in the developmental ideology of the postcolonial state. In the 1940s, the nationalist leaders argued that self-government was the essential element for the financial development of the nation as the exploitative colonial rule acted as the main obstacle to such developmental project.<sup>74</sup> Thus, the infant postcolonial state got its legitimacy to exercise its administrative power as it represented itself as the necessary prerequisite for the national development. Moreover, it should be pointed out that the Nehruvian nationalism, based on developmental agendas, was extremely inclusive in its nature as the process of development was thought to have its impact over 'the whole of society'. Thus, it focused primarily on 'general interest', often by subsuming 'particular interests' 'within the whole'.<sup>75</sup>

However, this inclusive model of nationalism, in spite of being the 'officially proclaimed version', faced severe opposition from the group propagating the sectarian 'cultural nationalism', reflecting mainly the Hindutva ideology.<sup>76</sup> Even, Nehru had to confront the challenges of his party members like Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad and many others who demanded that Indian state should defend exclusively the interests of the Hindu majority people of India. Patel and Prasad even argued that the Muslim state officials should be dismissed. They were also critical of Nehru's effort to use army to ensure the protection of the Muslim minority people of India affected by communal hatred.<sup>77</sup> However, Nehru vehemently opposed such ideas and tried hard to assure the protection of the minority people. Nehru's state sought its legitimacy and projected its sovereignty by maintaining law and order, providing security to

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<sup>74</sup> Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, 202-205.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Zachariah, *Playing the Nation Game*, 206-213.

<sup>77</sup> Khilnani, *The Idea of India*, 31.

its citizens irrespective of caste class and creed, and pursuing a policy of development for all. Thus, the state adopted the policy of toleration and planned economic development.

Rajni Kothari points out two ideological aspects of the postcolonial state- development and secularism. The developmental project enabled the state to follow a path of modernization which resulted in the social upliftment of the nation by emancipating it from ‘antecedent inequities.’<sup>78</sup> On the other hand the ideology of secularism was not to be implemented in a strictly European sense. Rather, the postcolonial state legitimized itself by offering secularism and toleration as a proof of its inclusive nature. The Nehruvian government thought this policy of toleration to be essential in order to unite a ‘multi-religious’ and pluralist society and thus, to establish law and order during a time of violent communal riots in different parts of the country. Protection provided to the minorities enabled the state to establish a ‘pluralist democracy’.<sup>79</sup> Patel, though realized the communal nature of the RSS, thought that as a socio-cultural organization, it could not inflict much damage to the country.<sup>80</sup> But Nehru treated the communal forces as the greatest danger for the nation and thus tried to delegitimize all the communal voices. Gandhi’s assassination by a Hindu, brainwashed by the RSS ideology, provided a much-needed justification to the infant state for its policy of ‘containment of communal forces’.<sup>81</sup> Thus, Nehru’s secularism enabled the state to undertake the project of ‘democratic nation-building’.

It may be argued that this policy of secularism highly influenced the filmmakers, scriptwriters and lyricists of the Hindi film industry. In the last chapter, we have already shown that in the 1940s, even in the midst of such communal violence, the Hindi filmmakers always championed

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<sup>78</sup> Rajni Kothari, “The Democratic Experience”, in *The Wages of Freedom: Fifty Years of the Indian Nation-State*, ed. Partha Chatterjee, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998): 25.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> Rakesh Batabyal, “Nehru: The Homemaker”, in *Nehru’s India: Essays on the Maker of a Nation*, ed. Nayantara Sahgal, (New Delhi: Speaking Tiger Publishing Pvt. Ltd., 2015): 111-115.

<sup>81</sup> Kothari, “The Democratic Experience”, 25-26.

the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity. Throughout the 1940s, many songs were written to celebrate the Hindu-Muslim fraternity which they thought to be essential for the national unity. Even after the partition, the lyricists and filmmakers continued to follow the same stance. In this matter, we should mention the pivotal role played by the progressive poets who joined the Hindi film industry in the late 1940s like Sahir Ludhianvi, Kaifi Azmi and others who wrote several such songs of communal harmony. Moreover, among the earlier lyricists, Kavi Pradeep always fostered the secular ideology of the nation-state and played a key role in creating an ideological atmosphere for the Nehruvian nation building project. Thus, he was given the title of '*Rashtra Kavi*'. Moreover, it should be pointed out that most of the lyricists, music directors, filmmakers were extremely secular and critical of any kind of religious fundamentalism. There are several bhajans which were composed, written, sung by Muslim artists.<sup>82</sup> The Hindi film industry always championed the cause of communal harmony even at a time when the entire country had been traumatized by the atrocities of the communal riots.

Another issue relating to the nation-building agenda of the postcolonial state indirectly affected the Hindi film industry. The Nehruvian state also faced several language problems which threatened the 'Balkanization' of the country. Nehru tried to remedy this issue through pluralistic solutions.<sup>83</sup> However, even many of the Congressmen like Purushottam Das Tandon adopted a narrow stance by advocating for the making of Hindi as the official language. Tandon refuted Nehru's insistence to make Hindustani, a mixture of Hindi and Urdu, the official language.<sup>84</sup> Rakesh Batabyal shows that Tandon had a close connection with the Hindu communalists and thus wanted to champion the cause of a sectarian Hindutva ideology. Actually, Urdu had been considered to be the language of the Muslim minorities by the

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<sup>82</sup> Mention may be made of the song '*Maan Tadapat Hari Darshan Ko Aj*', from the film '*Baiju Bawara*'. The song was composed by Naushad Ali, written by Shakeel Badauni and rendered by Mohammed Rafi. There are several other songs like '*Sukh Mein Saab Sathi Dukh Mein Na koi, Mere Ram, Tera Naam Ek Saccha Duja Na Koi, 'Madhuban Mein Radhika Nache Re*' etc.

<sup>83</sup> Brass, *The New Cambridge History of India, IV. 1: The Politics of India Since Independence*, 157.

<sup>84</sup> Batabyal, "Nehru: The Homemaker", 114-115.

Hindutva ideologues. This communalization of a language also had a huge impact over the Hindi film songs in the early 1950s. In 1952, B.V. Keskar, the Minister of Information and Broadcasting, banned the broadcast of Hindi film songs on All India Radio. Keskar wanted to revive the classical music of India and thus, considered the Hindi film songs, being ‘too vulgar, too Westernised and too steeped in Urdu’,<sup>85</sup> as a major threat to the cultural purity of the nation. Keskar wanted to save the ‘musical heritage’ of the country, ‘neglected’ by the colonial rulers and ‘corrupted’ by the Muslims, by strictly controlling the contents of radio broadcasting.<sup>86</sup> Thus, Keskar argued that the postcolonial state must ‘repair the damage’ inflicted upon Indian music by the British rulers and Muslims.<sup>87</sup> All India Radio continued the ban on Hindi film songs till 1957. This incident indicates that Nehru’s pluralistic notion always found stark opposition even from his party members. However, the lyricists of the Hindi film songs, as we shall see in the next chapter, always adhered to this notion of a pluralist democratic society and the lyricists in general and the progressive poets who joined the film industry in particular remained critical of such narrow sectarian and communal approaches.

We shall discuss in our next chapter that even after joining the film industry as lyricists, some of them continued their revolutionary approach and used their pen to protest against any kind of oppression. They even criticized the failures of the postcolonial state through their lyrics. However, in this section, we should mention such limitations of the Nehruvian state and the initial response of the progressive poets.

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<sup>85</sup> Mir and Mir, *Anthems of Resistance*, 114.

<sup>86</sup> Sanjay Srivastava, “Voice, Gender and Space in Time of Five-Year Plans: The Idea of Lata Mangeshkar”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 39, No. 20 (2004): 2022-2023.

Srivastava argues that Keskar’s view on Indian music was highly influenced by the history of ‘Hindu contextualism’ of the 20<sup>th</sup> century nationalist discourse in India.

<sup>87</sup> David Lelyveld, “Upon the Subdominant: Administering Music on All-India Radio”, *Social Text*, No. 39 (1994): 116-118.

Keskar held the North Indian Muslims responsible for the degeneration of Indian music as they made the ‘spiritual’ Indian music ‘erotic’.



Scholars have pointed out the failure of the Nehruvian government to bring about a fundamental transformation from the colonial system. Nehruvian government adopted a reformist stance. Thus, using the Gramscian concept scholars like Partha Chatterjee, Sudipta Kaviraj have termed such reformist ‘experimentations’ of Indian state as a ‘passive revolution’ bringing about only ‘molecular’ changes.<sup>88</sup> The postcolonial state failed to adopt any ‘serious bourgeois land reform’ due to resistance of the feudal elements and judicial orthodoxy.<sup>89</sup> Thus, massive agrarian transformation could not be achieved. Had the Congress ministry adopted a ‘mobilizational’ form, it would have enabled them to break down the feudal resistance. But through its ‘bureaucratic form’, the Nehruvian government wanted to ‘demobilize’ the mass movement it encouraged during the anti-colonial struggle. After the independence, as the Congress assumed administrative power and responsibility, they did not want to further radicalize the mass movement. Thus, Kaviraj argues that they renounced their promise of redistributive justice made to the people in the last days of the freedom struggle.<sup>90</sup> Congress was highly dependent on the landlords of rural India. Sunil Khilnani points out that the constitution restricted the state power to bring about a radical transformation in the rural property order.<sup>91</sup> Regional legislatures became responsible for undertaking socio-economic reforms. However, the rural elites exerted their local influences to act against any kind of redistributive agenda.

Moreover, scholars argue that the democratic and developmental policy adopted by the state was elitist in nature. There was no ‘popular pressure’ for the constitutional democracy based on universal adult suffrage. Rather, it was provided to the common mass above from the state

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<sup>88</sup> Partha Chatterjee, *Nation and its Fragments*, 211-214.

See also Sudipta Kaviraj, *The Trajectories of the Indian State: Politics and Ideas* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2010), 114-118.

<sup>89</sup> Kaviraj, *The Trajectories of the Indian State: Politics and Ideas*, 114.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> Khilnani, *The Idea of India*, 36.

as the elites thought it to be essential for the developmental projects of the state.<sup>92</sup> As far as the developmental strategy of the state was concerned, the leaders had a false belief that the ‘external experts’ had a more concrete idea than the common mass regarding their problems. Thus, state acquired the role not only of the ‘initiator’ but also of the ‘evaluator’ of such developmental agenda.<sup>93</sup> Thus, due to such elitist approach, the state often failed to solve the problems of poverty, oppression etc. In his poem ‘Chabbees January’ (26<sup>th</sup> January), Sahir Ludhianvi questioned the state for its failure to remedy the problem of poverty - ‘*Daulat Badi To Mulk Mein Iflaas Kyun Bada? Khush-Haali-e-Avaam Ke Asbaab Kya Hue?*’<sup>94</sup>

We may argue that the progressive writers refused to get confined within the ivory tower and actively participated in various social activities. By recognising and respecting the pluralist character of Indian society they always championed the secular values. In this issue they supported the postcolonial Nehruvian state. However, the partition of India gave a huge blow to these progressive artists. Governmental authorities of both of the infant nations adopted oppressive measures to suppress their movements. In Pakistan, progressive leaders like Sajjad Zaheer, Faiz Ahmed Faiz were arrested in 1951 in ‘Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case’.<sup>95</sup> The Pakistan government followed an autocratic policy by brutally suppressing the progressive movement as they feared their communist connection. The condition of India was not much difference as far as the fate of the progressives was concerned just after the partition. Ali Sardar Jafri was arrested while trying to organize a PWA conference in Bombay. The conference got

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid. 34.

<sup>93</sup> Kaviraj, *The Trajectories of the Indian State: Politics and Ideas*, 117.

<sup>94</sup> Mir and Mir, *Anthems of Resistance*, 148.

<sup>95</sup> For details See Kamran Asdar Ali, *Communism in Pakistan: Politics and Class Activism 1947-1972* (London: I.B.Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2015).

As a response to this conspiracy and his eventual imprisonment, Faiz wrote- ‘*Nisaar Main Teri Galiyoon Pe Ai Watan, Ke Jahaan Chalte Hai Rasm Ke Koi Na Sar Utha Ke Chale*’. See Mir and Mir, *Anthems of Resistance*, 148.

severe opposition from Morarji Desai, the Chief Minister of Bombay.<sup>96</sup> Desai also wanted to suppress the movement due to its communist link.

Facing such governmental repression many of the progressives turned their attention towards the Bombay Film Industry. Since the Fourth AIPWA conference, the progressives wanted to utilize the film industry as a medium of propagating their ideologies. After the partition, this trend increased manifold as several progressive authors, poets joined the industry as screenplay writer like Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, lyricists like Kaifi, Sahir, Majrooh and others. In the next chapter, we shall discuss whether the advent of the progressive artists into the film arena brought about a transformation in the nature of the cultural production of the industry. Moreover, as it was a period of nation-building, the Nehruvian government often tried to manipulate the industry as an ideological weapon to carry forward its activities. Thus, we shall also take into consideration the response of the progressive lyricists towards such nation-building agenda

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<sup>96</sup> Ahmed, *Literature and Politics in the Age of Nationalism*, 157.

## Chapter Three

### **Hindi Film Songs in the ‘Nehruvian’ Era (1947-64): Lyrical Response To the ‘Nation-Building’ Project**

The previous chapter studied two major developments that would be deeply influencing some of the Urdu poets who would play a significant role in the world of Hindi film songs in the decades immediately succeeding India’s independence. The reason we selected these two major developments for discussion in the previous chapter is that we had the following lyricists in mind. In this chapter, we would have the occasion to enquire the exact way and the exact extent to which these two developments studied in the previous chapter could after all determine the nature of lyrics that these poets wrote for different film sequences.

Thus, this chapter concentrates on the process as to what extent these nation-building activities of the postcolonial state found its reflection in the cultural production of the Hindi film industry, particularly in the lyrics of these movies. As after the partition, Hindi film industry acquired the status of the ‘national film industry’<sup>1</sup>, many of the contemporary Hindi films in general and their song lyrics in particular resonated either the prospects or the anxieties of the nation-building project. Moreover, as many of the Urdu poets of the Progressive Writers’ Movement now joined the Bombay film industry as lyricists, this thesis also enquires about their response to the ‘Nehruvian’ nation-building agenda. Moreover, another question to ask would be how true to their progressive antecedents could they remain in their film lyrics too.

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<sup>1</sup> Tejaswini Ganti, *Bollywood: A Guidebook to Popular Hindi Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 11-12.

## **The Emergence of the Hindi Film Industry as the National Industry**

In the Nehruvian era, the Hindi film songs reflected the various themes relating to the nation-building project of the postcolonial state. In this way, many of these songs encouraged the growth of a national awareness among the spectators. Hindi film lyricists like Kavi Pradeep, Shailendra and others wrote several songs which raised the enthusiasm among the listeners regarding the nation-making process. But it may be argued that the emergence of such particular kind of lyrics, written for a particular kind of films having a national concern, would not have been possible had the Bombay film industry remained a merely 'regional' one like the other film industries in different regions like Lahore, Calcutta, Madras etc. This is why in the following section we shall discuss the factors which helped the Bombay film industry to virtually acquire the stature of the 'national film industry'.

After the partition, due to massive migration, communal riots, serious refugee problem, the film industries of Lahore and Calcutta were adversely affected. The Punjabi film industry in Lahore, in the late colonial era, was dominated by the Hindu and Sikh artists who migrated to Bombay after the partition. Film artists, producers and filmmakers like Pran Krishen Sikand, Om Prakash, B.R. Chopra and many others came to Bombay from Lahore after the partition.<sup>2</sup> The Bengali film industry also suffered due to the partition of Bengal as 40 percent of its market was situated in the newly created East Pakistan.<sup>3</sup> While the other industries faced several difficulties and became 'regional' industries, the Hindi film industry in Bombay was able to establish itself as the 'national industry'.<sup>4</sup> As the Hindi film industry gained the status of the national film industry in the postcolonial era, the Hindi film songs very often reflected such issues relating to the nation-building agenda.

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<sup>2</sup> Mihir Bose, *Bollywood: A History* (New Delhi: Lotus Collection, 2007), 160.

<sup>3</sup> Ganti, *Bollywood: A Guidebook to Popular Hindi Cinema*, 22.

<sup>4</sup> Vijay Devadas, "The Shifting Terrains of Nationalism and Patriotism in Indian Cinemas", in Routledge Handbook of Indian Cinemas, ed. K. Moti Gokulsing and Wimal Dissanayake, (Oxon: Routledge, 2013): 219.

Within a decade after the partition, the popularity of the Hindi movies made Bombay the ‘acknowledged centre’ of Indian film industry.<sup>5</sup> The rich melodies composed by some of the most gifted composers coupled with fine lyrics written by some great poets of the time made these songs extremely popular throughout the country. Music Director Madan Mohan claimed that the popular film songs were the ‘first really national music’ of India as it had cut through all the ‘linguistic and provincial barriers’.<sup>6</sup> Scholars argue that among the various kinds of art forms, Hindi film songs played a dominant role in capturing the ‘national imagination’.<sup>7</sup>

In a multi-lingual nation like India, while the regional cinemas remained confined within their specific linguistic group of audience, the Hindi filmmakers were able to get a far wider viewership by evolving ‘a national film language.’<sup>8</sup> ‘Hindustani’, a mixture of Hindi and Urdu<sup>9</sup>, became the dominant language of the Bombay film industry which ensured the largest markets in the North India. Hindi films also became popular in the ‘Urdu-Marathi’ speaking Hyderabad and even in South India.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, unlike the regional industries, the Bombay film industry did not show any particular inclination towards the local language of the region. This helped the Bombay industry to transcend beyond any ‘regional identification’ and achieve a ‘national character’.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ramachandra Guha, *India After Gandhi: The History of the World’s Largest Democracy* (London: Picador, 2008), 722-723.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Bhaskar Sarkar, *Mourning the Nation: Indian Cinema in the Wake of Partition* (New Delhi: Orient Black Swan Pvt Ltd, 2010), 58.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Reginald Massey, “The Indian Film Industry”, *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, Vol. 122, No. 5214 (1974): 374.

<sup>9</sup> Due to its rich poetic nature, Urdu became the dominant as the language of cinema. Urdu Ghazals were extremely popular in the North India, even among the non-Urdu speaker audience.

Peter Manuel, “Popular Music in India: 1901-86”, *Popular Music*, Vol. 7, No. 2, *The South Asia/ West Crossover* (1988): 167.

<sup>10</sup> Anirudh Deshpande, *Class, Power and Consciousness in Indian Cinema and Television* (Delhi: Primus Books, 2009), 84-85.

<sup>11</sup> Ganti, *Bollywood: A Guidebook to Popular Hindi Cinema*, 11-12.

Songs and dance sequences of the Hindi films also indicated the national character by diluting ethnocentrism. Famous lyricist and scriptwriter of the Bombay film industry Javed Akhtar argues that the characters of Hindi cinema had an ‘all-India culture’ and thus, in a song, the heroine could perform Punjabi bhangra in a scene followed by a south Indian dance like Bharat Natyam in another scene. Thus, the Hindi movies picked varieties of cultural aspects of different regions and combined them together to give it a national outlook.<sup>12</sup> Hindi cinema and its songs developed its own symbols and expressions which could be understood by the spectators of different regions.

After the independence, like Gandhi, most of the national leaders were sceptical to the ill-effects of the film industry over the Indian society. They considered that the primary task of the films was to act as a ‘potential instrument of social reform’ which the industry failed to perform.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, they thought that the contents and songs of the most of the films were ‘seriously corrupted by Western influences’ which would be detrimental to the cause of a newly developing national culture. Thus, B.V. Keskar prohibited the broadcasting of the Hindi film songs on All India Radio in 1952. But due to the absence of the film songs, the All India Radio lost as many as 90 percent of its listeners who now turned their attention to Radio Ceylon which now started to air their favourite film songs.<sup>14</sup> In 1957, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting was compelled to uplift the ban on the Hindi film songs and thus, All India Radio regained its popularity.

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<sup>12</sup> Javed Akhtar in Conversation with Nasreen Munni Kabir, *Talking Films and Songs* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2018), 47.

<sup>13</sup> Erik Barnouw and S. Krishnaswamy, *Indian Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 130.

<sup>14</sup> David Lelyveld, “Upon the Subdominant: Administering Music on All-India Radio”, *Social Text*, No. 39 (1994): 121.

As the Bombay industry was able to achieve a more or less nation-wide viewership, Nehru, unlike many of his colleagues, showed his eagerness to utilize the films as a medium of reshaping the minds of the countrymen in order to carry forward his nation building activities. The Film Enquiry Committee was established in 1949 which gave its report in 1951. According to this report, The Indian movies were expected to serve as ‘effective instruments’ for ‘national culture, education and healthy entertainment’ to raise a sense of national awareness among the viewers.<sup>15</sup> The Committee considered the movies as the most significant form of mass media. Thus, it asked the filmmakers to cooperate with the government by taking a positive step towards the process of nation-building by providing the state a cultural justification through their movies.

Nehru personally maintained contact with some of the most famous film directors of the Hindi film industry like Mehboob Khan, Raj Kapoor and others. He performed the role of an ‘unofficial consultant’ of Mehboob Khan during the making of ‘Mother India’. He advised Mehboob to add more songs and portray the picture of industrial India to celebrate the nation-building agenda.<sup>16</sup> He also lamented the absence of child movies and asked Raj Kapoor to make a movie for children in which he even promised to give some personal time for shooting.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Report of the Film Enquiry Committee, 1951, 46-47.

<sup>16</sup> Priya Joshi, *Bollywood's India: A Public Fantasy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 135.

<sup>17</sup> Ritu Nanda, *Raj Kapoor: The One and Only Showman* (Noida: Harper Collins, 2017), 93.



## Songs as the Tool of the Nation-Building Project

The independence of India brought about a significant transformation in the content of the Hindi film lyrics. Lyricists, scriptwriters and filmmakers in this era, having experienced the trauma of partition, showed a 'deeper commitment' to enrich the cultural sphere of the infant nation.<sup>18</sup> Profoundly influenced by Nehru's vision of a 'new India', filmmakers like Mehboob Khan, Raj Kapoor<sup>19</sup> and many others upheld a sense of 'Indianness' and called for the active participation of the countrymen in the process of nation-building through their cultural production. As the content of the films very often dealt with such issues, the song lyrics used in such movies also reflected a national spirit.

At the outset, it may be pointed that along with the happiness of freedom, there was also a sense of deep pathos running in the air due to the bifurcation of the country. But there was an astonishing dearth in the number of the movies and songs relating to the partition in the early 1950s. There was only references to the agony of partition which helped to establish the background of the main character. Between 1947-1962, among more than 1800 movies produced in the industry, not more than merely 12 films like '*Lahore*', '*Kashmir*', '*Kashmir Humara Hai*' etc. dealt with partition. Thus, the songs of this era did not generally reflect the trauma of partition.<sup>20</sup> The reason for this lacuna of songs reflecting the pain of partition was that the lyricists, perhaps subconsciously, wanted to dilute the traumatized impact of partition in the psyche of the audience and thus, instead of such songs of mourning, they upheld in their lyrics a euphoric notion of independence with a tinge of optimism.

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<sup>18</sup> Partha Chatterjee, "Indian Cinema: Then and Now", India International Centre Quarterly, Vol. 39, No. 2 (2012): 45-46.

<sup>19</sup> Raj Kapoor talked about Nehru's 'beautiful dream' of nation-building. As Nehru wanted every Indian to do 'something for the nation', Raj tried to follow his vision through his films. Quoted in Nanda, *Raj Kapoor: The One and Only Showman*, 93.

<sup>20</sup> Sarkar, *Mourning the Nation: Indian Cinema in the Wake of Partition*, 98.

See also Manoj Sharma, "Portrayal of Partition in Hindi Cinema", Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, Vol. 70 (2009-2010): 1155-1160.

In these initial years of independence, the movies naturally tried to celebrate the attainment of freedom and thus, many of such films, glorified the bravery and sacrifice of several freedom fighters. Many of the lyricists cheerfully portrayed the celebration of freedom in their songs. Thus, the emergence of '*Azadi Geet*' became one of the main features of this era. In the year of partition, Raja Ram directed movie '*Ahimsa*' appeared on the screen in which Gopal Singh Nepali's song '*Azad Hai Hum Aj Se, Jailo Ka Tala Tod Do, Ab Jao Apne Ghar Ko Angrejo, Bharat Chor Do*' inspired a large number of patriotic songs celebrating the '*Azadi*'. The song also condemned the British due to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre as the *antara* went on- '*Mara Hai Deshbhakto ko Tumne Goli Se Bhunke, Jallianwala Bagh Mein Hai Dagh Abhi Bhi Khun Ke*'.

This song also inspired other lyricists like Nazim Panipati, Raja Mehdi Ali Khan, Ramesh Gupta and others who wrote some of the most famous patriotic songs of the late 1940s. The songs like '*Ab Darne ki Koi Baat Nehi, Angreji Chora Chala Gaya, Wo Gora Gora Chala Gaya*' (*Majboor*), '*Muddat Ke Baad Hum Yeh Khushiya Mana Rahe Hai, Azad Ho Gaya Hai Hindustaan Humara*' (*Jalsha*), '*Watan ke Raha Pe Watan Ke Sipahi Saheed Ho*'<sup>21</sup> (*Shaheed*) were successfully able to elevate the nationalist sentiment among the audience. In the film '*Azadi Ke Raah Paar*' (1948), two such songs were used to celebrate the independence. Sahir Ludhianvi's song '*Jag Utha Hai Hindustan*' offered a new sense of optimism. In another song '*Badal Rahi Hai Zindegi*' Sahir argued that with the end of the colonial oppression, the life of the common people witnessed an important transformation- '*Ye Ajnabi Ke Zulm Ki Kahaniya, Abhi Dukho Ke Jaal Se, Badal Rahi Hai Zindegi*'.

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<sup>21</sup> Rajiv Vijayakar argues that this Rafi song inspired a large number of patriotic songs in that period. See Rajiv Vijayakar, *The History of Indian Film Music: A Showcase of the Very Best in Hindi Cinema* (New Delhi: Times Group Books, 2009), 27.

The 1950s witnessed the continuation of this trend of reflecting patriotism in the film songs. But now along with the celebration of independence, there emerged a sense of responsibility of nation-building which was reflected in the songs written by famous lyricists like Kavi Pradeep, Prem Dhawan, Shailendra and others. They injected a sense of hope and optimism in the minds of the audience. Raj Kapoor even argued that role played by a 'showman' like him in the society sometimes had a close resemblance with a 'politician' as both of them used to 'sell dreams'.<sup>22</sup> The open message of patriotism along with an optimism for a better future captivated the imagination of the countrymen. Jayson Beaster-Jones rightly argues that these songs were emblematic of Nehruvian nation-building project.<sup>23</sup>

It may be argued that apart from the lyrics, the charming melodies coupled with an appropriate picturization made these songs extremely popular. If we focus on the picturization and music arrangement of these songs, we shall find a striking similarity. These songs were written to provide a hope for a 'new India' which would be free from any kind of socio-political evils. Thus, very often the lyricists used phrases like '*Naya Zamana*', '*Naya Daur*', '*Naya Dagar*' etc. And more importantly, many of such songs were used in those films in such a way that these would attract the minds of the youth people of India whom they considered to be the flagbearer of the nation. As far as the visualization of these songs in the films were concerned, these were often performed on screen by child artists. Moreover, music directors often used Chorus in these songs to which these child artists lip-synched in the films. The following section of this paper deals with such examples where this formula was applied by the filmmakers, lyricists and music directors of the contemporary era.

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<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Nanda, *Raj Kapoor: The One and Only Showman*, 139.

<sup>23</sup> Jayson Beaster-Jones, *Bollywood Sounds: The Cosmopolitan Mediations of Hindi Film Song* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 50-54.

As far as the songs of patriotism was concerned, scholars and film critics held Kavi Pradeep in high esteem. Raju Bharatan argues that Pradeep mastered the art of ‘arousing nationalist fervour’.<sup>24</sup> In the Satyen Bose directed film ‘*Jagruti*’ (1954), Pradeep’s songs like ‘*Aao Baccho Tumhe Dikhaye Jhanki Hindustan Ki*’, ‘*Hum Laye Hai Tufan Se Kashti Nikal Ke*’ and ‘*Sabarmati Ke Sant Tune Kar Diya Kamal*’ became extremely popular. In this film, Abhi Bhattacharya played a role of a teacher who teaches the children about the greatness of the country. Through the song ‘*Aao Baccho Tumhe Dikhaye*’ the teacher made his students aware about the geography, culture, history of freedom movement of India and glorified the ‘past heroes’ of the country from Shivaji to Subhas Chandra Bose. Moreover, Pradeep described India as a land of sacrifice to pay tribute to the martyrs- ‘*Iss Mitti Se Tilak Karo, Ye Dharti Hai Balidaan Ki*’. Interestingly, in this song we find that every antara comes to an end with a Chorus performed by the students- ‘*Vande Mataram*’- which indicates that the children came to be profoundly inspired by the teaching and they had started to develop a sense of nationalism among them.

After the assassination of Gandhi songs like ‘*Suno Suno Ae Duniya Walo Babu Ki Yeh Amar Kahani*’ were composed in order to pay tribute to the ‘Father of Nation’. The Hindi filmmakers who tried to uphold the spirit of Nehruvian nation-building also used songs regarding Gandhi. In ‘*Jagruti*’, the song ‘*De Di Hume Azadi Bina Kharg Bina Dhal, Sabarmati Ke Sant Tune Kar Diya Kamal*’ also praise the deeds of Gandhi. Again, the song was lip-synched by a child artist who played the role of a physically handicapped student and this perhaps indicated the role of Gandhi as the messiah of the helpless downtrodden people. This song also followed the same formula as each antara was followed by a chorus line in which the children glorified ‘the saint of Sabarmati’.

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<sup>24</sup> Quoted in Manek Premchand, *Yesterday’s Melodies Today’s Memories: Singers, Lyricists and Music Composers from Hindi Cinema’s Yesteryear* (Chennai: Notion Press, 2018), 67.

In another song '*Hum Laye Hai Tufan Se Kishti Nikal Ke*', Pradeep termed the young people as the future of India and thus, asked them to take up responsibilities in order to protect the country- '*Tum Hi Bhabishya Ho Mere Bharat Bisaal Ke, Is Desh Ko Rakhna Mere Bacche Sambhal Ke*'. Pradeep warned the children against 'slipping into complacency'.<sup>25</sup> Although India had already attained the much-wanted freedom, the youth, whom the poet compared to the flowers, had to adopt the responsibility to make the country proud- '*Tum Gaardo Gagan Mein Tiranga Uchal Ke*'. Thus, this Rafi number composed by Hemant Kumar went on in the antara like- '*Aaram Ke Tum Bhulbhulaiya Mein Na Bhulo, Sapno Ke Hindolo Pe Magan Hoke Na Jhulo, Ab Waqt Aa Gaya Mere Haste Hue Phoolon, Utho Chhalang Mar Ke Akash Ko Chu lo*.' Unlike the previous song, it did not have any chorus. But the melody changed its character in the last antara with a crescendo as the pitch went to higher octave when the teacher inspired his students to achieve the highest goal in their life and help the nation to move forward. The nature of the tune along with the poetic excellence of Pradeep produced a peculiar kind of excitement which bore a huge impact in the minds of the audience. Furthermore, it may be argued that the visualization of the song attempted to flatten out the ideological differences of the national leaders in order to preach a sense of national unity. Thus, in the picturization of this song, the camera zoomed on the images of Gandhi, Subhas and Jawaharlal to whom the children were paying tribute through the verses of Pradeep. The message of the films and 'true intention' of the directors were often hidden in the picturization of such song.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Ganesh Anantharaman, *Bollywood Melodies: A History of the Hindi Film Song* (Gurgaon: Penguin Random House India, 2008), 105-106.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in Jacob Levich, "Freedom Songs", *Film Comment*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (2002): 50.

Apart from Pradeep, other lyricists like Shailendra, Shakeel Badauni also wrote some songs of nationalist flavour. Although Shakeel Badauni was well-known for his ghazals, romantic songs, his song in the film 'Son of India' (1962) '*Nanna Munna Rahi Hu, Desh Ka Sipahi Hu*' received huge success. Shakeel adopted an optimist stance regarding this 'new time' and internalized Nehru's dream of an industrialized India- '*Naya Hai Zamana Meri Nayi Hai Dagar, Desh Ko Banaunga Mashino Ka Nagar*'. This also had a chorus as after each antara the children jointly raised the slogan of '*Jai Hind*'. It is worth mentioning that as the Hindi films reflected the nation making process, the filmmakers, heroes and lyricists often talked about 'Naya Zamana'. 'Naya Dagar', 'Nayi Roshni' etc.<sup>27</sup>

Shakeel also wrote a patriotic song for Dilip Kumar's 'Leader' (1964) where he maintained that India earned her freedom at the expense of enormous sacrifices and urged that the countrymen should protect the nation from the enemy as they could sacrifice their lives, but not their freedom- '*Apni Aazadi Ko Hum Hargis Mita Sakte Nehi, Sar Kata Sakte Hai Lekin, Sar Jhuka Sakte Nehi*'. He argued that even if the enemy came with a huge force, they could not stand against the unity of our countrymen- '*Lakh Fauje LeKe Aye Aman Ka Dushman Koi, Ruk Nehi Sakta Humari Ekta Ke Samne*'. Moreover, he warned the traitors of the nation as the country would not tolerate any further treachery, indicating the first betrayal resulting in the bifurcation of the subcontinent- '*Gar Watan Mein Bhi Milega Koi Gaddar-e-Watan, Apni Taqat Se Hum Uska Sar Kuchalte Jayenge, Ek Dhoka Kha Chuke Hai Aur Kha Sakte Nehi*'. Thus, traitors were to be punished brutally to maintain the unity of the nation. But interestingly enough, in the next antara, the lyricist also talked about following the footsteps of Gandhi- '*Jo Sabak Bapu Ne Sikhlaya Wo Bhula Sakte Nehi*'. Here, we also find an attempt to flatten out the ideological differences of the national leaders to uphold the national unity.

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<sup>27</sup> Akbar S. Ahmed, "Bombay Films: The Cinema as Metaphor for Indian Society and Politics", *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (1992): 292-293.

Shailendra's songs '*Yeh Chaman Humara Apna Hai, Is Desh Pe Apna Raaj Hai*' from the film '*Ab Dilli Dur Nehi*' and '*Nanne Munne Bacche Teri Mutthi Mein Kya Hai?*' from the movie '*Boot Polish*' showed the confidence of the new nation. Shailendra showed that the younger generation of our country would be able to make good fortune through hard work- '*Mutthi Mein Taqdeer Humari, Humne Kismat Ko Baas Me Kia Hai*'. Thus, Shailendra hoped for a better future in which there would be no exploitation and starvation - '*Anewali Dunia Mein Sab Ke Saar Pe Taaj Ho, Na Bhukho Ki Bheer Hogi, Na Dukho Ka Raaj Ho.*'

In this respect, perhaps the most two important songs written by Shailendra were '*Jis Desh Mein Ganga Baheti Hai*' and '*Mera Joota Hai Japani*', both were lip-synched by 'the showman' of the Hindi film industry, Raj Kapoor. Akbar Ahmed points out that due to the influence of Nehru, the filmmakers and lyricists started championing the virtues of truth, love, unity.<sup>28</sup> These virtues found their reflection in the title song of the movie '*Jis Desh Mein Ganga Baheti Hai*'. The river 'Ganga' is a symbol of purity. Thus, Shailendra stated that in this land of the Ganges, the people followed the path of honesty, truthfulness- '*Hoto Pe Sacchai Raheti Hai, Jaha Dil Mein Safai Raheti Hai, Hum Us Desh Ki Basi Hai, Jis Desh Mein Ganga Baheti Hai*'. In the antara, Shailendra asked his countrymen to live together peacefully as the song went on- '*Mil Jhul Ke raho Aur Pyar Karo, Ek Cheez Yahi Jo Rahete Hai*'.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

Another Mukesh-hit from the film '*Shree 420*' symbolized the claim of an 'Indian identity in a globalized world', argues Anirudh Deshpande.<sup>29</sup> In spite of having a Japanese shoe, English trouser and Russian cap, the heart of Raj remained an Indian- '*Mera Joota Hai Japani, Ye Patloon Englishtani, Sar Pe Lal Topi Rusi, Phir Bhi Dil Hai Hindustani*'. This also indicates the secular approach of the Nehruvian state which was ready to borrow several things from various cultures but at the same time maintained its 'essential Indianness'.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, this song also celebrated Indian democracy as the antara- '*Honge Raje Rajkumar, Hum Bigre Dil Shahezade, Hum Singhasan Paar Ja Baithe Jab Jab Kare Iraade*'- indicates that in the postcolonial India, even a vagabond could aspire to reach the highest stage in political arena. As India freed herself from the shackles of feudalism, now each and every citizen of the country, irrespective of their caste, class and religion had the right to take part in the administrative machinery of the state. Thus, while the other lyricists in their nationalist songs mainly glorified the country, Shailendra, because of his IPTA background, even in his patriotic songs raised his voice for the empowerment of the common people.

One of the greatest lyricists of the time Sahir Ludhianvi generally adopted a critical approach towards the limitations of the nation-building project. However, Sahir also glorified our country as a nation of 'brave martyrs' in his song '*Yeh Desh Hai Veer Jawano Ka*' written for Dilip Kumar's 'quintessentially Nehruvian film'<sup>31</sup> '*Naya Daur*' (1957). The song expressed a sense of pride in the developing nation.<sup>32</sup> This thesis will deal with the other aspects of Ludhianvi's lyrics in the next section.

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<sup>29</sup> Deshpande, *Class, Power and Consciousness in Indian Cinema and Television*, 93.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Lord Meghnad Desai, *Nehru's Hero Dilip Kumar: In the Life of India* (New Delhi: Lotus Collection, 2004), 102.

<sup>32</sup> Akshay Manwani, *Sahir Ludhianvi: The People's Poet* (Noida: Harper Collins, 2013), 139.



In the early 1960s, lyricists like Prem Dhawan started following this patriotic stance. His songs like 'Ae Mere Pyare Watan' (Kabuliwala) and the title song of 'Hum Hindustani' became extremely popular.<sup>33</sup> In this latter song, he also talked about a 'Naya Daur' in which he urged the Indians to forget the 'purani' (old) things in order to undertake a new beginning. He also put emphasis on the need of unity- '*Choro Kal Ki Baatein, Kal Ki Baat Purani, Naye Daur Mein Likhenge, Mil Kar Nayi Kahani*'. The following phrase '*Hum Hindustani*' was used as a chorus to express the unity. The picturization of this song indicated the financial as well as technological development of India as the camera focused on dams, heavy machinery, modern communication system etc. Moreover, Nehru was shown on the screen as attending a Congress session. Dhawan also asked for hard work from his countrymen to make India a dreamland- '*Aao Mehnat Ko Apna Iman Banaye, Apne Hato Ko Apna Bhagwan Banaye, Ram Ki Is Dharti Ko, Gautam Ki Is Bhoomi Ko, Sapno Se Bhi Pyara Hindustan Banaye*'.

Contemporary political condition, Indian foreign policies and problematic relations with China and Pakistan also got its reflection in the Hindi film songs of the Nehruvian era. Issues like Kashmir problem, Indo-China war etc. also bore a profound impression on the minds of the artists, filmmakers, lyricists. In the early 1950s, lyricists like Ramchandra Aansoo, Sarshar Sailani wrote some songs like '*Uth Ae Watan Ke Naujawan*', '*Kashmir Humara Hai*' which described Kashmir as an integral part of India and thus, they called for the participation of the youth of the country to protect Kashmir from the aggression of the enemy. The Kashmir issue continued to influence the lyricists even in the post Nehruvian era.

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<sup>33</sup> Premchand, *Yesterday's Melodies Today's Memories: Singers, Lyricists and Music Composers from Hindi Cinema's Yesteryear*, 339.

In the early 1960s, the Sino-Indian war also inspired the Indian filmmakers to portray the sacrifice of the Indian soldiers through their movies. Chetan Anand's '*Haqeeqat*' celebrated the bravery of the Indian army and thus, encouraged the growth of a nation-wide patriotic sentiment. This film received state patronage and media support.<sup>34</sup> In this film, the Rafi number '*Kar Chale Hum Fida Jano-Taan Saathio, Ab Tumhare Hawale Watan Saathio*',<sup>35</sup> written by Kaifi Azmi and composed by Madan Mohan, resonated such patriotic sentiment. Kaifi provided examples from 'Ramayana' and compared the soldiers with 'Rama' and 'Laxmana'. He compared the country with 'Sita' and urged the army to protect her from the aggression of the enemy- '*Kheench Do Apne Khun Se Zameen Pe Lakeer, Is Taraf Aane Paye Na Ravaan Koi, Tod do Agar Haat Uthne Lage, Chu Na Paye Na Sita Ke Damaan Koi*'.<sup>36</sup> The use of such examples from Ramayana raised the national awareness of the audience.

### **Critical Response Towards the Limitations of the Nation-Building Project**

Although the partition of India was marked by communal riots, refugee problems, financial crisis, at the same time independence brought about a sense of hope and expectation for a better future. The developmental strategy of the postcolonial state based on the principal of 'distributive justice' created an optimism among the citizens that in the near future India would be emancipated from the shackles of feudalism and financial condition of the common people would improve through a rapid industrialization process.<sup>37</sup> It would ensure the establishment of a just and egalitarian society by eradicating the problem of mass poverty.

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<sup>34</sup> Someswar Bhowmik, "From Coercion to Power Relations: Film Censorship in Post-Colonial India", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 38, No. 38 (2003): 3151.

<sup>35</sup> Kaifi Azmi, *Meri Awaaz Suno* (New Delhi: Rajkamal Prakashan, 2018), 88.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Sudipta Kaviraj, *The Imaginary Institution of India: Politics and Ideas* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 223.

However, the failure of the state to fulfil these expectations created among the common people a persistent feeling of betrayal.<sup>38</sup> Scarcity of employment aggravated the financial condition of the common people. Nehruvian nation-building project, in the words of Partha Chatterjee, became ‘a purveyor of empty platitudes.’<sup>39</sup> The unfulfilled dreams of the citizens generated a sense of pessimism which had a huge impact on the cultural production of the Hindi film industry. Thus, after the first decade of independence, a sense of disillusionment came to be reflected in the Hindi film songs.

The lyricists of the Hindi film industry started writing songs relating the issue of financial inequality in the early 1940s, about which this thesis had discussed in details in the first chapter. Some lyricists like S.P. Tripathi, A Shah Azeez, Ramesh Gupta continued to write about such themes even after the independence. Pandit Indra’s song ‘*Kamzoro Ki Nahi Hai Dunia, Mazdooro Ki Nahi Hai Duniya*’ (*Chin Le Azadi*), Ameen Gilani’s ‘*Jago Gareebo Jago, Dhanwano Ki Is Zulm Se Tum Jago*’ (*But Tarash*) were some examples of such songs reflecting the misery of the poverty ridden common mass and oppressive nature of the affluent people. However, in the immediate post-independence era, these songs were very few in number as the euphoria of freedom injected hopes about a better future where the society would be freed from the ‘evils of inequality’.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Partha Chatterjee, “Introduction”, in *The Wages of Freedom: Fifty Years of the Indian Nation-State*, ed. Partha Chatterjee, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998): 5.

<sup>39</sup> Chatterjee, “Indian Cinema: Then and Now”, 48.

<sup>40</sup> Pankaj Rag, “The Theme of Social and Political Consciousness as a challenge for Indian Recorded Music”, *Social Scientist*, Vol. 32, No. 11/12 (2004): 87.

In the early 1950s, lyricists talked about the financial suffering of the common people in an indirect way. Shailendra's IPTA background enabled him to write many such songs portraying the plight of the poor people like '*Awara Hoon*', '*Dil Ka Haal Sune Dilwala*' etc.<sup>41</sup> The antara of the '*Shree 420*' Manna Dey song '*Dil Ka Haal Sune Dilwala*' showed the miserable life of a poor man who had suffered from starvation- '*Chote Se Ghar Mein Gareeb Ka Beta, Main Bhi Hoon Ma Ke Naseeb Ka Beta, Ranj-o-gham Bachpan Ki Sathi, Andhiyon Mein Jali Jeevan Bati, Bhook Ne Hai Bade Pyaar Se Pala*'. However, the tune of this song does not portray any grief. Rather than using a pathos, the music director duo Shankar-Jaikishan used a delightful charming melody. This had an inherent message that that particular person was not lamenting about his poverty, rather he had an optimistic view of life as he went on to sing- '*Manzil Mere Paas Khadi Hai*'. However, at the same time, the leftist lyricist pointed out the oppressive character of the rich people- '*Pao Mein Lekin Bedi Pada Hai, Taang Deta Hai Daulat Wala*'.

The title song of the film '*Awara*', written by Shailendra, depicted the plight of a vagabond. But just like the previous song, '*Awara Hoon*' also had a catchy and rhythmic tune rather than a pathos. Shailendra wrote that in spite of having a waste life, the vagabond still sang a song of happiness- '*Abad Nehi Barbad Sahi, Gata Hu Khushi Ke Geet Magar*'. He also painted the picture of an unkind urban life where nobody paid heed to the plight of the poor- '*Zakhmo Se Bhara Sina Hai Mera, Hasta Hai Magar Yeh Mast Nagar*'. The movie '*Awara*' along with its title song reflected the anxieties of the nation-building project.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Kabir, *Talking Films and Songs*, 117.

<sup>42</sup> Omar Ahmed, *Studying Indian Cinema* (Leighton Buzzard: Auteur, 2015), 22.

Such picture of a heartless city also found an echo in other songs like ‘Ae Dil Hai Mushkil Jeena Yaha’ from the movie C.I.D. The lyricist Majrooh Sultanpuri termed the city of Bombay as his ‘heart’- ‘Yeh Hai Bombay Meri Jaan’. But he also accepted the harshness of the modern city life. The materialistic world of Bombay had no place for virtues like kindness, humanity etc. In the name of business, the capitalist urban ‘life-world’ exploited the downtrodden people.<sup>43</sup>

Sudipta Kaviraj finds a ‘dual character’ of these songs. Though these songs were written to support the narratives of the films, at the same time, many of them achieved ‘a freestanding meaningfulness’ by reverberating the contemporary socio-economic life of the common people.<sup>44</sup> This present thesis argues that these songs achieved such wider significance as most of them were written by such lyricists who were closely associated with the progressive writers’ movement before joining the film industry. Their leftist leanings ran through many of their songs. Influenced by socialism, lyricists like Sahir Ludhianvi, Kaifi Azmi, Shailendra and others always tried to champion the cause of the downtrodden common people. Thus, with the advent of these progressive poets in the film industry, the cultural production of the industry witnessed a qualitative transformation.

However, it should be kept in mind that as they had to work in a capitalist profit-driven industry, the specific demands of the industry often compelled them to come to a compromise. Moreover, a lyricist did not have the same freedom as a poet because he had to consider the demand of the film narrative, the structure of the tune while writing the lyrics. Thus, writing songs called for a unique type of poetic expression. These complexities often hampered their

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<sup>43</sup> Sudipta Kaviraj, “Reading a Song of the City: Images of the City in Literature and Films”, in *City Flicks: Indian Cinema and the Urban Experience*, ed. Preben Kaarsholm, (Calcutta: Seagull Books Private Limited, 2004), 68-70.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* 64-65.

personal preference and ideological concerns. Ashraf Aziz notices that Josh Malihabadi faced severe difficulties in composing film lyrics and eventually retreated into poetry.<sup>45</sup>

Thus, an important question arises that in spite of their progressive background, as they were no longer writing as independent poets, rather the demand of the film industry often obliged them to produce such lyrics which would be beneficial for the industry, how far were they able to continue with their rebellious ideological stance? Here, we also find a variety of responses as while poet like Sahir Ludhianvi more or less tried to continue his radical outlook, one of the greatest film lyricists of the contemporary era Majrooh Sultanpuri lost his rebellious character as a lyricist. Majrooh separated his 'personal path' from the personal one as he admitted that he joined the industry solely for earning his livelihood.<sup>46</sup> Ganesh Anantharaman points out that Majrooh was imprisoned by the Morarji Desai Government of Bombay in 1950 due to recite a poem criticising the Nehruvian government. After this incident, Majrooh ceased to follow the activist stance as a film lyricist and established himself as 'a lyricist of romance'.<sup>47</sup> However, as an independent poet, he continued to his struggle 'for the dignity of man' in his non-film writings.<sup>48</sup>

Like Majrooh, another progressive poet Kaifi Azmi kept his political outlook out of the film lyrics. More successful as a poet, Kaifi confined his revolutionary worldview to the poems he wrote as an individual poet. However, as far as his lyrics were concerned, between 1951-1964, he wrote as many as 77 songs of which merely three or four songs like '*Apne Hatho Ko Pehchan*' for the movie '*Apna Haat Jagannath*', '*Kar Chale Hum Fida*' for '*Haqeeqat*' etc.

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<sup>45</sup> Ashraf Aziz, *Light of the Universe: Essays on Hindustani Film Music*, (New Delhi: Three Essays Collective, 2003), p. 49.

<sup>46</sup> Vijayakar, *The History of Indian Film Music*, 28.

In an interview given to Manek Premchand, Majrooh Sultanpuri stated how his 'filmi zindegi' and 'ilmi zindegi' were apart. See Premchand, *Yesterday's Melodies Today's Memories*, 258.

<sup>47</sup> Anantharaman, *Bollywood Melodies*, 108.

<sup>48</sup> Premchand, *Yesterday's Melodies Today's Memories*, 257.

had a political underpinning while the majority of the songs remained confined within the romantic or sad genre.<sup>49</sup>

One of the greatest lyricists of the Bombay film industry Sahir Ludhianvi refused to follow the norms of the industry.<sup>50</sup> His progressive background inspired his literary endeavours as a lyricist. In his songs written for the films like ‘Pyaasa’, ‘Who Subha Kabhi To Ayegi’, ‘Naya Daur’, ‘Dhool Ka Phool’ etc., he gave voice to the downtrodden mass of the country and articulated their disillusionment with the nation-building project. He vehemently condemned any kind of oppressions and raised his voice for an egalitarian and just social order. While most of the lyricists still continued to celebrate the nation-making stance of the government, Sahir, on the contrary, urged for a world without feudal or capitalist exploitation- ‘*Samanti Sarkar Na Hogi, Poonjibaad Samaj Na Hoga*’. Thus, through his writings, he always called for uprooting the ‘*Taj*’ or ‘*Takht*’- two symbols of monarchical and feudal order. His war against the world of throne or crown found its manifestation in his songs like ‘*Ye Mehlo Ye Takhto Ye Taajo Ki Dunia*’ (‘*Pyaasa*’),<sup>51</sup> ‘*Takht Na Hoga, Taaj Na Hoga, Kal Tha Lekin Aaj Na Hoga*’ (‘*Aaj Aur Kal*’)<sup>52</sup> etc. While he called for a revolution in order to burn this exploitative world down in his *Pyaasa* song – ‘*Jalado Ise Phoonk Dalo Yeh Dunia, Mere Samne Se Hatalo Yeh Dunia, Tumhari Hai Tumhi Samhalo Yeh Dunia*’, in the latter song he argued that in order to achieve ‘*Saccha Swaraj*’ (real independence), an egalitarian society had to be established- ‘*Jisme Saab Adhikar Na Paye, Woh Saccha Swaraj Na Hoga*’. In the Delhi edition of the *Hindustan Times* (24 March, 1957), it was written that Sahir’s song ‘*Ye Dunia Agar Mil Bhi Jaye To Kya Hai?*’ had ‘stirred the nation’.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Azmi, *Meri Awaaz Suno*, 13-92.

<sup>50</sup> Anantharaman, *Bollywood Melodies*, 113.

<sup>51</sup> Asha Prabhat, *Sahir Samagra: Sahir Ludhianvi Ka Rachna Sansar* (New Delhi: Rajkamal Prakashan, 2018), 212.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* 306.

<sup>53</sup> Quoted in Manwani, *Sahir Ludhianvi*, 112-113.

Sahir pointed out the limitations of the Nehruvian government in its task of nation-building. In his song '*Jinhe Naaz Hai Hind Par Woh Kaha Hai?*' ('*Pyasa*'), Sahir turned our attention to the suffering of the common people and condemned the political leaders who used to take pride in India. This song also portrays the miserable condition of the women, irrespective of their caste, class and religion- '*Madad Chahti Hai Ye Hawwa Ki Beti, Yashoda Ki Hum-Jins, Radha Ki Beti, Payambar Ki Ummat Zulaikhan Ki Beti, Jinhe Naaz Hai Hind Paar Woh Kaha Hai?*'<sup>54</sup> It is important to note here that Sahir's progressive antecedents inspired him to reflect the miseries of the marginalised section of the society in his songs. This particular song was taken from one of his poems published in '*Talkhiyan*', named '*Chakley*' (Brothels).<sup>55</sup> In this poem, he raised the question- '*Sana-Khwaan-e-Taqdees-e-Mashriq Kahaan Hai?*' ('Where are they who take pride in the Eastern Purity?'). But in 1957, this poem was slightly reshaped for the purpose of the film narrative. Sahir simplified this line with his rebellious stance towards the failure of the Nehruvian nation-building project and raised the question- 'Where are they who take pride in India?'<sup>56</sup> Ali Mir points out that in 1957, Nehru delivered a speech in which he exclaimed that he was extremely proud of India. In this song, Sahir provided a critical response to the statement of the Prime Minister.<sup>57</sup> Thus, '*Pyasa*' illustrated the role of a poet in the Nehruvian nation-state.<sup>58</sup>

The progressive poets always protested against the patriarchal oppression and portrayed the plight of the marginalised women in their poetry. Sahir's '*Noor Jahan Ki Mazaar Par*', Kaifi Azmi's '*Aurat*' and many other poems written by these progressive poets, they always asked for the emancipation of women from such kinds of exploitation. Even after joining the film industry, Sahir continued to address such issues in his songs. We have already discussed how

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<sup>54</sup> Prabhat, *Sahir Samagra: Sahir Ludhianvi Ka Rachna Sansar*, 210.

<sup>55</sup> Manwani, *Sahir Ludhianvi*, 100.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ali Mir, "Lyrically Speaking: Hindi Film Songs and The Progressive Aesthetic", in *Indian Literature and Popular Cinema: Recasting Classics*, ed. Heidi R. M. Pauwels, (Oxon: Routledge, 2007): 212.

<sup>58</sup> Beaster-Jones, *Bollywood Sounds: The Cosmopolitan Mediations of Hindi Film Song*, 76.



in his songs in '*Pyasa*' asked for the betterment of the condition of women. Sahir vehemently criticised the practice of prostitution in his song written for the film '*Sadhna*' (1958)- '*Aurat ne Janam Dia Mardo Ko, Mardo Ne Use Bazaar Dia, Jaab Ji Chaha Masla Kuchla, Jaab Ji Chaha Dhutkar Dia*'.<sup>59</sup>

The progressive poets undertook a complex stance towards the question of nationalism. In the colonial era, they were staunch supporters of the anti-colonial movements. However, they wanted to use their nationalist and patriotic feelings for the betterment of the common people. Thus, when after the independence, the national leaders started championing the cause of an elitist nationalism, some of the poets took up their pens for an egalitarian and just society in which poor people would not be exploited in the name of nation-building agenda. Sahir ridiculed such elitist nationalism in his song- '*Chin-O-Arab Humara, Hindustan Humara, Rahene Ko Ghar Nehi Hai, Sara Jahaan Humara*'. Sahir thus made a mockery of Nehru's vision of 'India's place in an international community' by reflecting the suffering of the homeless people.<sup>60</sup> Sahir also showed the dark sides of the capitalist exploitation which was the main reason behind their suffering- '*Jitni Bhi Buildinge Thi, Setho Ne Baant Li Hai, Footpath Bombai Ke, Hai Aashiyen Humara*'.<sup>61</sup> Thus, Sahir wanted to argue that in the name of nationalism, the capitalist class and the state continuously oppressed the poor downtrodden mass. Thus, this kind of elitist nationalism, where there was no room for the development of the common people, should not be accepted.

Moreover, this song was a parody of Iqbal's '*Tarana-i-Milli*' where Iqbal talked about his pan-Islamic vision. The progressive poets always condemned religious fundamentalism. Even, after the partition, as film lyricists they continued their secular stance. Sahir always called for

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<sup>59</sup> Prabhat, *Sahir Samagra: Sahir Ludhianvi Ka Rachna Sansar*, 229-230.

<sup>60</sup> Manishita Dass, "Cinetopia: Leftist Street Theatre and the Musical Production of the Metropolis in 1950s Bombay Cinema", *East Asia Cultures Critique*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (2017): 114-115.

<sup>61</sup> Prabhat, *Sahir Samagra: Sahir Ludhianvi Ka Rachna Sansar*, 226.

communal harmony. Refuting all kinds of religious majoritarianism, Sahir glorified the notion of universal brotherhood. His song '*Tu Hindu Banega Na Musalman Banega, Insaan Ke Aulad Hai, Insaan Banega*' became one of the most famous songs of communal harmony by preaching the mantra of humanity. Even in his romantic songs he advocated the notion of secularism. The antara of the famous qawwali '*Na to Karwa Ki Talaash Hai*' ('*Baarsat Ki Raat*') emphasized the secular nature of true love which refused to bother about the religious identity of the beloved one- '*Ishq Azad Hai, Hindu Na Musalman Hai Ishq, Aap Hi Dharm Hai, Aap Hi Imaan Hai Ishq*'.

In the capitalist society, religion and deity are used to fulfil the materialistic demand of the affluent and influential people. This kind of religion does not solve the problem of the common people, rather it aggravated the crisis by justifying the economic inequalities sometimes. Thus, Sahir ridiculed the almighty in his song as the god seemed to be the guest of the capitalist class only- '*Kitna Badal Gaya Bhagwan, Bhookho Ke Gharo Mein Fera Na Dale, Setho Ka Ho Mehmaan*' ('*Railway Platform*').<sup>62</sup> Thus, neither religion nor god could eradicate the problem of poverty. Sahir was thus utterly sceptical about the existence of any divine being. He made a mockery of the deity in his song '*Aasman Pe Hai Khuda Aur Zameen Pe Hum, Ajkaal Who Is taraaf Dekhta Hai Kaam*'.

However, Sahir had a high optimism about the 'better future' when a just and egalitarian society could be established. He believed in the power of the working class- '*Hum Mehnatwalo Ne Jab Bhi Milkar Kadam Baraye, Sagar Ne Rasta Chora, Parbat Ne shish Jhukaya*'. Kaifi Azmi also championed the cause of the labouring class in the movie '*Apna Haat Jagannath*'. In the title song of the film '*Apne Hato ko Pehchan*' Kaifi pointed out the immense power of the labouring class as the song went on- '*Apne Hato Ko Pehchan, Murkh Isme Hai Bhagwan.*' Sahir realized

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid. 203.

that in the postcolonial Indian society, the peasantry and the working-class people were deprived of their rights. But in the title track of the film *'Phir Subha Hogi'* (1958) he was waiting for 'that dawn' when the subaltern people would achieve their status in the society- *'Jis Subah Ke Khatir Jug Jug Se, Hum Saab Mar Mar Kar Jite Hai, Jis Subah Se Amrit Ki Dhun Mein Hum Zahar KE Pyaale Pite Hai, In Bhookhi Pyaasi Ruhu Paar Ekdin To Karaam Farmayegi, Woh Subah Kabhi To Ayegi'*.<sup>63</sup> Sahir always pointed out the importance of the solidarity of the downtrodden mass- *'Sathi Haat Barana, Ek Akela Thak Jayega, Milkar Bojh Uthana'*.

In the late colonial era, the British government wanted to control the public opinion by using a harsh censorship policy. In the post-independent era, the Nehru government also adopted a strict censorship policy whenever the state found the content of the lyrics and the films to be unacceptable. Sahir's two songs from the film *'Phir Subha Hogi'*, namely *'Asmaan Pe Hai Khuda'* and *'Chin-O-Arab Humara'* were banned by the Nehru government.<sup>64</sup> Even, when Kavi Pradeep portrayed the dirty politics of the country, his song was also banned. Pradeep's songs were prohibited as he lamented that the dirty politics made the countrymen beggars- *'Hai! Siyasat Kitni Gandi, Buri Hai Kitni Firaqbandi, Aj Ye Sab Ke Saab Nar-Nari, Ho Gaye Raste Ke Yeh Bhikhari'*.<sup>65</sup> The line *'Paise Ka Raj Mita Dena'* (End the rule of the affluent people) from the song *'Paise ki Dunia'*, written by Sahir, was also banned due to its anti-capitalist rebellious stance.

However, it may be argued that though with the advent of the progressive writers in the film arena, the film lyrics started focusing on the socio-economic hardships of the common people, most of the lyrics remained confined within the romantic-sad-bhajan triad. While progressive

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid. 223.

<sup>64</sup> Mir, "Lyrically Speaking: Hindi Film Songs and The Progressive Aesthetic", 213.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. 212.

poets like Sahir Ludhianvi, Kaifi Azmi and others brought about a huge change in the content of the film lyrics, it should also be pointed out that as the progressive poets now had to work within a culture industry, the norms of the industry often compelled them to make several compromises. Thus, even such lyricists like Sahir who did not abandon his rebellious character even after joining the film industry, had to write according to the demand of the market. It is true that even majority of the lyrics of Sahir also conformed to the romantic or sad genre. But the significance of the progressive poets lies in the fact that in spite of having such restrictions in the film arena, they very often tried to remain honest to their literary conviction. One more thing should be mentioned here. In the midst of this nation-building euphoria, while many of the lyricists celebrated the agenda of the postcolonial state, the progressive-inspired poets, in their patriotic songs, very subtly portrayed the plight of the common people.

## Conclusion

In our study, we see how the progressive poets were compelled to come to a compromise after joining the film industry. As independent poets, they had the right to write according to their own experience and literary conviction. But as lyricists, they lost that privilege. The capitalist profit-driven culture industry treated their cultural productions as commodities. Thus, the demand of the market came to influence their literary endeavours. Thus, due to the increasing commodification of their writings, they got alienated from their own cultural production.

However, the response of the progressive poets to this crisis was by no means homogenous. The thesis shows that while eminent poets like Asrarul Haq Majaz, Josh Malihabadi and some others could not fit themselves into the world of Hindi cinema due to certain restrictions, famous poet Majrooh Sultanpuri totally abandoned his revolutionary style after joining the film industry. It should be mentioned that though as an independent poet, Majrooh Sultanpuri continued to follow his progressive antecedents, as a lyricist he reshaped the nature of his literary production. At the same time, there were other lyricists like Sahir Ludhianvi, Kaifi Azmi, Shailendra<sup>1</sup> who influenced the film industry with their rebellious outlook. It is important to note that these poets also had to write for a particular situation given in a particular film and thus majority of their works were based on romantic or sad or devotional lyrics. But at the same time, as has been mentioned in the last chapter, they wrote a considerable number of songs which reflected the socio-political atmosphere of the subcontinent, the miseries of the marginalized people, the plight of the downtrodden mass. They pointed out the sufferings of

the common mass at a time when majority of the lyricists internalized the Nehruvian nation-building project and asked the countrymen to sacrifice for the betterment of the nation.

However, in this thesis, we could not extensively deal with the changing nature of the tunes of the Hindi film songs along with the qualitative transformation in the sphere of lyrics after the partition. The role of music directors like Salil Chowdhury should be pointed out. Influenced by the IPTA movement, Salil Chowdhury brought about a unique style in the sphere of tunes. For an instance, in the Bimal Roy directed film '*Do Bigha Zameen*' (1953), Salil used the march music of the Russian Red Army in a song- '*Dharti Kahe Pukar Ke*'. Moreover, as the music director of the 1961 film '*Usne Kaha Tha*', he provided music to the famous anti-war poem of Makhdoom Moinuddin '*Janewale Sipahi Se Poocho Woh Kaha Ja Raha Hai?*' which inculcated an anti-war sentiment among the audience. Moreover, in the early 1950s, in many of the songs, portraying the plight of the poor, written by Shailendra, the music director duo Shankar-Jaikishan ironically used extremely cheerful musical compositions rather than any kind of pathos. Such interesting contradiction should be explained in details in further research. Finally, this thesis also does not take into consideration the male dominated vision of the Hindi film songs. Even in the romantic songs of that era, women were treated in such ways which would reflect their position and the patriarchal nature of the society. These questions may be considered for further research.

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