

وہ ہاتھ آج بھی موجود و کار فرما ہیں
 وہ ہاتھ جس نے پلاٹے کسی کو زہر کا جام
 وہ ہاتھ جس نے چسٹھایا کسی کو سُوکی پر
 وہ ہاتھ وادی سینا میں دیٹ نام میں ہیں
 ہر ایک گردن میں ہر ایک جام میں ہیں

”کینہ شرطِ وفا ترکِ سربود حافظ
 برد گزار تو این کار بر نمی آید“

تیرے ہونٹوں کے پھولوں کی چسپاہت میں ہم
 دار کی خشک ٹہنی پہ وارے گئے
 تیرے ہاتھوں کی شمعوں کی حسرت میں ہم
 نیم تاریک راہوں میں مارے گئے
 جب گھلی تیزی راہوں میں شامِ ستم
 ہم چلے آئے لائے جہاں تک قدم
 لبِ حریفِ غزلِ دل میں قندیلِ غم
 اپنا غم تھا گواہی تیرے حسن کی
 دیکھ قائم رہے اس گواہی پہ ہم
 ہم جو تاریک راہوں میں مارے گئے

6

PROGRESSIVE POETRY AND FILM LYRICS

*Eeshwar Allah tere jahaan mein, nafrat kyoon hai jang hai kyoon
 Tera dil to itna badha hai, insaan ka dil tang hai kyoon*

...
Is duniya ke daaman par, insaan ke lahu ka rang hai kyoon

...
Dil ke darwaazon par taale, taalon par ye zang hai kyoon

O Eeshwar, O Allah, why this hatred, this war in your world?⁴²
 Your heart knows no bounds, why are the hearts of humans
 so small and petty?

...
 Why is the garment of the world stained with human blood?

...
 Why are the doors of hearts locked, why are these locks rusted?

So goes the hauntingly beautiful song from the 1998 film *Earth*. Written by Javed Akhtar and set to music by A.R. Rahman (and incidentally, put to good use by Gauhar Raza as the recurring theme of *Evil Stalks the Land*, a documentary on the 2002 Gujarat violence), the song is obviously a homage to another one that was written earlier by Sahir Ludhianvi:

*Khuda-e bartar, teri zameen par, zameen ki khaatir ye jang kyoon hai
Har ek fath-o zafar ke daaman pe khood-e insaan ka rang kyoon hai*

...
Jinhein talab hai jahaan bhar ki unheein ka dil itna tang kyoon hai

...
*Saroñ mein hibr-o ghuroor kyoon hai, dilon ke sheeshe pe zang
kyoon hai*

O great God, why do people of your earth wage war over land?
Why is the garment of every conqueror stained with human blood?

...
Why are the hearts of those who desire the whole world so small
and petty?

...
Why are their heads swollen with pride and arrogance, why are the
mirrors of their hearts rusted?

Do these two songs represent bookends of a line that ran from Sahir through Kaifi Azmi and Majrooh Sultanpuri to Javed Akhtar? Is there a generational continuity of progressive sentiment that Urdu poets deployed in the arena of popular culture through their Hindi film lyrics? After all one can, without much effort, recall a number of progressive film songs written by the Urdu poets of the PWA. In order to answer these questions, we bought books of lyrics, cross-checked with online databases and asked friends to tell us about the progressive songs that came to their mind. Surprisingly, the search yielded a far smaller output than we had first imagined. Nevertheless, there is a story to be told here, a narrative to unfold, a lesson or two to be learnt.

The deployment of songs to propel a narrative has a long and varied tradition in India. Many of the country's popular art forms have used this technique for a long time: the Kutiyattam

and Kathakali in Kerala, the Jatra in Bengal, the Nautanki and Ramlila traditions in North India, the Marathi Tamasha, the Terukuttu from Tamil Nadu, the Burrakatha in Andhra Pradesh, the Yakshgana from Karnataka, the Bhavai from Gujarat, the Ojapali from Assam, the Lila from Orissa and, of course, the various enactments of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.⁴³

The early Parsi theatre, the precursor to Indian cinema, also had its share of songs. As Javed Akhtar says in an interview⁴⁴, in a play about Marcus and Helena set in Rome, for instance, Helena pining for her love would burst out into a song *Piya morey aaj nahin aaye* (My beloved hasn't come today). The original plays of the likes of Agha Hashr Kashmiri were subsequently adapted into Hindi cinema. Here is a typical dialogue from *Aseer-e Hirs* (Prisoner of Greed). The conversation is between Changez Khan and his love, Naushaba⁴⁵:

- N: *Pyaar se ek savaal hai* (I have a question for my love).
C: *Farmaaiye woh kya khayaal hai?* (Pray, what are you thinking?)
N: *Kumhaar jo mitti ka khilona banaata hai, woh kis kaam aata hai?* (The clay toy a potter makes, what good is it?)
C: *Us se dil bahlaaya jaata hai. Agar woh kisi ke haath se choot jaaye, ya thokar se toot jaaye, to kumhaar ko sakht malaal hoga* (It is to amuse one's heart. But if it slips through one's fingers, or is broken by a careless foot, the potter will be very sad).
N: *Kyonn aisa khayaal hoga?* (Why would he feel so?)
C: *Kyonke us shakhs ne kumhaar ki mehnat barbaad kar di* (Because the person has destroyed the potter's effort).
N: *Wah wah, subhaanallah. Khoob baat irshaad kar di* (Lord be praised. That was beautifully said).

Given this history, it is no surprise then that Indian cinema took so easily to including songs as a form of theatrical narrative.

The history of Hindi film lyrics actually predates the talkies. The standard practice during the silent era was to provide musical accompaniment to the film from the orchestra pit. Each movie theatre had its own band of musicians that played along with the film itself. The first instance of playback singing seems to have occurred in 1921 for the movie *Bhakt Vidur*. Vidur's wife, spinning a charkha, mouthed the words of a song that was lip-synched for the audience by a live singer in the theatre (the audience sang along, often demanding encores). By the time the first talkie, *Alam Ara*, was released in 1931, songs had taken centre stage in Indian cinema (according to one account, *Alam Ara* had fifty five!).

The use of Hindi film lyrics as a means of articulating a progressive sentiment was, not surprisingly, intertwined with the freedom struggle. While some film screenings in the North used the interval between the changing of the reels to lead the audience into singing nationalist songs, the deployment of lyrics to propagate resistance was first popularized in the South. Daring film-makers in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh defied the British censors by using the poems of the banned revolutionary poet Subramanya Bharati in films, sometimes without credit (for example, in *Navayuvan/Modern Youth*, 1937; *Menaka*, 1935; *Adrishtam/Fate*, 1939; and *Naam Iruvar/We Two*, 1947). Hindi cinema, initially cautious, soon followed suit. The 1936 film *Janmabhoomi* (Land of Birth) was one of the first to have an explicitly nationalist song (written by J.S. Cashyap): 'Jai jai janani janmabhoomi' (Hail to the land of our birth).

One lyricist who consistently wrote patriotic songs for films was Ramchandra Narainji Dwivedi, better known as

Pradeep, whose most famous song is probably this one from the film *Jagriti* (Awakening, 1954):

*Aao bachcho tumheñ dikhayeñ jhaanki Hindustaan ki
Is mitti se tilak karo, ye dharti hai balidaan ki
Vande Mataram, Vande Mataram
Come children, let me offer you a peek into Hindustan
Adorn your foreheads with its soil, for this is the land of
martyrs
Vande Mataram, Vande Mataram*

Writing first for Bombay Talkies, Pradeep soon joined the newly created Filmistan, whose first film *Chal Chal Re Naujawan/Walk on, Youth*, 1944 (scripted by the PWA writer Saadat Hasan Manto) included a song extolling the unity of Hindus and Muslims:

*Manzil sabhi ki ek hai, raaheñ alag alag
Voh ek hai, par apni nigaaheñ alag alag
Mandir mein hai bhagwaan, voh Masjid mein khuda hai
Kisne kaha Hindu se Musalmaan juda hai
Bolo Har Har Mahaadev, Bolo Allah-o Akbar*

Though our paths are different, our destination is the same
There is but one God, just different ways of looking at Him
In the temple He is called Bhagwaan, in the mosque, Khuda
Who says that Hindus and Muslims aren't but one
Say Har Har Mahadev, say Allah-o Akbar

In the 1940 film, *Aaj Ka Hindustani* (Today's Indian), directed by Jayant Desai and featuring Miss Rose, Prithviraj, Ishwarlal, Sitara and comedian Charlie⁴⁶, Prithviraj, playing a nationalist, is picturized walking through his village singing:

*Charkha chalaao behno
Kaato ye kachhe dhaage
Dhaage ye kah rahe haiñ*

*Bhaarat ke bhaag jaage
Charkhe ke geet gaao
Duniya ko ye sunaao
Charkha chalaane waala
Gandhi hai aage aage*

Spin the charkha O sisters
And as you cut these threads
Listen as they say that
India's destiny has awakened
Tell this to the world
That the charkha spinner Gandhi
Leads us all

Some of the songs that were written during the Quit India Movement consciously pushed the censor-imposed bounds of acceptability. The opening song in *Kismat* (Fate, 1943), written by Pradeep and composed by Anil Biswas, had the following chorus:

*Aaj Himaalay ki choṭi se, phir hum ne lalkaara hai
Door hato, door hato ai duniya vaalo Hindustaan hamaara hai*

From the peak of the Himalayas, we defiantly announce
Get out O foreigners, for India is ours

Gautam Kaul, in his book *Cinema and the Indian Freedom Struggle* documents an anecdote about how the censors were hoodwinked into thinking that the reference to 'foreigners' in the song was about the Japanese army and not the British. *Kismat* was first released in Kanpur at the Imperial Talkies. The British authorities received information that this song was being played repeatedly on public demand. Officer Dharmendra Gaur (the brother of Vrajendra Gaur, author, lyricist and screenplay writer of many films) was sent to investigate. A

detention order under Section 26 of the Defense of India Rules was readied to arrest Pradeep. Dharmendra Gaur reportedly saw the film four times and filed a report saying that another line in the same song, *Tum na kisi ke aage jhukna, German ho ya Jaapaani* (Do not bow before anyone, be they German or Japanese), demonstrated that the song was not anti-British. *Kismat* ended up running for 186 weeks at Roxy Cinema in Calcutta. Other lyricists such as Pandit Narendra Sharma (*Hamari Baat/Our Story*, 1943), Qamar Jalalabadi (*Chand/Moon*, 1944), D.N. Madhok (*Pehle Aap/You First*, 1944), Zia Sarhadi (*Badi Maa*, 1945), and Gopal Singh Nepali (*Amar Asha/Eternal Hope*, 1947) took heart from this and penned freedom songs with increasing frequency.

Gramophone records served the purpose of popularizing film music beyond the cinema halls. Since the recordings were not of a great quality, the lyrics were printed on cheap booklets and distributed with the records. The British administration banned several of these songs, but the booklets circulated freely carrying the word around.

Independence unshackled film-makers from the limitations placed by the censors on patriotic songs and lyricists celebrated. Songs such as the one from *Ahimsa/Non-violence* (1947; *Azaad hum haiñ aaj se, jailoñ ke taale tod do; We are free from today, let us break the locks of our jails*) and *Majboor/Helpless* (1948; *Chala gaya gora angrez, ab kaahe ka dar; The white British have departed, what do we have to fear now?*) became more and more common.

In the meantime, the PWA was gathering momentum. This radical movement breathed a new life into cultural production and rapidly gained popularity. Not surprisingly, the medium

of cinema was seen by the PWA as a space for intervention. The mood of the nation allowed members of the association to make inroads into the film industry and leftist writers were soon penning scripts and stories for large film studios, exposing the large movie-going audience to socially conscious ideas.

Another institution that had a considerable impact on the evolution of Indian cinema was the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA), the cultural wing of the Communist Party of India (CPI). Launched in 1943 'to defend culture against fascism and imperialism', IPTA worked towards the development of an avant-garde culture in India, largely in theatre – its primary field of engagement – but also in the arena of cinema.

A large number of the country's cultural intelligentsia – actors, directors, screenplay writers, journalists, lyricists, musicians and technicians – came together to produce work that was in line with their politics of social justice. Writer-director Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, cinematographer-director Bimal Roy, director Chetan Anand, music composer Salil Choudhary, poet-lyricists Sahir Ludhianvi and Majrooh Sultanpuri and actors Balraj Sahni and Utpal Dutt were all linked to IPTA.

K.A. Abbas, a cofounder of the IPTA, made *Dharti Ke Lal* (Children of the Earth, 1946) from a story by Krishen Chander, a film that examined the Bengal famine in a documentary-like fashion. Mohan Bhavnani's *Mazdoor/Labourer* (1934), inspired by IPTA's play *The Factory* based on a story by Premchand, was one of the first of its kind and offered a realistic portrayal of the plight of industrial workers. Chandulal Shah's *Acchut*, a film focusing on the theme of untouchability, Mehboob Khan's *Manmohan* (1936) which critiqued the patriarchal

order; *Jagirdar/Feudal Landlord* (1937) which questioned the issue of land ownership, and *Hum Tum Aur Woh/I, You, and the Other* (1938), a film about a woman who seeks sexual and emotional comfort through an extramarital relationship – all challenged existing social norms in a probing fashion.

While writers and directors belonging to the Progressive Writers' Movement made a number of films that exhibited a political consciousness and a desire to precipitate social change, it took a while for the Urdu poetry of the movement to enter the arena of film lyrics. Although Sahir Ludhianvi made his debut in 1941 (in *Naujawan/Youth*) and Majrooh Sultanpuri in 1946 (with *Shahjahan*), their early lyrical output belonged to the traditional genre of love poetry.

For reasons that are too complex to go into in detail, the leading Hindi poets of the time had shied away from writing film lyrics. The leadership of the Hindi poets was at that time dominated by an orthodoxy which insisted that its members refuse to degrade their art by writing for popular cinema or theatre in the common or *bazaar* language of Hindustani. As Yogendra Malik points out 'literary traditions in Hindi tended to be dominated by Hindi revivalism, nationalism and romanticism'.⁴⁷ The leading Hindi writers and poets of the time frowned upon socialism as 'an alien philosophy unsuitable for the Indian context as well as upon popular culture as a medium for their work'.⁴⁸

The Urdu poets, on the other hand, were more than eager to explore this new medium of expression. Kaifi Azmi, Majrooh Sultanpuri and perhaps most significantly Sahir Ludhianvi started writing for cinema and dominated the landscape of its lyrical production for the next few decades. Other progressive poets such as Shailendra, Ali Sardar Jafri,

Jan Nisar Akhtar, Neeraj and Gulzar joined the fray in due course.

The decade of the 1950s proved to be the time when progressive lyrics came of age. This was the period dominated by the auteurs of Hindi cinema, the movie-makers with a vision. K.A. Abbas, Bimal Roy, Raj Kapoor, Kamal Amrohi and, of course, Guru Dutt sought to use cinema as a pedagogical tool and a space for constructing social critique. Their expression found a cause in the failure of the free nation to fulfil its promise of an egalitarian society with justice for all citizens. As the euphoria of Independence dissipated, and as people understood that the end of British occupation did not mean the end of their misery, disenchantment with the Nehru government grew.

Some like the IPTA poet Prem Dhawan, who had written 'Jhoom jhoom ke gaao aaj' celebrating the exit of the British, continued to urge the youth of the Nehruvian era to engage in the process of nation building:

*Chhoro kal ki baateñ, kal ki baat puraani
Naye daur meñ likhenge hum mil kar nayi kahaani
Hum Hindustaani, hum Hindustaani*

Forget yesterday, yesterday is gone
We shall write a new story for the new times
We Indians, we Indians

But for a host of others, Nehru became the symbol of the betrayal of the promise of Independence. As Rajadhyaksha and Willemen point out, this was a period reflecting 'the emotional and social complexities affecting the artist when the reformism associated with Nehruvian nationalism disintegrated under the

pressure of industrialization and urbanization creating the space for Indian modernism but also generating social dislocation⁴⁹.'

Sahir strode on to this stage like a giant, writing songs for movies like *Naya Daur/The New Age* (1957) and *Phir Subha Hogi/Morning Will Come* (1958) in a manner that was in keeping with his reputation as a revolutionary poet.

*Saathi haath badhaana, saathi haath badhaana
Ek akela thak jaayega mil kar bojh uthaana
Saathi haath badhaana*

Comrades, lend your hand!
One alone will tire soon, let us bear this burden together,
Comrades lend your hand!

*Maati se hum laal nikaaleñ, moti laaeñ jal se
Jo kuch is duniya meñ bana hai, bana hamaare bal se
Kab tak mehnat ke pairon meñ daulat ki zanjeereñ
Haath badhaakar chheen lo apne sapnoñ ki tasveereñ
Saathi haath badhaana*

We are the ones who extract rubies from the earth, pearls from the sea,
All that is of value in this world has been created by us
How long will labour be chained by those who own wealth?
Reach out and snatch that which you have always dreamed of
Comrades, lend your hand!

Pyasa (1957), of course, is the movie that is best remembered as Sahir's vehicle. A Guru Dutt film about a struggling poet coming to terms with post-independence India, the story gets its radical edge mainly from its songs. The poet-protagonist of the story, after an agonized search for meaning, offers this disdainful take on the current times:

Ye mahloñ ye takhtoñ ye taajoñ ki duniya

*Ye insaan ke dushman samaajon ki duniya
Ye daulat ke bhooke rivajon ki duniya
Ye duniya agar mil bhi jaye to kya hai?*

This world of palaces, thrones and crowns
This world of societies that hate humanity
This world that hungers for nothing but wealth
Even if one obtains this world, so what?

And as the poet, played by Guru Dutt himself, wanders through the red-light district and observes the desperation that forces women to sell their bodies, he sings a song that is a minor reworking of a poem that Sahir had written earlier (called *Chakle*, or Brothels) which went: *Sanaakhaane tasdeeq-e-mashriq kahaan hai?* (Where are those who praise the purity of the East?). The story goes that Nehru had given a speech in which he had remarked 'I am proud of India.' Guru Dutt asked Sahir to work this line into the refrain of the song. The result was:

*Ye kooche, ye neelaam-ghar dilkashi ke
Ye lut-te hue kaarvaan zindagi ke
Kahaan hai, kahaan hai, muhaafiz khudi ke?
Jinhe naaz hai Hind par voh kahaan hai?*

These streets, these auction houses of pleasure
These looted caravans of life
Where are they, the guardians of self-hood?
Those who are proud of India, where are they?

This taunt was followed by a harsh indictment of the national leadership:

*Zara mulk ke rahbaron ko bulao
Ye kooche, ye galiyaan, ye manzar dikhaao
Jinhe naaz hai Hind par unko laao
Jinhe naaz hai Hind par voh kahaan hai?*

Go, fetch the leaders of the nation
Show them these streets, these lanes, these sights
Summon them, those who are proud of India
Those who are proud of India, where are they?

This mode of film-making soon ran into problems. The censor board, now under the control of the Indian government, kicked into gear, reflecting the government's hypersensitivity towards any reference to people's struggles, particularly in the cause of socialism. Director Ramesh Saigal was asked to delete a line from his movie *Kafila/Caravan* which went: The caravan of the people of Asia is on the move. Sahir's line *Paise ka raj mita dena* (End the rule of the wealthy) was axed from another film. Pradeep's song from the film *Amar Rahe Ye Pyaar/May This Love Be Forever* (1961) was deleted in its entirety, presumably because of the lines:

*Hai! Siyaasat kitni gandi
Buri hai kitni firqa bandi
Aaj ye sab ke sab nar-naari
Ho gaye raste ke ye bhikaari*

Alas! How dirty are the politics of the time
How despicable this sectarianism
Today, all these men and women
Have been turned into beggars

The lyrics of *Phir Subha Hogi* were considered so radical that two songs from the film were banned in India. One was:

*Aasmaan pe hai khuda aur zameen pe hum
Aaj kal voh is taraf dekhta hai kam
Kis ko bheje voh yahaan khaak chaan-ne
Is tamaam bheed ka haal jaan-ne
Aadmi hai anginat, devata hai kam*

God is in the heavens while we are here on earth
 These days, He does not pay us much attention
 Who can He send here to sift through these sands,
 To figure out the condition of these teeming masses?
 For there are too many people, not enough deities

And the other was a parody of the famous Iqbal poem, *Saare jahaan se achcha Hindostaan hamaara* (Our India is better than the rest of the world):

*Cheen-o Arab hamaara, Hindostaan hamaara
 Rahne ko ghar nahin hai, saara jahaan hamaara*

China and Arabia are ours, so is India
 Yet we have no home to live in; the whole world is ours

*Jitni bhi buildingein thin, sethon ne baant li hain
 Footpaath Bambayi ke, hain aashiyaan hamaara*

The wealthy have distributed all the buildings among themselves
 While we are left to take refuge on the footpaths of Bombay

After Independence, the Indian government maintained monopolistic control over its radio broadcasting. When B.V. Keskar succeeded as the Minister for Information & Broadcasting in 1952, he decided to ban the broadcast of film music on All India Radio, considering it simultaneously too vulgar, too Westernized and too steeped in Urdu, choosing instead to promote light classical music. Most listeners simply tuned over to Radio Ceylon or Pakistani stations, both of which were broadcasting Hindi film songs. In 1957, film music was back on All India Radio on a new channel called Vividh Bharti. It is probably fair to say that most Hindustani-speaking Indian households had their radios perennially tuned to this station.

Since the only medium through which the public got to hear film music was the radio, station programming determined the songs that the public listened to. Popular demand, expressed through write-ins to programmes like *Man Chaahe Geet* (Favourite Songs), began to play a significant role in the kind of music that was heard on the airwaves and, therefore, in the kind of music that was produced.

Eventually, the social sensibility of the 1950s and early 1960s lost its appeal, shrinking the space available for progressive cinema and consequently progressive lyrics. There were two major reasons behind this.

The first was the break-up of the studio system in the 1960s, a phenomenon that changed the rules of the film-making game rather significantly. Serious, socially conscious cinema gave way surely but steadily to popular entertainment and the space provided by the studios to the maverick filmmakers, writers and poets withered away. The growing urban population, which formed the largest chunk of the viewing public, gravitated towards escapist films seeking perhaps to forget their frustrations. Opulent sets, well-choreographed songs and a formulaic script were the order of the new day. As the critic Aruna Vasudev puts it, the films that were produced were mostly 'absurd romances packed with songs and dances, made like fairytales with a moral'.⁵⁰

The second, as Peter Manuel elaborates in his book *Cassette Culture*⁵¹, was the advent of the portable cassette-players, the early ones arriving in the country in the late 1970s in the hands of the guest workers returning from the Gulf. The fetishization of the cassette-player (everyone wanted to have one) symbolized the changing aspirations of the middle class

and its freshly discovered consumer power (which was beginning to be unleashed by the newly instituted policies of economic liberalization). With foreign collaboration now a possibility, new tie-ups like Bush-Akai, Orson-Sony, BPL-Sanyo and Onida-JVC started manufacturing cheap cassettes. Sales of recorded music consequently went up from \$1.2 million in 1980 to \$12 million in 1986 and over \$21 million in 1990.

Bourgeois democracy, thus unleashed, paved the way for what can be called the age of Bappi Lahiri. Foot-tapping, easily consumable and subsequently disposable tunes became the order of the day, and banal lyrics were welcomed:

*D se hota hai Dance
I se hota hai Item
S se hota hai Singer
C se hota hai Chorus
O se Orchestra!
I am a Disco Dancer!!*

D for Dance,
I for Item,
S for Singer,
C for Chorus,
O for Orchestra!
I am a Disco Dancer!!

The allegedly anti-establishment films of the 'angry young man' days did not provide much scope for progressive writing either. We say 'allegedly' because there was nothing really anti-establishment about this cinema; all it did was to promote the image of an alienated, disillusioned youth who sought vigilante justice by taking the law in his own hands. It must be recalled that *Sholay/Flames* (1975, possibly the biggest blockbuster

produced in India and a film whose influence can still be seen on Indian cinema) is essentially a story about two mercenaries fighting subaltern dacoits on behalf of the feudal zamindar of the village. Songs in these films were used merely to interrupt the narrative and to provide some light moments. Rhyme became the handmaiden of the tune, and relatively meaningless lyrics fitted comfortably in this setup:

*Koi haseena jab rooth jaati hai to aur bhi haseen ho jaati hai
Station se gaadi jab choot jaati hai to ek-do-teen ho jaati hai*

When a beauty gets upset, she becomes even more beautiful
When a train leaves the station, it departs from sight

Even the likes of Sahir were reduced to writing love songs of, shall we say, dubious merit (such as the one in *Trishul* that went *Gapuchi gapuchi gam gam, kishiki kishiki kam kam*); his light and frothy songs in *Deewaar* (*Kah doon tumheñ ya chup rahoon dil mein mere aaj kya hai? Shall I tell you what is in my heart, or shall I remain silent?*) were in popular demand while the only semi-progressive song he wrote for the film (*Deewaron ka jangal jis ka aabaadi hai naam*; This forest of walls that we call a city) was deleted from the movie.

Ironically, the one space which could have provided refuge to the progressive poets, the so-called parallel cinema movement, did not open its doors to their lyrics. In this genre, songs were seen as an unnecessary impediment to the narrative. In their attempt to produce a cinema of calculated, purposeful naturalism that anxiously sought to distance itself from the *bazaari* Hindustani of commercial films, the alternate film-makers adopted a self-consciously Sanskritized Hindi, as is evident even from the titles of the films by Shyam Benegal,

Govind Nihalini and others: *Ankur/Seedling, Nishant/Night's End, Manthan/Churning, Bhumika/Actor, Aakrosh/Anguish, Ardhasatya/Half-truth.*

A further wrinkle was added to the development of film lyrics with the emergence of A.R. Rahman whose genius captured the nation's imagination with a fresh brand of music that was a breathtaking amalgamation of classical Hindustani and Carnatic ragas, syncopated jazz rhythms, meticulous orchestration inspired by his Western classical training and complex changes of tone and tune. His musical scores for south Indian films were such huge hits that these movies were dubbed in Hindi and re-released for a wider audience. The unfamiliar actors and the crude dubbing were more than offset by the wild popularity of the music. Lyricists were brought in to write fresh words for the songs and operated under the constraint of trying to write songs that would provide an acceptable level of lip synchronization⁵². The subordination of the lyrics to the tune became so overwhelming that we were treated to gems like *Strawberry aankhen* (Strawberry eyes) and *Telephone dhun mein hansne wali* (The one who laughs like a telephone ringing).

This about-turn was quite dramatic since, at least until the 1980s, most lyricists were poets in their own right and first wrote out the words to the song based on the requirements of the script and then handed them over to the composers who set them to a tune. In an interview, a disgruntled Kaifi Azmi complained bitterly about the new trend of lyricists being asked to fit words around already composed musical scores 'Ye to vahi baat hui', he said, 'ke kisi ne kaha ke ye *khabar khudi hai, is size ki laash le aao!*' ('It is like being told that a

grave has already been dug and now an appropriately sized corpse has to be found to fit in it').

The most successful lyricist of today, Javed Akhtar, says that the emphasis is now on the tune and it is up to the song writer to find the right words, and just as importantly, the appropriate sound that works for the melody. The following comment by Akhtar is interesting in and of itself, but also points to the diminishing importance of the words vis-à-vis the sound:

The meaning of the words is important but so is their phonetic effect. Ultimately the song is being written to be sung. So it should sound extremely good ... What I'm going to say might sound very strange, but every sound has a certain visual effect. If you take 'j': now 'ja' has a sparkle that is very white. While the sound of 'cha' also has a sparkle, it's somehow yellow or golden. 'Ta' sounds like throwing a ball on a solid floor. But if you throw the ball on wet ground, then you get the sound 'tha'. If you hit the ball against a hollow wooden wall, you'll hear a 'dha'. Sounds create different images in your mind. Like 'dha' is a sticky sound, 'gha' is a dense sound, 'ga' is clean⁵³.

Despite the constraints under which he writes, Javed Akhtar does produce the occasional lyric that reminds one of the time that once was, when Hindi film songs pressed the cause of social justice, a time that seems to have long gone:

*Footpaathon ke hum rahne vaale
Raaton ne paala hum woh ujaale
Aakaash sar pe, pairon tale, hai door tak ye zameen
Aur to apna koi nahi, aur to apna koi nahi*

*Bachpan mein khele gham se, nirdhan gharon ke bete
Phoolon ki sej nahi, kaanton pe hum hain lete*

*Dukh mein rahe, sau gham sahe, dil ye kahe
Roti jahaan, hai swarg apna vahiin
Aur to apna koi nahin, aur to apna koi nahin*

We are the pavement dwellers
We the light that has been sheltered by the nights
Our companions are the sky ahead, the ground beneath our feet
And none else

Our childhood spent playing with sorrow
Our beds made not of flowers but thorns
We live with unhappiness, suffer sadness, and say with our heart
That our heaven is where we can find bread

Peter Manuel, describing the Frankfurt School's analysis of popular culture, writes that 'modern capitalism operated through the acquiescence of a depoliticized, alienated and generally stupefied public. The mass media (and in Adorno's thought, popular music), played essential roles in legitimizing the status quo by stultifying critical consciousness, commodifying and disarming oppositional art, and promoting consumerism and the myth of a classless society'⁵⁴. In this context, the media function as 'manipulative instruments' that seek to promote the voices of those who are comfortable with the status quo while delegitimizing the voices of those who challenge and subvert the relationships of power and domination in inequitable social systems. It is no surprise then that the content that is produced in Hindi cinema, including its lyrics, tends towards escapist fantasies and commodity fetishism played out in chimerical dreamscapes.

But at the same time, it is important to remind ourselves that popular culture is a site of contestations, negotiations, mediations and rearticulations, a space where hegemonic and oppositional values symbolically and explicitly engage one

another. This chapter then, is partly the mourning of that which has passed, but it is simultaneously both an attempt to remind ourselves that the current struggles for social justice have a history and a celebration of those who helped produce it.

In the movie *Kabhi Kabhie* (Sometimes, 1976), Sahir wrote a song that anticipates the end of his period as a poet:

*Maiin pal do pal ka shaayar hoon
Pal do pal meri kahaani hai
Pal do pal meri hasti hai
Pal do pal meri javaani hai*

I am a poet of a brief moment or two
My story is a passing one
My life is ephemeral
My youth, transient

*Kal aur aayenge naghmon ki khilti kaliyaan chun-ne vaale
Mujh se behtar kahne vaale, tum se behtar sun-ne vaale
Kal koi mujh ko yaad kare, kyoon koi mujh ko yaad kare
Masroof zamaana mere liye, kyoon waqt apna barbaad kare?
Maiin pal do pal ka shaayar hoon*

Tomorrow, there will be others harvesting the blooming buds of fresh songs
Others who will write better than I could, others who will listen better than you can
Who will remember me tomorrow, why should anyone?
Why would this busy world waste its time on me in the future?
I am a poet of but the moment

But Sahir did more than just write in and for the moment. He not only left behind an oeuvre that still plays on our radios and stereos, but also inspired a whole lot of others like Shailendra, Hasan Kamal, Javed Akhtar, and occasionally, even the not-

quite-progressive Anand Bakshi to follow in his footsteps. Listening to a tape of songs from the 1971 movie *Dushman/Enemy* (lyrics: Anand Bakshi), we did a double-take when a song (*Dilli ka Qutub Minaar dekho, Bambayi shahar ki bahaar dekho*; Look at Delhi's Qutub Minar, look at Bombay's spring) suddenly sprung the lines:

*Logoñ ko paise se pyaar dekho
Zaalim ye sarmaayaadaar dekho*

Look at how people love wealth
Look at the oppressive capitalist

The word *sarmaayaadaar* sticks out because it is a legacy of the progressive poets, their contribution to our popular vocabulary. Its explicit use reminds us of the time when lyrics and poetry were defined by the PWA, and when film songs could, almost unselfconsciously, offer a critique of social conditions.

Perhaps because he recognized his influence, or perhaps merely in hope, Sahir, in a rare moment of self-assertion, added a coda to his *Kabhi Kabhie* song that in our opinion is an apt comment on the generation of PWA poets:

*Maiñ har ek pal ka shaayar hoofi
Har ek pal meri kahaani hai
Har ek pal meri hasti hai
Har ek pal meri javaani hai*

I am a poet for all times
My story is forever
My life, unending,
My youth, eternal!

کوشن کا گیت ہے گوگل کی حسیں شام ہے تو
آکھجے سے لگائیں کہ سیاہ فام ہے تو

ظلم پھر ظلم ہے بڑھتا ہے تو میٹ جاتا ہے
خون پھر خون ہے ٹپکے گا تو جم جائے گا

خاک صحرا پہ جمے یا کفِ قابل پہ جمے
فرقِ انصاف پہ یا پائے سلاسل پہ جمے
تبعِ بیداد پہ یا لاشہِ بے لیل پہ جمے
خون پھر خون ہے ٹپکے گا تو جسم جائے گا

ظلم کی بات ہی ظلم کی اوقات ہی کیسا
ظلم بس ظلم ہے آغاز سے انجام تک
خون پھر خون ہے سو شکل بدل سکتا ہے
ایسی شکلیں کہ میٹاؤ تو میٹائے نہ بنے
ایسے شعلے کہ بجھاؤ تو بجھائے نہ بنے
ایسے نعرے کہ دباؤ تو دباؤ نہ بنے

میں قتل تو ہو گیا تمہاری گلی میں لیکن
میرے لہو سے تمہاری دیوار گل رہی ہے

مگر تھی خواہوں کے لشکر میں کس کو اتنی خبر
ہر ایک قصہ کا اک اختتام ہوتا ہے
ہزار لکھ لے کوئی فتح ذرہ ذرہ پر
مگر شہت کا بھی اک مقام ہوتا ہے

جیون جیون ہم نے جگ میں کھیل ہی ہوتے دیکھا
دھیرے دھیرے جیتی دُنیا دھیرے دھیرے ہائے لوگ
نیکی اک دن کام آئے گی ہم کو کیا سمجھاتے ہو
ہم نے بے بس مرتے دیکھے کیسے پیارے پیارے لوگ

وصل کا سکون کیا ہے حیرت کا جنوں کیا ہے
حسن کا فنوں کیا ہے عشق کے دُڑوں کیا ہے
تم مرین دانا مصلحت کے شہدائی
راہ گزراں کیا ہے تم نہ جان پاؤ گے

7

VOH YAAR HAI JO KHUSHBOO KI TARAAH, JIS KI ZUBAAN URDU KI TARAAH

*Dil na-umeed to nahiñ, naakaam hi to hai
Lambi hai gham ki shaam, magar shaam hi to hai*

Defeated it may be, but the heart does not despair
Sorrow's evening is long, but it too will pass

Thus begins a song from the 1994 Hindi movie *1942 - A Love Story*. The lyrics of the song are credited to Javed Akhtar, but the verse above comes from a poem by Faiz Ahmad Faiz. The contribution of Faiz to this song is unstated, unobtrusive, seamless, and is emblematic of the symbiotic relationship between Urdu poetry and Hindi film songs. This chapter contends that Hindi film music not only offered a new space to Urdu poetry, ensured its performative presence in the cultural landscape and nurtured its heritage but also transformed it in the process, keeping it in tune with the cultural milieu in India.

In order to appreciate the association between Urdu