Discourses of confusion, contradictions and tensions constitute the heroes of Indian cinema. Heroes of Indian cinema basically symbolise the idea of nationhood through frames, which take the codes of nation and culture beyond geographical contours. More than other mediums of culture, cinema, through the modalities of geography, culture and historicity of time, becomes iconic of the concept of nation. Popular Indian movies make use of “images of the nation-state through the visual shorthand of landscape, maps, particularities of dress and utterances” (Chakravarty, 14). In the select MIP films, interconnections of literature and geography provide a different face to history.

Just like that, history, in convergence with literature and geography, reconstructs the perceptions of the East on the West and vice versa. Through spatial and climatic reflections, we can see the British perceptions of the nation, regarding climate, geography, culture, etc. The modalities of British life are reflected in the elements of the Victorian era in the costumes, home decor and way of thinking too. The uniform architectural patterns of the Victorian bungalows, furniture, and the costumes of the owners and those of their Indian servants (in white dress) remind the viewers of the race and distinct class divisions of the colonial period. They clearly portray the elements of British Raj. The Raj’s contemptuous attitude towards the ‘barbarous’ and ‘uncouth’ culture of the colonised helped the British to keep the illusion of superiority in the colonial era. The popular historian and freelance writer Charles Allen considers the superiority complex of every chhota sahib’s initial years in India, “I grew up in the bright sunshine, I grew up with tremendous space, I grew up with the animals, I grew up with excitement, I grew up with believing that white people were superior” (Allen, 21).
This chapter deals with the representation of the heroes of the select films as possessing the quintessential characteristics of the spatial and geographical characteristic of India. These elements are portrayed through the Raj nostalgia of the colonisers in the age of decolonisation. Raj nostalgia, a longing for the past British reign, exemplifies the superior notions of culture and the anxieties of confronting an alien ‘other’ of the British. In this context we can consider the words of Allen, which cue the important feature of the Raj as “learning by being put on a job and requested to get on with it... (because) one had an initiative at a young age which one could never have got in England” (77). The westerner’s way of life and administration made them authoritative and regimented, and it becomes their moral obligation or “burden” to civilize the uncouth people who are colonised.

This chapter focuses on the personal experiences of the Westerns and Indians in pre and post-Independent India in *The Householder, Shakespeare Wallah, Bombay Talkie* and *Heat and Dust*. Here, Prem, the melancholic protagonist of *The Householder* reflects his disillusionment in his displacement, as he stays in a rented home in a city. Through *Shakespeare Wallah* we get a taste of the Raj nostalgia of the travelling troupe. The film star Vikram’s career, hobby and life style become mouthpieces of the upcoming Bombay film industry, in *Bombay Talkie*. And, finally, *Heat and Dust* gives a concrete picture of Indian geography and the Western perception and confrontation of it through the Nawab’s trips and their consequences (1920s), further elaborated through Inder Lal (1980s).

While analyzing the English language films set in British Raj from 1930s – 1980s, (Appendix B), we can understand that the roles of Indian characters were played by Englishmen; like Douglass Dumbrille (Canada) as Muhammad Khan in *The Lives of the Bengal Lancer* (1935), Henry Gordon (US) as Surat Khan and J. Carrol Naish (US) as Puran Singh in *Charge of the Light Brigade* (1936) and Oliver Reed (England) as Ali Khan in *The Brigand of Khandahar* (1965). But in the select movies Shashi Kapoor, the dazzling hero of Hindi film industry, performs various heroes of the select movies, as a college lecturer, play boy, chocolate hero and a Nawab.
4.1. *The Melancholic Householder*

*The Householder* can be considered as a movie revolving around the melancholy of the hero. This is symbolic of his displacement from his native place, for he is a migrant to a city for the sake of a job. The displacement of rural migrants and their maladjustment with the rapidly industrializing urban spaces as a result of Independence gave way to ‘dissatisfaction with the culture of the present’ (Hutcheon, 1998). This had been a common theme among popular Hindi movies of that time. This displacement, which arises from nostalgia can be read with the characters’ proclivity to live in the memories of the past, experienced or imagined.

This displacement is manifest in many ways in the movie. In *The Householder*, the modes of travel became pointers to Indian grappling and conjunction with tradition and modernity. The modes of travel in the movie depict India of the 1960s. In the initial shots of the movie, the village girl Indu expresses her excitement over travel in a bus. This movie also provides a detailed geographical portrayal of India, by documenting the rocky, dusty cities and villages (Fig. 4.1). Along with the sordid delineation of the landscape, a glimpse of Indu’s broken sandals gives us an example of the unfriendly pathways of the city. The movie also provides gendered notions and commentaries on the landscape through Prem and Indu. While Prem considers the place as ‘beautiful and peaceful’ (seems ironic), Indu calls it ‘dull’. While Prem and Indu go for a wedding, we are shown a crowd of horse carts and bicycles with few motor vehicles, which are the main means of travel inside the city.
Fig. 4.1 The wedding scene of *The Householder*, reminds of E. M. Forster’s India.

In the background of these vehicles, we can see many rocky, devastated buildings which remind us of an ancient desolate past (Fig. 4.2). The vehicles on roads provide life in the scenes of Delhi.

Fig. 4.2 India of the 1960s, remnants of the past in the background, while bus symbolizes modernity.
The difficulty in travel and logistics in the 60s is again unraveled through Prem’s colleague, Mr. Sohanlal. He cycles a long distance from Mehrauli to Delhi, and shows the scarcity of motor vehicles in the place. The movie interestingly showcases India’s logistical transition from road transport to railways. We can see similar concerns voiced in many contemporary literary works, like, *The Train to Pakistan* (1956), *The Guide* (1958), etc, and interestingly these novels were later adapted as movies. Even before these works were adapted into movies, we can see the slow logistic transition of India clearly etched in the select film. Trains were the prominent mode of travel and the only means to go long distances during that period. It is illustrated and elaborated through Prem’s mother’s travels to and from her home. Interestingly, Indu’s reminiscences of a trip in a crowded train adds one more leaf to the discourse on travel. This is later developed in the final train trip of Prem’s mother to his sister’s home. Along with the tea supplier, the crowded station brings the bizarre picture of Indian railway stations.

In addition to the social and emotional themes of India and its hero, Ivory has crafted the film with some historical underpinnings. Histories of intrusion have enriched the indigenous history of India through centuries. Each and every documented history can be considered as the result of ‘condensation, displacement, symbolization, and qualification exactly like those used in the production of the filmed representation’ (White, 1988). Ivory’s irresistible quest towards exploring Indian history and culture is documented in many of his films and documentaries like *The Sword and the Flute* (1959), *The Delhi Way* (1964) and *Heat and Dust* (1983). Here, “Indian and other non-European histories” function “as parallel narratives to the West’s history, with their own logic and rhythm” (Khilnani, 22). In *The Householder* too, Ivory frames the history of Nehruvian India, proliferating the narratives of Mughal history and British invasion in the background through the history classes of Prof. Chaddha.

Through the hero, Prem, Ivory presents the evolution of a young India, among confusions, anxieties and disturbances. Another stock character Prof. Chaddha symbolizes the Mughal reign. With respect to the teaching style, discipline of students and the topic of discussion, Prof. Chaddha’s class undervalues the Hindi class of Prem. While the former discusses the glorious history of the nation under the Mughal
emperors- Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan, etc. the latter puts an emphasis on the strong Sanskrit tradition of Hindi - ‘Tatsam words’. 54 Interestingly, Prem’s undisciplined students make him look inferior to both Mr. Khanna, the Principal and Prof. Chaddha. Prof. Chaddha is harsh to exert his authority and superiority over Prem, saying “this is how a college should be conducted!”

Prof. Chaddha’s thrust is mainly on the Mughal dynasty, and he is either unmindful of or ignorant about ancient Indian history, before the Mughals. This is in contrast with the Hindi class, a search for the roots of Hindi vocabulary. Prof. Chaddha’s lectures on the two hundred years of British Raj and the imperialistic plans, envisaged to obliterate the indigenous cultures through English, critique the antique past of India. Mr. Chaddha reminds Prem that the first duty of a teacher is to impose discipline and silence. 55 Thus, he becomes the mouthpiece of the colonial foreign powers that controlled the ingenuity of Indian culture, nation, and ‘the Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin and more exquisitely refined than either’ (Nehru, 171).

Through the History Professor, Ivory selects, “organizes images, musters arguments, and tells the story of (some part of) art's history” (White, 21-26). Thus it becomes “the conveniently interpreted … interaction between great men and the institutions they created, modified or restored” (Jones, 46). The artistic storytelling makes the students more interested in history than in the national language and their mother tongue. Though Prem teaches the development of language through time, he seems too feeble to inculcate an interest in his students, which Mr. Chaddha achieves through the power of his rhetoric. Thus, the history class symbolizes the oriental discrimination and ‘other’ing of native tongue. Prem’s inability to open his mind towards the Principal is also an example of his incapability to realize himself. He becomes symbolic of the timid India; indecisive and anxious, in front of superior powers.

54 ‘Tatsam words’ are Sanskrit words which are used without any change in Hindi language.
55 “pin drop silence”
4.2. *Shakespeare Wallah*: Resonance of an India of 1960s

*Shakespeare Wallah* is basically a movie of nostalgia. Though it centers on the nostalgia of the Shakespearean troupe, it also carries the remembering and longing for Indian royalty. In this movie, we have a nameless Maharaja, who patronizes the troupe with a delicious banquet before their awesome performance in the palace. He is introduced as repairing his royal motor car engine, with a pipe in his mouth. He seems nostalgic of his experience at the coronation of Queen Elizabeth at Westminster Abbey. He prefers theatre, calling it more ‘enjoyable and instructive’ than banquets and appreciates Shakespeare for his poetry and wisdom and even delivers dialogues from *The Merchant of Venice*. He mentions the present and past political scenario of India (Fig.4.3), for his father used to ride on an elephant to meet people in a silver howdah, encrusted with pearls. That thing is now in the museum and half of his palace is turned into an office.

![Image](image.jpg)

Fig.4.3 The Maharaja seems materialistic than preserving the royal heritage.

In addition to this, we can see his plans to turn his other properties, full of spears and animal heads, into hotels for foreign tourists. With the advent of independence, a new world view is formed and tradition is showcased as commodity which can be marketed. Nostalgia brews throughout and feeling the decadence, Mr. Buckingham quotes
“let us sit upon the ground and tell sad stories of the death of kings” (The Life and Death of Richard the Second, Act III, Scene 2). 56

Trains become symbols, like in The Householder, which highlights the transitional phase of India. While the theatre troupe travels in the train, over the shoulders of the leader of the group, Mr. Buckingham, we can see the deserted and desolate landscape (Fig.4.5), as the train moves.

The train trip also highlights the Indian actors, who are too anglophilic and read British newspapers and literature, like Screen, Lolita (of Vladimir Nobakov) and The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich (William L. Shirer). This is in contrast with the lifeless,

56 Mrs. Buckingham also adds, “How some have been deposed; some slain in war, some haunted by the ghosts they have deposed”
unromantic outside landscape. Interestingly, the boarding home in Simla, where the troupe stay during their performances, reveals the British longing for places which resemble their home. The concept of home reoccurs in many scenes of the movie, as Mrs. Buckingham becomes nostalgic about her past days with her cousins and husband in England and tells Lizzie that ‘the rain is different at home’, unlike the monsoon and advises her that, “everything is different when you belong to a place when it’s yours” (*Shakespeare Wallah*). This oscillation between homeland and hostland of the stock foreign characters reveal their diasporic traumas in Independent India. Their dislocation and collective memory of their homeland create a collective and personal identity, where they have to adapt with the experiences and limitations of their present life. We can also see the elements of mimicking the colonizer’s tongue, when the English housekeeper Beryl talks about an Indian pastor, who talks English with a different accent.

In the course of the movie we can see the damaged car of the theatre troupe on the road. There, we can also observe the deserted lands and mountains of India in the background. The performance of a monkey-charmer with two monkeys near the troupe creates a typical Indian scenario. Since the people are not interested in the monkey plays, the charmer has to travel distances and worse still, the monkeys don not obey him.

![Fig.4.6 The desolate road, where the troupe repair their car, in a sunny day.](image)
This symbolizes the pathetic scenario of the travelling troupe, discarded by the public for the sake of new entertainments. The difficulties of travelling as a troupe in India is illustrated in the same scene and the public are shown to be seeking out new entertainments. The movie can be partly seen as a collection of ‘on the road’ experiences of various characters. Through their experience we also come to know about the developmental problems of a newly formed nation, which is in the repair mode, after the British left. *Shakespeare Wallah* documents the burning sunny days and dark cool nights of India through the travellers. Heat in the day and squawking of some animals in the night, creates a mysterious heart of the primitive in India for the troupe. It is while highlighting the intriguing darkness that Sanju arrives, heroically. In another context, we can see the conversation between Sanju and Lizzie on a misty morning.

![Fig. 4.7 Sanju’s romance with Lizzie, covered by mist.](image)

Their romance is intensified in the dark mist, which covers them for a short time. Thus, the nature in India is portrayed as intensifying the personal experiences of people.

While analyzing the protagonist of *Shakespeare Wallah* with respect to the geographical and historical documentation of India, we can see that Sanju echoes the foreigner’s perception of India, which is charming, mysterious, filled with desire and sexually
intriguing and deceptive. Indian landscapes are often shown as interspersed with misty mornings, afternoons, dark and cool nights, and monsoon rains, etc, in monochrome (Fig.4.8).

![Image](image_url)

Fig. 4.8 The troupe’s travel in a rainy day to Beryl’s boarding home.

The hero’s melancholy, romance, anger, and his mood swings are played up with the subtle changes in nature. Thus, the nature around the hero reflects his romance, angst, struggles with conscience and final reconciliation, as the internal mindscape of the hero is mirrored as rough and rigid and sometimes treacherous and insipid, like the outside nature.

4.3. **Bombay Talkie: A talkie of Bombay City**

While Merchant Ivory Productions’ *The Householder, Shakespeare Wallah* and *Heat and Dust* picturize the protagonists Prem, Sanju and the Nawab as reflections of the geographical peculiarities of India, *Bombay Talkie* tells us about the Bombay film world, more than its urban sociology. *Bombay Talkie* reminds the audience of E.M. Forster in many aspects, as the movie portrays many scenes of Indian roads, caves, buildings, etc, which are meant to appeal to the civilized West. Just like E.M. Forster’s Marabar caves in *A Passage to India* (1984), in *Bombay Talkie* too we have a cave scene with beautiful sculptures carved inside, where Vikram and Lucia play the ‘consenting adults’ (Fig. 4.9). It portrays the complicated triangular relationship of Vikram, Lucia and Hari. In that scene we can see the first verbal fight between Sanju
and Lucia. Their commentaries on ‘dirty sex book’ and the sick ‘sing sang movie’ illustrate the East’s perception of Western art and vice versa.

Fig. 4.9 Romance of Vikram and Lucia, in his shooting location (in an ancient cave).

Complementary to this, the wrestling scenes of the movie open up another facet of Indian culture of the 1970s, where Vikram courts Lucia. While he is up to it, Hari gets drunk and acts like a jealous lover by roughing up a man who criticizes Lucia as a “white scorpion” (Bombay Talkie). Wrestling itself is relevant with respect to the plot of Bombay Talkie. Wrestling, a synthesis of both Persian and Indian tradition (Alter, 1992), becomes symbolic of the internal conflict between Hari and Vikram with respect to their relationship with Lucia. Wrestling as a sport gives much importance to the exhibition of physical body and its power to conquer the other. As a result, it becomes a text that reveals the cultural background of a society, where a synthesis of tradition and modernity occurs. Wrestling, “an exhibition of suffering… with all the amplification of tragic mask” (Barthes, 19), provides a spectacle of both defeat and justice. By the supple maneuvering of the body, the wrestler entertains the spectators. Thus, suffering of the ‘other’ becomes a mode of sadistic entertainment for the audience. The wrestler’s physique becomes the embodiment of ‘a basic sign… (which constitutes) actions, his treacheries, cruelties, and acts of cowardice’ (Barthes, 17-19). Here, the wrestling

match is also symbolic of Indian masculinity, through the display of the raw energy and brutality of bodies. The gaze of the audience on the physique and the performance of the wrestler gives a new meaning to the art. The upper class audience enjoys the clash of physical bodies, which satisfies its desire to identify with the winner, who gains power over the fallen. According to Jhabvala (in her interview with Pym), ‘Bombay Talkie was chiefly fashioned not round the idea for a plot but from a string of favourite images: a wrestling match; restaurant life; a desire to put on to the screen the Bombay film star’s fantastic bedrooms’ (Pym, 47). Actions which the wrestlers go through are more important than the final result of it, for wrestling gives importance to the visual over the cognitive aspects. Just like the spectators of wrestling (Fig.4.10), the moviegoers watch the fight between Vikram and Hari, as they go through different phases of their mind to achieve Lucia.

![Fig.4.10 The upper-class audience of wrestling, which include Lucia and Vikram too.](image)

Along with this physical entertainment, we can trace modern transport systems of the 70s, like motor cars and buses in this movie. The luxurious houses of both Vikram and Anjana replicate the wealthy life style of film actors. It indicates the superfluousness of Vikram’s and Anjana’s personalities. Their well-furnished rooms stand in contrast with the average lifestyle of the screenwriter, Hari. Vikram, the protagonist seems bankrupt in his moral dealings, unlike Hari, who is dedicated to both his work and to his love.

58 In wrestling, audience are not more concerned with “what it thinks but what it sees” (Barthes, 15).
Hari’s room and its setting, the lack of enough furniture, with lots of books and papers on table and a shelf of books, balanced with bricks in between create a pathetic picture of his life (Fig. 4.11). The hero Vikram becomes a personification of the cosmopolitan life of Bombay city, unlike the virtuous rural life. These contradictions are played out throughout the Merchant Ivory films on India.

Fig.4.11 Hari’s simple Indian room, shelf arranged with bricks!

4.4. The Heat and Dust of India

Among the films of analysis, Heat and Dust is significant with regard to the depiction of India through the persisting characters of ‘heat’ and ‘dust’. The movie was released at a time when the West was still curious about India and its geographical, historical and climatic terrain. Through the personal experiences of the ‘panoramic travelling’ of the female protagonists Olivia and Anne, the audience gets a clear picture of India of the 1920s in Heat and Dust.

Ivory has made the 1920s sequences “more glamorous, unusual, romantic” than the “modern, negative conception of the country that Westerners, and especially timid Americans, have” (Long, 111). The palace of the 1920s withdraws into silence and dust in the 80s. The entire lighting in the movie exaggerates decadence and degeneration, as


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the camera reveals the dim walls of the palace, plain tables, printed curtains, paintings on the wall, covered hanging lamps, dusty furniture, royal chairs, etc, which are portrayed as remnants of a glorious past. Thus, the movie throws light on the dynamic yet decedent nature of India from the 1920s to the 80s through various chromatic narratives.

The movie documents the nostalgia of the British people in India through the stock character Mrs. Saunders. She lost her child in India and longs for her motherland, “Everyday I tell Willy, let’s go home. I know I can’t have my baby back, but let’s go…” (Heat and Dust). But her husband feels that it is the heat outside that makes her nervous, “That’s the worst season for it, that’s when the heat’s starting. As soon as we get her off to Simla, she’ll be as right as rain…” (Heat and Dust). In addition to this, Douglas also advises Olivia to take a vacation in Simla, in order to get away from the heat and dust, like other white women, “You’ve no idea how hot it gets. It can drive you mad, you’ll be irritable. We’ll quarrel over every little thing” (Heat and Dust). The heat has a strange nature, which makes people irritable, mad and sexually driven (Fig. 4.12). There is a common English belief that, “No English woman is supposed to stand this weather” (Heat and Dust). Douglas’ descriptions of the journey picturize the beauty of India, “… the journey up to the mountains is another four hours, but, what a journey. You’ll love it. The scenery, not to mention the changing climate” (Heat and Dust).

Fig.4.12 Douglas warns Olivia of the scary summer days in India.
Though Olivia tries to manage the heat, in a couple of scenes we can see the wiping her hands and sipping water. In the film, we can also see how colours and setting intensify the heat, like the red colored champa flowers in the vase, along with the opened windows (Fig.4.13).

Fig.4.13 Olivia’s struggles to overcome Indian heat.

Olivia’s travels with the Nawab kindle her interest in India. Their trips to barren and deserted mountains (Fig. 4.14) are filled with the presence of gentle breeze and the pilgrim place of Baba Firdaus.

Fig.4.14 Olivia’s trip with the Nawab through barren landscape.
There we can see the water pitcher and the neem leaves kept for washing hands, and the leafless trees and the white clouds that accentuate the summer of India. The Nawab compares Harry with Olivia, as she can bear the climate better than him, and calls Harry an ‘improper Englishman’, as he complain about the ‘goddamn climate’ of India. In one of their private trips Olivia and Nawab confront the dacoits who maintain a secret liaison with the Nawab. At times, the wild, uninhabited landscape develops agoraphobia in Olivia too. Though she is scared, she feels safe and happy with the Nawab.

In many scenes of the 1920s, we can see the reflection of heat in that rocky place, under the blue sky, where the people are crowded under the shadows of a tree (Fig. 4.15).

Fig.4.15 Douglas’ official meeting with the villagers regarding their problems with the Nawab.

Through the visual metaphors, the hostile terrains of India are etched strongly. The crowds also sweat and think helter-skelter in the sweltering weather. The film interconnects the political clashes within India and how weather corroborates in a hostile manner and further accentuates the divide. Douglas illustrates a haunting incident about the quarrelling of two women over a bucket of water, “… in this heat before you know where you are, you have a full-scale riot on your hands and then there’s no holding anyone” (Heat and Dust), and it ends in acid throwing. The heat is also a trigger to riots. The riot, which was masterminded by the Nawab, in front of the Satipur jail that resulted in gunshots also throws light on the clashes in India. This
reinstates the insidious and vulnerable nature and craftiness of Indian men, in an ironic way. Shashi Kapoor is portrayed as ‘the worst sort of Indian’ in *Heat and Dust*, further denigrated in the words of Douglas. In another context, the Nawab sweeps aside the volatile nature of the riots and resentment in his locality as principally the result of the volatile climate, “they get hot and then they cool off. It’s like our weather in its season(*Heat and Dust*).”

Throughout the movie we can see the presence of heat and dust (Fig. 4.16), the unpredictable, volatile and destructive nature of it, and how the westerners try to overcome it. Harry has Indian punkah wallas, to reduce the heat inside the palace. And in Douglas’s home we can see the servants wetting the vetiver curtains for the same. All these are westerner’s adaptations of an Indian way of life in a foreign land. In contrast to the severe hot weather, Olivia takes refuge in the Nawab’s company and in her piano music.

![Fig.4.16 The Begum’s efforts to leave the palace during the hot and dusty summer season.](image)

The movie introduces Chid, an American who comes to India in the 1980s, as chanting in the ‘incredibly cold’ river, in the summer season (Fig. 4.17). Chid’s quest of spirituality reminds us of Earnest in *The Householder*, “I’m not anything now…So it’s like dying as a material being and being reborn spiritually” (*Heat and Dust*).
While Anne tells him that she intends to do research in India about her great grandmother, he says that, “I’m not researching Hinduism. I’ve become a Hindu” *(Heat and Dust)*. The superficial spirituality that hippie culture brings with it is lampooned here. The movie also documents the bus travels through dusty rocky places (Fig. 4.18) and teashops (which were part and parcel of Indian culture) of the 1980s.

The film makes use of Chid to make a comparison of life in India, where he comes for spiritual realization, and his homeland in the USA. He seems nostalgic about his ‘cleanest’ city there. The crowded railway station, dirty food, dusty roads and chaotic lifestyle of India are contrasted with the paradisiacal ‘green and fresh green’ home memory of Chid.
Anne’s walk through the Indian streets (Fig. 4.19) gives us another stereotypical picture of India, seen through its grocery shops, groups of hurrying men and women of different classes, castes and colours, bullock carts, bicycles, taxi cabs, rickshaws, glittering garlands of primary colors, pooja accessories, bangle shops, mattresses, champa flowers, sounds of an owl, dusty wind, etc. The visual cornucopia India provides is all down by a dusty wind, which becomes a symbolic spoiler indicating the ambiguous nation India is.

![Fig.4.19 A scene of an Indian street.](image)

The movie also makes use of Sauner’s child’s tombstone in the context of the 1980s. It gives a glimpse of Inder’s mind in the 1980s. Inder is not conscious of the historical significance of the place as Anne is concerned. The tomb of the child, which was once a dear metaphor of death and sacrifice in India becomes an unimportant deserted place 60 years later (Fig. 4.20, Fig. 4.21). In this scene, the desertion of the once British inhabitant place is accentuated by the chirping of birds, leafless trees, dry soil, etc, in the midst of ruins.
In the background we can hear Indian classical music from a distance and it is silenced by the wind blowing heavily with dust. This indicates a stagnancy and sterility. However, there is a suggestion, which can be seen often in travel narratives, about the Indian attitude towards history, which neglects and sidelines its importance in human lives. Anne is even conscious of the power of India to change people, in subtle ways. Anne seems uncertain about her relationship with Inder and tells him, “I don’t always understand you”. But, at the same time, Anne finds Inder intriguing too in many incidents.

Her uncertainty in India is projected through the ice-covered mountains, roads, wooden homes, teashops, rural people in blankets, etc, as she travels in Simla (Fig. 4.22). The great Himalayas hanging about with their immensity and vastness, add a visual reinforcement to Anne’s incomprehensiveness.
The landscape of India, as a cultural construction, is ‘encoded with meanings which can be read and interpreted’ (Taylor, 215) in terms of the vibrant socio-cultural advances of the foreigners in the select movies. These movies provide a picturesque voyage of white people in pre and post-Independent India, which describe nature of India and its phenomena. Throughout the movie, we can see a thick layer of dust, covering the beautiful landscape of India. Right from the beginning, Douglas’s crisis in his personal life is captured in the backdrop of a beautiful landscape. His adaptation with different struggles in India is reflected in the interior of his home, both Indian and western in look, with bamboo chairs, table, vetiver curtains, decorated window panes, flower vases, cushions, dining table, photographs on wall, etc. Just like The Householder, in Heat and Dust too we can see the crowded railway platforms of India, filled with tea-boys, coolies and passengers of different classes.

While analyzing the movie, Heat and Dust, regarding the characteristics of Indian geography, we can see the reverberations of the nature in the personality of the Nawab. The Nawab’s political discourses and actions were disturbing to the British administration. Since the Nawab has relations with the dacoit, the British has to take care of the local people. The Nawab’s incisive handling of the affairs of the land creates problems to the British, like heat and dust of India, ‘it
blew all day, it blew all night. If you left a chink open anywhere, within seconds there would be a film of dust over everything. It got in your eyes, your nostrils. It was gritty between your teeth’. But India also occupies peaceful cool places like Shimla and Masuri, where the British and royalty spend the summer time. Olivia, though she neglects her husband’s advice to go to Simla, later realizes it as a comforting space through Nawab. Thus, the Nawab himself becomes her final reconciliation in Simla, as she spent her last days there. Thus, the protagonist embodies divergent elements of nature in his character, deploys according to the receiver of it, for the British he is like ‘heat and dust’, but for Olivia, he is like the peacefully snow of India. In the case of the 1980s, Inder Lal, the counterpart of the Nawab, is also an incarnation of diversity. He is an educated middle class man, a government servant, and harbors fragments of superstition, as he rejects Anne’s advice to consult a psychiatrist to cure Ritu’s illness. Thus, he personifies India and embodies diverse elements like the hills and rivers.

Staircases and steps in houses are also very important in these movies, as they connect the protagonists with the real life outside. When Indu does not feel well she come downstairs to meet Mrs. Sehgal and she even comes down to buy (or just to see) the bangle seller. It is the same staircase that witnesses Prem’s heated words on leaving his mother alone in the room and his romance with Indu in different occasions. Ivory has made use of staircase scenes to portray the feelings of different people, expressed through their ‘different ways of running up and down stairs’ (26) in movies like *Shakespeare Wallah, Bombay Talkie* and *Heat and Dust*. The stairs become the connecting link between imaginative and real world (Fig. 4.23 and Fig. 4.24). In most cases, the ground represents reality/reconciliation, as Lucia understands Vikram’s rejection in the climax of the movie, *Bombay Talkie*. 
Lucia moves away from Vikram with Hari, and later compels Hari to go back to Vikram and she follows him.

Through analyses of the movies selected for this study, an attempt has been made to show how Merchant Ivory Productions portray the interconnections between the geographical features of India and the nation. They provide an unflattering picture of the nation. This multiplicity in culture, religion, class and language is clearly a representation of the diversity in India’s geography, with variegated geographical terrains like, hills, deserts, rivers, and greenery. The presence of Punkah wallahs, box wallahs, etc is visually juxtaposed with the country’s snail-pace development. Thus, in the select movies we can trace the western perspective on India through the interplay of various landscapes and its culture. And, at the same time, they mirror social and psychological inclinations of the heroes of different stratum of life, in different situations.
Reference

15. on Barthes’ *The World of Wrestling*