Chapter IV

SHOW BUSINESS: THE BLATANT REALITIES
OF THE TINSEL TOWN
Chapter IV

SHOW BUSINESS: THE BLATANT REALITIES
OF THE TINSEL TOWN.

Tharoor the maverick writer with a hawk’s eye for detail and newness has hardly left any untouched subject of discovery and scrutiny in the Indian social and cultural milieu. The very range of his experiences is stunningly refreshing. Each experience and each anecdote and every character is declared in to and branded by Tharoor with his own irresistible style of writing. Tharoor lived thrived and blossomed in a very modern India. The life and times may have situational turbulent but from it (life) Tharoor had successfully painted a kaleidoscope mosaic of Indian life in its richness, its poverty, its backwardness, diversity cultural specificity of each state especially his beloved state of Kerala and a multilingual babar of language or tongues. When Tharoor wrote Show Business, some critics were surprised that he would follow The Great Indian Novel with a work that dealt with the trashy world of commercial Bombay cinema. But he did so because Indian films, with all their limitations and outright idiocies, represent part of the hope for Indian’s future. In a country that is still almost forty percent illiterate, films represent the prime vehicle for the transmission of popular culture and values. Bollywood and its regional offshoots produce more than 800 films a year in nineteen languages and employ 2.5 million people, and their movies are watched over and over again by the Indian masses, especially those with few other affordable forms of entertainment. In India, popular cinema emerges from, and has consistently reflected, the diversity of the pluralist community that makes this cinema. The stories they tell are often silly, the plots formulaic, the characterizations superficial, the action predictable, but they are made and watched by members of every community in India. Muslim actors play Hindu heroes; South Indian heroines are chased around trees by North Indian rogues. Representatives of some communities may be
stereotyped (think of the number of alcoholic Christians played by Om Prakash, including in Zanjeer) but good and bad are always shown as being found in every community.

Tharoor both glorifies and lampoons the very idea of an Indian’s existence in the sense of reality and fantasy. In the light of T.S. Eliot’s observation “human beings cannot bear much reality,” So Tharoor also observes the average Indian who draws himself from reality in to the cinema halls and finds solace and happiness and contentment by gifting away small amounts of money (Ticket money) to the entertainment industry. The whistling gallery to be found in the front row hugging the screen is the great patronizes of the multi core Indian film industries. This section of the cine viewers, audience calls the shots of the entire echoes of Bollywood films. The traditional viewers which from yet another chunk of cine lovers fall in the traditional mould or middle class values that leaves only a miniscule section of intellectually endowed people who would crave for new wave of fresh cinema. The reason is not hard to find, the laboring masses and the traditional folks wish to see dreams and illusions of mythological cultural past of glamour’s half-clad innocent village, bells ramping around the fields through adolescent who know everything about the birds and beasts and is atrophied as only sweet sixteen. The middle class morality dictate that sex is dirty and her ‘daman’ ‘Izzat’ should not have any ‘Daag’. Indianess in the Bollywood industry out model concepts of morality persist as myth in the Indian Film Industry. Tharoor thus asks a question:

“I also looked at stories…in two cases of the popular film industry, why?
Because…. Film still represents the principle vehicle for the transmission of the fictional experience. Other that your grandmother telling you the stories on her knee, you go off and get your fiction by watching a movie. So I ask the question, what do these stories tell to Indians? What do they tell about Indians?” (Berkley: Interview)
The story of *Show Business* charts the career of a socially well placed but indigent theatre actor Ashok Banjara, who decides to abandon his earnest attempts to bring Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter to a few dozen aficionado’s and go instead for the big bucks and the colossal fame of being a star of Hindi cinema. Somehow to his surprise he succeeds almost at once, and his second film, *Godambo* launches him in to role of a dashing matinee idol virtually overnight. This Bollywood star Ashok Banjara is the hero of *Godambo, Judai, Dil Ek Aina,* and *Mechanic,* In his last movie *Kalki* he is critically ill fighting for his life in the intensive care unit in one of Bombay’s hospital. Ashok Banjara the best-educated actor in the Hindi film world, also former member of parliament gives both ‘man’ and ‘action’ a new definition. He acts as Villain many times but in actual life he is somewhat a nice man, falls in love with Maya (His wife) He stops his relations with Sunita and changes himself for Maya.

Another visitor is Kulbhshan Banjara, Ashok’s politician father, Minister of State for minor textiles, Kulbhushan Banjara, who is disappointed that Ashok first goes onto films and then that he joins politics which turns out to be a disaster:

“I resign from parliament, I decide to leave Delhi, so you are leaving he says (Kulbhushan), go! Go to your films and your stunts and your dancing and kicking! Go-go and destroy something else!” (Ramanan 1997:118)

Mehnaz Elahi who is Ashok’s heroine in several movies loves him very much. But to Mehnaz, Ashok hardly has any feelings. The next visitor is Ashwin, Ashok’s brother who is a grass root political worker finds his patrimony, the parliamentary seat held by his father snatched away by Ashok, but who nevertheless campaigns for his brother. These and several voices, all give insights in to Ashok’s life and career.

In an event Ashok whose acting talent is not too good, becomes the star of *Godambo* and very soon super star of *Bollywood.* The novel also takes to the film sets of each one of the
Ashoka starrer and tells that Godambo is the story of how Ashok a patriotic policeman brings to book Godambo a smuggler played by Pranay with the help of Abha. In reel life Abha has the famous bust out thrust but in real life Ashok seduces her. He realizes in horror and disbelief that Abha’s breast are shriveled and empty like pockets of delineated scheme. It is like the most famous bust in India as a pair of falsies.

Bollywood, of course, disagrees; our cinematic history is full of the titles of movies being chosen, amended or misspelled on astrological or numerological grounds. (Think of that absurd second ‘u’ in Eke Duuje Ke Liye or the bizarre extra ‘e’ in Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham.) Actors too, have had their names tampered with for luck. The actor Rakesh Roshan, after a couple of underserved flops, trying his hand at being Rakesh Roshan, after a couple of underserved flops, trying his hand at being Rakesh Roshan for a film or two before giving up and finding success behind the camera rather than in front of it.

Nothing in Bollywood is what that seems everything is make belief. Ashok’s imagination is the slave of Abha his first heroine. His first contact with the world of Hindi cinema Abha initiates Ashok into the reality of Hindi Cinema, the lobbing to get roles, the false pretenses, the casting couch are all ingredients of Bollywood life in Judai separation of twin brothers, which has been a very popular theme of almost four decades. Another popular theme is the Zamindar. Abha play a mother to Ashok, who plays the double role one as an inspector, the other as slum hero and the monkey man that gets a monkey to play tricks between the Thakur or landlord played by Pranay, who has been guilty of sending their innocent father to prison and of separating the brothers. The feminine interest in the movies is Mehnaz Elahi, who falls in love with inspector Ashok, and the monkey man Ashok brings them together, after a grand reconciliation of the family and the destructions of the villains. Such movie scripts are described in which are the parallels of Ashok Banjara’s life.
Ashok Banjara who personifies a new kind of hero and lover, the good bad hero, reflects the physiological changes in a vast number of people who are located in a half-way house in the transitional sector. The good bad hero is neither overtly emotional like Manju nor boyish phallic like the Krishna lovers, he is very much Dishum Dishum hero dished up with dollops of sentimentality. The Hindu movie churn a velange of comedy and tear jurkar situation, the emotional emphasis for the viewers is so complete that one feels cleansed the widowed mother making carrot halwa and offering tea is stereo type inspector Ashok comes home to his widowed mother. Thus it reflects that a good bad feature of the hero can be directly correlated with the major physiological difficulties experienced by the transactional sector during the course of modernization of Bollywood Movies. Cinema carries us of our feet by the power of its sensuous images and melody is as well as provoking sound for only those who have highly developed aesthetic sensibilities and philosophical depth, can understand and appreciate literature. Cinema can be enjoyed by all and sundry, irrespective of their level of literacy. Thus literature remains by and large an elitist form of art within reach and comprehension of highly literate alone. While cinema is a truly democratic form of art that reach out to the least literate and even the poorest that is not to say that cinema does not require high level of aesthetic literacy, but popular cinema is so direct and gross in its message making skills that even the dumbest of them all would not miss the point of the visual stunning language of entertainment. More over films is general ask the viewers to stairs at the world as though a naked body cinema allows the viewer’s not only to taste the forbidden fruit, but also to reach the unreachable.

The novel Shows Business ends with voice, among them Ashwin is Tharoor’s voice a mouth piece, being a deep Hindi a hard. Tharoor’s word even in The Great Indian Novel end up in dharma all slain and done according to dharma saves humanity for foreign reader. This book is a study of Bollywood and the Hindi films which are the mirrors of Indian culture and traditions.
Concerning his novel *Show Business* it seems that Tharoor is looking for a new creative metaphor to explore aspects of the Indian condition. He considers films to be the primary vehicles for Indian. The novel explores the Bombay movie industry. Tharoor explains the culture of this industry as contemporary myths invented by popular Hindi cinema. He uses this myth to portray his perspectives of the diversity contained within India. Thus a weekly satirical tail of hits and misses in the worlds of politics and cinema engaging presented through montage of shooting scripts, narrative and monologues, he invests a fictional that is metaphor for deeper concern.

Ashok Banjara, lying seriously injured in hospital, listens to the "hate and frustration and regret of a motley cast of characters" (SB-303) from his life. He can hear them, see them but he cannot speak, respond or react. His mind is the only part of him that "Kalki's act of destruction has left untouched." (SB-303) his mind is "huge, cavernous and full of shadows and empty spaces, airless and vast, a prison for pain." (SB-303) this pain is not merely physical. It is a mind which "does not sleep." (SB-303) the mind is a prison in which Ashok relives his life as a politician and as an actor, and watches some of his own films. It is a mind which is filled with the voices of the visitors.

Shashi Tharoor builds up the theme of *Show Business* through the reel that runs in Ashok Banjara's mind and the voices of trial which he hears. The novel *Show Business* treats show business at two levels, the political and the reel level. Contradictory worlds are presented through the two levels. At the political level a chaotic, complex democracy emerges and at the reel, level a highly fantastic, exaggerated India emerges. The role of films in a country like India is pure entertainment, a means of mass escapism. These are the questions that the novel tends to raise. The answers to these questions become explicit once both when the worlds are explored. The Technicolor fun inside Ashok's mind, introduces him as a nervous, embarrassed, and nondescript hero.
Shooting for Musafir his first film, cast as a romantic hero, he attempts to perform the ridiculous role of chasing the heroine, an ageing actress, who runs, ducks, dances and nimbly evades his lunge; blinks and picks up the wet pallau of her soaked sari and covers half her face in "practiced coyness." (SB-34) The scene is shot a number of times, unsuccessfully, as he dances like a "paraplegic" (SB-4) to the utter frustration and wrath of the director. His own embarrassment mounts with the sense of the ridiculousness of the role. The shooting for the day ends with the hero's discovery that the famous bosom of the heroine, which had once caused a "celebrated traffic jam" (SB-7) was that of "a ninety-year-old" (SB-7) this satirically exposes the false celluloid world of Bollywood.

*Godambo,* an action-packed thriller presents a world even more fantastic and imaginary than the dungeons and isolated castles haunted by witches in fairy tales. The dark castle of fairy tales is replaced by a resplendent, gaudy, brightly "cavernous hail" (SB-23) of *Godambo*. The villain Gold black and red stand out in jarring contrast. “The massive pillars, eerily lit in red and gold" (SB-23) are guarded by "black-clad commandos" and each commando has a badge with 'Black Cheetah' embroidered in gold thread. The huge pool in the center of the hall is "flanked by ornamental fountains, its waters also illuminated in red and gold."(SB-23) At the press of a button the floor opens up, to reveal hungry sharks, moving dangerously in the pool. A close-up of a hapless victim can be seen on a large screen with the press of another button, the concealed buttons are on the "jeweled throne" (SB-23) of the villain, who is also "attired in black, red and gold" (SB-23) holding a live baby cheetah on his lap. The eerie silence is broken by the rising tempo of music, each note indicating danger. A world certainly far removed from reality. The camera focuses on family scenes and romantic scenes, with Ashok, the CID Inspector, as the affectionate son, brother and lover. The scenes are complete with songs, dances and adoring, loving glances. The camera shifts to the nightclub whose "dazzling mosaic of multi- coloured minors" (SB-28) and "rainbow colours" (SB-28) make it appear as gaudy as Godambo's den.
The rolling drums sound dangerously as the dancer is introduced. Secret doors and passages open up in Godambo's den, as the fight between the forces of good and evil begins. "Celluloid policemen" (SB-47) and black commandos fire indiscriminately, with unearthly weapons.

Shashi Tharoor's *Show Business* fight ends with the spectacular and dramatic drop of Godambo and his pet into the sea, from evil Godambo, the camera moves on to the evil "feudal Thakur" (SB-85) in Judai. The scene shifts from the chandeliered hall with its mosaic floor, to the birth of twins, the conspiracy to put them to death, their safe escape by being placed in two baskets, with talisman around their podgy wrists, for future recognition and re-union; the servant running with one basket, the other floating down the river, while the water turns red with the injured mother's blood, and sound of the horses' hooves, fade as the "director's name fades from the screen," (SB-88) and the camera shifts to a pavement on Inspector performing prison scenes and finally the arrest of the Thakur once again the triumph of good over evil puts an end to the story. All along, the sound track is dramatic, powerful, suspenseful and plaintive as the scene demands.

The original and revised versions of *Dil Ek Quila* are screened. In the original version the camera "pans across assure sky, Verdi an slopes, Technicolor flowers" (SB-148) and lingers on the poor heroine running, laughing in a gay mood across the screen to the "strains of an electric mandolin," (SB-148) while Ashok pursues. He holds her in an embrace and they both roll down the hill. The camera focuses on a domestic scene:

Ashok's announcement of his love for Mehnaz, the father's consternation and the mother's plea to meet the girl leads 10 the next scene: an auditorium. The girl dances and sings with loving glances at Ashok. The "rage and outrage" (ISO) of Ashok's father disappears when the scheming, deceiving scene is quickly followed by Ashok's marriage to Abha- A couple of domestic scenes follow; Ashok is shown in the company of his "dutiful wife and beautiful children." (SB-154) In the meantime Mehnaz rises in fame and Ashok unaware of others
success in learning music from a maestro. An accidental meeting between the two flares up the old relationship and follows its success. The early happy dramatic life turn into one of pain and sorrow with the unhappy wife pleading the hero to give up Mehnaz. Ashok miserably expresses his inability to do so. The inevitable takes place, Abha pleads Mehnaz. This meeting quickly leads to the climactic scene. During the performance Mehnaz is shot dead. Ashok, Abha and the villain mourn her death.

The revised version introduces most of the scenes again. The romance is between the poor hero and the rich heroine. The Kashmir scene is repeated, followed by songs in the palm grove, complete with their joyous expressions. The beach scene follows. The running, chasing and embracing culminates in their wedding. The poor hero continues to sing while the beloved of the original script dances to his songs. A domestic scene shows Maya, the wife learning to sing from a maestro. She is launched as a singer. She "goes from success to success in a series of quick cuts." (175) Ashok's career in the meantime shows a downward curve. He performs in "nondescript theatres before dwindling crowds, his name set in increasingly smaller print in shabby notices," (175) and in a state of depression lie goes to his stage partner for solace and comfort. His wife decides to give up her career for the happiness and peace of her home. The climactic scene: Ashok is shot by the villain, but fortunately escapes death. At a performance lie announces his wife as his new stage partner.

In statics Ashok is a car mechanic, who through quick camera meets the heroine and her evil, powerful, politician father, who has ordered the demolition of huts in the slum area where he lives. The camera lingers on the slum-dwellers' march to the palatial house of the politician and soon shifts to the bull dozer scene. The "monsters of destruction and development" (234) come to a screeching halt before the human barrier. The scene shifts to the struggle for political power between the forces of evil and good. The election campaign has striking improbable scenes. The powerful politician has a fleet of cars "loudspeaker equipped," (235) while the
righteous hero "stands on Ashwin's shoulder at street-corners, making his passionate entreaties without the benefit of a microphone." (235) His supporters move about with "palm folded sincerity" (235) while the opponent addresses huge gatherings, where his "millions distribute rupee notes to the trucked in participants." (234) His "glossy posters and gigantic hoardings" (235) stand in contrast to Ashok's symbol of a 'spanner' scrawled with charcoal by street urchins on each and every wall available, Ashok's "printed leaflets and brochures are scattered on the streets and sold by biekriwullahs to be made into peanut packets for the street vendors" (235) and street plays are performed by supporters to expose the "prevalent evils, of corruption and Mack-marketing." (235) In the climactic scene; the camera moves swiftly from the political debate to the abduction scene and then lingers on the impatient crowd and dance scene to shift to the treed Ashok reaching the scene in an auto rickshaw. In final scene: "a kurta-clad Ashok, newly elected is garlanded in triumph," (242) The camera fingers as the scene takes a long shot of the palm-folded Ashok, the applauding crowd and the poster of Ashok's election symbol. The strains of the national anthem bring the film to an end.

The reel election campaign turns into a real one. By fielding Ashok Banjara, the superstar and heartthrob of millions of Indians into the political arena, Shashi Tharoor captures the psyche of an entire nation. The satirical vein is clearly evident when Cyrus broaches the subject tries to motivate Ashok to enter politics:

'Opportunity-wise, I mean, look at these Southey guys, MGR, NTR, you know.
Big-time Tamil, Telugu movie stars, and when they entered politics they were, like, unstoppable everywhere their movie played. Now you, man, your movies play everywhere. You're not a regional actor, like. Only real handicap's your initials. ... AB lacks something, ya know? . . . Call yourself ABR and you could
be bloody Prime Minister one day, big guy? (200) Ashok, thinks that he would
look "awful in dark glasses and a Gandhi cap."(SB-200)

The satire continues into the circumstances that turn Ashok into a politician. At a silver jubilee film function, he is declared the "'most popular man in India," and someone shouts "Ashokji for Parliament!" and the crowd rakes up the "'cry in a chant," which only subsides when Ashok with "folded hands" promises to "consider their demand." (201) startlingly the news is "all over the papers the next day: 'Banjara Thinking of Joining Politics." (201) He receives a call from a Congress bigwig- The Prime Minister wishes to meet him. His political entry is sudden and unplanned. Ashok who could never imagine himself "squatting with the slum-dwellers in a dharma against their proposed eviction or leading clamorous demonstrations against petrol prices" (201) finds himself contesting an election. Ashok contests from his father's constituency. A constituency which his father and younger brother had sincerely nurtured for years. The father is disheartened that his younger son should be overlooked by the party. Ironically, the party ignores a sincere political worker for a popular film Star.

The opposition fields a defector from the Congress, Pandit Sugriva Sharma. He is a learned man but unscrupulous. He is predictably like "ablest defender" (202) of the "slum-dwellers. Untouchables, Muslims and the 'left,'" (202) The Congress has held this particular seat since Independence and its loss could be "fatal for the party" (202) and "threaten the government nationally." (202) Ashok Banjara is the ideal candidate who can help the party win the seat. Through sheer force of satire, Shashi Tharoor, ridicules the reasons for the choice of Ashok Banjara "popular, especially, among the underprivileged, whose fantasies he embodies; potentially as effective a campaigner as the experienced Pandit, and demonstrably a better speaker, and as a bonus, heir to the family's long connection to the constituency," (202)

The real election campaign is totally different from the reel one. Ashok Banjara trudges for miles through the countryside in chappals. A part of his "nationalist attire" (206) and his
"fed take a pounding from the hard. Unrelenting soil. From the slushy muck of the fields, from the grimy dust in the streets," (206) He finds himself engaged in the "ritual of campaigning, talking, questioning, ducking, into thatched huts, sitting on charpoys with hookah puffing fanners, standing on the back of the flatbed Tempo to harangue the bazaar: through a megaphone" (206) a "hectic punishing schedule." (206) the election campaign includes "a strategy session" (207) which Ashok's "uninitiated mind" (207) finds utterly confusing. The "consensus of the professionals" (207) on the Brahmin factor, the minority factor, the poverty factor, the "Madurai effect" (208) and the "endless cups of over-sugared tea" (207) completes the election scenario.

Ashok wins the election. To his utter shock and disbelief, he is not considered for a ministerial post. His name does not figure even in the list of the Deputy Ministers. He finds himself "languishing in the back rows of, The Lok Sabha." (259) He watches the Parliament in action. Once again, Shashi Tharoor's force of satire is evident when, he throws up the spectacle of Parliament at work through the protagonist.

Ashok is a good orator and he raises his hand to get a chance to speak. He is, however, ignored and senior representatives get turns to speak before him and by the "time the queue than, the debate is over." (260) if he raises his voice, he is "shouted down." (260) those who express their views are "semi-educated morons" and subjects which are not debated turn into "long ministerial monologues." (260) at the end of the speech, slumbering MPs are roused to vote for the government. At this juncture the Opposition usually protests making-up in "volubility what they lack in numbers," (260) Added to this are the "noisy walkouts" (260) by the opposition. It is a "symbolic gesture of protest" (261) as they are "numerically powerless" (260) to overthrow a government bill, Ironically this only takes place "after the exciting MPs have signed the attendance register that ensures their daily fee," (261) The quality of debate does not really matter in a democracy, as a bill can be passed by the issue of a whip. Democracy
is the "irrefutable logic of numbers." (261) the satirical note continues as Shashi Tharoor captures some of the scenes in the "teak paneled sanctum of national legislation," (261) some of the MPs "snore sonorously, undisturbed in the innocence of their ignorance. Others are awake, but equally immune to contamination by ideas." (261)

As an MP, Ashok attends endless diplomatic receptions, dinners, weddings and "spiritless lunches of spiritual books the total cocktails hosted by alcoholic party-men ... to a new government contact", is to attend the Parliament and all the functions, Ashok lives in Delhi while his family lives in Bombay (36 Essays on New Literatures bay). The satire mounts as this separation is considered as a sacrifice for a "national cause." (264) He is the member of a Consultative Committee which never meets. The rest of the MPs scramble over foreign trips to "'inspect the use of Hindi - in India's diplomatic missions abroad," (261) Ashok Banjara is bored. Cyrus tries to help Ashok overcome this state of ennui, by suggesting that he could perhaps distribute free raincoats (like MGR did, in a similar state of mind) or, umbrellas with his picture or the Party's symbol on them. The idea fails for two reasons: Ashok's constituency is facing severe drought and the inability of finding a funding agency. A bored MP has no national cause to fight for. Through Cyrus' suggestions. Shashi Tharoor reduces Indian democracy to a state of mockery.

Ashok escapes from this state of boredom when he is trapped into permitting the Party to deposit its funds into ill's private Swiss account. The party fund is built-up through commissions from deals struck with foreign businessmen in national interest and "unaccounted donations." (272) an "enterprising newspaper" (274) has evidence of the transaction. Documents are circulated in Parliament, Ashok's private account is "unearthed." (274) Papers cover, extensively, his wife's visits abroad, and a dossier is built up on his visits to Geneva. His account is frozen. MPs. avoid him, the PM denies meeting him after the elections and the voters deny seeing him after the elections. Ashok is a broken man. From a superstar he has been
disgracefully reduced to the status of a real villain, though nothing could be proved against him. In a state of disgust he quits the party. He could never understand why he was framed, Ashwin explains to him: "That was done with the political equivalent of reflectors, playback dubbing. That was all show business." (276)

Shashi Tharoor projects his views regarding the guff between reel India and real India, through Kulbhushan, Ashwin and Pranay. These three characters express similar views though they have different experiences in life. Kulbhushan is a senior politician with vast political experience dating from pre Independence days. His son, Ashwin belongs to the younger generation of sincere political workers. Pranay, an actor, who worked his way up still identifies himself with the "under class" (SB-294).

Kulbhushan, Ashok Banjara's father, entered politics during the Quit India Movement. He has been "functioning in lie real India" (117) for years. To him celluloid India bears no relation to real India. Kulbhushan points out that India is "periodically torn apart in outbursts of communal and sectarian violence" (117) but films generally do not treat this theme. It is only treated in terms of "'promoting national integration' (117) to extract a lax-waiver from the government. Further, Kulbhushan points out that caste and class distinctions are undeniable alive and important in real India, in fact. "A man's surname alone can frequently" (117) indicate his political affiliations. In films, caste and class distinctions are generally ignored. Pranay, in fact to pines that 'Romantic love' (255) is used to "cast a veil over the classic contradictions inherent in these situations, it is an exploitative device to blur the reality of class struggle by promoting an illusion of class mobility." (255) the marriage between the poor hero and the landlord's daughter or vice versa is actually “capitalist camouflage” (255). Ashwin also points out that "rich girl-poor boy fantasies the Hindi films churn out fly in the face of every single class, caste and social consideration of real India." (248) in real life a rich girl will not even look
at a poor boy "let alone sing duels with him." (248) To Kulbhushan poverty in India "means distended bellies and eyes without hope." (117) whereas, the poor in films "change their costumes for each verse of their songs" (117) which is much distorted picture of the poor in India. In Kulbhushan's India "evil pervades an entire social and economic system" (117) whereas, in films, evil is personalized in a “wicked Zamindar cruel smuggler” (117) or embodied in a wicked politician, as in Mechanic. ‘Pranay reiterates the same’ view when he remarks that evil is 'personalized in the villain, rather than in the system which makes victims' (254) and ironically, Kulbhushan points out, it is the villain, the smuggler of real India who helps the common man fight the capitalist. The Indian industrialist produces inferior goods "without the fear of foreign competition" (117) and protects his own interests by do liberally to the various political parties. The ironies don't end here. The anti-national smuggler, is the most “avidly sought after for campaign contributions" (118) and votes. The political panics in reality "get support from both the beneficiaries and the violators." (118) Mechanic was a disastrous failure. Even the twenty-five paise audience (which applaud Ashok's movies throughout (his novel), fail to appreciate it. Pranay and Ashok are both cast in very unconvincing roles. They both enact roles which go against that of a real politician. Kulbhusan points out:

A real-life Pranay would never support slum demolitions . . . , In fact the slums exist because of the Pranays who give them political projection by making populist speeches about squatter's rights, and who thereby assure themselves both the voles of the grateful slum-dwellers and the financial support of the Mafia dons who really run the slums, and collect the extortionate rents for a few square feet of public property. (SB-247)

Ashok's clean image as a politician is also improbable. Ironically, the proletariat (the twenty-five paise audience) prefers the image of a real Pranay who even though evil protects their interests. Kulbhusan is angry that films make no attempts to change or challenge the
existing corrupt system. In fact Pranay Finds every hero "counter revolutionary," (254) they “dissipate the revolutionary energies of the masses" (254) and the proletariat's innate desire to "overthrow injustice is vicariously fulfilled in the hero's defeat of the straw villain." (254) thereby, making the masses forgets the injustice prevalent in the society. They forget that the "ownership and control of the means of production remain unchanged." (254)

The films fail to project a real India or grapple with its real issues. This art media fails to stir and inflame the minds of the people to challenge a corrupt system. The films project a "make-believe India that has never existed and can never exist." (118) Politicians too, have failed to change the corrupt system. In fact they have helped to build the corrupt system. The politician is also an actor. He also plays a role in a "world of make believe," (118) pretending that his principles will bring about change. Further, "politicians make speeches in which they pretend that their actions and positions are motivated by policy, principle, ideology, the interests of their constituents, and their vision of India" (120) and they pretend that they win elections and receive money on these grounds. In a satirical vein, Kulbhusan Says, "Issues and values determine little of their actual actions, and less of the support they really get: they win on caste calculations, they get money for subverting laws. They switch parties and abandon platforms at the dangling of a lucrative post or a ministerial berth." (120)

The Indian proletariat is ineffective, not only because the hero fulfils their dreams, but also because he is highly emotional and fickle-minded. The masses fail to support Ashok Banjara at the time of his political downfall. Ironically, the same proletariat seems to forget his political career, and remembers him once again as a hero, when he meets with the accident. The rickshawallah "epitome of the common man," (250) who is one of the many who have poured into Bombay to pray and wait anxiously for Ashok's recovery, raises him to the status of "avatar of God." as one who had upheld the "Moral order of the Universe," (255) Once again, Ashok
has become the most popular man in the country, and as Ashwin feels, the masses could perhaps make him a political leader if he survived the accident.

Again, Shashi Tharoor maintains the satirical note when a parallel is drawn between MGR and Ashok. In 1967, when MGR was hospitalized for a serious bullet wound, the whole of Tamil Nadu came to a halt. He fought his elections from a hospital bed and won "by the largest majority in the electoral history of the state." (251) He remained the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu for a decade and "continued to rule the state from a hospital bed." (251) Once again, when he was severely crippled by a stroke and he couldn't speak, a recorded tape of one of his utterances was played and for the first time India had a "played-back politician." (251) Ashok's accident, could perhaps be his rebirth as a politician. There is massive public support for him- Prayers are being held for his recovery throughout the country.

The emotionally charged proletariats wait for their God to rise. This unfortunately is one of the greatest tragedies of Indian. Essays on New Literatures Democracy the films, far removed from reality, fail to rouse the masses, who are trapped in their own emotional state. Shashi Tharoor has taken up the challenge to stir the minds of the Indian masses through this novel. Perhaps this art form will rouse feelings and the Indian would do something for their country in which they live. He has tried cinema as a new metaphor to explore different aspects of a Indian condition. In addition, it reflects the diversity of pluralist society as well as the pleasures, pains, procrastinations and predicaments of the majority of Indian people.