Chapter 2

Cinema And Ideology

The cinema, the stage, the race course, the drinking booth and the opium den – all these enemies of society that have sprung up under the fostering influences of the present system threaten us on all sides.

Mahatma Gandhi

Bombay has devised a perfect formula to entice and amuse the illiterate multitude that forms the bulk of our film audience

Satyajit Ray

... so long as Hindi films are watched and their songs sung, India will survive.

Ramachandra Guha

In a sense all of Hindi cinema may be seen as Partition cinema.

Gauri Vishwanath and Salma Malik

In the winter of 1896 in Paris, when the Lumiere brothers – Auguste and Louis - first displayed “photographic images” on screen using a “cinematograph”, it transported many into what Maxim Gorky called ‘the kingdom of shadow’ (Fursteanau 2010: 1). Soon this strange combination of “art and technology” (Fursteanau 2010: 2), resulted in something of a butterfly effect as it gained popularity all over the world and created various socio-cultural aesthetic and economic changes. It didn’t take long to reach the Indian shores. On the night of July 7 1896, a few films were screened at the Watson
Hotel in Bombay and a fortunate few witnessed it. But it is here that the story takes an unexpected turn. As Mukul Kesavan writes:

Colonised countries like ours borrowed the short story, the novel and literary modernism itself from the West ... but the feature film as a fictional form is unique because it emerged exactly at the same time in India as it did in Britain or America ... The technology of film might have been elsewhere, but the art of cinema was fashioned at the same time as it was developed in the country cum direction sometimes called the west ... Cinema in India didn’t dance to the Western tunes; it marched to the beat of its own drum. (Kesavan 2012: n pag)

However even though it charted its own course, Hindi films have always been measured by the standards set by the standards of the West. And not surprisingly it has failed miserably. It had taken a long time for cinema in general to become a topic of serious discussion among academics. Philip Lutgendorf writes that:

The delay may have been reflected not merely the inertia of disciplines, but a more ingrained prejudice towards text over image that may be traced back at least to the Reformation and Enlightenment. The proliferation of ever more sophisticated technologies for the reproduction of images and especially of moving images in the 19th and 20th centuries was experienced by many scholars as a worrisome onslaught on the cerebral realm of verbal discourse. Hence film studies as a necessary discipline necessarily arose as an offshoot of literary criticism. (Lutgendorf 2006: 228-231)
Hindi cinema had to face a double subjugation: not only did it have to negotiate with the written versus the visual debate but also the alleged supremacy of Western cinema. It has been dismissed as low art with its formulaic narrative and the many digressions. In his book, *Our Films Their Films* (1967), Satyajit Ray blatantly proclaims in a chapter titled ‘What is Wrong with Indian films’, that Indian films would never measure up to the mark set by Western films. Having trained in the Italian neo-realist tradition (being a mentee of director Jean Renoir), he found its narrative structure, song and dance format and its over the top means of expression as its flaws and felt that its salvation lay in adopting the Italian neo-realist tradition (Ray 1967: 22). As a result of such negative opinion, it is not deemed fit or sophisticated for any serious attention and review by scholars. As Ashis Nandy and Vinay Lal comments:

> It is a cinema that appears terribly flawed by the canons of global film theory and almost globally disjunctive with the globally dominant aesthetics and concepts of good cinema. Its principal attractions – the carnivalesque atmosphere, the centrifugal story-line, the larger-than-life characters and stilted dialogue - also mark it out as flawed art and curious intrusion into the world of modern art forms. (Nandy and Lal 2006: xiii)

Another accusation that it has to deal with is that it is not original, having its genesis in the West. Mukul Kesavan writes that there is a tendency to look down on it because of its mixed form. This excessive focus on its “hybridity”, Kesavan notes, is due to a “post-colonial anxiety” that Indian efforts are “time-delayed re-runs of things” that have already completed their cycle in the West (Kesavan 2012: n pag). Such observations compounded its status as a second rate art form. What needed to change was the
Eurocentric lens of judging Hindi films and to accept it for its own distinct characteristics.

The ways of looking at Hindi cinema has gone through a drastic change in the 1990s. The advent of movements like postmodernism and its disregard for the high and low art binary, have ensured that Hindi films gets the intellectual scrutiny due to it. Today universities have opened their corridors to the study of films. The Hindi film industry or Bollywood as it is known today, has found its way in the works of novelists like Salman Rushdie. Rushdie’s works are a testament to the importance of the Hindi film industry. Sumita Chakravarty comments that in his novel, *Satanic Verses*, the Bombay film industry becomes the “allegorical representation of the postcolonial consciousness” (Chakravarty 1993: 1). It captures the transformation of “Indian national life” into a “global transnational culture” (Chakravarty 1993: 1). And it is Gabriel Farishta, the bollywood star in his novel, who captures the change in Indian filmic and socio-cultural history (Chakravarty 1993: 2). The relation between cinema and the nation state is also explored in Shashi Tharoor’s novel, *Show Business* (1992). Talking about the relevance of cinema, Tharoor writes that:

One is always looking for new creative metaphors to explore the Indian condition, and cinema was a particularly useful one ... And the whole process of manufacture of our modern myths on celluloid was one that I found fascinating as a creative issue in itself: How were these stories told? What do they mean to those who make them and those who see them? How do they relate to their lives? (Tharoor 1992: 38)
All these factors have contributed to a change in the way people have looked at Hindi films as mere meaningless entertainment. The new studies have raised doubts about the supposed universalism of film criticism as the only valid criteria for judging a film’s quality. The new interest in Hindi films has led to studies in two directions. Firstly the distinct flavours which differentiates it from the western films. Scholars like Ronnie Parciakvi, Ashis Nandy, Mukund Lathvii, M. K. Raghavendraviii, Vinay Lalix, to name a few, have pushed for a reading of Hindi films outside Western paradigms to a focus on its distinctive narrative and visual structure which can be traced to various sources: the epics, Hindu traditions and performative tradition.

Apart from these studies which focus on the impact of the epics, Hindu religious imagery and Hindu Sanskritic traditions in formulating theories about Indian cinema, there are others like Rachel Dwyerx, Ira Bhaskarxi, Richard Allen and Anjali Gera Royxii who talk about the influence of the Parsi theatre, Islamic connection and the impact of the Persian Arabic trope of the dastan or qissa.

Apart from such critical studies that focus on the narrative conventions and aesthetics of Hindi cinema, there is another line of criticism that uses the medium of cinema to explore the relation between society and the nation. Thus cinema has become an important site to reflect the socio-political reality of India. In her book, The Cinematic Imagination [sic]: Indian Popular Films as Social History (2003), Jyotika Virdi shows how through cinema the nation is portrayed and imagined and also how the ‘cultural politics’ influence films (Virdi 2003: 5). Ashis Nandy sees cinema as dictating and impacting every single aspect of Indian life. He goes on to add that Indian cinema gives a “bird’s eye view of politics” (1998: 1-5). It is critical analysis like these that
validates the idea of looking at Indian through its filmic texts. They attempt to find meaning or a method in the ‘madness’ of Hindi films. As Sumita Chakravarty writes:

Cinematic culture, like other forms of widely disseminated communal discourse, can then be seen as a mediated form of national consciousness ... Bombay cinema’s development alongside India’s (high) nationalist phase makes it an eminently contemporary mode of expression implicated in debates regarding national identity. (Chakravarty 1993: 8)

A look at the evolution of cinema from the beginning would help us to understand how the shifting socio-political landscape has directly or indirectly affected Hindi films. In the words of Vamsee Juluri, “The evolution of Indian cinema has paralleled that of India very closely, starting from the period of anti-colonial nationalism, through the Nehruvian era of nation building and into the present period of globalization” (Juluri 2013: 56).

Myths and legends of gods, saints and kings have always had an immense hold on the people of India. So it is no wonder that the distinction of becoming the first feature film of India belongs to Dada Saheb Phalke’s Raja Harishchandra (1913). However mention must be made of the various short features made in India after the Lumiere brothers showcased the first cinematic shots. The themes were “topical in nature” but most of them were displayed by foreign producers (Chakravarty 1993: 34). Even before Raja Harishchandra made its debut, R. G. Toney’s Pundalik, based on the life of a saint had already released in India on May 18, 1912 but it was shot by an English cameraman and hence lost the official distinction of being the first feature film to Raja Harischandra (Chakravarty 1993: 35). But the choice cannot be pinned down
only to the enchantment of people with mythologies. Vamsee Juluri writes that Phalke’s choice was propelled by the spirit of nationalism which had engulfed the subcontinent at that time (Juluri 2013: 59). Legend has it that after having viewed a film on Christ, he too wanted to portray the Indian gods in films and in the process bring the people together by helping them get in touch with their own culture. With *Raja Harishchandra*, the Indian nationalists “saw the possibility of an imagined community that mythological cinema represented” (Juluri 2013: 59). *Raja Harishchandra* was a classic example of how a Western import was moulded to strike back at the West. In this regard, Bill Ashcroft writes in his essay “Bollywood and Post-Modernity” that:

> When we observe the cultural production of colonized and formerly colonized societies, we see that ‘resistance’ to the homogenizing pressures of modernity, imperialism and colonial culture occurs through transformation of those influences rather than simple (and sometimes futile) opposition. (Ashcroft 2012 : 2)

The ideological project of *Raja Harishchandra* is very similar to Jawaharlal Nehru’s monumental work *The Discovery Of India* which is an attempt to provide Indians with a common unifying past. Thus the “India of Cinema, much like the India of reality, was from the beginning, an imagined one” (Juluri 2013: 56). Benedict Anderson has opined in his famous treatise on imagined communities as to how print media plays an important role in bringing together people who are strangers. He writes about how the invention of the printing press helped people in Europe to imagine that they were bound together by similar experiences. In the same way, the choice of mythologies helped foster the spirit of anti colonial nationalism in India. Writing about the political importance of *Raja Harishchandra*, Ashis Rajadhyaksha says that it:
Wasn’t the first film made in India; it wasn’t even the first mythological. Its claim of having begun something new lay partially in the manner of its production, but mostly in its conscious claim that it inaugurated a particular understanding of an Indian cinema, as against films merely made or shown in India. In providing ... an answer to ... what really is Indian about Indian cinema – Phalke relied on the larger political movement of _swadeshi_ ... that dominated the subcontinent at that time. Phalke translated his political ambition into his film partly through his choice of theme of theme, and partly in the way he announced his project – as a cottage industry enterprise he named Phalke’s Films ... Phalke’s film was an indigenous enterprise in the classically _swadeshi_ sense. (Rajadhyaksha 2016: 2)

The mythologies served as allegories that reflected the issues of the time and were “necessitated by the political situation of India as a colonized nation struggling at every level to throw off the colonial yoke” (Bhaskar 1998: 52-53). The success of these mythological in bringing about the spirit of nationalism could be measured from the fact that in 1918 a Censor Board was set up to monitor the kind of films which were being made. In fact in 1921, a film called _Bhakta Vidur_ was banned because the authorities felt that it referred to the political situation – right from Vidur wearing a Gandhi cap to the songs extolling the virtues of the spinning wheel (Bhaskar 1998: 53).

The 1930s and 1940s were dominated by the genre of historicals and saint biographies of the saints (Juluri 2013: 18). Issues of social reform and regeneration, which were gaining ground in the political environment, were being referred to in these films apart from the fight against the colonisers. The reference was done in an
allegorical manner by combining “history and tradition” (Bhaskar 1998: 53). *Sant Tukaram* (1936) is an important filmic text in this regard. Based on the life of the bhakti saint Tukaram, the film acquires a more symbolic meaning when seen in the context of the anti colonial movement in the 1930s\textsuperscript{xiii}. As the nationalists tried to formulate a distinct indigenous cultural identity, films such as *Saint Tukaram* worked as allegories “functioning in the typological manner by interpreting the meaning and relevance of the past for the present and future” (Bhaskar 1998: 57). The films of this period also took up the issues of child marriage and untouchability.

By the time India became free from colonial rule, it is this link to a glorious past fostered by the Nehruvian vision as encapsulated in his *Discovery of India*, that India cinema hung on even after the ravages of partition.

The partition saw the mass migration of film actors, writers and producers from Lahore but the trauma of partition was not something they were ready to portray on the silver screen\textsuperscript{xiv}. In his essay, “The Lahore Film Industry”, Ishtiaq Ahmed writes that when he interviewed B. R. Chopra on why he did not make a film on partition though he himself had fled from Lahore, Chopra replied that since “all communities were victims as well as culprits of violence, he did not want to stoke old wounds” (Ahmed 2014: n pag). When Ramanand Sagar was asked as to why he did not adapt his novel *Aur Insaan Maar Gaya* into a film, his reply echoed that of B. R. Chopra:

He feared it would stir the vile passions and hatred of 1947. He made a very interesting observation that that what can be read as a piece of literature could prove to be an igniter of communal and atavistic feelings when transmitted through motion pictures. Therefore he asserted that it
was best that *Aur Insaan Marr Gya* remained a novel and was not made into a film. (Ahmed 2014: n pag)

This fear of being a catalyst for inciting violence, may perhaps be why it took more than fifty years for Amrita Pritam’s novel, *Pinjar* to be made into a film. There were many factors attributed to the silence of the industry regarding the topic of partition. The first was the film censorship laws imposed in 1951 which restricted filmic representation of Partition for fear that it might incite the people (Daiya 2011: 88). Secondly scholars like Sumita Chakravarty have pointed to the fact that the events were too close to 1947 and too painful to be confronted and dealt with as yet (Chakravarty 1993: 55). Bhaskar Sarkar writes that paucity of Partition films is a paradox, given:

the existence of film footage of Partition/Independence and of surrounding events (for example the 1946 riots in Calcutta; refugees on the road, on the roofs of trains and in camps; Nehru’s famous midnight speech in Parliament; and Gandhi’s cremation in 1948). After all, there were armies of film crew – associated with the pre-independence government Information Films of India, private film-producing bodies like Wadia Movietone and Motwani Company, and international news agencies like Agence-France-Presse and Reuters – ready to document the historic end of the British raj and the birth of an independent nation-state. (Sarkar 2010: 48)

However mention must be made of the film 1949 film *Lahore* which brings up the topic of abducted women. But the gravity of the issue gets swept by the, what Kavita Daiya calls the ‘Don Juan’ type antics of the hero (Daiya 2011: 89). The film is similar to the
2001 film *Gadar: Ek Prem Katha* which deals with the complexities regarding the rehabilitation of abducted women. However, made in the format of the popular bollywood film, the focus is shifted to the larger than life actions of the hero. Like *Lahore*, there was another commercial film by V. Shantaram called *Apna Desh* (1949). However not much is known about it as the copy of the film has been lost (Sarkar 2010: 170).

If *Lahore* dealt with the partition of Punjab, then at about the same time in the Bengali film industry, a film called *Chinnamol* (Uprooted, 1951) by Nemai Ghosh dealt with the partition of Bengal. However in *Lahore*, Ghosh opted for a realistic depiction. The realistic portrayal was achieved by shooting the film at Sealdah railway station with the place filled with an exodus of refugees from East Bengal and this kind of capturing is quite “rare however extensive is the catalogue of relevant Indian cinema” (Ghosh 2016: 272). Produced by people with strong political beliefs, both *Chinnamol* and another film *Natun Yehudi* “adopt an explicitly polemical stance” in depicting partition and its displacement (Sarkar 2010: 175).

Coming back to Hindi films, apart from *Lahore*, I.S. Johar’s *Nastik* (1954) was another film in the 1950s where there was a direct reference to partition. The film uses documentary footage of refugees and the rioting is not shown directly but through a “silhouette” shot (Sarkar 2010: 172). While in films like Bibhu Mitra’s *Shabnam* (1948), Raj Kapoor’s *Aag* (1949), there is an indirect reference to Partition where “the original event may get transformed into other events” (Ghosh 2016: 256-266). According to Astrid Erill:
remembering and forgetting are two sides – or different processes – of the same coin, that is memory. Forgetting is the very condition for remembering. Total recall, after all, the complete memory of every single event in the past would amount to forgetting ... forgetting is necessary for memory to operate economically, for it to be able to recognize patterns. (Erill 2011: 9)

In Hindi cinema, the reference to partition was also done indirectly through different ways. Indirect allusion to partition was done through “Conscious displacements, subconscious, even unintended allusions; accidental traces” (Sarkar 2010: 92). Thus the narratives would focus on, “Physical injury resulting in bodily scars and wound, reunion of separated families ... the dishonoured woman, the illegitimate child and suspicions of paternity (Ghosh 2016: 269). In fact the common themes in most Hindi films in general – lovers separated due to family opposition, feuding families, or the trope of brothers separated due to various circumstances – are in a way poignant reminders of the dislocation and trauma of partition (Vishwanath and Salma 2009: 63). The division of families and separation of lovers symbolises the division of the subcontinent and of its people during partition (Vishwanath and Malik 2009: 64). According to psychoanalysis, this indirect reference is also a way to reflect the trauma of 1947 and Hindi Cinema achieved this through “transformed narratives” (Ghosh 2016: 266). In this regard Suvir Kaul writes:

We have not forgotten, for we memorialize selectively, and thus produce the authorised histories of the time, histories that are sanctioned by the state and its institutions, or by smaller collectivities. For the most part
however (to use a psychoanalytic truism) we remember by refusing to remember it. (Kaul 2001: 2)

There were many films and documentaries which took up the process of nation formation and the independence struggle where partition is not the central theme but only a minor event (Daiya 2011: 88). Documentaries like Azadi ka Utsav (1947) and Phani Mazumdar’s film Andolan (1951) – all refer to the freedom struggle and independence (Daiya 2011: 88). Words like azadi, andolan, utsav – all point to how 1947 was viewed not as a painful memory but something which can liberate people. In order to illustrate this point Sumita Chakravarty quotes filmmaker Jabbar Patel’s observation “Freedom was a romantic ideal and on this was built the classic Hindi film” (Chakravarty 1993: 31).

The cinema after independence was guided by the Nehruvian ideal of progress, tolerance and modernity. As Vamsee Juluri writes:

By the time India became independent and began to grow into a state, it was Nehru’s vision that came to prevail on India. The enduring legacy of Nehru ... and to some extent the cinema of this time would be faith in the state. In time the state, would fall from grace in the world of cinema ... however in the 1950s, the cinematic vision of India was not anywhere close to losing faith in the nation. (Juluri 2013: 67)

The actor whose films reflected the optimism of the age was Dilip Kumar. Film stars have played a huge role in propagating certain ideologies. As Pramod Nayar writes, “Celebrities serve a social function because of their cultural, symbolic, economic and political power, which is constantly enforced and reinforced through mass media
representations” (Nayar 2009: 7). In India, film stars are also looked upon as Gods. This reverence can be explained by the concept of the ‘darshanic’ image. In India, darshan refers to the act of gazing at the image of God in order to experience the divine powers. According to Ravi Vasudevan:

In this practise the devotee is permitted to behold the image of the deity, and is privileged and benefitted by the permission, in contrast to a concept of looking that assigns power to the beholder by reducing the image to an object. Darshan has a wider purchase being invoked in discourses of social and political authority as well. (Vasudevan 2000: 114)

The concept of Darshan can be transformed to the domain of Indian cinema where spectators go to halls for a darshan of stars who are transformed into national symbols. In his book, Nehru’s Hero: Dilip Kumar in The Life of India (2004), Lord Meghnand Desai places Dilip Kumar as the quintessential Nehruvian hero whose career was:

a reflection of the course of India since Independence ... and who developed a range of ... characters that reflected the idealism and optimism ... Dilip Kumar was a staunch public supporter of Nehru and his ideals of secularism and socialism ... In the 1964 film Leader, for which Dilip Kumar wrote the story, these ideals are clearly reflected and applauded ... A new nation thus acquired a national institution, indeed a national storyteller in the Hindi cinema. A common set of men and women began to have a following across regions, languages and religions. Only a small number of politicians, mainly famous because of
their contribution during the Independence struggle has the same wider reach that this small common set of filmstars has. Nehru was of course the principal politician with a national reach ... He was engaged in nation building in a unique way... This effort inspired everyone including filmmakers to play their own part in the national story-telling. This is where Dilip Kumar’s life in the films of the Nehru era becomes a vital part of the national story telling ... Indians looked to their Prime Minister’s speeches for didactic guidance but to their film heroes and heroines for the models. (Desai 2004: 3)

The 50s was a time when the Five Year plans were started and with it started the transformation towards modernity under the guidance of Nehru. In his essay “Against Silence and Forgetting”, Jonathan D. Greenberg uses Clifford Geertz’s theory of ‘integrative revolution’ to explain the phenomenon where:

The social equilibrium of the new era of new states pushed towards setting aside or forgetting Partition’s trauma in order to enable the fullest attention to the pressing tasks at hand, and above all, the obligations of development, political and economic ... these nationalist imperatives powerfully informed the cadres sociaux of partition’s collective memory for new Indian ... citizens. (Greenberg 2008: 256)

Films of Dilip Kumar like Naya Daur (1957) and Leader (1964) were part of this project of creating a collective memory for the people. They were seen as subtle tributes to Nehru’s policies and can be seen as capturing the impact of the various social and economic policies on the lives of the people (Juluri 2013: 68). What is interesting is that
the man who carried the vision of Nehru on his shoulders had to himself negotiate the communal disharmony created by 1947. Born as Yusuf Khan, Dilip Kumar decided to go with his Hindu name as he was unsure of whether he would be able to endear himself to the masses as a Muslim actor (Talbot 2000: 58). This is yet another grim reminder of how amidst the narrative of progress, the communal disharmony created by partition still continued to influence the decisions of the people. In fact according to Talbot, Dilip Kumar who was careful enough to not play Muslim characters, agreed on playing the role of Salim in Mughal-e-Azam because the Nehruvian ideals of secularism was to be found in the film (Talbot 2000: 58).

Another development seen, which continued for twenty years after 1947, was the production of documentaries by the Film Division of India which were to be screened before the beginning of any movie (Ghosh 2016: 269). The main focus of the documentaries was on “the symbols of modernism as the tools of nation building, massive developmental projects and public services that the state was committed to provide” (Ghosh 2016: 269) Thus drawing on the relation between memory and culture while analysing the importance of forgetting the dastardly side of 1947, Ghosh writes that recalling it did not serve any purpose and hence forgetting them and redirecting energies in developing the nation on “a modernist mode” was considered more appropriate (Ghosh 2016: 269).

However the films did not only depict a euphoric nation marching towards progress. The miserable existence of the poor, unequal distribution of wealth and corruption were issues that are to be found in films such as Shree 420. But the problems were still in their nascent stage to wipe out the euphoria of independence. As Juluri writes:
In time the state would fall from grace in the world of cinema ...
However in the 1950s, the cinematic vision of India was not anywhere close to losing faith in the nation or its institutions ... it would take a long hard look at some of its failures and record, in its own register of intense feelings and tested relationships and hard times ... but the struggle against injustice, tyranny and deprivation were often presented within the terms of a moral struggle. In the end faith was re-allotted to the state for taking India forward, materially and, as it were, spiritually. (Juluri 2013: 69)

Mention must be made of Mehboob Khan’s *Mother India* (1957), where the mother does not hesitate to kill her son in her fight against injustice. All is well in Nehruvian world, even when it is inhabited by greedy zamindars, when the mother picks up cudgels against evil. The 19th century evocation of the spiritual superiority of the mother figure is again evoked in the film. The mother becomes not only the “source of life and sustenance, but as the custodian of the moral order as well” (Juluri 2013: 66).

Amidst the depiction of the euphoric march of the nation, mention must be made of the two films on partition made towards the beginning of the 1960s. They were Manmohan Desai’s *Chalia* (1960) and Yash Chopra’s *Dharamputra* (1961). *Dharamputra* is considered as one of the first films “that addressed the communal crisis as well as partition as a social and political reality ... the film addressed the issue of Hindu fundamentalism in Partition” (Vishwanath and Malik 2009: 63). The division of the country is shown symbolically through the burning of a map where the extreme ends burn and fall down signifying the “severing of East and West Pakistan” (Sarkar 2010: 172). There is also a montage of lightning striking and breaking a tree; waves clashing against rocks and this is followed by shots of rioting (Sarkar 2010: 172). Thus from the
year of partition till 1961, only a handful of films took up the theme of partition, either directly or indirectly (Ghosh 2016: 270). This dismal ratio speaks volumes about how difficult a topic partition was for the people.

In the Bengali film industry, 1960s were a golden period for partition films as three classics, *Megha Dhaka Tara* (The Star Veiled by Clouds, 1960), *Komal Gandhar* (‘A Soft Note on a Sharp Scale, 1961) and *Subarnarekha* (‘The Golden Line’, 1962) were made by Ritwik Ghatak. What is interesting to note is that unlike in the Hindi film industry where directors who experienced partition first hand were reluctant to recreate it on films, Ghatak’s films stemmed from his own experience of the event. The stimulus for the films was the plethora of problems faced by the people and Ghatak had tried to capture different aspects of it. The impact of partition on him could be gauged from the fact that six out of his eight films handled the issue of partition and migration (Ghosh 2016: 271). The other films are: *Nagarik* (1951), *Bari Theke Paliye* (1958) and *Titas Ekti Nadir Naam* (1972) (Ghosh 2016: 272).

The period after Nehru saw a gradual increase of the disillusionment of the people with the state which was aptly reflected on the Hindi screen. It was also a time when the role of the farmer in the development of the nation was brought to the forefront. The 1965 war with Pakistan had raised the patriotic fervour of the nation and it highlighted the role of the soldier. The atmosphere of the time was captured by the slogan given by the second Prime Minister of our country Lal Bahadur Shastri – “Jai Jawan Jai Kisan”. The film which captured the essence of the symbol was Manoj Kumar’s *Upkar* (1967). Kumar was advised by Shastri himself to make a film on the slogan “Jai Jawan Jai Kisan” and it gave Kumar the ideal framework to build a story around the figure of the jawan (soldier) and kisan (farmer) which later earned him the
name “Mr. Bharat” (Vardhan 2017: n pag). Like Dilip Kumar in the Nehruvian era, the nation found a new idol in Manoj Kumar to put forward the new goals of the state. Glorification of the military, “an institution Nehru was either indifferent to or had a distrust of, and the return of the farmer in the country’s economic imagination” were the changes from the earlier period (Vardhan 2017: n pag) The film highlights the crisis of the nation and also extols the potential of agriculture – something which was put on the back foot during the Nehruvian era of industrialization (Bharat and Kumar: x). The song “Jis Desh Ki Dharti” is a celebration of the numerous potential of the motherland (Juluri 2013: 68).

The disillusionment against the state continued throughout the seventies creating the persona of the Angry Young Man fighting for roti, kapda and makan. His anger sprung from a lot of factors - the class divide, the tyranny of the rich – but most of all “he was ... angry in a sense of abandonment. He was abandoned by the country, the government and sometimes even by the mother” (Juluri 2013: 74). Apart from films like Zanjeer (1973), the film where this dissatisfaction was ironically reflected was in the partition movie, Garam Hawa (1974). It is an adaptation of a work by Ismat Chughtai which had not been published. Made almost two decades after partition, the film chronicles the isolation faced by Muslims in post partition India through the story of Salim Mirza. As a result of growing anti-Muslim antagonism, Salim Mirza loses his ancestral property, his business, his daughter and most of all his hard earned reputation. The film deals with the themes of migration, loss of home, division of families, question of belonging and so on. Partition brought about a reconfiguration of identities. The film looks at how the idea of the nation affected the individual at a psychological level (Ali 2016: n pag). Deprived of his ancestral property and almost reduced to penury, Salim
Mirza is almost on the verge of leaving India when in the end he joins a group of people protesting against unemployment. Cutting across religious identities, it is with another marginalised section of society, protesting against the failure of the nation state, that Salim Mirza finds a sense a belonging. Ironically this sense of association with the economically marginalised class, that helped the film get a national award for national integration (Daiya 2011: 68).

The 60’s and 70’s was also a period of wars with Pakistan. And this was captured on celluloid with the production of war films. The wars are important landmarks in the:

narrative of partition ... in that it confirms the national jingoism and the bloodthirsty hatred that propelled the mass slayings and movements of populations in 1947 and after ... The destructive legacies and nightmarish policies still guide our public policy and inhabit our progress from colonial state to post-colonial democracies. (Kaul 2001: 2)

Films like *Hindustan Ki Kasam* (1973) “identified Pakistan as the enemy and set the trend for the deployment of a strong anti-Pakistan sentiment in the ongoing exercise of forging and discovering a strong anti-Pak sentiment” (Bharat and Kumar 2008: x). Thus the films have also captured the Indo-Pak dynamics right from an initial silence about the other nation to a negative portrayal due to the escalating tensions.

Mention must also be made of the television serial *Tamas* (1989) made by Govind Nihalani based on Bhisham Sahni’s novel of the same name. The Bhiwandi riots of 1970 had prompted Sahni to pen down the novel after he had visited the place along with his brother. Sahni wrote in an interview that the riots of 1970 had triggered
the memory of 1947 which led him to reconstruct the Rawalpindi riots of 1947 in *Tamas* (Sant 2010: 151). The serial chronicled how the riots were a result of careful planning and how both the British and the political leaders played their part in fuelling the unrest. In the serial, a Chamar called Nathu is asked by a thekedar to kill a pig for medical purpose. The next day, a dead pig is found at the steps of the mosque which leads to riots. Nathu tries to question the thekedar but is brushed off. The British police commissioner is asked for help but he refuses to take any preventive measures. However after the riots are over, he is shown to be informing a gathering of prominent people the measures that had been taken. At the end, an Aman committe is formed consisting of leaders of all communities who visit people at the refugee camp singing songs of harmony. Both *Tamas* and *Garam Hawa* belong to that phase of partition films which “gives space for the surfacing of concealed emotions by dealing with repressed issues in society – amongst these was Partition and communal conflict” (Vishwanath and Malik 2009: 63). The state’s trepidation over showing the gruesome memories of partition could be gauged from the fact that when in 1985, the Film Division released a short documentary piece called *The Agency Of Partition* to show India’s freedom struggle, “the focus shifts quickly to Gandhi’s assassination, the trauma of Partition is deflected onto the shocking death of “the Father of the Nation” (Sarkar 2010: 171).

The 80s saw a watershed moment in the history of Indian politics when people had a brief encounter with authoritarianism –emergency. Not only did it see the rise and fall of political fortunes but it led to various changes. Lal and Nandy writes:

> The Emergency ... did manage to subvert crucial aspects of conventional wisdom about Indian public life ... the period was one of intellectual confusion. The older forms of political analysis did not seem to work and
many of the academically popular slogans – progress, development, secularism, and national security – were in any case taken over by the authorities ... not only did the existing ideologically tinged categories that dominated academics studies of Indian politics not work, they were a distinct. The rediscovery of M. K. Gandhi by a new generation of Indians was partly a product of the category-confusion the Emergency induced ... The new interest in popular culture grew in this environment and got identified as an alternative entry into Indian public consciousness ... Many ... turned to Indian popular culture, particularly popular cinema, as a cultural and political self-expression. (Lal and Nandy 2006: xxiii)

This new found stature of films as a vehicle for political self expression, the rising sectarian and communal violence and instability in the South Asian region led to a reopening of themes long pushed to the margins. Another important factor is the gradual loss of generation that bore witness to partition. Without first-hand experiences, “societies are dependent on media supported forms of remembrance” such as “historiography, monuments and or movies” (Erill 2011: 4). And it is here that partition movies play an important role. Apart from the four primary texts that have been taken in this thesis, the 90s gave way to films like *Train to Pakistan* (1998), *Gadar* (2001), *Refugee* (2000), *Hey Ram* (2000), *Partition* (2007). Apart from dealing with the issues of identity and secularism, scholars observed that subjects “considered taboo for nearly 40 years were being talked about more openly: preconceived stereotypes and prejudices against one another, communal and racial sentiments” (Vishwanath and Malik 2009: 63). Another factor in the development of partition films is the economic liberalization which changed the way films were produced. In Sarkar’s words:
What does it mean to claim that India opened up only in the 1990s ... The rhetoric of openness is clearly predicated on economic liberalisation, with its twin criteria of large volume of foreign trade and ease of foreign capital investment thereby privileging the logic of the market over all other concerns that might inform national policies. This transformation of the project of nationhood in terms of a calculus of efficiency produces mutations in its social and cultural co-ordinates. The logic of the market demands that the past like all other entities, be transformed into a commodity that can enter the nexus of exchange: our memories must be made concrete and imparted marketable forms. Old and obsolete memory is now repackaged so that it retains the aura of authenticity. (Sarkar 2010: 262)

The 90s was also the period when India was inching towards celebrating her fiftieth anniversary of freedom. As against this, the partition films project the other side of freedom. These films can serve as “mnemonic devices” (Vishwanath and Malik 2009: 64) which deal with memories “perceptions and experiences neglected in official versions or silenced if at all present, in the official versions or silenced” (Saint n pag). However memory can be manipulated. As Astrid Eril writes:

There are two generally agreed-upon central characteristics of (conscious) remembering: its relationship to the present and its constructed nature. Memories are not objective images of past perceptions, even less of past reality. They are subjective, highly selective reconstructions, dependent on the situation in which they are recalled ... individuals and collective memories are never a mirror image
of the past but an expressive indication of the persons and group doing the remembering. (Erll 2011: 8)

Memories of partition have been manipulated by fundamentalists to incite more violence. Recalling partition in this way can take away the healing and mourning process that are supposedly inherent in the remembering. But as Edward Mallot puts it:

> The perception persists that memory can provide an antidote to the lies and omissions of history, can reveal the truth about what happened in the past, can provide an antidote to the lies and omissions of history, can finally reveal the truth about what happened in the past, can offer the occasion for justice and in doing, can begin the process of healing.

(Mallot 2012: 5)

Thus in spite of these complexities and drawback of remembering, in the films taken up in this thesis, there is an effort to redirect the attention towards the experiences of the common people as against the officially sanctioned narratives in an attempt to understand partition as the site of “original trauma” (Mallot 2012: 11) that continues to haunt the subcontinent in various ways – be it in the continuation of hostility between communities or bilateral confrontation or tussles over issues of identity. Apart from these, the “politics of the act of remembering” (Mallot 2012: 2) shall also be looked into. There is an overwhelming emphasis in some research to pass off the survivors account as the truth and to discredit the official narratives. This thesis does away with that approach. The attempt is not to replace these accounts but only to rattle the sense of closure that the official narratives seem to harp upon.
Before moving on to an analysis of the films, the next part of this chapter will look into the way partition has been viewed by the other side.

If the Bombay film industry saw a gradual rise in the production of partition films over the years, then the opposite was seen in the Lahore industry. In fact, film industry in Lahore floundered as against its Indian counterpart. Two of its major studios, which were owned by Hindus were burned down (Bali 2017: n pag). From 1948 to 2005, as compared to India, Pakistan produced less than 4000 films (Vishwanath and Malik 2009: 62). One of the main reasons for this was that any form of entertainment, be it music, song or dance, was considered offensive to the fundamentalist. The first road block was encountered in the years immediately after partition when the leaders were trying to figure out how to consolidate a distinct Islamic identity. A consensus was reached by the ulema that:

all un-Islamic ways and forms of life had to be dictated and instead a chaste social and political order permeated by Islamic moral and legal principles needed to be established. In their opinion, music, dance, romantic theatre, representations of the human form, photography was forbidden in Islam and had no place in an Islamic mileu. Therefore they ruled that filmmaking was un-Islamic. (Ahmed 2014: n.pag)

Thus in the initial years filmmakers shied away from making any controversial creation. Thus the period from 1948 to 1954 is the “struggling phase” (Vishwanath and Malik 2009: 61-69) where the industry was trying to make its mark as it struggled to cope with the censures and the exodus of film personalities from Lahore to Bombay.
The sixties fared much better and this was facilitated by various factors. The first was the argument put forward by Maulana Abul Ala Maududi defending cinema against the criticism that it was un-Islamic. He was of the opinion that “Islam forbade the painting of the human figure and face. However, motion pictures threw an image of the human person on the screen and did not reproduce it as hard picture” (Ahmad 2014: n pag). Another factor was the partial ban on Indian cinema. The film fraternity in Pakistan felt that the industry was losing out financially because of the huge number of Indian films being shown in Pakistani theatres. Thus in 1963, the Pakistani government made it compulsory for theatres in Pakistan that only “fifteen percent of playing time” could be given to Indian films while the rest of the “eighty five percent” had to be devoted to Pakistani films (Ahmad 2014: n pag). The 1965 Indo-Pak war had led to a further weakening of relations between both the nation states. There was a complete ban on Indian films and Pakistani artists took to the radio to take part in various programmes where they tried to boost the morale of their soldiers by extolling their virtues and mocking the Indian soldiers (Ahmad 2014: n pag).

The rise of the Zia-ul-Haq government and the ‘Islamification of Pakistani society led to a fall in the quality of films and by the 90s the industry was in “a state of paralysis” (Ahmad 2014: n pag). In this regard Vishwanath and Malik writes:

Pakistan cinema, since the late 1970s has been dying a slow death, if it is not already dead, owing to the socio-political culture, coupled with the issue of piracy and lack of governmental interest in promoting and sustaining the film industry ... For a certain segment of opinion makers, cinema was nothing more than a frivolous, mushroom growth, which would die its natural death with time and this in turn, has contributed to
the depreciation of the cinema in Pakistan. Not only this, there was no concept of a film academy in Pakistan and the only regulatory body National Film Development Corporation (NAFDEC) established in the 1970s also closed down a few years later. (Vishwanath and Malik 2009: 62-69)

However though the Pakistani film industry was not able to flourish like the one in Mumbai, yet it did manage to produce some notable partition films. The first film on partition to be made was Kartar Singh (1959). Saifuddin Saif, who was himself a partition refugee, was the producer and writer for the film (Ahmad 2014: n pag). As against producers in India like B. R. Chopra and Ramananda Sagar, who were victims of the displacement caused by partition and who refused to make films on partition, Pakistan’s first partition film was made by a refugee. The film was a dedication to Saifuddin Saif’s friend, renowned poet Amrita Pritam and her haunting poem “Aj Akhan Waris Shah Nun” forms the main theme around which the movie revolves (Vishwanath and Malik 2009: 62). The film begins in a pre-partition Punjabi village where members of different communities live in harmony only to be broken by the communal riots. Kartar Singh, the protagonist of the film gets into a fight with Umeer Din who works for the Border Police. Kartar Singh is let off by Umer Din. Both Umer Din and the woman he loves migrate to Pakistan. In order to repay Umer Din for letting him go Kartar Singh tries to help Umer Din’s brother to cross over to Pakistan but he is mistakenly shot by Umer Din at the border who thinks that Kartar Singh may create more trouble (Bali 2017: n pag). The film was a huge commercial success not only in Pakistan but also in India. This may have had to do with the fact that the film presented
an unbiased perspective where the Indians are not portrayed in a negative light (Ahmad 2014: n pag).

Apart from Kartar Singh, three films were made in the 60s which was also the Golden Period for films: S. A. Hafiz’s film Tauba (1964), Raza Mir’s Lakhon Mein Ek (1967) and Hasin Tariq’s Behen Bhai (1968) (Vishwanath and Malik 2009: 62-69). In the seventies, two films were made which includes Islam Dar’s Pehli Nazar (1977) and Masud Pervaiz’s Khaak Aur Khoon (1979). An adaptation of Nasim Hijazi’s novel, Khaak Aur Khoon depicts a society where people of different communities lived in harmony which is broken by the communal riots. The film was important because it was made with government backing and funding with the purpose of educating the younger generation about the trials and tribulations faced and the sacrifices made by the older generations in the creation of Pakistan (Vishwanath and Malik 2009: 62-69).

Hasan Askari’s Jannat ke Talaash was the only film made in the 1990s after a gap of almost twenty years but it was not a commercial success. Thus, Pakistan too dabbled in the genre of partition films and like its Indian counterpart the treatment of themes has been influenced by the political conditions of the time. But as against the Hindi film industry, the graph of partition films in Pakistan, for various reasons, have declined over the decades.
Endnote


4 Most Hindi films operate on the themes of brothers lost in a fair or separation of lovers which according to Vishwanath and Malik is a symbolic reference to the partition of the subcontinent and migration of people (Vishwanath and Gauri)

5 The films are *Entry of Cinematographe, Ladies and Soldiers on Wheels* and so on. (Chakravarty 1993)


7 In his essay, “Bharata and the Hindi Film Revisisted”, Mukund Lath writes that the inclusion of songs in Hindi Cinema is very much in keeping with the “non-linear conventions of representation” found in India and can be traced to the practices encoded in the *Natyashastra* (Lath 1986: 139-49)

8 In the essay, “Structure and Form in Indian Popular Film Narrative”, M. K. Raghavendra writes about how the form and structure of popular Hindi films differ from those in the West. The classic Hollywood film, is driven by ‘rules of causation’ while Indian films do not tow the Hollywood line (Raghavendra 2006: 35). Another important
feature of the Hindi film is the motif of family. He writes that “Hollywood family
dramas are about the family under threat” while the Indian family drama are mostly
stories of ‘triumphant love’ (love which is reciprocated) (Raghavendra 2006: 37)

Vinay Lal brings up Manmohan Desai’s claim that “all his films were inspired by the
Mahabharata” and every figure, right from the mother to that of the anti-hero can be
traced back to the epics (Lal 232)

Rachel Dawyer opines that Hindi films were not only influenced from the mythologies
and the dramas of Shakespeare but also from the Parsi theatre. The migration of artists
from the Parsi theatre to the Hindi film industry saw them bring their knowledge to the
silver screen which in turn saw the rise of the musical genre (Dawyer 2006: 7, 102

In the book *Islamicate Culture of Bombay Cinema*, Ira Bhaskar and Richard Allen
traces the impact of Islamic tradition – the Mughal historical, the stories from Arabian
nights – on the early movies (Bhaskar and Allen 2009)

In the essay, “Qissa and the Popular Hindi Cinema”, Anjalli Gera Roy focuses on an
“alternate aesthetic of Hindi Cinema” by tracing its roots to the Perso-Arabic tradition
(Gera 184). Drawing on the works of scholars like Farina Mir, Francis Pritchard,
Mahmood Farooqui, to name a few, Gera writes that the stories in the qissa tradition can
be traced to the “1001 Arabian nights” and they have influenced the writers of the Hindi
films (Gera 184)

In her essay, “Allegory, Nationalism and Cultural Change in Indian Cinema: Sant
Tukaram”, Ira Bhaskar writes that in order to make a claim for independence, the
nationalists tried to create a distinct cultural identity. The significance of the Bhakti cult
lay in the very project of providing a strong cultural basis. The Bhakti movement
propagated the doctrine of universal brotherhood. The movement could be seen
embodying the aims of the dual movements of “reformation” and “revivalism” and many nationalists turned towards the tenets of the Bhatki cult, the most important being Mahatma Gandhi (Bhaskar 1998: 50-55)

xiv Some famous film personalities who began their careers in Lahore but migrated to India include, Ramanand Sagar, Om Prakash, Jivan, Chetan Anand, Pran, I. S. Johar, O. P. Nayyar, and so on (Ahmad n.pag). In the same, people also made the journey Lahore from Bombay. Noor Jehan along with her husband migrated to Lahore.

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