CHAPTER 2

Nation and (its) Hero: Nehruvian India in Shashi Kapoor

In literary works the hero is the masculine incarnation of bravery, intelligence, morality and strength. While heroes of classical literature are skilled warriors who live and die for honor, in Indian movies the skillful protagonists accept both physical and psychological adventures and dilemmas for the sake of the truth. The hero can be a prince or a commoner. In films they become role-models for the audience. Actors, especially heroes of Bombay cinema, are both similar and different from the Western world. In order to analyze the construction and dispersal of indigenous culture through heroes, we need to probe into the detailed transformations of Indian heroes. For this we have to consider the technicalities and discursive practices used in the film, its Indian and foreign connections, etc. Heroes of the Indian epic films were carved with respect to the parameters of renouncer and the man of the world, keeping Rama and Krishna figures in the background. But, later, the focus on characters like Arjuna and Karna delimits the figure of the hero. In most Indian films men are the central figures who carry the burden of meaning and cultural codes in their persons across the boundaries of space and time. Thus, the discourses of both stability and instability through diffusion of meaning beyond cultural limitations are mapped on the bodies and actions of the heroes. The heroes spread out the meaning of film text in conjunction with various cinematic and narrative techniques like camera angles, lighting, montage, modes of language, accent, dress, gestures, etc. Thus, they expand the spectator’s recognition of the self through different modes of expression.

This chapter analyses the cult of the hero through different decades in Indian cinema. And, it also places Shashi Kapoor in the context of the heroes of Indian cinema. His characters in the select Merchant Ivory films are analyzed with respect to the pre and post Independent nation. Thus, Prem (The Householder) is analyzed in the milieu of the clashes of tradition and modernity, class struggles, and of Eastern and Western philosophies of life. The protagonist of Shakespeare Wallah, Sanju, becomes
representative of the youth confused between the worlds of English theatre and Indian cinema. Sanju also portrays the elements of displacement, decline of theatre in Independent India, and cultural clashes through his romance with Lizzie and Manjula. Bombay Talkie becomes a meta-film through its stunning hero Vikram. It also throws light on the prevalence of superstition in the modern nation. And, finally the Nawab of Heat and Dust is considered as a connecting link of history of two decades of India - 1920s and 1980s.

Various social, political and cultural developments of the 1960s propelled a developing India towards attaining a new identity beyond its colonial subjugation. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the ‘architect of the modern nation’, contributed a lot to the establishment and constitution of a new India. Under the reign of Nehru, India recreated itself in a mould distinct from its mythical past and its colonial lineage. Nehru’s emphasis on industrial development and five-year plans gave vigor to the developing nation to go beyond the multiplicities of language, religion and culture into a shared terrain of modernity. It is obvious that the Hindi movies of the early postcolonial period had a poignant played up social angle and served as excellent commentaries on the socio-political conditions of the new-born nation. Interestingly, films of the 1950s and 60s, like, Awaara (1951), Shree 420 (1955), Mr. and Mrs.’55 (1955), Pyaasa (1957), Mother India (1957), Phir Subah Hogi (1958), Sujata (1959), Dharmaputra (1961) and Mere Mehboob (1963) are critiques of both the ebullience and the lethargy of Nehruvian dialectics. While going through the Hindi films of the 1960s, among different genres, comedy brings out laughter through amusement and exaggerations of day-to-day affairs as well as through forms like irony, sarcasm, slap-stick drama, etc. In the 60s, independent film producers produced star-based movies. Most of these films have a class angle, with the experiences of the relatively powerless youth opposed with the obstacles of class, gender, caste, societal norms and time (Marteinson, 2006).

Ironically, the 1960s also witness a stagnation and decline of the uprising rays of development due to India's failed foreign relations with China and Pakistan, along with relentless famines. Nehru was succeeded by Lal Bahadur Shastri and then by Indira Gandhi. Mrs Gandhi took the nation forward in the agricultural front with the Green
Revolution in agriculture of the later 1960s. Yet in cinema, the coming years, i.e., the 1970s, constituted a 'dark age' compared to optimistic years of Nehru. During this time the actor became parallel text of the Bombay film industry, epitomized mainly through the angry man roles of Amitabh Bachchan. His constant introverted brooding and anger on social injustices like unemployment, homelessness, and violence of the time symbolize the raging youngsters of 70s. His Deewar (1975, Yash Chopra) portray the trauma of the displaced self, its urban experiences and dilemmas in the matrix of post-colonial nationalism. His “dialogue delivery, sense of timing and superbly crafted new kind of anger on the screen, an anger generated primarily by his gestures and movements” (Mazumdar, 9),\textsuperscript{21} create a cathartic effect on the celluloid, which resulted in the creation of melodramatic themes. The 1970s also witness the emergence of new trends in the Indian film industry, the New Wave Cinema from different parts of India, West Bengal, Kerala, Karnataka, etc. They provided a realistic portrayal of the marginalized, the subjugation they face in the society. Interestingly, movies of the early years of 1980s are about family reunion (Asha and Ram Balram of 1980), industry life (The Burning Train of 1980 and Avtaar and Mawaali of 1983), foreign education (Naseeb and Yaarana of 1981), rape and kidnapping (Vidhatha and Prem Rog of 1982, Hero of 1983) and patriotism (Shaan (1980), Kranti (1981), Desh Premee (1982)).

Since the present research concentrates on the Merchant Ivory movies produced in 1963 (The Householder), 1965 (Shakespeare Wallah), 1970 (Bombay Talkie), and 1983 (Heat and Dust), this chapter analyses the general trend of Hindi movies of the chosen time (1960s-80s). Along with movies on migration, economic, social and domestic anxiety, the Hindi film industry had also started producing interesting sub-genres in 1963 and 65, like Muslim social drama (Mere Mehboob), historical romance (Taj Mahal), dacoit drama (Mujhe Jeene Do), romantic crime drama (Gehra Daag), etc. These films reinforced the secular fabric of the nation as well as proclaimed the high patriotic aspirations and socio-cultural anxieties. The Hindi films in the period 1970 - 1983 explore different genres like crime comedy drama (Johnny Mera Naam (1970)), mystery (Kab? Kyoonn? Aur Kahan? (1970)), romance (Pehchan (1970)), and crime thriller (The

\textsuperscript{21} Rage on Screen, Mazumdar.
Train (1970), Jeevan Mrityu (1970)). The following movies of 1970 have themes as diverse and wide-ranging as the sufferings of the hero (Safar and Mera Naam Joker), patriotism (Prem Pujari), Hippie culture (Purab Aur Paschim), identity crisis (Sachaa Jhutha, Kati Patang), marital issues and integrity (Abhinetri, Geet, Agar Tum Na Hote), psychological problems (Khilona), issues affecting the lives of household women and public women (bar dancers and courtesans) (Sharafat (1970)), and of 80s gambling (Ghar Ghar Ki Kahani (1988)), family reunion (Coolie (1983)), industrial life (Avtaar (1983)), etc.

Cult of the Hero

Though a systematic production of movies in India started in 1913 with Phalke’s Raja Harishchandra with a mythological theme, the industry grew rapidly only after the introduction of talkies like Alam Ara (1931). In order to contextualize our discussion of the heroes of Merchant Ivory Productions, a brief analysis of the heroes of the Hindi film industry from the 1930s to 80s is important at this juncture (Appendix E). They are arranged with respect to their date of birth, with the help of Internet Movie Database (IMDb), an online information provider on movies, actors, television programs, documentaries, etc., launched in 1990.22

Charismatic performances of actors like Prithviraj Kapoor (1906-1972) in Awara (1951), Pardesi (1957) and Mughal-E-Azam (1960), Ashok Kumar (1911-2001) in Achhut Kanya (1936), Kismat (1943) and Balraj Sahni (1913-1973) in Do Bigha Zameen (1953) and Kabuliwala (1961) set the emergence of the heroic figure in India. In the 40s, the filmgoers have witnessed the development of the hero image through the veteran actors like Dilip Kumar (1922- ), Dev Anand (1923-2011), Raj Kapoor (1924-88), Guru Dutt (1925-64), and Raaj Kumar (1926-96). The influential actor Dilip

22 For the proper analysis of the heroes of Hindi film industry from 1930s, the researcher has taken only fourteen actors from the list of thirty, provided by IMDb, by selecting only the leading figures in films (protagonists). Comedians and villains have been largely kept in the margin. For the selection of the films of the selected actors, rating scales of IMDb (≥8 out of 10 per IMDb rating) and Rotten Tomatoes (an American online film review aggregator launched in 1998) have been used. The list of film heroes based on their scoring (8≤) is provided in Appendix E.
Kumar is renowned for his realistic performances that made him ‘tragedy king’ of the industry. From 1940s to 80s, he acted in many roles like the romantic hero in *Andaz* (1949), historical figure in *Mughal-E-Azam* (1960) and character role in *Kranti* (1981). For more than five decades the stunning star Dev Anand acted in many women centered movies like *Vidya* (1948), *Jeet* (1949), *Sanam* (1951), *Do Sitare* (1951), etc, with the leading actress Suraiya. Later he became a stunning star through the crime thriller *Baazi* (directed by Guru Dutt in 1951) with Kalpana Kartik. The duo made hits like *Aandhiyan* (1952), *Taxi driver* (1954), *House No. 44* (1955), *Nau Do Gyarah* (1957), etc. His rapid dialogue delivery made him distinct in the field. In the 60s, with Waheeda Rehman (*Guide* 1965), Nutan (*Manzil* 1960), *Tere Ghar Ke Samne* (1963), Vyjayanthimala (*Jewel Thief* 1967) he became a romantic icon of the time. Raj Kapoor is best known as the ‘greatest showman of Bollywood’ in the words of Dr. Narasinha Kamath. Though he acted in several films, *Neel Kamal*, a 1947 movie is remarkable for his performance with Madhubala. His films are remembered for their romantic and responsible themes and characters like the issues of unemployment and poverty in the prevailing conditions of national pride. Guru Dutt is an icon of the golden age of Indian cinema, with respect to the artistic and literary contents of his movies. He is renowned for his epic performances in *Pyaasa* (1957), *Kaagaz Ke Phool* (1959) and *Sahib Bibi Aur Ghulam* (1962) with the heroines of the time like Mala Sinha, Waheeda Rehman, Meena Kumari, etc. Raaj Kumar’s *Mother India* (1957), with Nargis was a path breaking movie.


Shashi Kapoor (1938 - 2017); the prominent Indian hero of the Merchant Ivory Productions, is from Calcutta. Shashi, the youngest son of Prithviraj Kapoor, practiced the initial lessons of acting from Prithvi Theaters. He entered the film industry as a child artist in movies like *Aag* (1948), *Sangram* (1950), *Awaara* (1951) and in *Dana Paani* (1953) too. *Dharmaputra* (1961) is the first movie of Shashi as a protagonist. Among the 160 movies in which he acted, 148 were in Hindi and 12 were in English. With his wife Jennifer Kendal, Shashi established Prithvi Theatre in Mumbai in 1978.


role with Shammi Kapoor in *Jabse Thumhen Dekha Hai* (1963). He also performed the epic character Lakshman in the mythological movie *Bajrangbali* (1976).


Shashi Kapoor has won the Filmfare Best Supporting Actor Award in 1976 for *Deewar* (1975), and won Best Actor Award of Silver Lotus in 1986 for *New Delhi Times* (1986). He also received The Bengal Film Journalist’s Association Award (BFJA) for Best Actor in 1965 for *Jab Jab Phool Khile* and in 1988 for *New Delhi Times*. Shashi Kapoor also produced a number of films like *Junoon* (1978), *Kalyug* (1981), *36 Chowringhee Lane* (1981), *Vijeta* (1982), *Utsav* (1982), *Ajooba* (1991), etc. He has achieved Filmfare Award for Best Movie for his movies *Junoon* (1978) and *Kalyug* (1981). In 2010 he received the Filmfare Lifetime Achievement Award. The Govt. of India honored him with the Padma Bhushan in 2011 and in 2015 he has won the Dadasaheb Phalke Award too.

From the analysis of the Hindi film heroes, it is understood that though there were many actors in Hindi film industry, only Shashi Kapoor had leading roles in foreign language films, though Saeed Jaffrey has enacted small roles. While going through the super hit Hindi films, it is clear that the heroes have acted different roles of life, with respect to the different trends of the time. Thus, the role of Shashi Kapoor as the protagonist of early Merchant Ivory Productions is significant, as he becomes an ironic representation of a developing nation, in the Western camera eyes, which is described in detail in the following section of the chapter.
2.1. Prem Sagar: A Symbol of Nehruvian India

In 1963 India was reeling under the euphoria of Nehruvian ideology, which was reflected in all facets of life. Patriotic feelings were at their zenith. Many movies of the era were chronicles of the issues facing the recently created political entity called India. Films of this period had motifs and themes such as ‘the displaced outsider’ in the city space, caste - class and tradition - modernity conflicts, gender politics, changing social order, nationalism and the transforming domestic patterns in the middle-class households. According to Mridula Mukherjee, the Nehruvian years were an extremely creative and innovative period of Bombay cinema that demonstrated exciting developments in all its fields.\(^\text{24}\)

The ‘new born cities’ in independent India, created under the influence of Nehruvian nationalist trends, were, according to Sunil Khilnani, “not only the symbol of a new sovereignty but an effective engine to drive India into the modern world. The urban world created by the nationalist imagination is certainly no facade - some may still chose to see India’s politics or economic development as a pale imitation of a Western paragon, but they can hardly do so when confronted by the country’s vibrant, but sometimes excessively palpable cities” (Khilnani, 110).

Merchant Ivory’s *The Householder* is about the initial struggles and final reconciliation of a newly married couple. Since Prem is working as a lecturer in a private college he gets a low salary, which seems not enough to make ends meet. Indu, a rustic housewife also has her fantasies and limitations within the walls of their rented home in city, New Delhi. Through the main characters, Prem and Indu and their interactions, the movie represents the issues of middle class youth. In addition to the household issues the

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\(^{23}\) She is the former Director of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML)

\(^{24}\) Madhur Tankha reports (in *The Hindu*) that the Nehruian era witnessed the emergence of a mature and distinctive cinematic aesthetic form with the power and potential of communicating with mass audiences and initiating debates on several pressing political and social issues of the day.
movie also portrays main socio-cultural incidents during Nehruvian time with respect to
the discourses of tradition and modernity, Eastern and Western philosophy of life and
class conflicts. Prem, the householder protagonist of the movie reflects these elements
through his personal and public interactions with the mini narratives of a middle class
family life, which in a way reflects the roller-coasters of Nehruvian India.

2.1.1. Tradition vs. Modernity

Under the leadership of Nehru, India witnessed the dilemmas of a recently formed
nation. India was torn between various socio-cultural transitions, especially the
persistance of fear and anxiety over the possible loss of traditional values. Noticeably,
the Merchant Ivory Productions deals with the nuances of nostalgia with subtlety and in
detail. The narrative of the film, *The Householder*, revolves around the flashback of the
hero and portrays his coming of age as a mature, responsible householder through
experiences and realizations of day-to-day life. The plot is complicated as it
accommodates the flashback-within-flashback technique to portray Prem’s nostalgic
distancing from the stark realities of life, since he is an “ingenuous Indian
youth…previously sheltered by his family” (Long, 43). We can also note that he
assumes the responsibilities of a householder only at the insistence of his orthodox,
widowed mother.

The initial frame of the movie presents a quote from *Manusmṛti* (Chapter 6) along with
sad Hindustani music (lasts for some 24 sec) in the background. It introduces the theme-
the position and responsibilities of a householder, of the movie. It details the superior
status of the *Grihastha* (householder) among the different orders of one’s life-
*Bramacharya* (student), *Vanaprastha* (retired life), and *Sannyasa* (renunciation). In
addition to that, the expositional scenes of *The Householder* begin with the waking-up
shots of India (Fig.2.1).
In a long shot, from a shallow focus on an open terrace, on a misty morning, the camera turns to deep focus on the main characters Prem and his wife Indu against the backdrop of a smoky dawn. High angle camera and panning shots reveal a ‘realistic portrayal of India’ of the 1960s. The costume of the characters, wooden furniture, congested buildings and Mogul domes are panned and zoomed into the first shot. It is symbolic of a ‘slumbering’ India waking up to modernity. In the very first shot of this movie, Ivory also adds an Islamic touch with Subah Namaz\(^{25}\), retaining the faded domes of Zeenat Masjid\(^{26}\) in the background. The movie thus begins with an antique India; a symbiotic blend of both the Hindu and the Islamic cultures, through the costume of the characters and setting. The inextricability and interdependence of Islamic and Hindu traditions keep the root of the nation strong beyond its multiplicity. This is explicit in the Mughal art history as James Ivory documents in *The Sword and the Flute*.

\(^{25}\) It is an invocation of Allah in the early morning.

\(^{26}\) Zeenat Masjid is built by Zinat-ul-Nissa Begum, Aurangzeb's daughter in 1710AD (used by the British as a bakery in 1857), outside the Delhi Gate, on the banks of river Yamuna.
The All India Radio news on the then President of India, Dr. Radhakrishnan and on the Indo-China war add to contemporaneity to the movie. Another medium shot of the Principal’s room reinstates the post independent times of India. The Principal’s room has framed pictures of Nehru and Rajendra Prasad, and quotes like ‘Work is Worship’, ‘Be Brief’, etc. These make Prem more fragile and diffident in front of his superior whenever he tries to present his intense necessity for a salary hike.

Prem, working as a Hindi teacher in a private college and his housewife Indu become the embodiments of an upcoming middle class society. Indu’s role is played by Leela Naidu (1940-2009), Miss India of 1954. Though Indu is rustic in her demeanor, Prem satirically calls her the “city girl” as she prefers to live in the city, for “(she) has seen enough cows, fields, wells… and wants to see more people, cars, and buses” (*The Householder*). In the consequent shots, which portray a wedding scenario, we can see MIP dexterously portray crowds, ruins and the cacophony of an Indian middle class life. Such scenes look straight out of E. M. Forster’s *A Passage to India* (1984). As Prem and Indu arrive at the wedding (of his colleague’s brother), the blearing film song, “*Chahe koi mujhe jungle kahen*”, also ironically depicts the insidious mix of crowds, which was trendy at that time. The bridegroom’s disinterest in his marriage is reflective of Prem’s case. This opens up his flashback on his early married life with Indu (Fig.2.2).

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27 The song is taken from the movie *Junglee* (1961), sung by Muhammed Rafi for the actors Shammi Kapoor and Saira Banu.
In this family drama, we can also see Prem’s very short tempered mother expresses her dissatisfaction with his rented house and its furniture, which comes as Indu’s dowry. Just like any stereotypical mother-in-law, she finds fault with Indu and her family and determines to ‘put everything in order’, and is complicit with her son in their nostalgia of a shared past. She scornfully calls Indu a ‘modern girl… who can’t keep (a) house’. Symbolizing the prototype of a traditional mother-in-law figure (Fig.2.3) in patriarchal India, her words echo an age-old perception of the ‘obedient’ Indian housewife who ‘dances’ to the words of her mother in law.

![Fig.2.3. Prem’s stereotypical mother finds fault with Indu.](image)

The disparity in the modes of perception of the mother-in-law and Indu reveals the past and present conflicts of a housewife’s role. Indu’s mother-in-law cherishes her earlier routine as she waits for her husband from office, as “a newly wedded one with oiled hair with flower on it” (*The Householder*). Close-ups of the mother show the stereotypical worries of a mother about the health of her son, loss of her good old days with her late husband, etc. She even wants Indu to wake up early, since she is not in a ‘paradise’. She even complaints to Prem that Indu is wasting his money to buy bangles, toys and trifles. But, in the entire film we cannot see any lavishness in Indu. In medium shots we can see her lamenting for getting “broken pieces of bread and harsh words”
(The Householder) from Indu. As a result, Prem, who seems powerless to solve the problems between his mother and his wife, signifies the inertia of an evolving nation to reconcile the beliefs and interests of different ages. The earlier shots of struggling Prem fade into the brooding one in classroom, unaware of his undisciplined students, which ultimately resulted in his clash with Mr. Chaddha, an aged History Professor. Throughout the movie, Prof. Chaddha and Prem’s mother are symbols of traditional inflexible norms and they remain dogmatic obstacles in the paths of both Prem and Indu, “children, unacquainted with the realities of the world” (Long, 43), as representatives of the displaced youth in the era of Nehruvian India. Young Prem’s preference of names like Nimmy and Nandita indirectly reveals his desire to get away from traditional Indian names like Indu. He stands in contrast to the traditionalist Prof. Chaddha, who fixes him with a scornful gaze in the same frame.

2.1.2. Class struggles

MIP’s The Householder also portrays the interactions and difficulties of middle class Indian families in the immediate aftermath of Independence. This differentiates it from the other films of the company. As Taylor comments, ‘the identity of India is comprised by the interacting components of physical elements, observable activities and the symbol or meanings of the place’ (p. 5). The protagonist’s monotonous, troublesome life has been compared and contrasted with the lives of his colleagues and superiors. Though Prem is in need of a better salary, he is very house-proud as a college lecturer. He even employs a servant-boy for his dusty kitchen. Prem’s situation becomes more complicated when he comes to know that Indu expects a baby and asks spontaneously, “How can I support a baby? It’s difficult enough for me” (The Householder) (Fig.2.4).
And, he even complains ironically that it is her fault and it is very easy for her! Instead of accepting reality, he berates her for disrespectful behavior as she makes somber facial gestures. These incidents make Prem feudalistic and antithesis of the concept of a typical Indian hero, as he seems depressed even hearing the pregnancy of his wife. Just like a silent movie, a series of consequent actions show the clash between Indu and Prem.

Another representative of the middle class is the Prof. of Mathematics Mr. Sohan Lal, from Mehrauli, who has to start his journey early in the morning ‘to cycle and cycle’ to reach the college by nine. With his limited salary he has to take care of his deceased brother’s family along with his own. Instead of being persuasive in trying to convince the Principal, Prem, the hero, becomes philosophical in his request for an increment in salary as he says, “it’s not good for one man to have everything and another nothing… life is a hard struggle… and it’s the duty of those whose struggles lighter to give a helping hand to those …” *(The Householder)*. Medium to close-up shots portray a philosophic Prem than a realistic one (Fig.2.5).
MIP delineates the rise of middle class society in Independent India. The rise is also looked upon with apprehension and irony. Through Sohan Lal’s pathetic condition the film portrays the dilemmas of transport and mobility, job opportunities, familial problems, and poverty of middle class society. Compared to him, Prem is fortunate, for he has a job in the nearby college gained through the influence of his father, who was a Principal of a government college. In the next frame we can hear the scornful words of Prof. Chaddha, who describes Prem as one among the most wretched men on the earth, who are idle, living a life “barren of utility, (who has) nothing to do except to gratify (his) senses”\textsuperscript{28} (\textit{The Householder}). Mr. Chaddha’s words echo the incapability of Prem to stand on his own feet, personify the powerlessness of India to stand alone after long periods of imperialism. Prem’s status is analogous to that of Nehru, for in the words of Shashi Tharoor “the domineering Motilal adored and spoiled his son” (Tharoor, 197). Fascinatingly, Prem’s middle class life is again complicated in the context of his friend Raj’s life style.

\textsuperscript{28} Taken from the first chapter of \textit{Thrift} by Smiles, i.e. “Of all wretched men, surely the idle are the most so those whose life is barren of utility, who have nothing to do except to gratify their senses. Are not such men the most querulous, miserable, and dissatisfied of all, constantly in a state of ennui, alike useless to themselves and to others mere cumberers of the earth, who, when removed, are missed by none, and whom none regret? Most wretched and ignoble lot, indeed, is the lot of the idlers.”
He is a government servant and seems an ‘experienced’ householder, who advises Prem to be conscious of women, for they can be “troublesome… you have to keep them in check and the children too” \((\text{The Householder})\). The long and medium shots of Raj’s interaction with his wife and family reveal his dissatisfaction (Fig.2.6) with his present life and his opinion on the difficulties in getting a government job.

Prem’s middle class life is portrayed in contrast with that of Mr. Sahgal, the house-owner and Mr. Khanna, the Principal. Mr. Sahgal and his benevolent wife are symbols of an upper middle class family. Their son, Umesh symbolizes the life of a student, free from worries about day-to-day affairs, watching films and reading film magazines, representing the \textit{Brahmacharya} stage of life. Mr. Khanna also enjoys a luxurious life with his wife. Medium shots of his dining table with delicious food, carpets on the floor, dressing style, etc, symbolize his high status in society compared to that of Prem, Prof. Chaddha and even the government employee Raj. Class distinctions in Indian society are well-depicted through the housewives of different strata of society. That is, while Prem’s and Raj’s wives are the spokespersons of the middle class challenges in India, Mrs. Khanna and Mrs. Sehgal are powerful housewives of the upper middle class society. Mrs. Khanna, wife of the principal, portrays the power of the ruling class over those who live on the ‘generosity of Mr. Khanna’. She is very rude in her behavior, and
says “advantage must not be taken of people’s greatness” (The Householder). The power of the upper middle class over the lower is captured in detail when Prem approaches both Mrs. Khanna, who opens his written request in front of her sneering friends, and Mr. Sahgal for an increment in salary and a reduction in rent respectively. This reveals the economic problems faced by middle class Indians consequent to power exploitation. Thus, the movie can be considered as a “comedy of self-involvement” since it portrays the “failure of understanding among characters (like) the martinet Headmaster, the incredibly pompous elder teacher” (Long, 73). The depiction of a beggar woman with a weeping baby in her hand in the coffee-shop scene of the movie also reveals the presence of lower class society in the newly Independent nation.

2.1.3. Eastern vs. Western philosophy

In addition to the discourses of tradition and modernity and class biases in India, The Householder also looks into India through Eastern and Western philosophies of life. The film can be critiqued in the context of other Hindi films of 1963 like Tere Ghar ke Saamne, which portray the negative impact of modernity and its sophisticated manipulative impulses disseminated through western culture. In The Householder, Ivory includes Shakespeare’s As You like It as a parallel text for the Manusmṛti. A few lines from “The Seven Ages of Man”, reveal the different stages of a man’s life like those mentioned at the beginning of the movie through quotes from Manusmṛti. The only difference is that while the former elaborates the different phases of one’s life in terms of roles – as a helpless infant, a whining school boy, an emotional lover, a devoted soldier, a wise judge, a clueless old man, and finally a corpse, the latter mentions the duties of an individual at four different stages of life- Brahmacharya, Grihastasrama, Vanaprasta, and Sanyasa. It proclaims the eastern philosophy of the importance of karma in one’s life from birth to death. The film produces a “discerning Western eye, made both believable and comprehensible” (Pym, 34). Pym also critiques the failures of

29 He enjoys his bottle and complains about its rate- “60 rupees a bottle”.

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generalities, especially the conflicts of East and West through the “distinctly unrooted household of truth-seekers.” (Pym, 34).

The film also provides an oriental perception of India through Hippies, a number of displaced foreigners, who are attracted to Indian culture. They become real caricatures with respect to their interest and experiences in India, seeming to escape from the “boring English background (materialistic)” (Raw, 97). The Hippies questioned Western middle-class norms and practices, hierarchies of class. Thus, they were attracted to Eastern religion and philosophy. Literally and metaphorically, there was a wide-spread curiosity about the hippie movement in Hollywood films. 30 The introduction of the American character, Earnest, diverts the plot of The Householder to bring out this East West dichotomy prominently. Long and tilting shots of the circumambulating Earnest depict his experience of cosmic energy at Ram Yantra. 31

Later, through close-ups of Prem and Earnest we can see their perceptions about India. Earnest realizes the cosmic energy within him at Ram Yantra (Fig.2.7), explains the development of the soul through the pointed structure in the background as a symbol of the way to eternity from earth. While Prem, as a mouthpiece of Nehru, is a supporter of

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30 Films like Chappaqua(1966), The Born Losers(1967), Psych-Out(1968), and Easy Rider(1969) are significant records of the Hippie Movement.

31 A cylindrical instrument with 12 stone triangles on ground used to measure both altitude and azimuth of celestial things, at Jantar Mantar.
India’s journey towards materialism through national development, steel projects and five year plans, etc, Earnest appreciates the spiritual roots of India, which kindle the soul; “you got the soul and we the flesh!” (The Householder). The words of Earnest reaffirm the general observation of East as the spiritual centre of the world and the West, the material one. Earnest’s rejection of materialism symbolizes the hippie preference for spirituality and its denial of material development.

Their conversation denotes India’s struggles for material development in the wake of independence through five-year plans, while the colonial west pursues spirituality on Indian soil. In addition to this, the setting of the movie deliberately questions the emerging industrial development of India in the wake of independence, for Ivory is silent about the things highlighted by Prem on the technological development of the nation during his encounter with Earnest. And, Ernest introduces himself in an Indian way with folded hands, while Prem tries to give him a handshake. This too portrays India’s imitation of the Western ways, while the Westerner follows the Indian way of greeting the individual. Earnest’s fondness to the Indian sunset, tigers, women and songs reveal the West’s residual Orientalist notions about the exotic Third World and a kind of voyeurism with which the West views India even long after political decolonization. Kitty, Hippie friend of Earnest, compares Prem’s name to divine love and spiritual love, and invites him to her home by quoting Christopher Marlowe:

“Come live with me and be my love,
And we will all the pleasures prove”.

In this context, we can see Prem’s interest in English literature, as he appreciates her welcome song. Long and medium shots of the well-furnished hall with modern painting on the wall and decorative lights create a diverse experience for Prem, in that home. From the conversations of Earnest and Kitty, Prem understands the West’s interest in the practice of Yoga and meditation. Panning shots of the scene introduce a ‘little

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32 It is taken from the poem The Passionate Shepherd to His Love.
mixed-up’ Bobo, a young Indian girl in modern dress. While Earnest becomes reminiscent of his reason for coming to India, Bobo performs a twist dance (Fig.2.8).\(^{33}\)

![Image](image.jpg)

**Fig.2.8 Prem’s wonder on Bobo’s twist dance in Earnest’s home.**

This is significant in the history of Hindi cinema, as the movie introduces twist dance into the industry. Though Bobo devalues India as a ‘backward country’, her painting on the wall, her demeanor, loosened hair, beauty consciousness, and cigar smoking differentiates her from both the natives and foreigners. She embodies another facet of Indian youth, in the long run to modernity, ‘a little mixed up’ colonized Indian spirit, in the words of Earnest. And, it is ironic that Earnest is supposed to teach her discipline. Prem’s detailing of Bobo and her features to Indu intensify his astonishment. He even compares her to a ‘memsahib’ of a funny film. Indu’s imitation of the twist dance provides an Indian version of it. But, from the comments of her mother-in-law, we come to know that a woman from a ‘good respectable family’ should not behave like this/dance in front of her husband. Here, the mother-in-law becomes the spokesperson of the traditional biases on a woman’s space within her family itself. In the very next scene, we can see the prayers of the mother-in-law for blessings for Prem and family that seem ironic because she creates clashes with Indu.

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\(^{33}\) It has been introduced in 1960, by Chubby Checker
The East West confrontation becomes more prominent with the introduction of a nameless American Professor. With the theoretical tools of eugenics and phrenology the Professor tries to analyze and study Prem. Close-up shots of Prem remind him of Ajanta-Gupta sculptures. He restates (Fig.2.9) the concept of rebirth, the “drone of continuity” (The Householder).

In another panning shot we can see him gleaning the ancient history of India from a Jaipuri monument. The shots of Prem’s second visit to Earnest is cinematic as it carries the background score Beethoven’s ‘9th Symphony on Speaker’, which intensifies the tone and mood of the American Professor. He considers Prem as a part of five thousand years of Indian civilization. The beautiful garden of the home, along with the music seems lively, compared to the remaining shots of the movie. In the same scene we can see the meditating Earnest and the house owner Kitty. Earnest’s proclamation of ‘non-attachment’ from earthly dealings to the desperate Prem is evident from the long shot of their discussion. Thus, the Hipppies, “such a cozy group, all united in (our) quest” (The Householder), as Kitty says, open up another vista of India for Prem who usually till then had been indifferent to yoga and meditation. Kitty’s interest in wearing the sari and Earnest’s desire to attain supreme power through meditation are further extended in

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34 He touches and studies Prem’s cranium with enthusiasm, and describes the Indian mythology of life and rebirth.
35 He says that, “men die and sink back into the ocean. And then are born again”.

44
Heat and Dust (1983) through the Western Anne and Chid. They clearly portray the flimsiness and hypocrisy of the Westerners along with their superficial perceptions of India.

The film also adds frames of spirituality through shots of a meditating Yogi with his disciples. The background diegetic score, “Sharan Ram theri aayo…” 36 bhajan proclaims renunciation of material life for spiritual salvation as Prem and Sohan Lal meet him to solve their problems in life. The Yogi is portrayed as an embodiment of spirituality who advises his devotees on the duties one has to perform in order to realize the touch of God. Prem takes Earnest to the same Guru and from him we hear about the presence of eternal life in everyone’s life, attainable at any age. Earnest seems very depressed in his urge for spirituality in India, as he fails to get the easiest ways to attain supreme power from the Yogi. The movie provides an epiphany that Earnest goes in search of spirituality while Prem goes for Indu (Fig.2.10), as the plot evolves.

![Fig 2.10 The divergent decisions of Prem and Earnest.](image)

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36 It is a Hindi bhajan invokes Lord Ram, can be broadly translated as

‘Hey, Ram, I came to your shelter,
Detaching from the family, and leaving behind the
fort and palace of Lanka and the temples, home, there in Lanka,
Just for the sake of your holy name.’

- Tulsidas Das
The Mogul architecture in the background symbolizes the different streams of culture in India, a place of unity in diversity. Prem’s desire towards spirituality is mitigated by the bodily presence of Indu. A close-up shot of the happy Prem illustrates this. And, he wants to be a dutiful householder in her presence. Bobo’s comments on the Yogi as ‘fake’, while she polishes her nails, provides a different perception of slighting Indian spirituality. In this movie Bobo becomes the caricature of the liberated Indian woman, unlike the stereotypical Indu and her mother-in-law.

Though the West perceives India primarily as a spiritual nation, it has an amalgam of cultures as a result of centuries of invasion. The critic Long analyses the less developed foreign characters, “quiet moments of visual perception, the images complement the observant spirit of the film that, although modest and sometimes awkward, seems full of promise” (44) though it was a box office failure. Thus, the movie makes an ironic portrayal of the West’s perception of India as a place of spirituality.

2.2. Sanju: the Link between Theatre and Film

Merchant Ivory’s *Shakespeare Wallah* (1965) presents Shashi Kapoor as a playboy with his anglophilic interests and personal biases. It displays another face of developing India, which is still in the shackles of traditional belief systems. Sanju is also a parody of Nehru, who oscillated between idealism and dynamism and he becomes a symbolic representation of the era. The roles of Shashi Kapoor in the select Merchant Ivory movies develop from a “woebegone, poor schoolteacher” (Long, 77) to a “shallow but exuberant playboy … a more suitable kind of part for his personality… (Shashi Kapoor) was at the peak of everything by then.” (78) While *The Householder* focuses on actions within the hero’s home and office spaces, in *Shakespeare Wallah* the plot evolves along with the wandering theatrical troupe in India.
Fig. 2.11 English Beryl makes a commentary on Indian scenario after Independence.

The film is a blend of the protagonist’s relationships with two women (one is a white theatre actor and the other one is a Hindi film actor) and his first hand knowledge of the travelling theater company.

The cinema deals with the crisis and anxieties of the Shakespearean theatre in Independent India (Fig. 2.11). It historicizes the flourishing new medium called films, which was slowly getting more popularity and approval among the masses. The travelling troupe consists of Anthony Buckingham, his wife Carla, their daughter Lizzie, Bobby and three Indian actors. The movie adapts real life experiences of Geoffrey Kendal, an Elizabethan actor of a travelling troupe. Thus, the movie becomes a “sort of paddling remnants of English culture after the British Raj” (Ivory, 8).\(^{37}\) This movie also details the problems of displacement, decline of British influence and cultural clashes in Independent India. This section of the chapter analyses the hero, Sanju, as an incarnation of the Nehruvian youth with respect to his diverse identity.

### 2.2.1. Displacement

The expository shots of *Shakespeare Wallah* have a dramatic punch, with a meta-theatrical display. It begins with two actors in Elizabethan costume. From this long shot, the consequent panning shots cover ancient Roman sculptures facing a pond,

\(^{37}\) Taken from Lawrence Raw’s *Merchant Ivory Interviews*. (2012).
where some actors perform *The Critic or A Tragedy Rehearsed* 38. The entire performance is watched by an audience of mixed race. Their performance, without any audible voice, symbolizes the pathetic state of drama in India. Meanwhile, soft music is used in the background to introduce the heroine, and the music is key to representing ‘the mood of philosophical resignation implicit in the story of the traveling English actors’ (Long, 76). 39 The lip-synced dialogues turn slowly audible. The performance is Elizabethan as we can see the characters wear masks in the play as a tree and a river. The play within the film ends with a British musical score, ‘Rule Britannia’ 40. It is interrupted by an ironic interlude of a cow, clearly indicating the anachronism and comic presence of Elizabethan drama in Independent India. The scene foretells the possible difficulties the troupe has to face in their open stage performances. The plot of the movie revolves around Sanju’s two-timing relations with the theatre actress Lizzie, and Indian actress Manjula. The dialogue between Lizzie and Sanju is centered around the problems of the travelling troupe in India, keeping ancient carved pillars in the background.

38 Act II of the drama, by Richard Brinsley Sheridan.
40 It’s British patriotic song written by James Thomson. The song proclaims Britain’s superiority over other nations

“When Britain first at Heaven’s command
Arouse from out the azure main;
This was the charter of the land
And guardian angels sang the strain
Rule, Britannia!
Britannia, rule the waves:
Britons never shall be slaves...”
The troupe has to sleep on station platforms and on stones, where cows, people and pariah dogs walk all over them (Fig.2.12). In another scene, Lizzie even complains of a hired car from Delhi, a ‘useless old rattle trap’ in which they have to travel for performances. Sanju justifies the car as a ‘museum piece’. As the plot evolves, the audience can see the difficult and weary life of the theater actors, which is in stark contrast with the luxurious life of film actors.

**2.2.2. The Declining British Influence in Independent India**

Mr. Buckingham’s meeting with the Principal of an Indian school unveils the pathetic status of the troupe over the years in India. While Buckingham expects quite a few shows, the Principal allows only one, mentioning lack of time. This can be seen through the tracking shots, which reinforce the importance of new co-curricular activities such as NCC, gym and cricket. These physical activities have displaced Shakespeare and English theatre from the syllabus. There is also an underlying implication of the displacement of the cerebral with the physical in the new born nation. Through this incident the movie traces the changing trends of the Indian education system, which fosters and develops a nationalist spirit which borders on jingoism in the children.
Thus, the 1970s also witness the displacement of Shakespeare from the Indian curriculum. We can observe that Shakespearean theatre symbolizes British values and ethos. It was used to instill an anglophilic attitude among colonial students. The new trends in curriculum concentrated on the holistic development of the students, taking forward the educational system from an imperial Macaulian sensibility to a nationalistic level. The anxieties of the entire troupe can be seen in the movie, *Shakespeare Wallah*.

In another scene we can see a dancing woman in the valley with an Indian pop song in the background. Here we are introduced to the Indian actress Manjula (Fig.2.13).

![Fig.2.13 Manjula’s dance, an example of shooting locations in India.](image)

Through the continuing shots we see the whole conundrum of shooting process and the instructions given to the star. The production scene, with its background music, splendid costumes and the dancing style elaborate the visual and auditory variety and diversity of Indian musicals of the time. Actors from the travelling troupe also join the

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41 National Cadet Corps, an Indian military cadet corps, is formed in 1948, is intended to groom discipline, unity, social service, leadership qualities and patriotic spirit in students. After the Indo-Pak War in 1965, NCC syllabus was revised to strengthen their participation in the warfront. Though India attained membership in the ‘elite club’ in 1932 with Australia, South Africa, England, New Zealand and West Indies, it was after the Partition cricket gained popularity. India’s victory over England in 1952 was remarkable in the history of cricket. From 1960-70, Bombay was the only leading team of Ranji Trophy. It strengthens the importance of cricket in Indian curriculum. Introducing gym through Physical Education to the school syllabus ensures the emotional, physical and intellectual development of children.
common folk to watch the shooting process. Among the audience, we can also see Sanju, as a hero, wearing sunglasses. Behind him, in a long shot, we can see some upper-class women with vanity bags and sunglasses watching the shooting. In a freeze frame, the camera zooms into his face, as he smokes a cigar. It indicates his power and superior status over the audience.

Manjula, as a practitioner of the nouveau-art, cinema, is characteristically disinterested in the travelling troupe and the art form they perform. She is also uncomfortable (Fig.2.14) with Sanju’s intimacy with Lizzie and his appreciation of her superior acting skills.

Sanju is portrayed as a womanizer who double-times both Manjula and Lizzie. He becomes happy when Manjula decides to come for one theatre performance and erotically calls her to bed. The consequent shots display Manjula’s entry into the theatre, as Othello is on stage. Manjula’s visit to the theater distracts the audience from the theatrical performance (Fig.2.15). The vanity and success of the new genre over the old is portrayed successfully as the audience flock around her to get autograph, almost disturbing the performance.
While *Shakespeare Wallah* interestingly portrays the possibilities of ‘film’ as a new visual medium; it critically engages the medium for its popularity, mass appeal and shallowness in comparison with the theatre. Manjula’s superior life style is in contrast to Lizzie indicate the lucrativeness of the new medium. Meanwhile Lizzie’s father is not just an ardent artist, but also a humane person who supports other actors especially Indians in the movie. This is another point of comparison which shows movies as shallow and self-centered art.

### 2.2.3. Cultural Clash

The movie portrays the clashes of Indian and Western cultures mainly through the nostalgic and aged Shakespearean artist Bobby (Fig.2.16), who faces death in the course of the movie, and through Mrs. Buckingham, who realizes the lack of future for Lizzie as an artist in Independent India.
These incidents are significant as they intensify the lack of hope of the theatre troupe in India, which cherishes the new medium of entertainment, cinema. While the Buckingham’s live in the memory of a glorious past, they fear for the future of Lizzie, who is attracted to an Indian, who keeps ambiguity in his relations.

Subsequently, the dissonance of the Indian couple, Manjula and Sanju, is brought out in the course of the movie. The movie has elements of meta-theatre, where the plays (Antony and Cleopatra, Hamlet, Othello, Twelfth Night and Romeo and Juliet) have dramatic bearings and connections with the movie’s plot. Manjula’s derisive comment on Othello and her interest in film magazines are examples of India’s changing aesthetic sensibility. Her failure to comprehend and appreciate the theatrical performance illustrates the decline of British influence in modern India. The rejection of Shakespearean theatre in India is further illustrated in the spectators’ reaction to Lizzie on stage. Manjula’s subsequent jealousy in Sanju’s relationship with Lizzie and her attempts to typecast Lizzie as an easily available woman can be read as the change in Indian cultural perception of the British women. Manjula finds Lizzie as both threat and competition, combined together. Though initially Sanju is sympathetic to Lizzie, when he witnesses the audience’s lewd comments on her, his own protective instincts dwindle. He becomes more concerned with izzat (honor) of women in public eyes.
Sanju’s preconceived motives of female dignity and his double-standards are revealed in these instances.

2.2.4. Sanju: a Caricature of Nehruvian Youth

Sanju, the protagonist of *Shakespeare Wallah*, becomes an ironic representation of Nehruvian youth with respect to his mode of life, interests and attitudes. He considers the narcissistic Manjula inferior to the ‘real artist’ Lizzie, who is committed to her performance. At the same time, we can see Sanju making derisive comments on Indian cinema as it reiterates a monotonous pattern of singing, dancing, mourning, romancing, etc. But, while analyzing the films of 1960s, we can see that they deal with the importance of family life (*Waqt, Jab Jab Phool Khile, Guide*, etc). Another nuance of Sanju’s hypocritical perception is highlighted while the hero seems to be scornful of Indian cinema, he expresses his desire to produce films as well. This can be read as the changing entrepreneurial interests of the upper class youth of the 60s, who are completely divorced mentally from the enterprise they take up for their livelihood. In Sanju’s case, it is the world of films.

The boarding school background of Sanju becomes another satirical portrayal of the Indian youth. Sanju enjoys billiards and cricket, whereas he is completely cut away from Indian traditional systems of knowledge. The anglophilic Sanju fails to recite Sanskrit lyrics, whereas he is familiar with Urdu literature, which was again a fashionable fact of the 1960s. Sanju recites the lyrics of Firaq Gorakhpuri, a Jnanpith winner remarkably. These contradictory elements of Sanju’s personality make him the mouthpiece of a new nation of the upper class Indians. Though Sanju genuinely appreciates British theatre, the mock psychology of Indian spectators affects his perceptions to a large extent. Gory scenes on the theatre like the killing of the heroine, committing of murder and violence are unacceptable to Indian spectators.

Sanju is also outwardly worried about the inconveniences faced by the travelling troupe, like the consumption of very small space and lack of privacy. However educated, and aesthetically and creatively adaptable Sanju is, his moralistic inhibitions are again
typical of the educated Indian upper-middle class of 1960s. Thus we can see the hero who tries to appreciate Shakespearean drama utterly fails to adapt with and accommodate the lives of the travelling troupe. Thus, the protagonist Sanju is a hero who is limited by his own perceptions on creativity, morality, etc.

2.3. Vikram: an Embodiment of the Bombay Film Industry

While Merchant Ivory’s *Shakespeare Wallah* portrays India of 1960s with melancholy, it also highlights an upstart Indian snobbery. Whereas, *Bombay Talkie* documents the Western ‘benign acceptance’ of the transition between colonial and independent times in Bombay film industry of the 70s. Here, the plot revolves around the relationship of the hero, Vikram, with his Indian wife and the Western egoistic lover who falls in love with his glamour. Bombay Talkie is a meta-film, which gives equal importance to the cinematic techniques used in the industry. Along with it, the movie also critiques the presence of customary belief systems in India, especially superstitions.

2.3.1. Bombay Film Industry

*Bombay Talkie* begins with zooming and wide angle shots of Bombay city with some indistinct Hindi songs in the background. The exposition of Bombay with its skyscrapers, busy roads, double-decker buses, taxi cabs, flex boards of films and ads, railway, mosques, streets with salesmen, etc, are all indicative of the pandemonium Bombay is (Fig.2.17). The movie is titled talkies to add to its Indianism, as the Bombay sound movies were generally known so. Many new marketing strategies like billboards to introduce the character crew added to the peculiarity of Indian talkies.
The select movie also makes use of this technique to showcase the trend of Indian cinema industry of the 70s, as Bombay was “plastered with garish billboards for films” with colorful portraits of characters (Long, 93). The expository scene of the movie introduces the heroine Lucia Lane, a well-known international novelist to the film shooting studio by Ismail Merchant. Lucia’s curiosity is illustrated with a series of camera techniques. The tracking shots portray her surveillance of the locale and its functioning.

Merchant tells her in detail about the laborious tasks of the crew for the completion of the film, and he introduces her to the writer, Hari and a huge typewriter prop intended for the shoot. The film uses tilting shots to capture dancing women on the typewriter: amidst whom we can see Helen, ‘the Queen of Nautch girls’. Her seductive attire and gestures with Indian music in the background explicitly convey the role of cabaret dancers in Bombay cinema (Fig. 2.18). British film critic John Gillet analyses the role of Helen in commercial Indian cinema, “extravagant, rigidly conventionalised world of mythological sagas and novelette-ish modern dramas where the action always stops for song and dance and the numbers themselves give full rein to some astonishing fantasies. These numbers … comprise a basic dream world for a vast audience deprived of any other direct sexual stimulus from the censor-bound local screen” (37).
Vikram, the hero, is introduced through a medium shot and his loud costumes and blushing face capture the attention of Lucia in their very first meeting. Hari, the scriptwriter, scorns Vikram as an illiterate man, who does not recognize Lucia, the writer (Fig. 2.19 and Fig. 2.20).

And this incident also reflects on Bollywood which gives more importance to the physical and not cerebral qualities.

The typewriter is symbolic as a *fate machine*, which represents the different keys of life. The director of the movie elaborates thus, “we human beings dance on them and then
when we dance, as we press down the keys of the machine, the story that’s written… is the story of our life” (*Shakespeare Wallah*), becomes symbolic of the fate of Vikram and Lucia in the coming shots. Vikram’s dance on the fate machine reflects the style of dancing fashionable in the Bombay film industry, which is later imitated by one of his fans. Soon after this, we can see Vikram’s fans crowding around him hysterically in a moment of mob mania. Vikram’s life that revolves around his expensive car, luxurious home and popularity as an actor are all tell-tale of the glib facet of Bollywood.

Fate machine, an adaptation of the Hollywood musical “Ready, Willing and Able” (1937), connotes Indian belief in fate, *karma*. Thus, the typewriter scene (Fig. 2.21) questions fatalism, a prominent theme of American film noir, where fate exerts supreme power over the willpower of individuals. The typewriter scene is also ironic of the fate of the main characters in the movie.

![Fig. 2.21 The Fate machine dance on the movie-prop.](image)

The movie also makes use of Usha Uthup’s cabaret song, *Hari Ohm Tat Sat* (Fig. 2.22) to document another important trend of Bombay film industry in the 1970s. Usha Uthup[^42] redefined Indian music history through her versatility in selection of songs, raspy voice and costume. She came to the lime light from night clubs in Chennai, Calcutta and Madras through her distinctive fusion technique. Her singing style, just


In the select movie Usha Uthup is in Indian costumes like silk sari, bindi and gold jewelry. Her popularity as a ‘pop singer in Indian sari’ inspired MIP to select Usha Uthup as a cabaret singer in the movie, which is released in USA (1970) and in Portugal (1979). Thus, she started her film career through MIP’s Bombay Talkie and became popular in USA and UK. Though Sharda Rajan Iyengar is yet another popular cabaret singer of the 60s and 70s, it is Usha’s English accent in singing made her more appealing to MIP. ‘Ohm Tat Sat’ is a Sanskrit verse from Bhagavad Gita, means Brahman is the absolute truth. Here, by ‘Hari Ohm Tat Sat’, the verse re-establishes the spiritual codes of India, but in a satirical way, as the very ‘quintessence’ of the nation is commodified. Here, the value of moola mantra is diminished. Interestingly, she sings it like a Christian devotional song, which praises the ultimate victory of truth.
Usha Utup had sung successful pop songs in the Indian market, while the Anglo-Burmese Helen projected sexuality and sensuality to cater to the voyeuristic pleasures of the Indian audience. Cabaret, a dance form, especially in Bollywood, had its origin in European countries (France - 16th century, America - 1911 and UK - 1912), and it redefined the romantic fantasies of a booming film industry in Independent India. While analyzing the history of Indian cinema, we can trace the presence/role of Anglo-Indian woman as either a vamp or a femme fatale, an easily available, westernized figure. The traces of the vamp concept are visible in American cinema of the 1940s and 50s (The Maltese Falcon (1941), Leave Her to Heaven (1945), Out of the Past (1947), etc). In Bombay cinema, a vamp’s place in the public space is ‘liminal’ as it demarcates the ideal Hindu women of home (andarmahals). The vamp’s presence and the roles they partake make them promiscuous. They mark the margin between ‘moral East and immoral West’ (Gangoli, 145). The vestiges of the exact sentiments can be seen in Shakespeare Wallah, where Manjula accuses Lizzie of being an easily available woman.

The select movie makes use of Helen, the cabaret dancer in Indian musicals, from the 50s onwards, though Bindu, Aruna Irani, Jayashree T, and Fayal are the popular cabaret dancers of 1960s and 70s. Helen’s Anglo-Indian heredity and anglicized outlook, glittering sexy costume with wigs, glitzy dance, flamboyance and exotic charm appealed to Indian men fantasies for decades. She marked her identity as a cabaret dancer through her golden eyelashes, wigs, gold paint, plumes and feathers, explicit and exaggerated sexual gestures, revealing dresses and voluptuous dancing, in films like Jaali Note (1960), Aansoo Ban Gaye Phool (1969), Aag Aur Daag (1970), Caravan (1971), Anamika (1973), Benaam (1974), Ek Se Badhkar Ek (1976), Inkaar (1978), etc. Though she has acted in more than 700 Hindi films in 1960s and 70s, most of them were set in night clubs, especially for male audiences. Sometimes the movies also present the Indian women as spectators of her dance. The quintessentially traditional Hindu heroines of the movies are portrayed in contrast with Westernized women. The Anglo-Indian characters were portrayed as a mode of “defiance and an assertion of cultural superiority” (Gangoli, 149). But, MIP introduces Helen more as a dancer,
though she is in her Western golden costume, than as a sensual and ‘vampish’figure. Her dance with the hero, Vikram, is indicative of cabaret dance of Bombay cinema of the 60s and 70s. *Bombay Talkie* reinstates the concept of femme fatale through Lucia, who seems sexually promiscuous. She is contrasted with the devoted and trusting wife of Vikram, Mala. Thus, the presence of Helen, Usha Uthup and the type writer shots indirectly trace the connections between American and Indian film industries in period of transition in India.

Anjana is yet another important woman character that represents the yesteryear star of Bollywood (Fig. 2.23). She is portrayed as a drunk and fallen woman, whose loose morals and duplicitous character are very well highlighted in the movie. MIP has selected Florence Ezekiel Nadira, a Bagdadi-Jewish actress to play the role of Anjana. By that time Nadira was famous for her vamp roles in Hindi films, like *Shree 420* (1956). Through Anjana, the select movie unveils the hidden practices in Bombay film industry, where aspiring men have to get support from other leading stars to get a chance in films. The three young men, who are in Anjana’s home at late night, to satisfy her physical and sexual needs, illustrate this fact.

![Fig.2.23 Anjana, the yesteryear star of Bollywood.](image-url)
2.3.2. Superstition and Spirituality

Merchant Ivory’s *Bombay Talkie* records the seamless coexistence and mediation of both superstition and spirituality in India in the 1970s. From Mala’s and Lucia’s experiences in India the spectators can trace their belief in superstition and spirituality, as they go through different phases of their relation with the hero. We can see that in the movie, Mala and Vikram face the problem of infertility for years. Mala prefers to meet a guru and to go for a pilgrimage to Badrinath for conceiving a child rather than medical consultations. Vikram looks unaffected in Mala’s presence, though he hype his condition to Lucia and grieves the absence of a son to conduct his funeral ceremonies. Ironically he recites Gayathri mantra to impress Lucia.

Though Lucia comes to India to make a film on India, she finds it hard to distance herself from the process of film making. In an interesting scene, we can see the western self of Lucia interfering while participating in a Rakshabandhan ceremony in Vikram’s house. Not only does Lucia come to Vikram’s house uninvited, she insists on gifting a watch to Vikram instead of a Rakhee, which provokes Mala and other women, who were part of the celebration. An offended Lucia throws away the watch and walks out of Vikram’s house and she later tells Vikram that she cannot understand the customs of India. Here, Merchant Ivory deals with another nuanced representation of a western woman, who in this case is American, whose self interferes with her own perception of India. Lucia, though she seems interested in India becomes perplexed with its ‘bloody customs’.

Lucia’s decision to get away from Vikram and to involve herself in a spiritual way of life also bring to light the superstitious facet of her personality, who relies briefly on the palm-reading faculty of Anjana. A desperate Lucia is told that she brings bad luck to people around her. While predicting the same, Anjana tries to seduce Vikram after causing a rift by sowing superstitious seeds in Lucia’s mind. By using the dramatic instances of palm-reading and withholding her prediction, she manipulates the already dormant insecurities and superstitions within Lucia, and the incident drives her to an ashram to seek solace. Her Western perception of India as a spiritual place that makes
people ‘peaceful’ also forced her to lead an ashram life. But, the ashram gives a rude shock to Lucia, as she witnesses everything but spirituality there. The Guru conducts spiritual talks and elaborate prayers. Lucia faces segregation everywhere, where women are treated as servants in the ashram, to feed the Guru. The Guru also seems to make erotic advances towards Lucia, making her cautious of ashram life and eager to get out of there. Lucia believes that something is inherently wrong with her. She seems fatalist and conscious of bad omens like funeral, and pearls and stone jewels.

2.3.3. Alcohol and Cigars

Unlike the earlier movies of MIP, here, in *Bombay Talkie*, the spectators are given a first-hand critique of the changing trends of the upper class Indian youth, especially of the film field. Many shots are filled with smokes of luxurious cigars (Fig.2.24) and drinks. The night club scenes with cabaret songs and bar sequences filled with smoke and luxury are indicative of a neo-liberal lifestyle among the newly emerging upper class of modern India. Interestingly, the night club itself becomes a space on which the synthesis of tradition and modernity happens in a convincing manner. Here, in this space, a sari-clad woman sings Indian mantras with the accompaniment of western music. The diners entertain themselves with drinks, smokes, music and food. Many dramas of romance, jealousies, gossips, seduction and disenchantment are enacted in night clubs, which are shown as closed spaces of elitism and exclusivity, where the upper class men and women socialize and relax.
Since the movie is about the Bombay cinema industry, alcohol and cigar also become important characters, for Indian films from 1950s onwards relate cigar smoking with romance, style and power according to the mood of the hero. They also become symbols of luxury and they stereotype men and women accordingly. In the select movie both cigar smoking and alcohol consumption of Vikram also reveal the flaws in his behavior. Unlike alcohol, cigar becomes symbolic of male pride, as Hari at first rejects one from Vikram. This reveals the cultural difference between the two. Lucia smokes and drinks and she is contrasted with the orthodox Mala, who is genuinely averse to such habits. We can find that such stereotyping was already prevalent in the Bollywood films of the 60s. Movies like Sahib Bibi aur Ghulam (1962), Gumnaam (1965), Kismat (1968), Caravan (1971), etc. highlight the issues, concerns and anxieties of alcohol consumption in men and women. In this movie, Anjana and Lucia smoke and drink, and these symbols make them at once sexually independent, vulnerable and easily available.
2.4. Nawab: the Connecting Link of Two Decades

Merchant Ivory’s *Heat and Dust* is an adaptation of Jhabvala’s Booker prize winning novel of the same title (1975). The movie was released in UK, France, Australia, Portugal, Denmark and USA (1983), Belgium and Finland (1984), Japan (1988), Peru (1990) and Singapore (1996). It is a historical film, with respect to its theme of discussion, as one of the heroines searches for her roots and re-creates an identity in the 1980s, following the paths of her great grandmother of 1920s. The plot of the movie moves between the past and present as it is set in the 1920s and the 1980s. Though Shashi Kapoor has active role in 1920s only, as the Nawab of Khatam, he becomes a relevant presence in the entire movie, as he becomes the invisible thread that connects two decades.

![Image of the Nawab's royalty in front of the British administrators.](image)

The film makes use of interview, paintings, various narrative techniques, like the voice over narrations of Olivia, Olivia’s letters to her sister, tape recorder and, an album along with architecture and monuments to picturise the (hi)story of 1920s. In the introduction we can see foreign women salute the Nawab in his royal palace, initially in black and white, and then in color with Hindustani background music. It showcases the power of an Indian Nawab in colonial India (Fig.2.25).
For the introduction of the characters of two time spans of two places, the film makes use of paintings and background scores. These paintings are taken from *Antiquities of Dacca* of Charles D’Oyly, Collector of Dacca (1808), which was the capital of Mogul reign. His paintings, printed as folios from 1814 to 1827, provide a satirical portrayal of Anglo-Indian life. The first painting, ‘Remains of a bridge near the Tantee Bazar’, with an English classical in the background introduces Satipur (Utter Pradesh) of the 1920s (Fig. 2.26).

![The Nineteen Twenties In the Civil Lines at Satipur](image)

Fig. 2.26 Remains of a bridge near the Tantee Bazar

Boats, boatmen, trees, a river and Mogul remnants in the painting depict the geography of the 1920s, along with the main characters of the time.

Second painting, ‘Mosque in Dacca’ (Fig. 2.27) introduces the palace of Khatam (Gujarat), of ruined Mogul architecture, overgrown wild trees, with Hindustani music in the background.
Here the Nawab, Begum (his mother), Harry (Nawab’s English courtier), Douglas Rivers (Asst. Collector), Olivia (Mrs. Douglas), and other English officials like Mr. Crawford (Dist. Collector), Dr. Saunders, etc are introduced. The third painting, ‘Paugla pool, with part of Dacca in the extreme distance’ (Fig.2.28), reveals the story of 1982-Satipur town, with river bank, ruined buildings, and trees.

With the background of Hindustani music, characters like Anne (Olivia’s great granddaughter), Chid (an American in search of Nirvana), Inder Lal (Indian government servant), and his family are introduced. The final painting, ‘The Fort and N. Gateway of
the Great Kuttra’ (Fig.2.29), details a rustic place with working men, elephant, horse and dogs, with remnants of ancient dynasty in the background.

![Fig.2.29 ‘The Fort and N. Gateway of the Great Kuttra’](image)

Thus the movie documents two decades of Indian history as a fiction, by the help of colonial paintings in the introductory part.

### 2.4.1. India in the 1920s:

*Heat and Dust* begins with the (hi)story of 1920s and it throws light on various socio-cultural and political incidents in colonial India. The movie documents British administration and its struggles with the local Nawab (Shashi Kapoor) and West’s perceptions on Indians, in Satipur and Khatm of 1920s.

#### 2.4.1.1 British Administration in Colonial Times

Though the movie is set in Pre-Independence India, it celebrates the supremacy of the Nawab through the welcome ceremony (Fig. 2.30) and the grand feast he conducts for the Western administrators.
We can also trace the undercurrent of British administration as they drink for ‘the King Emperor’\(^{43}\). Though the Nawab seems naïve and co-operative in his interactions with the British officials, he has secret alliance with the ‘wanted dacoit’ Tikaram, and creates turbulence and robbery in rural villagers in the sly. Thus, the local situation is so complicated that Khatam becomes the ‘White man’s burden’ as they have to deal directly with the dacoit and indirectly the Nawab, who is in complicit alliance with the dacoit. The Nawab also becomes an interesting, yet treacherous character, as he himself reveals in many instances, as he narrates the treason of Amanullah Khan (Fig. 2.31), who treacherously murders his guests during an invited feast.

\(^{43}\) George V was the ruler of Britain during that time (1910-1936).
In another instance, we can trace instances of nostalgia in the movie. Mrs. Saunders, wife of Dr. Saunders, who lost their child in India, seems pessimistic and always longs for ‘home’. Nostalgia for home is also in the words of Harry, who enjoys an English food in Olivia’s home, in summer. As we can also see from its title, ‘heat and dust’ becomes a major character that too a harrowing one in the film as well as in the novel it is adapted from. When Harry suffers from heat and ill-health, Olivia gives him a Dickens for reading and relaxation. Paintings and portraits of English people, white bed-sheets and pillows, high ceilings, light walls, candles, home décor, large windows, houseplants, marble bathing tub, mosquito netting, white colored curtains, tiger skin rug, wooden partition, matted floor, flower vases, etc, portray the Victorian home decor of the 1920s (Fig. 2.32), which is decorated with orientalist fineries. In a symbolic display of the home décor, we can see pieces of taxidermy on the walls, which signify the authority of the West over India.

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44 He enjoys tea, toast and marmalade, boiled eggs and English newspaper in Olivia’s home.
MIP does not deal explicitly with the freedom struggle of India. However, we can see passing references to it in a couple of scenes as a minor irritant to the British Raj. The movie also mentions Gandhi’s struggles against the British, with gunshot sounds in the background. The 1920s were remarkable in Indian freedom struggle as they witnessed protests against the colonial regime, under the leadership of Gandhi, like the Non-cooperation Movement (1920-22), the Chauri-Chaura incident (1922), the Satyagraha campaign (1928)⁴⁵, etc.

2.4.1.2. Gaze on the ‘other’

*Heat and Dust* explicitly reveals the superior gaze of the West on the colonized in many instances. While the male supervisors, especially Douglas, consider Indians as ‘transparent like children’, female characters are paranoid of their Indian servants. From Mrs. Saunders, Olivia gets a bad impression of Indian servants, who are eager to know a white woman (Fig. 2.33). She relates this with the spicy food Indians take.

⁴⁵ These political incidents are related to Gandhi’s non-violent methods (*satyagraha*) to defeat the colonizers from India. Under his leadership Indians protest against the British regime, by rejecting foreign products and adapting locally made things. This ultimately led to clashes between the protesters and military.
Douglas also advises Olivia, not to wear the night dress outside the room ‘you shouldn’t let the servants see you like this’ (Fig.2.34). He even suspects Indian’s voyeurism.

Doctor Saunders’ grim moralism towards his Indian patients and his wife’s prejudices, and Mrs. Crawford’s comments on Gandhi illustrate the superior attitude of the West over the colonized.

**2.4.1.3. The Purdah Quarters**

The Nawab’s welcome ceremony of his English administrators with family gives a visual extravaganza of the imperial heritage of India. His royal attire, pink turban, glittering costume, etc, with servants in uniform around illustrate his glorious
importance. In that scene we can also see the royal women in Zenana, watching the ceremony (Fig.2.35). Proliferation of turban and Purdah heritage in the scene reflects the hierarchical power structure in Indian royal households. The power structure of Muslim palaces in the 1920s is also envisaged here.

The Purdah segregate Indian women, but we are also given a glimpse into the covert curious gaze which comes from behind the veil. At the same time the women of Zenana celebrate their lives in ways unimaginable to western women. They smoke Hukkah and dance to Western songs, and they gamble. In the movie, the western gaze and the reversal gaze are elaborated with subtle nuances.
The women in the Zenana include Begum- Nawab’s mother (Fig. 2.37) (acted by Madhur Jaffrey), and her assistants and maids. They are contrasted with the foreign women with respect to their costume. While the Western women sit on chairs, the women of the palace sit on an embroidered carpet. The way in which the maids surrounding the Begum reflect the hierarchy among them is clearly portrayed through their ornaments and outfits. This explicates the position of different classes of women inside the palace. The Begum’s telescope represents her authoritative position (Fig. 2.36) and her secret gaze on the incidents in the palace. Through the telescope the Begum is “creating and sustaining a power relation (independent of the person who exercises it)” (Foucault, 201).

46Here, some upper class fair women sitting near the Begum, young girls in beautiful dress in front of her, while some dark colored maids in white dress standing in a far distance.
Though she is isolated from the public ceremonies, her dominating gaze on the incidents of the palace reveal her omniscience. Her ultimate surveillance regulates the whole incidents in the palace, just like Jeremy Bentham’s architectural design. From the words of Harry we can understand that Begum is “a perfect eye that nothing would escape” (Foucault, 173). The Purdah quarters also carry mysterious histories, like the practice of black magic, rumors about Begum’s poisoning of the Nawab’s first wife, etc. Through these incidents, the movie subverts the secluded Purdah quarters, where the reversal of gaze occurs.

2.4.1.4. Dossier of health in India

The movie begins in an Indian Hospital, with an English nurse and a doctor, Dr. Saunders, informing Douglas about the disappearance of his pregnant wife, Olivia. We are shown a glimpse of Indians crowding around the hospital waiting for their turn. We are informed about the pseudo-scientific practices of abortion in India. Though abortion was illegal during that time, the villagers practised unhealthy methods to abort children, which ultimately led women to hospitals. The audience also gets a hint of Olivia’s abortion, where the midwives insert cloth and twig, to abort the child (Fig. 2.38).
The abortion is symbolic, as Olivia tries to get rid of her extra marital liaison with the Nawab, in a violent way. Merchant Ivory suggests that the relation between the Raj and the colony deteriorated by the 1920s, and came to a possible violent end by that time. Though Olivia aborted her illegitimate child, destroying the seeds of miscegenation, she spends the rest of her life as Nawab’s mistress in Simla, a hill-station and the summer capital of the Raj. Very subtle resonances of the trade-romance between the British East India Company and India, which turned bitter and the violent consequences during the time of the Nationalist struggle are brought out implicitly in the story of the Nawab and Olivia. Olivia’s plight of ending up as Nawab’s concubine also shows Britain’s slow divestiture of power to India, and the clandestine sustenance of the colonial romance.

We can see in another thread of the story, how Harry devalues Dr. Puran, an Indian doctor, as a quack and a ‘witch doctor’. These instances are pointers to the spread of allopathic practices as scientific and rational treatment and the denigration of indigenous medical practices as pseudo-scientific, and irrational bordering on superstition and witchcraft. The movie through many deft maneuvers discusses the pathetic health of Indians. Their hygiene, over population, heat, dust and eating habits are perpetually blamed for the increasing ailments and deaths in colonial India.
2.4.2. India in the 1980s:

Heat and Dust documents the history of India in the 1920s and 80s through the female protagonists Olivia and her great grand-niece Anne. Anne travels to India to search out the roots of Olivia and she stays with Inder Lal, and turns native in her dressing and routines. Chid, an American in search of spirituality is depicted in a rather satirical way that opens up debates about the superficiality of Hippie culture in India. Inder Lal’s home, Anne’s boarding place is again arranged as a stereotypical Indian home with baskets, pots, brass vessels, cushion chair, wooden shelf, bottles, carved wooden pillars, stained walls, colored window panes, etc,. The movie also deals with the issues in colonial and post-colonial India.

2.4.2.1. Spirituality for Indians and Foreigners

Though Heat and Dust portrays the western quest for spirituality through Chid and Anne, Chid is representative of the Hippie generation, westerner’s delusion of finding a guru to practice spirituality in India. Chid is ironically represented as a man, running away from West, a place of multi-national corporations and material powers. He was considered weird for his spiritual cravings. His strange association of the power of meditation on sex makes him a complex character. According to him Indians like ‘giving’, as good Karma for the next life. We can see through certain subtly humorous scenes Chid’s failure to live as a yogi. Though Chid talks about the presence of a ‘light around our body that controls our mind’ and recites some mantras, which deceives Inder’s mother and wife, he tries to molest Anne when he gets a chance. The entire idea of ‘moksha’ is shown in a satirical light. For the West, East becomes a path to attain ‘moksha’, while the Indians approach moksha as a problem solver.

Through the family of Inder Lal, Merchant Ivory tries to portray the irony of Indian spiritual life. The first instance of mixing medicine and spirituality is illustrated when Inder Lal, an educated, middle class Indian sends his wife Ritu to a pilgrimage to Amarnath to cure her epilepsy.
Inder Lal’s home becomes a citadel of mixing superstitions with medicine as his mother practices some mumbo jumbo to cure Ritu’s epilepsy (fig. 2.39). Though Anne suggests a psychiatrist, Chid exhorts the family to practice yoga to cure her illness.

The pilgrim centers in India provide yet another spectacle of Indian crowds, squalor and filth. Through body-scaping, a vast array of bodies, are represented in many stages of display, from begging to appealing for charity. We are also shown a glimpse of a widow, who is thrown out of her house by her in-laws. While the pilgrims worship the gods inside the temples with marigold garlands and joss stick, the temple premises teem with beggars, disabled and abandoned people. The irony of ritualistic worshipping and the gruesome practices in real life are juxtaposed in these scenes.

2.4.2.2. Health and Hygiene

The story of the 1980s is almost an extension of the 1920s, in the case of how health is perceived in India. Though India has become an Independent nation, it still struggles with health problems. Harry advises Anne (Fig. 2.40), not to take water, food and salads from any Indian streets.
It is later illustrated through the deterioration of Chid’s health, who suffers kidney and liver problems in India. He longs for the cleanliness and hygiene in Washington even in his most squalid spiritual stage. The movie replays a lot of western stereotypes like hysterical Indian women, superstitious and lecherous men, the practice of black magic, which is reminiscent of voodoo, etc. Like in the 1920s, this ironically happens in the 80s, when India boasts of Independence and modernity. Anne’s search for a midwife for abortion also portrays the availability of illegal abortion system in India as in 20s, though it is prohibited by law.

2.4.2.3. Gender Space

While Olivia and the Begum were the mouthpieces of different classes of women, of two different traditions, living in India in the 20s, here, Anne and Ritu embody the gender positions in the 80s. While Anne seems independent and open to accept an Indian child, though in a clandestine manner, Ritu is an obedient middle-class, orthodox housewife (Fig. 2.41). Her red bindi, sari and bangles and her traditional hairdo ensnares her in the household with the steel and copper vessels.
Like Indu of *The Householder*, a stereotypical housewife, she is also nostalgic of her father’s home. She is reticent and shy and unable to communicate in English. She is also shown as illiterate and an example of the prevalent early marriage system in India. She seems silent in most part of the movie, and is totally unaware of her husband’s affair with Anne. She seems fond of Chid in a naïve kind of way and follows his meditation practices meticulously.

With the passage of time, we can see that Olivia’s bungalow is transformed into a government office (Fig. 2.42 and Fig. 2.43), where Inder works.
The red-tapism and vestiges of British bureaucracy can be seen in the piled up files on the table, the noisy typewriter, picture of Gandhi on the wall, clock and tube lights, etc. Olivia’s bungalow now effectively portrays an Indian office of the 80s. The thronging crowds of people inside and outside the office, men and boys in shabby western outfits, the parked cycles, scooters and rickshaws and the street sellers, create a picture of the modern India, caught in between development and chaos.

We can also see the way Indian men desirously gaze at Anne (Fig. 2.44), which makes Inder uncomfortable, and mentions them as ‘just ignorant fools’.

As in *The Householder*, Merchant Ivory typecasts an Indian middleclass family through Inder Lal’s family as well. Inder is a government servant and his wife spends most of her time in kitchen. In his work place also we cannot find out a single woman. The absence of women in public spaces and their confinement in private, domestic and religious spaces also speak volumes about Indian society. Most of the women’s conversations also revolve around marriage and children, as we can see in Merchant Ivory movies.
2.4.2.4. India: Nation of Festivals and Busy Streets

Anne’s travels and peregrinations are captured with a reversal of gaze, the spectators get to see the landscape of Indian streets and roads. The roads are always crowded with people and vehicles. And, we can also see the vulgarity of modernity, like huge pipes dumped on the side of the road, beside which vegetable selling also happens. Since the movie is set in a town, we get to see more bicycles and scooters on the busy streets.

*Heat and Dust* also portrays India not only a nation of celebrations but also as a place for exotic celebrations. In the scenes of *Tazkiyah* procession, a cornucopia of colors and objects with musical bands, float of decorated arches, painted lions, multi-color mirror works, acrobats and dancing men; the movie creates a festive season in Indian streets (Fig. 2.45). Another occasion of celebration is at the shrine of Baba Firdaus, built by the Nawab’s ancestor Amanulla Khan. This later becomes a pilgrim center for both Hindus and Muslims. As Anne wonders ‘everything gets mixed up here’, in Indian soil.

![Fig.2.45 The Tazkiyah procession.](image)

From the analysis of *The Householder, Shakespeare Wallah, Bombay Talkie* and *Heat and Dust*, we can trace the style of Merchant Ivory productions in documenting various aspects of Indian history from the 1920s to the 1980s through the protagonist, Shashi
Kapoor. While *The Householder* deals with the problems of middle class Indian youth in the Nehruvian era, *Shakespeare Wallah* bemoans the decline of the Shakespearean theatrical tradition or British literary tradition, in the age of films. Interestingly, when Sanju of *Shakespeare Wallah* stands as a confused and diffident youngster to accept his foreign love and English theatre, Vikram of *Bombay Talkie* becomes a satirical portrayal of an Indian film actor, bogus in his relations and superficial in his commitment to art. Through the protagonists of the select movies, MIP gives us a glimpse of the life and values of India after Independence.

The select movies, *The Householder, Shakespeare Wallah, Bombay Talkie*, and *Heat and Dust* narrate the continuous journey of India through decades, as a new nation, grappling with its difficult diversities. These movies showcase the various aspects of Indian middle/upper class men, through its heroes from that range from a householder, a playboy, a chocolate hero to a Nawab. Though the movies highlight the issues of class of various decades they are silent to the prevalent caste system of India throughout the ages. For instance, *Bombay Talkie* is remarkable in the history of Indian films as it is the first movie that popularized the Indian folk song, “Mere Angane Mein”, which is later used in Hindi films like *Maze Le Lo* (1975) and *Laawaris* (1981). The movie also documents the poor telecom service, song recording facilities, shooting process, streets of Bombay, and even family planning agendas in India during the 70s. As a meta-movie, it talks about the slice of life within the Hindi movie industry much before the nomenclature of Bollywood was assigned to it.
Reference
