Cinema and the Urdu Public Sphere: Literary imaginaries in the making of film cultures in north India (1930-50)

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CINEMA AND THE URDU PUBLIC SPHERE: Literary imaginaries in the making of film cultures in north India (1930-50)

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ABSTRACT

Urdu language and its literary culture had a considerable influence in shaping the narrative and aesthetic vocabularies of cinematic practice in India. While film scholars have recognized the role of Urdu in film dialogues and lyrics, few have attempted to understand the crucial processes by which film culture was fashioned within the Urdu public sphere. This dissertation aims to map the entangled networks of the literary with the cinematic and brings to light the vibrant debates of the Urdu public sphere on cinema from 1930 to 1950.

Drawing on an interdisciplinary approach, extensive archival research was conducted to excavate previously undiscovered materials in Urdu on film. In the thesis, these marginalized texts in Urdu are juxtaposed with and studied alongside film sources in Hindi and English to complicate and diversify existing discourses on film in India. The thesis is divided into two sections. The first part focuses on the relationship between cinema and the Urdu public sphere through a study of printed texts such as Urdu film journals, translations of film theory, and biographical dictionaries of actresses and acting manuals. These textual artefacts highlight how cinema as an institution was formalized and disseminated in Urdu with an active engagement in values and codes of etiquette borrowed from an Urdu cultural milieu. I show how these texts were produced with serious pedagogical intent to refine the taste of the cinephiles and at the same time make accessible global film theories through translocation and translation.

Part two engages with early sound cinema's mobilization of the tropes from an Urdu imaginaire, a term I have coined to refer to an affective literary imaginary that provided not only narratives but also cultural frameworks for representation in north Indian cinema in the 1930s and 40s. The coming of sound technology in the 1930s was a momentous technological shift. The thesis demonstrates how cinematic aurality ensured that the Urdu imaginaire blossomed within the film texts through the strategic evocation of the semantics of authority, romance and reform. I employ speculative research trajectories to contextualize the place of the Urdu imaginaire within a heterogenous and variegated film aesthetic by discussing case studies of film personnel, genres, film styles, literary adaptations and codes of respectability in the cinema from 1930 to 1950.

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AUTHOR’S DECLARATION

I declare that all material contained in the thesis is my own work.

Sarah Rahman Niazi………………………………

New Delhi, 2021

Note on Transliteration and Translation

I have followed the style of transliteration prescribed in John Thompson Platts' *A dictionary of Urdu, classical Hindi, and English* throughout.[1] The only exception is the alphabet 'غ' which has been used as 'gh' as in 'ghaur'. As the dictionary is available in multiple online sites, I have relied on the digital version available on Digital Dictionaries of South Asia hosted by University of Chicago. Most Urdu and Hindi terms are transliterated. However, names of authors, books and films have not been transliterated.

The study has extensive translations from Urdu and Hindi into English, from extracts in film journals and books to dialogues and lyrics in film texts. In most cases, the translation is provided in the main body of the chapter and the original Urdu text is provided in the footnote. In some instances, where the extracts are important for their content and broad sense, and not the form, only the English translations have been given. In Chapter 4, specifically focussed on dialogues and lyrics, because the form of the lyrics are important they are included in the main body of the text along with the translation.

All translation are mine unless specified otherwise. I would like to thank Prof. Mohammad Talib, Tasneem Yusuf Khan and Obaid ur Rahman Niazi for their *iṣlāḥ* and advice on translation.

[1] John Thompson Platts, *A dictionary of Urdu, classical Hindi, and English* (London: W. H. Allen & Co., 1884), https://dsal.uchicago.edu/dictionaries/platts/

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation maps the relationship of cinema with the Urdu public sphere in India from 1930 to 1950. Working with the idea of a literary public sphere that encompasses both highbrow literary cultures and lowbrow popular fiction, I attempt to trace the dynamic relationship between the two worlds – the literary and the cinematic. Urdu language and its literary performative cultures have been central to the way a variety of modes of entertainment in India were articulated. From its early manifestations as *Hindvī*, *Rekhtā*, *Dakhanī*, *Zabān-e-Urdu-e mu'alla-e Shajahānabād* (the language of the exalted city/court of Shajahanabad) to Urdu, the language has been a vital component in the Indian creative milieu. From the time of its humble beginnings in tent houses and mobile theatres, cinema drew a considerable amount of its creative energies from Urdu literary culture.[1] Urdu has provided north Indian cinema with literary imaginaries and material for its avid audiences, thus interacting with and creating a vibrant cinematic public sphere. Displacing the idea of the Habermasian public sphere, Miriam Hansen, following Negt and Kluge, identifies cinema as a public sphere defined both by specific relations of production, representation and reception and as a part of a larger 'social horizon of experience'.[2] Similarly, Francesca Orsini's work on the Hindi public sphere points to the crucial ways literary spaces are imbued with interactions, reflections and self-representations that generate a debate on language and its public use.[3] These are the ideas of the literary and cinematic public spheres that this dissertation deploys to explore the complex worlds of Urdu and its constitutive impact on cinema in India.

Curiously enough, these familiar trajectories of the interconnected networks of cinema and the Urdu public sphere have not been subjected to sustained and comprehensive academic interest. Even though a general consensus exists about the role of Urdu language in Bombay film dialogues and song lyrics, the analysis of how the Urdu public sphere shaped cinematic discourses remains to be explored. As the literature review suggests, historians of Indian

[1] Scholars have shown how early Urdu dramas were a source for early films. For an exemplary study of Imtiaz Ali Taj's 1922 play *Anarkali* and its film versions, see Alain Desoulieres, "Historical fiction and style: The case of *Anarkali*," *The Annual of Urdu Studies* 22, (2007): 67-98. See also Kathryn Hansen's work on the links between Urdu-Parsi theatre and early cinema in- Kathryn Hansen, "Passionate Refrains: The Theatricality of Urdu on the Parsi Stage," *South Asian History and Culture* 7, no. 3 (2016): 221-238.
[2] Miriam Hansen, "Early Silent Cinema: Whose Public Sphere?," *New German Critique*, no. 29 (1983): 147–184.
[3] Francesca Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere: Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000).

cinema have not critically engaged with this topic in any nuanced or detailed way.[4] On the other hand, few Urdu scholars and historians have analyzed the deep impact of Urdu literature and poetry on cinema in India.[5] This thesis attempts to fill the gaps in knowledge and maps how, through printed texts in Urdu on cinema ranging from film journals to biographical dictionaries, the Urdu public sphere addressed broader debates on language and literary imaginaries of cinema in India. These articulations on cinema in Urdu aimed to shape film production; they also intended to discipline and cultivate audiences' tastes by defining the parameters of 'good' cinema. Despite the pedagogic potential of these printed texts in Urdu, the film texts themselves reveal a varied and dispersed sphere of influence and mobilization of Urdu language. These include attempts to create a semantic field of romance, grandeur and authority in the films but also to aid in the representation of ethical subjects and characters for the project of national reform that derived its charge from the discourses in the Urdu public sphere. The knotty question about the range of influence of the Urdu literary culture and its frameworks on the diverse cinematic aesthetic through speculative strategies are discussed in the thesis.

The many cinemas of India inherited the cultural sensibilities of various linguistic and literary traditions of South Asia; from the very beginning Bengali, Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi, Punjabi, Tamil, Telegu and Urdu, amongst others, influenced the networks of film production, distribution and exhibition. Within this multilingual context, Urdu was an important force in South Asia in the twentieth century. The Urdu public sphere had an overarching influence on Bombay cinema but the sharp Hindi-Urdu language divide in north India contributed to the alienation and marginalization of Urdu language over time.[6] The political disenfranchisement

[4] Mukul Kesavan, "Urdu, Awadh and the Tawaif: The Islamicate Roots of Hindi Cinema," In *Forging Identities: Gender, Communities and the State in India*, ed. Zoya Hasan (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 244-57; Ravikant, "Popular Cinephilia in North India," *Journalism Studies* 16, no. 5 (2015): 637- 650, and Ira Bhaskar and Richard Allen, *Islamicate Cultures of Bombay Cinema* (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2009) are among the few studies on the subject. For further details see next chapter on literature review.

[5] This is perhaps due to the lack of seriousness with which these disciplines have traditionally viewed popular Indian cinema. As I discuss in chapter 1, there are of course exceptions like David Lelyveld "Eloquence and Authority in Urdu: Poetry, Oratory and Film," In *Shariat and Ambiguity in South Asian Islam*, ed. Kathrine P. Ewin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 98-106; Shahid Amin, "Representing the Musalman: Then and Now, Now and Then," In *Subaltern Studies XII*, ed. Shail Mayaram, M.S.S Pandian (Delhi: Ravi Dayal Publishers, 2005), 1-35 and Alain Desoulieres, "Historical fiction and style: The case of *Anarkali*," *The Annual of Urdu Studies* 22, (2007): 67-98.

[6] The genesis of the Hindi-Urdu language divide can be traced back to the attempts by British colonial linguists like John Gilchrist who made concerted efforts to study and codify 'Hindustani'; Gilchrist distinguished Hindustani in the Persian script as the language of Muslims and in the Nagri script as the language of Hindus. In 1837, the British administration replaced Persian with Urdu for administrative purposes in North Western Province, Bihar and Central India. The official patronage of Urdu created disaffection among the emerging elite and middle-class Hindi intellectuals who demanded the introduction of the Nagari script. As scholars have shown,

of Urdu and its association with minorities, specifically Muslims, contributed to the slow and gradual shrinking of its sphere of influence. In contemporary discourse, Urdu has come to mean different things to different people. For some, the reference to Urdu is evocative of the past and its *tahẕīb* (culture); for others, it is a mode for the interpretation of history.[7] The domain of Urdu remains a contested site today. From popular *ishqiya* poetry to the resurgence of Faiz Ahmad Faiz and Habib Jalib for political resistance, from the legacies of the Urdu-Parsi theatre to K. Asif's magnum opus *Mughal-e Azam* (1960), what counts as Urdu for many is not just the language, but the cultural ethos, images of splendor and the efflorescence of romance that it invokes. It is these allusions to Urdu that I wish to foreground through this project and reiterate the forgotten matrix of interconnections between the Urdu public sphere and cinema in north India.

In the thesis, I introduce the term 'Urdu Imaginaire' which is an important conceptual framework for the thesis. I have coined this term to refer to the intricate network of literary and cultural imaginaries that were prevalent in India in the decades under study, as I discuss in the next chapter. I will argue that the codification of the values of the Urdu public sphere became the basis of the 'Urdu imaginaire' that is palpable in the aural landscape of the films I discuss. The use of Urdu vocabulary in dialogues and song lyrics weaves a semantic net of concepts, connections and allusions to the Urdu public sphere that find a presence in the films from the 1930s and 40s. The 'Urdu imaginaire', whose contours I elaborate on over the course of the thesis, functions as a system of knowledge, an imaginary guided by literary images which aim to influence cinematic practice and texts in India.

To avoid confusion, it is important, at this point, to explain my key terms of reference. I use a number of related terms in quite specific ways. These include Urdu language, Urdu literary culture, Urdu popular culture, Urdu public sphere and Urdu imaginaire. I develop these

this demand was to develop into a powerful movement from the 1860s onwards in which supporters of both Urdu and Hindi persistently made claims in support of their languages, debated the use of vocabularies, the formulation of literary canons etc. Subsequently, the issue of two scripts got intimately linked with identity and eventually to nationhood and national language. For details see Christopher King, *One Language, Two Scripts: The Hindi Movement in Nineteenth Century North India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994) and Francesca Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere: Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[7] David Lelyveld, "*Zuban-e Urdu-e Mu'alla* and the Idol of Linguistic Origins," *The Annual of Urdu Studies* 9, (1994): 57-67,
https://minds.wisconsin.edu/bitstream/handle/1793/11851/14LelyveldZuban.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y

distinctions in Chapter 1, but for now, in brief, these should be understood in the following ways:

1. Urdu Language: As a member of the Indo-Aryan group within the Indo-European family of languages, the Urdu alphabet has up to 39 basic characters and 13 extra characters, total of 52, which are a modified form of the Arabic and Persian alphabets. The language is written from right to left. The Urdu language is closely related to Hindi in terms of phonology, with slight variations in terms of aspiration, voicing and articulation of some alphabets like the glottal *qaf*. The Urdu grammar uses more Perso-Arabic prefixes and suffixes than Hindi but overall is quite similar. The Urdu language has an expansive vocabulary borrowed from Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit, Portuguese, Turkish etc. Hindustani is used colloquially to mean a spoken form of Urdu/Hindi. But Hindustani also has a longer political history that I discuss in Chapter 1.
2. Urdu Literary Culture: A culture that produced literature in Urdu. The expanse and nature of literary culture is diverse, ranging from north to south India (Delhi, Agra, Lucknow, Patna, Lahore, Calcutta and Hyderabad among others). Even within the few cities I have mentioned, the Urdu literary culture has its own distinctive character. Shamsur Rahman Faruqi has pointed out that the expansive reach of the Urdu language has created peculiar problems of pinning down early Urdu literary culture. He writes, "there are, for instance, problems of historicizing, of historical space, the literary canon, canonical versus non-canonical pronunciation and usage, suppression or promotion of regional identities, the dynamics of hegemonic literary centres like Delhi and Lucknow, the emergence of new institutions like that of *ustād* (master) and *shāgird* (pupil) in the art of poetry."[8]
3. Urdu Popular Culture: The culture of the *bāzār* (marketplace) which also has overlapping connections with what is considered as 'classical'; hybrid forms of literature, calendar art, mass mediated forms like theatre (Urdu drama, Urdu-Parsi theatre) and the cinema are part of the Urdu popular culture.
4. Urdu Public Sphere: a literary public sphere where printed material (fiction and non-fiction) becomes space for debate, discussion and the formation of public opinion on

[8] Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, *Early Urdu Literary Culture and History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 17.

contemporary social values and issues. The Urdu public sphere has significant influence over Urdu popular culture (Urdu drama, Urdu-Parsi theatre and the cinema).

5. Urdu Imaginaire: a literary imaginaire that is linked to the values emerging from the Urdu public sphere, as described above and elaborated on as the thesis develops.

In terms of periodization, I have used 1930 and 1950 as bookends to mark a period in which major transformations took place within the Urdu public sphere and cinema in India. My primary focus is on north Indian cinema i.e. film produced in cities such as Bombay, Calcutta, Poona and Lahore. I do also refer to Madras briefly but with respect to Hindustani versions of films produced in the city which were circulated in north India. The coming of sound technology in the 1930s marked a paradigmatic shift in the film industry, with the expansion of various networks of production, exhibition and distribution. The film business entered a new era in which the language of a film became an important consideration in attempts to preserve the diverse regional markets of film consumption. In those years, the question of language was subject to disputation within both the literary public sphere and the cinematic public sphere. The intense Hindi-Urdu debates about the language of cinema reached a new dimension in the 1930s and 40s, as articulated in the Urdu and Hindi film journals of the day, as I will discuss. In 1947, with the cataclysmic event of partition and the independence of India, the place of the Urdu language in the new nations (India and Pakistan) had arrived at a consensus; Urdu was chosen as the official national language of Pakistan, while in India, it became one of the twenty-two constitutionally recognised official languages. Post-partition, the film industry was in a state of flux as new film studios materialised and a few old ones collapsed. This significant reshuffling of the industry and the loss of Lahore as a site of film production led to the departure and arrival of film personnel.[9] The use and influence of the Urdu language in cinema reached another phase in the late 1940s which was marred by the politics of the times as I show in the thesis.

In this Introduction, I highlight the research objectives, key questions of the thesis and its original contribution to knowledge. This Introduction also outlines the theoretical and methodological approaches that underpin the investigation of the relationship between the

[9] Salma Siddique, "Between Bombay and Lahore: A Partition History of cinema in South Asia (1940-1960)" (PhD diss., University of Westminster, 2015).

Urdu public sphere and north Indian cinema from 1930 to 1950. The last section gives an outline of the thesis and brief summaries of each chapter.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND KEY QUESTIONS

1. To investigate the role and influence of the Urdu public sphere on cinematic culture in north India from 1930-1950

2. To recuperate and recover Urdu textual material on cinema i.e. film journals, acting manuals, biographical dictionaries, film theory texts in translation, and to analyze these to uncover the debates in Urdu that contributed to the cinematic public sphere.

3. To propose a new conceptual framework, which I call the 'Urdu imaginaire', which extends the language, its script and sounds beyond the margins of a literary page to cinema, as a powerful form of material culture.

   The key questions (chapter by chapter) that I ask in the thesis are:

1. What was the role of the Urdu public sphere in shaping cinema in India in the 1930s and 40s?

2. What themes dominated the Urdu film journals and how similar or different were these to contemporary film periodicals in other languages (Hindi and English)? Can we think of the Urdu film journal as an extension of the literary, in its format and structure?

3. How did Urdu texts on cinema aspire to contribute to film pedagogy and cultivation of skills like acting?

4. How did the 'Urdu imaginaire' affect strategies of narrativization, dialogue construction and song lyrics in the early sound period in India?

5. How does the Urdu imaginaire manifest in early sound cinema and how do we map it within a variegated film aesthetic?

ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

In tracing the interrelated, shared and complex exchanges between the Urdu public sphere and cinema, the thesis attempts to tell the history of cinema in north India in a way that moves beyond film texts, their histories and networks of production and exhibition. By mobilizing printed artefacts like film journals and Urdu books on cinematic practice, I argue for the significance of this wide range of Urdu printed material in telling the histories of film culture and consumption. This printed material from the Urdu public sphere is significant as it forms a powerful additional archive of the debates and discourses that shaped cinema in India. First, I look at the debates in the early sound era over what the language of cinema should be. For the Urdu writers and journalists, it was imperative to establish that the appropriate language of cinema was Urdu. Secondly, once the domain of the language of cinema was recognized as Urdu, I show how the values and codes within which the cinema was to operate were framed in these journals, and how those derived much of their strength from the Urdu public sphere. Here two key discourses on ethical conduct (*ak͟hlāq*) and reform (*iṣlāḥ*) were repeatedly mobilized by authors of these Urdu texts on cinema. As I discuss in chapters 2 and 3, these interventions into cinema drew from longer histories of the two concepts, albeit amid multiple digressions and contestations.

My research of Urdu printed texts and the entangled networks between literature (*adab*) and cinema have constantly made me aware of the importance of the role of the 'literary' within cinematic culture. In the Urdu public sphere, 'literariness' (*adabiyāt*) has been linked to polite culture, etiquette and taste. While film as a 'new media' was different from oral story-telling traditions, literary genres (novels, short story, poetry etc.) and theatre, cinema was mediated by and imagined through the frameworks of the 'literary'. I show how the cinema was legitimized as a cultural form by the Urdu public sphere, with overlapping moral and ethical codes and as an extension of the literary. The Urdu film journals, as I argue, incorporated the format of the literary journals in order to be more palatable to their diverse readers, but these impulses were complicated by the tantalizing advertisements and titillating gossip about film stars that ran alongside the main articles. The desire to 'discipline' cinema, which was seen as a ‘western’ import, was in a perennial state of flux because of the images of excess and the pleasures produced by the cinema. This project is a reminder of the potentialities of the Urdu public sphere in negotiating the complexities of colonial modernity, using the expansive Urdu lexicon to debate, dissent and argue. The archival material in Urdu that I have found provides new academic insights on the subject and highlights the various ways in which the Urdu public sphere aspired to shape the contours of cinema in India from 1930 to 1950.

In the thesis, I propose the concept of the ‘Urdu imaginaire’, a powerful sensibility that influenced film texts produced in north India. I offer the term to refer to an imaginary that participated within discourses that attempted to disengage the Urdu language from minority clichés and reiterated its place in shaping the composite culture of India. This research offers possibilities of reclaiming the place of Urdu material in writing the history of cinema by bringing into the conversation the debates from the Urdu public sphere. As an under-researched area of study, the thesis is an original contribution to the understanding of South Asian cinema history and the role of the Urdu public sphere in its reformulation.

METHODOLOGY

This project maps the intricate and complex negotiations between Urdu and the cinematic public sphere (1930-50) and is inspired by many critical and historiographical interventions. The thesis relies heavily on the archive and, in searching for Urdu material on film, the first obvious place to look was the National Film Archive of India (NFAI) in Pune. Surprisingly enough, material in Urdu, especially film journals, was completely missing from the archive catalogue. The dearth of Urdu material in the ‘official’ film archive brought into sharp focus the selective appropriation of materials and the fallacies of institutional politics that privileges one kind of archival material over another. It was also clear that the archive acts both as a repository of cinema history and a reminder of its exclusions. Despite my reservations concerning the reliability of the archives, the archive did provide fragmentary sources to the past, notably issues of Hindi film journals *Rangbhūmī*, *Ćitrapat* and *Cinema Sansār*, English-language film journals like *filmindia*, *Filmland*, *Picture Post*, *The Cinema* etc., and other film memorabilia like film booklets were sourced from the NFAI. Ultimately, my research work was informed by an intuitive response to found material through a search for traces and clues which produced significant "evidential paradigms".[10]

The film journals and other printed materials in Urdu have been neglected and this largely accounts for their absence from major libraries and archives in India and abroad.[11] In such a scenario, alternative archiving impulses outside traditional archives like the NFAI have been useful reservoirs for Urdu film material. Stephen Hughes has looked at the Tamil film archive as a 'living archive', positing the importance of the film collector as an crucial source.[12] Informed by what Timothy P.A. Cooper calls "*raddi* infrastructure", private collectors and libraries, as well as store houses of Urdu books in U.P., Hyderabad, Bihar and Delhi have been extremely helpful to me in sourcing texts and journals on cinema from the Urdu public sphere.[13] Sometimes, the archives encountered were crumbling and dusty, demanding a process of patient engagement that foregrounds the transience of archival material as fragile, incongruous and absent. I have had to rely on found materials, objects that emerged through unexpected unstructured encounters in the archive and outside it. A journey to an old discarded storehouse of an Urdu bookseller in Amroha was the source for a rare issue of the Urdu film journal *Sha'mā* from 1946. Thus, the method for the choice of the texts/printed material I could use was governed by accidental finds, or to what Horace Walpole in 1754 had coined with the neologism 'serendipity' to describe the "making [of] discoveries, by accidents and sagacity, of things which they were not in quest."[14]

Carolyn Steedman's *Dust* reminds us that "archive fever proper" is very much part of the experience of the encounter with archival material - the fever actually contracted in the "dust of an archive".[15] The Urdu archives have endured long periods of neglect and acts of

[10] Carlo Ginzburg, "Clues: Roots of an Evidential Paradigm," In *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method* (Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 1992), 96-125.
[11] I elaborate this further in Chapter 2 when I deal with archival conundrum around Urdu film journals.
[12] Stephen Putnam Hughes, "The Production of the Past: Early Tamil Film History as a Living Archive," *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 4, no. 1 (2013): 71 – 80, https://doi.org/10.1177/097492761200483060.
[13] Timothy P.A. Cooper, "Black Market Archive"/ "Raddi" archives in "*Raddi* Infrastructure: Collecting Film Memorabilia in Pakistan: An Interview with Guddu Khan of Guddu's Film Archive," *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 7, no. 2 (2016): 151-171.
[14] As quoted by Ginzburg, "Clues: Roots of an Evidential Paradigm," In *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method* (Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 1992), 116. Further, Ginzburg suggests that ancient Arabic physiognomies were rooted in the concept of *irisa* "a complex notion which, in general, designated the ability to pass, on the basis of clues, directly from the known to the unknown. The term came from the vocabulary of the Sufis and designated mystical intuitions as well as forms of discernment and wisdom that were attributed to the sons of the king of Serendipity. In this second meaning of *irisa* was none other than the instrument of conjectural knowledge." Ibid., 125.
[15] Carolyn Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2011).

omission. These archives are not neatly cataloged but housed in crumbling edifices leading to disappointments and dismay which were very much part of my experience as a researcher. I was following a trail that suggested the Saulat Public Library in Rampur might be in possession of Urdu film journals and books. The library was founded in 1935 and was a vibrant centre for scholars looking for Arabic, Persian and Urdu manuscripts, books and other printed materials. As a public library, they had annual subscriptions to all kinds of contemporary periodicals and books and hence my expectation was that I would find Urdu film material from 1930-1950. However, on my visit to the library in Rampur, I discovered that one of the walls of the library had collapsed and due to shortage of funds had not been repaired since 2013.[16] Witnessing the poor state of affairs of the library, I found that most of the books had been stacked in a small room hurriedly one day as rain poured down and threatened to further damage the rare Urdu, Persian and Arabic materials in the collection. This severely affected their cataloging and put the material in a complete state of disarray. The building which housed Saulat Public Library had poor access to electricity, was under-staffed and under-funded; it was a miracle that the library was even open to visitors. I worked in a dimly lit room, tirelessly turning the pages of a dusty and tattered hand-written catalogue to assess what material was logged in the records. With the help of the librarian Mazhar Muin Khan we went through cupboards of books, bundles of papers stacked on top of each other without any coherent alphabetical order. The staff, despite their constraints, were extremely helpful, generously offering me cups of tea with intermittent doses of advice on how and where to look for the film material. They shared their surprise at my research topic and how nobody had come asking for Urdu film material in the past. Mazhar *sahab* shared anecdotes and confessed that he had been an avid reader of the film journals (mentioning *Sha'mā* and *Ruby* as favourites). But he also divulged that these film journals were always considered as *tafrīh* (diversion and entertainment) and thus were not archived with any serious intention. After two evenings' worth of disappointments, when the staff realized that I had not found what I was looking for, they called for reinforcements in the form of a few local Urdu academics who generously brought Urdu film journals from their private collections and offered them to me to keep, with an underlying tacit suggestion that some of these might be sold off as *raddi* (scrap) owing to the lack of storage space at home, so

[16] Read about Daniel Jacobius Morgan's account of his visit to the library in Morgan, "Welcome to the graveyard of rare books, also known as the Saulat Public Library, Rampur," *Scroll.in*, November 25, 2017, https://scroll.in/article/859111/welcome-to-the-graveyard-of-rare-books-also-known-as-the-saulat-public-library-rampur

I had better look after these gems.[17] This unusual encounter and acts of magnanimity potentially expanded my role from a mere researcher to a collector of Urdu film material, thereby foregrounding that all research work is also in some ways an act of archive formation.

Steedman evocatively writes, "As might be expected of an experience that is an important professional rite of passage, no one historian's archive is ever like another's; each account of his or her experience within them will always produce counterexamples, of different kinds of discomfort".[18] The Urdu archives I encountered were 'inconsistent' and sometimes very 'dusty', but also dangerously alluring, I found Steedman's assertion reassuring as it indicated that the 'truth claims' of the archives were very much like the material they housed - somewhere between absent and present. Guilliana Bruno's work in *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map: Cultural Theory and the City films of Elvira Notari* has guided my approach to archives. This illustrative paradigm was immensely useful to deal with the encounter with textual loss. This is a method in which, in Bruno's own words, "the analyst's gaze would be able to move, as does that of an anatomist, from visible traces on a surface to invisible ones inside the body of texts. Indexical and inferential, this approach goes in depth and also traverses intertextu(r)al sites of absent presence, riding on the crest of a visible invisibility."[19]

Bruno's method was useful in my reading of archival materials and printed artefacts collected during research. I have used this material – Urdu film journals, film guidebooks, acting manuals in translations – to discuss a variety of discourses in Urdu on film. These range from a discussion about translation strategies (in acting manuals), to processes that highlight the continuum between other biographical writings and emerging star texts (in actors' *tazkiras*/ biographical dictionaries) to an assessment of the influence of *ak̲h̲lāq* textual tradition on film. I see these archival texts as part of efforts by Urdu writers to educate and reform potential readers, cinephiles and film personnel. Often inadequate information about the texts (like production/ printing detail) was available; this required using research strategies to locate the authors' other literary pursuits, drawing on materials by the printing presses among other nodes of inquiry. Thus, the printed text became a primary site of information, through which other

[17] I am grateful for their generosity in sharing the material and anecdotes of reading Urdu film journals, although most of the material I received from them was from the 1980s.
[18] Carolyn Steedman, "Something She Called a Fever: Michelet, Derrida, and Dust," *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 4 (2001): 1159–1180.
[19] Giuliana Bruno, "Mapping Out Discourse: An Introduction," In *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map: Cultural Theory and the City Films of Elvira Notari* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1993), 4.

source materials could be appendaged to buffer the analysis. In my close reading of the contents of the texts, what emerges is an engagement with the 'invisible'/ underlying discourses that these texts implicitly participated in and reproduced.

A serious consideration within the archive was my search for Urdu language material along with English and Hindi sources. Charu Gupta has argued that,

> "…emerging vernacular materials [she is referring to cheaply produced popular literature] have conventionally not been regarded as "serious" and "authentic". Mainstream scholars neglect them as viable archival sources just as they often do with fiction literature. However, while these writings may be embedded within non-archival genres, they are marked by discursive signs that allow them to be recognized as archival."[20]

Texts on film in Urdu have not generally been considered worthy of critical analysis, as these were embedded in a popular print culture. My analysis is imbued with an awareness of the context and complexities of printing in north India, for example juxtaposing the Urdu texts with other language printed materials (specifically film journals), I use a comparative methodological approach; this was not to pit one language over another, but merely privileging the Urdu text to focus on its content, glean what is written between the lines and place it within an existing corpus of available materials on film in Hindi, English, Bengali, Tamil and Marathi to show how these texts may have been in conversation with each other, in a multilingual cinematic public sphere.[21]

The colonial archive, with its ordered cataloging and meticulous configuration of power, has been useful, but one has to recognize that the archive cannot offer direct access to the past and any reading of its contents will necessarily be a reinterpretation, and thus I read it against the grain.[22] The *Catalogue of Books Published and Registered Under the Provision of Act XXV of 1867, NWFP, Oudh and Punjab*, as well as other catalogues of Urdu printed texts

[20] Charu Gupta, "Writing Sex and Sexuality: Archives of Colonial North India," *Journal of Women's History* 23, no. 4, (2011): 15.

[21] According to Ruth Wodak, the socio-political and historical context is important for any critical interpretation as "one cannot simply 'read off' ideological analysis from such (linguistic) forms". See, Wodak, *Bloomsbury Companion to Discourse Analysis,* ed. Ken Hyland and Brian Paltridge (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013), 42.

[22] Ann Laura Stoler, "Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance," *Archival Science* 2, (2002): 87-109.

now held at the British Library, are sharp reminders of the colonial imperatives of surveillance, censorship and the construction of the regime of knowledge. These archives, however, have now become a potential point of access into the history of the relationship between cinema and the Urdu public sphere. Avoiding a merely 'extractive' method, this thesis mobilizes the colonial archive to engage with and intervene in the production of knowledge about Urdu texts in the archives.[23] It is in these very subversive possibilities of (re)-interpretation and meaning-making that the archive and its materials emerge as transformed and push against the Derridian notion of "the institution of the archives as the expression of state power."[24]

The research is grounded in an awareness that cinema during the period under study was a product of intermedial networks between theatre, print, radio and other visual artistic practices like photography and painting. Following on, I use intermediality as a historiographic method proposed by Lucia Nagib and others.[25] They argue that cinematic culture cannot be studied in isolation, as its development and proliferation is marked by simultaneous hybridization and cross-fertilization with 'old' and 'new' media technologies. Sudhir Mahadevan writes that, "…infrastructure, mechanical reproduction, and intermediality defined the cinema as, respectively, an assemblage of screen practices, as mass culture, and as a topically relevant medium in its early decades."[26] These attributes are recognizable in the debates that spurred Urdu writers and film journalists whose views oscillated between references to the cinema's affiliation to literariness and the desire to posit it as an art form in its own right, a 'seventh art'.[27] Cinema as mass culture was a source of constant anxiety and

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[23]Ann Laura Stroler succinctly argues that "There are a number of ways to frame the sort of challenge I have in mind, but at least one seems obvious: steeped as students of culture have been in treating ethnographies as texts, we are just now critically reflecting on the making of documents and how we choose to use them, on archives not as sites of knowledge retrieval but of knowledge production, as monuments of states as well as sites of state ethnography. This is not a rejection of colonial archives as sources of the past. Rather, it signals a more sustained engagement with those archives as cultural artifacts of fact production, of taxonomies in the making, and of disparate notions of what made up colonial authority." Ann Laura Stoler, ibid., 90-91.

[24] Carolyn Steedman on Derrida in "Something She Called a Fever: Michelet, Derrida, and Dust," *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 4 (2001): 1162. Also see, Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

[25] Lucia Nagib, *Impure Cinema: Intermedial and Intercultural Approaches to Film* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013).

[26] Sudhir Mahadevan, *A Very Old Machine: The Many Origins of the Cinema in India, 1840-1930* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015), 6.

[27] Alain Badiou has argued, "Cinema is the seventh art in a very particular sense. It does not add itself to the other six while remaining on the same level as them. Rather, it implies them – cinema is the "plus-one" of the arts. It operates on the other arts, using them as its starting point, in a movement that subtracts them from themselves" in Alain Badiou, *The Handbook of Inaesthetics*, tr. Alberto Toscano (California: Stanford University Press, 2005), 79. The debates from the Urdu public sphere on cinema are discussed in Chapters 2, 3 and 5.

elite critics wished to rid the cinema of its *bazārī* (of marketplace) connotations and aesthetics.[28] I use these debates on intermediality to understand the role of an Urdu imaginaire within film culture, and explore how it propelled film journalism, pedagogic and instructional literature on cinema in Urdu, specifically through attempts to shape cinematic practice.

Crucial methodological insights have been derived from two essays: David Lelyveld's "Eloquence and Authority in Urdu: Poetry, Oratory and Film" (1988) is a methodological gem and has influenced my own approach to disparate Urdu sources. Lelyveld makes innovative use of a plethora of materials, highlighting the ways in which archival documents, poetry, political speeches and film texts can be interwoven together to map the historical transition of Urdu language as a linguistic register that was related to moral authority. In "Emotion, Subjectivity and the Limits of Desire", Ira Bhaskar demonstrates the effective ways in which the song sequences in films are assembled through mise-en-scene, camera movement and lyrics to accentuate a spatial articulation of desire.[29] In attempts to tease out the idioms and motifs of the Urdu imaginaire as expressed in the cinema, I analyze the use of Urdu in the dialogues and lyrics of the films from the 1930s and 40s. Bhaskar's method has been useful to explore the evocative register of the Urdu imaginaire as immortalized through cinema, specifically in the romantic song sequences of the films under study.

Finally, I use speculation as a methodological tool in attempts to map the Urdu imaginaire and its representational frameworks in the cinema of the 1930s and 40s. Richard Swedberg suggests that "Speculation refers to the use of guesses, conjectures and similar ways of thinking, that help the scientist to come up with explanations and redefinitions of phenomena, in situations where important facts are missing."[30] A speculative approach to research demands a creative and dynamic means to reconstruct and produce knowledge. While, intuitions like serendipity are primarily subconscious in nature, speculation as a method is conscious and active. With caution, as Michael Halewood argues, "speculation could be seen as a useful tool which recognizes the incomplete and processual character of the world and

[28] Kaushik Bhaumik, "The Emergence of the Bombay Film Industry, 1913-1936" (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2002), 144.

[29] Ira Bhaskar, "Emotion, Subjectivity and the Limits of Desire: Melodrama and Modernity in Bombay cinema 1940s- 50s," In *Gender Meets Genre in PostWar Cinemas*, ed. Christine Gledhill (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2012): 161- 176.

[30] Richard Swedberg, "Does Speculation Belong in Social Science Research?," *Sociological Methods and Research* 50, no. 1 (April 2018): 45- 74.

invites us to develop approaches to thinking and research which bear witness to the inherent dynamism of existence."[31]

CHAPTER OUTLINE

The thesis is divided into two parts. The first part focuses on the relationship between cinema and the Urdu public sphere through a study of printed texts produced in Urdu. The second part of the thesis maps the ways in which cinema in India between 1930 and 1950 mobilized the tropes from the Urdu imaginaire. Chapter 1 attempts to trace the history of the Urdu public sphere in India and reviews the relevant literature in the field. This chapter lays out the context of the thesis and the arguments within which interventions are being made.

Chapters 2 and 3 focus on printed material from the Urdu public sphere and are organized around questions of language, taste, etiquette and the role of these in shaping the cinematic public sphere. In Chapter 2, *Film Journalism and the Urdu Public Sphere 1930- 40s*, I map the history of the Urdu press and film journalism. These Urdu film journals, missing from 'official' archives, have been laboriously collected and are analyzed in this chapter. I compare these journals with film and literary journals in other languages. In engaging with these materials, I explore the role of Urdu film journals in contributing to the elaboration of a cinematic public sphere through discussions of the appropriate film genres for different audiences, reviews of films and film policy. In Chapter 3, *Cinematic Discourse and Texts from the Urdu Public Sphere*, I focus on printed material in Urdu on cinema. Texts like *Film Acting Guide* by Prithi Singh (1935), *Filmī Adakāri* (A translation of Pudovkin in Urdu) by Balam Firdausi (1937), *Filmī Pariyaṅ* by Gauhar (1936) and *Filmī Titliyaṅ* by Bijli Jampuri (1945) were concerned with the formulation of discourses on ethical conduct (*ak̲h̲lāq*) and reform (*iṣlāḥ*) of cinematic practice.

The process of selection of material for these two chapters was largely governed by the chance discoveries of Urdu journals and books during fieldwork. Nevertheless, the texts provide a fascinating insight into the ways in which the Urdu public sphere was responding to cinema by using a variety of literary strategies and genres. The question I ask of these texts is

[31] Michael Halewood, "Speculation as a Constraint on Thought: Whitehead, Stengers and the Role of the Future in the Present", paper presented at the British Sociological Association conference, "Speculation in Social Science: Novel Methods for Re-inventing Problems", 2014.

mainly about the ways in which the authors translate cinematic concepts and experiences within the frameworks of the Urdu public sphere. My readings of these Urdu texts confirm the role of the Urdu language in the Indian cultural milieu of the 1930s and 1940s. Specifically, they add crucially to our understanding of the important role of the Urdu public sphere in shaping cinematic discourses in India.

In Chapter 4, *Expression of the Urdu Imaginaire: Dialogues and Lyrics in the Early Talkies*, I look at the use of language in cinema in the period when sound technology arrived in Bombay. Despite the language diversity, Urdu became especially important for the dialogues and song lyrics of north Indian films from the 1930s and 40s. I analyze the speech and different registers of language (Urdu-Hindustani-Hindi) used by the characters in six films: Prabhat's *Amrit Manthan* (d. V. Shantaram, 1934), Minerva Movietone's *Pukar* (d. Sohrab Modi,1939), *Rattan* (d. M. Sadiq, 1944), *Shahjehan* (A.R. Kardar, 1946) *Mirza Sahiban* (d. K. Amarnath, 1947) and *Chandralekha* (d. S. Vasan, 1948). Following Kathryn Hansen's argument about the use of Urdu in Parsi theatre for commercial and aesthetic considerations, I structure the chapter around the three themes she identifies in the perceived qualities of Urdu culture, its "*sweet speech*" in dialogues, its articulation of "*realms of romance*" through song lyrics, and its "*lofty thoughts*" of reform.[32] The sample of films has been chosen from what little is available. However, careful selection has been made to account for films from the major studios from this period, including one from Madras. Also, I have selected the films to represent a spread of dominant genres including the social, the mythological, the historical and the oriental fantasy film. In doing so, this chapter reiterates the overarching concern of the thesis with the prevalence of the Urdu imaginaire in Indian cinema, which is not limited to the so-called Islamicate genres, as often previously assumed.[33]

In chapter 5, *Urdu is not a monolith: Locating the Urdu imaginaire within a variegated film language and aesthetic*, I assess a variety of strategies that might be deployed to map the Urdu imaginaire in the cinema of the 1930s and 40s. I explore the challenges and limitations in doing so, especially when confronted with an industrial network of film production that was characterized by diverse impulses. In this chapter, I use four speculative trajectories to establish

[32] For elaboration please see chapter 4. Also, Kathryn Hansen, "Passionate refrains: the theatricality of Urdu on the Parsi stage," *South Asian History and Culture* 7, no. 3 (2016): 222

[33] Here I am referring to genres such as 'Muslim socials' or Historicals associated with Mughals and Muslim rule or Courtesan films etc. For further discussion on the Islamicate see next chapter.

the connections between Urdu literary culture and cinema in India. First, in mapping the circuits through which individuals (poets and courtesans) straddled the world of Urdu literary culture and cinema, I assess the contribution of Jahanara Kajjan, Jaddan Bai, Qamar Jalalabadi and Shakeel Badayuni. Second, I explore film genres and styles, specifically the social film and its sub-genre the Muslim social. Third, through the case study of Ismat Chughtai's *Ziddi*, novella and film, I appraise the role of film adaptation in perpetuating the Urdu imaginaire. I show how the affective regime of the Urdu imaginaire transfers in an intermedial flow from novella to film. And finally, I refer to the *akhlāqī* framework and the discourses of *sharāfat*/respectability that were critical to the Urdu public sphere and notions of *iṣlāḥ* (reform) of cinema. I conclude that the Urdu imaginaire was not a monolith, just like the cinematic texts it influenced, which were complex, multi-layered and produced through series of negotiations between competing literary and cultural practices.

CHAPTER 1

SURVEY OF RELEVANT LITERATURE AND BRIEF INTERVENTIONS

In this chapter, I survey the relevant literature and provide a historical and theoretical context to my project. While it is impossible to provide a totally comprehensive account of all secondary materials and related research on the Urdu language, Urdu literary and popular culture, my aim is to signpost the important debates and to suggest where I might intervene within the field of inquiry.

In the first section, I draw on secondary literature to sketch a potted history of Urdu literary culture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to identify the contours of the Urdu imaginaire of the 1930s and 40s, that my thesis builds on. The Urdu imaginaire as I will discuss in this chapter was an important imaginary produced by literary and cultural frameworks from an Urdu public sphere. This vast domain of texts and genres that I briefly discuss were seminal in shaping the debates within the Urdu public sphere and, as I will argue, their impact on the cinema was consequently profound. Even though there may not have been an immediate and direct adaptation of these texts into films, it is possible to see similarities, echoes and borrowed ideas. I also discuss Urdu popular culture and the place of Urdu drama, Urdu-Parsi theatre and silent cinema within this culture. In doing so, I examine the crossover between various performative traditions and how they used the Urdu language and its literary genres effectively. The Urdu ghazal is one such genre that became a staple in films from the 1930s onwards.

In the next section, I briefly digress to discuss the debates on nomenclature and the overlaps between Urdu-Hindi-Hindustani. How have historians of South Asian cinema labelled the films according to language? Has language played a key role in defining the cinema, especially with the introduction of sound technology when the choice of a key language for Bombay cinema was under consideration? In the light of the contested Hindi-Urdu divide and the political call for ‘Hindustani’, I argue that the fluidities of these labels make this task challenging: labels like ‘Urdu cinema’ or ‘Hindi cinema’ obscure the linguistic diversity of the cinema produced in India. Perhaps the most satisfactory label is ‘Hindustani cinema’. However, as contemporary industry norms reveal, even this label was not without its own political agenda as I discuss further below. Instead, I prefer to prioritize the site of cinema, its location within the city of production, Bombay, as an easy way out of this conundrum.

As an interdisciplinary project I attempt to bring together literary culture and film history as possible ways through which the conceptual framework of the Urdu imaginaire of the 1930s and 40s can be formulated. The Urdu imaginaire in this period was marked by axes of tensions produced by the persistence of hierarchies between literary traditions, popular cultural practices like theatre, *nautanki* and emerging new media like photography, lithographic prints, calendar art and cinema. Thus, discourses of respectability (*sharafat*) became sutured into the narratives that were borrowed by new entertainment forms, specifically for our purposes, the cinema from 1930- 50.[1] These discourses were linked to those on ethical and moral conduct (*akhlāq*) which became crucial to combat the attitudes towards the use of Urdu within the cinematic public sphere. The narratives during this period presented stories of conflict between tradition and modernity, with the urban metropolis as a site for moral anxieties, or period films where the lives of saints and emperors were ideals for emulation for contemporary youth.

In my third section, I interrogate the category of the 'Islamicate' that has been used by film scholars to discuss particular film trends specific to genres like the Muslim social, the historical and the courtesan film, and by extension with the use of Urdu language in the films. I caution against the use of the Islamicate as a concept for discussing Indian cinema in the context of Urdu, as it obfuscates the secular and cosmopolitan heritage of the language. Instead, I will argue that an analysis of cinema from the 1930s and 40s that focuses on locating the contours of an Urdu imaginaire allows us to productively recognize the overlaps between literary and popular culture that shape cinematic practice. Finally, I discuss Habermas' theory of the public sphere and its later critiques. I suggest a few different ways of delineating the Urdu public sphere in order to map its enduring relationship with cinema in India from 1930 to 1950.

URDU LITERARY CULTURE: A QUICK OVERVIEW OF TWO CENTURIES

Scholars such as Shaista Akhtar Sughrawardy (1945), Frances Pritchett (1985), C.M. Naim (1992), David Lelyveld (1993), Aamer Hussain (1996), Shamsur Rahman Faruqi (2001), and Shahid Amin (2005) have traced the relationship between Urdu language and its literary

[1] Refer to Chapter 5 where I elaborate on this with specific film examples.

culture. The Annual Urdu Studies journal has consistently produced academic writings and scholarship on Urdu language and literature for the English-speaking and reading public. These works provide a nuanced understanding of the development of the Urdu language and its literary genres. It is interesting that most histories of twentieth-century Urdu literature refer back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This continuous reference to the past is part of the complexity of negotiating and defining the term 'Urdu literary culture'. Urdu literature inherited a complex history of associations which can be linked to the socio-political status of a language that has been in a constant state of flux.

The use of the term 'Urdu' to designate the language as we know it today has been widely discussed by scholars. The authoritative dictionary by John T. Platts defines Urdu as 'army', 'camp or market of a camp'. Platts, writing in the late nineteenth century, describes it as "Hindustani language as spoken by the Muhammadans of India, and by Hindus who have intercourse with them or who hold appointments in the Government courts."[2] Shamsur Rahman Faruqi suggests that "the belief that Urdu originated in Muslim army camps and cantonment bazaars helped generate and sustain two myths; Urdu was the language of the Muslims and, being originally the language of camp and cantonment, it stood in natural need of being refined and gentrified."[3] He argues cogently that even though poets as early as Mushafi (1750-1824) used Urdu to imply both language and community, it was British colonial imperatives and the work of John Gilchrist at the College of Fort William, Calcutta, that seized upon the etymological root of the word 'Urdu' to promote originary myths about Urdu as the language of army camps and *bāzār*. In its previous forms Urdu was known by different names in different regions, including *Hindvī*, *Re<u>kh</u>tā*, *Dakhanī*, and *Hindustānī*.[4] A literary written language similar to what we now call Urdu gradually began to replace Persian in early eighteenth-century Delhi, and "...while still resting firmly on its Indic grammatical and lexical base, was steadily enlarging its repertoire of Persian genres and imagery."[5] This literary Urdu gradually spread from Delhi and Agra (which were the centres of learning at the time) to Awadh, Punjab, Bihar and parts of the Deccan. By the nineteenth century, along with Delhi and Agra, Lucknow,

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[2] John T. Platts, *A Dictionary of Urdu, Classical Hindi, and English* (London: W. H. Allen and Co., 1884).
[3] Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, "Unprivileged Power: The strange case of Persian (and Urdu) in Nineteenth-Century India," *The Annual of Urdu Studies* 13, (1998): 12- 18.
[4] Stuart McGregor has argued that the linguistically diverse speech of Delhi "developed eventually, by different routes, into modern Urdu and Hindi which, linguistically speaking, are complementary Persianised and Sanskritised styles of the same language." See, Stuart McGregor, "On the Evolution of Hindi as a Language of Literature," *South Asia Research* 21, no. 2 (2001): 203.
[5] Frances Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and its critics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft10000326/

Lahore, Calcutta and Hyderabad became major centres of Urdu scholarship. This vast territory in which Urdu flourished enabled writers and filmmakers to contribute to - and provide a semantic framework for - the Urdu imaginaire. By the 1930s, many varieties of Urdu were in use – not only were the literary Urdu(s) produced in these areas peculiar to each region, but the colloquial (*bol-ćāl*) Urdu also had its own registers[6]; on the other hand, the Urdu of the official *kacchehri* (court) was codified[7] and the Urdu of performative traditions like the Parsi theatre had its own inflections.[8] These many kinds of Urdu fed into and nuanced the Urdu imaginaire of the 1930s and 40s. Some of these registers from Urdu literary culture were dominant like the *Lucknowi* Urdu from the princely state of Awadh in comparison to a *Kalkattan*- styled Urdu from the Calcutta area which had a Bhojpuri influence. The key point to be made is that the Urdu imaginaire was heterogenous and complex even if some strains from the Urdu literary and linguistic universe dominated over others.

A lot has been written about the wider political and social significance of the events of 1857. The defeat of the Indian Rebellion of 1857 was a huge blow to the interests of the Urdu-speaking Indian elite; it initiated a period of intense conflict and melancholia which found expression in the *shahr-ashob*[9] and produced complex negotiations between poets and intellectuals like Ghalib, and British colonialists.[10] This catastrophic event and the subsequent repression by the British affected the sense of self-worth among Indians and divided the intelligentsia into camps that were either hostile to British rule or who argued for reform and introspection. After 1857, many of the literary elite turned to their pre-colonial literary heritage as an authentic, albeit highly problematic past. Persian slowly and gradually gave way to the

[6] Lucknowi Urdu differs from Hyderabadi Urdu, or those varieties of Urdu spoken in Western U.P. towns like Saharanpur, Bijnor, Aligarh etc. had its own peculiar vocabularies, idiomatic expressions and metaphors.
[7] Nazir Ahmad translated the Indian Penal code into Urdu which became standard use in the courtroom as well in depictions and reproductions of courtroom scenes in theatre and cinema.
[8] Kathryn Hansen has argued that Parsi theatre practitioners were using Urdu to their own advantage. This produced specific kinds of texts of Urdu imaginaire. See Hansen, "Languages on Stage: Linguistic Pluralism and Community Formation in Nineteenth-Century Parsi Stage," *Modern Asian Studies* 37, no. 2 (2003): 381-405.
[9] According to Naim Ahmad, the Urdu *shahr-ashob* (the disturbed city) as a poetic genre began in the eighteenth century. While the genre has Persian and Turkish antecedents, within the Urdu tradition the *shahr-ashob* became a potent vehicle for the description of political, economic and social turmoil. See, Naim Ahmad, *Shahr-Ashob,* (Delhi: Maktaba Jamia, 1968): 9- 31,
http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00urduhindilinks/workshop2009/txt_naim_ahmad_1968.html
Also, see Sunil Sharma, "The City of Beauties in Indo-Persian poetic landscape," *Comparative Studies in South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24, no. 2 (2004): 73- 81.
[10] For further details see Peter Hardy, "Ghalib and the British," In *Ghalib: The Poet and His Age,* ed. Ralph Russell, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997): 54-69 and Masood Ashraf Raja, "The Indian Rebellion of 1857 and Mirza Ghalib's Narrative of Survival," *Prose Studies* 31, no. 1 (2009): 40-54.

Urdu language through the efforts of new political dispensations.[11] The expansion and proliferation of Urdu not only mirrored these socio-political changes in the public sphere but the language was also seen as the perfect medium for the renewal and reform of society. This was key to the idea of Urdu as a crucial language through which to articulate reform, influencing not only different literary genres but also the sensibilities and choice of semantics in early cinema in Bombay, Calcutta and Lahore.[12]

Indo-Persian poetic traditions have had a considerable influence on the history of Urdu literature and its genres. Poetry as an art form was cultivated and patronised by the ruling elite; elaborate *mushā'ara* (poetry recitation events) were frequently organized at the Red Fort during the time of the Mughal emperors such as Bahadur Shah Zafar.[13] In later decades, weekly events were organized on the Delhi College premises during the colonial period, as well as privately sponsored *mushā'aras* held in different cities in India.[14] These poetry conventions were interesting peformative and literary spaces that allowed poets to not only showcase their verses, but also debate and challenge poetic metaphors and established canons of poetry.

The vast and expansive field of the Urdu poetic tradition has been discussed by scholars writing in both Urdu and English in great detail. Urdu poetry, specifically the romance genres like the ghazal, had a significant place within the Urdu imaginaire of the 1930s and 40s. Frances Pritchett in her book *Net of Awareness* discusses the world of Urdu poetic tradition and most significantly its nineteenth-century critics Azad and Hali. She draws our attention to the tradition of *taẕkira* (anthologies of poetry), which had a profound impact on the conventions of poetry and its genres, rhymes and meter.[15] The Urdu ghazal was specifically picked up by

[11] Sunil Sharma argues that "…Urdu was primed to claim and eventually occupy the space left by the closing of the literary border between the Iranian lands and India, as the larger Persian world fragmented into separate cultural regions dominated by local traditions." See, Sharma, "The City of Beauties in Indo-Persian poetic landscape," *Comparative Studies in South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24, no. 2 (2004): 77.
[12] For a detailed discussion see Chapter 4.
[13] Frances Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and its critics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft10000326/. In 2012, a play titled *Lal Qile ka Aakhri Mushaira* (*The Last Mushaira at the Red Fort*) with actor Tom Alter was staged in Delhi. The play takes Muhammad Husain Azad's account, in his book *Ab-e Hayat*, of the poetic congregation organised at the Red Fort before the mutiny of 1857 where poets such as Ghalib, Zauq and Daagh were present with the emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar. See, "The Last Mushaira Once Again" *Indian Express*, Nov 27, 2012, http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/the-last-mushaira-once-again/1036851/. Also see, Heidi Pauwels, "Cosmopolitan Soirées in Eighteenth-Century North India: Reception of early Urdu poetry in Kishangarh," *South Asian Multidisciplinary Academic Journal*, (2014), https://doi.org/10.4000/samaj.3773
[14] Frances Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and its critics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft10000326/.
[15] In chapter 3, I discuss the biographical dictionaries on actresses from the 1930s that mimic the *taẕkira* tradition.

prudish critics – originally colonialists and, later, Indians - who dismissed it as a genre "tainted with narrowness and artificiality".[16] Its imagery was deemed "fixed and stereotyped"; as "incapable of showing any feeling for nature"; displaying "fragmentariness" and "a patchwork of disconnected and often contradictory thoughts and feelings".[17] On the other hand, other poetic genres like the *ḥamd* (poetry in praise of God/ Allah), *manqabat* (poetry in praise of the Prophet/Sufi devotional poem), and *marṡiya* (elegiac poem written to commemorate the battle of Karbala) were praised highly for their complex structures and devotional themes. Scholars such as Ralph Russell came to the defense of the Urdu ghazal, suggesting that the ghazal had been devalued by its own milieu - pointing to the work of M. Sadiq and other theorists.[18] This discussion of the Urdu ghazal among the other poetic genres is important to highlight as I will discuss the use of this genre in the form of the film ghazal as borrowed from an Urdu imaginaire, especially in the 1930s: when sound came to cinema, the aurality of the ghazal and its performative possibilities were mobilized by filmmakers.[19]

In the nineteenth century, John Gilchrist at the College of Fort William played a key role in creating a discourse around the importance of the vernacular and in consolidating Urdu prose, which added to the impetus for the development of Urdu literary culture. The efforts of the College of Fort William, however, were not merely philanthropic, as the pedagogic enterprise was not without motivation. Founded in 1800 as a college for the instruction of the East India Company employees in vernacular languages, it was part of the efforts by the British to enable effective governance of its native subjects.[20] Gilchrist commissioned important projects on grammar, lexicon, translation and adaptation in Bengali and Urdu. Some of the books were translated from Arabic, Persian, Bengali and Sanskrit into English and Urdu; these were historical pamphlets, manuals of conduct and ethical instruction. Fort William College also recruited local language experts, Urdu literati and munshis to explore the prose form. This led to the production of seminal fictional prose such as *Bagh-o Bahar* by Mir Amman, *Araish-i Mahfil* by Sher Ali Afos, *Nasr-i Benazir* by Bahadur Ali Husaini, *Mazhab-i Ishq*[21] by Nihal

[16] Frances Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and its critics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft10000326/.
[17] M. Sadiq as quoted by Frances Pritchett in the preface, ibid.
[18] Ralph Russell, "How not to write the History of Urdu Literature," *The Annual of Urdu Studies* 6, (1987): 1-10.
[19] For more details refer to chapter 4.
[20] Sisir Kumar Das, *Sahibs and Munshis: An account of the College of Fort William*, (New Delhi: Orion Publications, 1978) and Tariq Rahman, "The Teaching of Urdu in British India," *The Annual of Urdu Studies* 15, (2000): 31-57.
[21] This was a popular Urdu version of *Gul-e Bakavali* which was in the early silent and sound period adapted into film in Bombay.

Chand Lahori, and *Shakuntala* and *Singhasan Battisi* by Kazin Ali Javan in collaboration with Lallu Lal.[22] This phase of experimentation at the College of Fort William spurred a movement which led to the popularization of Urdu prose.

New vistas opened up by the possibilities of lithographic printing in this period led to the diversification of the Urdu-reading public and its reading habits. The Naval Kishore Press in Lucknow, among others, played a pivotal role in this process as many Persian *dastān*s like *Tilism-i Hoshruba*, *Dastan-i Amir Hamza* and *Bostan-i Khayal* were translated into Urdu in rapid succession.[23] The opportunities presented by cheap print added new dimensions to the public sphere, with printing of periodicals in particular being the facilitator of major social transformations. These early attempts at popularizing Urdu prose enabled the process through which literary culture overlapped with the popular; many of these narratives would become part of the repertoire of theatre companies and film studios as I discuss in the next section.

The introduction of Urdu in schools and colleges by the British in the initial decades of the eighteenth century met with some resistance from the Indian elites, who preferred instruction in Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit as more valuable lessons. In 1849, J.R. Ballantyne, Principal of the English department of Benares College, noted "that his students grudged the time spent in learning Urdu because they could expect praise at home for learning classical language, but not for Urdu."[24] H.S. Reid's report of 1852 makes it abundantly clear that introducing Urdu in schools and colleges was an uphill task for the British.[25] Despite the ambiguous position of the native intelligentsia, British efforts to include Urdu in the curriculum set forth a series of shifts in public opinion about the use and role of the language in the nineteenth century.

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, the founder of the Mohammedan Anglo Oriental College (MAO), was known to have revised his position regarding Urdu many times.[26] In 1872 Sir Syed and his son, Syed Mahmud, preferred an Urdu-medium education for Indian Muslims.

[22] Shaista Akhtar Banu Sughrawardy, *A Critical Survey of the Development of the Urdu Novel and Short Story*, (London: Longmans Green and Co., 1945), 15.
[23] Ulrike Stark, *Empire of Books* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2008).
[24] As quoted in Christopher R. King, *One Language, Two Scripts: The Hindi Movement in Nineteenth Century North India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), 91.
[25] Tariq Rahman, "The Teaching of Urdu in British India," *The Annual of Urdu Studies* 15, (2000): 38-39.
[26] David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996).

This was later abandoned in favour of advanced Persian and elementary English, with Arabic as an option.

> The Urdu experiment continued in the Oriental department of the MAO College where Urdu was the language of history, geography, science and mathematics. Although English was a second language too, the department lost students to the English department. Finally in 1885, it was abolished and only the English department, in which the medium of instruction was English for most subjects, remained.[27]

Sir Syed's role and contribution to the education of Indian Muslims was crucial to the process by which language, community (*qaum*) and culture (*tahẕīb*) became part of public life and discourse. Even though in the latter phase of his career Sir Syed laid emphasis on the use of and instruction in English, he brought a significant change to the way Urdu prose was written. An analysis of the articles in his journal *Tahẕīb-ul Akhlāq* demonstrates the 'new' style in prose that Sir Syed was advocating and promoting.[28] He suggested that '*tahẕīb*' was something which came "naturally" to individuals. This literalness was also extended to the field of literature; in a letter to the poet Altaf Hussain Hali, Sir Syed suggested, "bring your work closer to nature (*nećar*). The extent to which a work comes close to nature is the extent to which it gives pleasure."[29] By the 1930s, many decades later, Sir Syed's postulations on *tahẕīb* and the allusions to naturalism were still vigorously debated and often adhered to.[30] Urdu writers that produced film acting manuals often brought together disparate discourses on language, community and culture as the foundational basis for acting and, by extension, the need for naturalness for film actors was seen as imperative to their performance and as a way to mark them as distinct from theatre performers.[31]

The nineteenth century proved to be an exciting epoch in the development of Urdu prose. By the 1850s, Urdu literature was expanding in terms of genres and the possibilities of

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[27] Tariq Rahman, "The Teaching of Urdu in British India," *The Annual of Urdu Studies* 15, (2000): 42-43.
[28] Soheb ur Rahman Niazi, "Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and the Idea of Tehzeeb" (M.Phil diss., Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2015).
[29] As quoted in Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, "From Antiquary to Social Revolutionary: Syed Ahmad Khan and the Colonial Experience," Annual Sir Syed Memorial Lecture, Aligarh Muslim University, 2006, 9.
[30] The Progressive Writers movement would pose a challenge to these ideas. See, Gopichand Narang, *Taraqqi Pasandi, Jadidiyat, Mabād Jadidiyat* (Mumbai: Adhsot Publication, 2004), 560.
[31] See Chapter 3 for further elaboration.

newer motifs and imagery were exhilarating. The birth of the novel in Urdu is often attributed to the contact with colonialism. Early histories of Urdu literature saw the nineteenth century as the period of the "Renaissance of Urdu".[32] According to this narrative, the influence of western literary canons of realism and naturalism encouraged writers to adopt prose and to abandon the flourishes and extravagance of pre-colonial genres. Priya Joshi's fascinating account of public libraries in this period reveals readers' preferences and how these choices affected literary cultures.[33] But the story was far from straightforward. Meenakshi Mukherjee and Jennifer Dubrow have shown that the novel in India developed from a "multiplicity of determinants - both indigenous and derived from other sources."[34] As Pritchett argues, the foundations of Urdu prose lie in early Persian *masnavīs* and *dastāns*.[35] Moreover, religious tracts written in prose in Arabic as early as the fourteenth century, and still in circulation in the nineteenth century, were another immediate influence.[36]

Fasana-e Azad by Ratan Nath Dar "Sarshar" ("Brimful," his pen-name) is often cited as the first work of Urdu fiction to be declared by its author and discussed by readers as a "novel",[37] though some scholars argue that it was an immediate precursor to the novel.[38] It appeared as a long serialized *qissa* between 1878 and 1883 and ensured the success of the Urdu newspaper *Avadh Akhbar* in which it was published. The work created a sensation and catapulted Sarshar to fame. Another contender for the title of 'first novel' is Nazir Ahmad's *Mirat-ul Arus* (The Bride's Mirror, 1869). *Mirat-ul Arus* is a tale of two sisters in late nineteenth-century Delhi. The two sisters represented polar opposites, one 'good' and one 'bad'. The black and white characterization suited Nazir Ahmad's purposes for the work; he wrote the book as a gift to his daughter and a copy of it was included in her dowry. In 1870, it received the Northwest Frontier Provinces government prize for useful works in the vernacular

[32] Shaista Akhtar Banu Sughrawardy, *A Critical Survey of the Development of the Urdu Novel and Short Story*, (London: Longmans Green and Co., 1945), 12.
[33] Priya Joshi, "Reading in the Public Eye – Circulation of British Fiction in Indian Libraries c. 1835-1901," In *India's Literary History: Essays on the 19th Century*, ed. Stuart Blackburn and Vasudha Dalmia (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2006), 280- 326.
[34] Meenakshi Mukherjee, "Epic and the Novel in India," *The Novel, Volume1: History, Geography and Culture*, ed. Franco Moretti (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 596. Also see Jennifer Dubrow, "A Space for debate: Fashioning the Urdu Novel in Colonial India," *Comparative Literature Studies* 53, no. 2 (2016): 289- 313.
[35] Frances Prichett, *Marvelous Encounters: Folk Romances in Urdu and Hindi* (Riverdale: The Riverdale Company, 1985).
[36] Annamarie Schimmel, *Classical Urdu Literature From the Beginning to Iqbal*, Vol. 8 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 1975).
[37] Jennifer Dubrow, "A Space for debate: Fashioning the Urdu Novel in Colonial India," *Comparative Literature Studies* 53, no. 2 (2016): 289- 313.
[38] Shaista Akhtar Banu Sughrawardy, *A Critical Survey of the Development of the Urdu Novel and Short Story* (London: Longmans Green and Co., 1945).

to be included in the school syllabi.[39] The book was intended as a manual on female emancipation, etiquette and conduct.[40] It went on to become a bestseller, appearing in 100,000 copies within the first twenty years of publication. Nazir Ahmad's other novels *Banat-un Nash* (Daughters of Bier, 1875), *Taubat-un Nasuh* (Repentance of Nasuh), and *Fasana-e Mubtala* (Story of Affliction, 1885) have acquired a cult status in Urdu literary history and criticism.[41] Nazir Ahmad's literary legacy has had an enduring presence and resonance in popular culture especially as it has impacted the discourses on gender, respectability and reform. Nazir Ahmad's nephew Rashid-ul Khairi's (1868- 1936) writings have been discussed by Gail Minault as "novels of respectability".[42] Rashid-ul Khairi in his early novels highlighted the plight of women under patriarchy and the need for reform of the family. Khairi was influenced by Nazir Ahmad's writings and expanded on the mission of female emancipation and reform in his journal for women *Ismat* (Honor).[43] Jennifer Dubrow has shown how Sarshar's novel, *Fasana-e Azad*, foregrounds how the codes of *sharāfat* were rewritten through the protagonist Azad and his misadventures.[44] These 'novels of respectability' along with the writings of social reformers like Sir Syed were key in generating a discourse on *sharāfat*/respectability within the Urdu public sphere.[45] I will argue that these debates on gender and respectability from the Urdu public sphere inspired projects of aesthetic and cultural reform and can be considered an important theme within the Urdu imaginaire which then found articulation in the cinema of the 1930s and 40s, as the thesis explores in chapter 5.

Abdul Halim Sharar, another seminal figure, has a firm place within Urdu literary history. Sharar's extraordinary output is estimated at 102 books, varying from historical novels, drama, and poetry to social commentaries and reformist tracts. His works were widely circulated and read in Persian, Arabic and English. Some of his popular titles were *Malik Aziz*

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[39] C.M. Naim, "Prize winning *adab*" in *Urdu Texts and Contexts: The Selected Essays of C.M. Naim* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004).
[40] In Chapter 5, I discuss the use of similar 'two-sister' motif in the Wadia film *Muqabala* starring Nadia in a double role. The film can be seen as part of the project to impart reformist ideals and represent good *akhlāqī* behaviour on screen. Also, see, Salma Siddique's reading of Fazli Brothers' film with the 'two-sister' theme in "Between Bombay and Lahore: A Partition History of cinema in South Asia (1940-1960)" (PhD diss., University of Westminster, 2015), 127- 131.
[41] The books are still in print and digital copies are available online on websites like rekhta.org.
[42] Gail Minault, *Secluded Scholars: Women's Education and Muslim Social Reform in Colonial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998): 129.
[43] Christina Oesterheld, "Changing landscapes of love and passion in the Urdu novel," *Contribution to the History of Concepts* 11, no. 1 (2016): 62.
[44] Jennifer Dubrow, "Sharafat and Bhal Mansi: a new perspective on respectability in Fasana-e Azad," *South Asian History and Culture* 9, no. 2 (2018): 181-193.
[45] Also see, Asiya Alam, "Polygyny, Family and Sharafat: Discourses among North Indian Muslims, circa 1870-1918," *Modern Asian Studies* 45, no. 3 (2011): 631-668.

aur Varjana (1889), *Shauqin Malka*, *Alfanso*, *Flora Florenda*, *Muqaddas Naznin*, *Mansur Mohana* (1890), *Zawal-e Baghdad* (1912), *Husn ka Daku* (1913–1914), *Darbar-e Harampur* (1914), *Fateh Maftuh* (1916) and *Anarkali.* His magnum opus *Guzishta Lucknow* (The Lucknow of Old), which was originally serialized in the Lucknow literary journal *Dil Gudāz* in the years after 1913, was a celebration of the Lucknow form of Indo-Muslim culture that flourished during the reigns of Asad ud Daula (1774-98) and Wajid Ali Shah (I848-56). As a writer of Urdu, Sharar had a considerable influence on the development of Urdu prose. Often his works traversed the geographic limitations of his times and reorganized existing hierarchies of social decorum.[46] Sharar's novels also point to the crucial ways in which Urdu prose in the early twentieth century was negotiating a wide understanding of history and its relationship to the contemporary. His aesthetic and literary oeuvre had a long-lasting effect on the cultural production of historical genres on the Parsi stage and historical films in the coming decades.

In her analysis of Urdu novelists after Sarshar, Ahmad and Sharar (a period she dates from 1925 onwards), Shaista Akhtar Bano Sughrawardy highlights the diversity of the Urdu literary culture, ranging from translations of English sensational and detective novels (Arthur Conan Doyle, Edgar Wallace, Rider Haggard and Marie Corelli) into Urdu, to adaptions of classics, domestic novels professing reform, romantic novellas set in contemporary/ historical milieu and tales of *nawābs* and *ṯawā'ifs*. While she is dismissive of these works as mere imitations and cheap romances, lacking in novelty, this explosion of sub-genres of the novel are a sign that Urdu prose – and by extension the Urdu imaginaire – was undergoing a process of constant transformation and reinvention. Markus Daeschel's article on Urdu detective novels printed in Punjab highlights how the genre was addressing its readers within the framework of contemporary modernity and colonialism. By the 1930s, the *jāsūsī* (detective) "genre was well established with its form ranging from fully acknowledged translations, unauthorized renditions and adaptations of existing literature to indigenous new writing."[47] According to Daeschel, "the *jasusi* genre replicated the ideological concerns and projected them into wider Punjabi society."[48]

[47] Markus Daechsel, "Zalim Daku and the Rubber Sea Monster: Urdu Detective Fiction in 1930s Punjab and the experience of Colonial Modernity," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 13, no. 1 (2003): 23.
[48] Ibid. p. 29.

At the other end of the spectrum from the *jāsūsī* novel in this period are the writings of Premchand. He remains one of the most popular fiction writers in Urdu-Hindi. Although he began writing under the pseudonym Nawab Rai, he switched to writing in Hindi in 1914.[49] Premchand preceded the Progressives and was one of the earliest writers of short stories in Urdu. Social realism, a taut plot, and good character development are reliable features of his novels and short stories. Premchand's fiction has a progressive and reformist message, and highlights the inequalities between the Indian city and countryside and the human tragedy which resulted from this under colonial capitalism. His popular novels include *Bazar-i Husn* (1917), *Chaugan-i Hasti*, and *Gosha-yi Afiat*, and among his short stories are *Kafan*, *Mantar*, *Kaffara*, *Kash-makash*, and *Najat*.[50] A group of writers to emerge with a strong voice in the 1930s were Sajjad Zaheer, Rashid Jahan, Mahmuduzzafar and Ahmad Ali. Their collection of short stories titled *Angarey* in 1932 caused a huge sensation in literary circles; in 1933, it was banned by the government on charges of being blasphemous and objectionably obscene. The *Angarey* controversy laid the ground for the formation of the Progressive Writers' Movement of India.[51] In 1936, the All Indian Progressive Writers' Association was founded in Lucknow by Sajjad Zaheer and his fellow writers; it became one of the most important movements that shaped Urdu literary culture, giving it a critical edge that was sharpened by the discourses of decolonization.[52] Many Urdu Progressive writers went on to work for film studios as writers, and lyricists in Bombay, Poona and Calcutta. There are innumerable memoirs, biographies on the Progressives that map these journeys of Urdu writers to film cities. Due to the paucity of space and time, I briefly discuss the film work of Ismat Chughtai in Chapter 5, though I think

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[49] Premchand's "literary code-switching" has been attributed to the Hindi-Urdu divide that not only created economic consequences within the print industry, as Harish Trivedi explains, but also were linked to politics of identity and questions of national language. See, Trivedi, "The Urdu Premchand and the Hindi Premchand" in *ABRALIC* 19, no. 30 (2017), http://revista.abralic.org.br/index.php/revista/article/view/379/628

[50] In 1934, Premchand moved to Bombay to try his luck in the film business after two literary journals he founded had drained his resources. He wrote the film script for *Mazdoor*/*Mill* (d. Mohan Bhavnani) based on the cotton mill strike in Bombay. The film was banned by the Bombay Censor Board and the producers incurred a huge loss and Premchand was in financial distress all over again. In a letter to a friend, Premchand wrote, "it is useless to expect any improvement in the cinema. This business is in the hands of same kind of money makers as the sellers of liquor. I came to this line as it offered some chance of financial independence but now I see I was under a delusion and I am going back to my literature." Premchand left Bombay in 1935 and died soon after. His novel *Sevasadan/Bazar-i Husn* was adapted into a film in 1938. For more details see, Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, "The Mill Strikes in Bombay, 1928-29, and Munshi Premchand as Filmmaker" (unpublished paper) and "Writing and Money-Making: Munshi Premchand in the Film Industry, 1934- 35," *Contemporary India* 1, no. 1, (March 2002). Also see, Debashree Mukherjee, "A Spectre Haunts Bombay: Censored Itineraries of a Lost Communistic Film" in *Film History* 31, no. 4 (2015): 30-60.

[51] Shabana Mahmud, "Angāre and the Founding of the Progressive Writers' Association," *Modern Asian Studies* 30, no. 2 (1996): 447- 467.

[52] Priyamvada Gopal, *Literary Radicalism in India: Gender, Nation and the Transition to Independence* (Oxford: Routledge, 2005).

the Progressives deserve a whole separate dissertation that researches their role in the cinematic public sphere.

The Urdu literary culture was invested, on the one hand, in the production of high modernist reformist literature. With the emergence of genres like the novel, and the writings of Nazir Ahmad, Sarshar and Sharar still in vogue, the roles of Fort William College in Calcutta and the Aligarh Muslim University were important in shaping the Urdu public sphere. On the other hand, the new vistas opened up by the possibilities of cheap printing led to the diversification of the public and its reading habits, with a new readership emerging for the proliferation of popular *Dāku/ jāsūsī kahānī* (Dacoit and Detective stories), folk stories like *Gul-e- Bakavali*, and romances like *Laila Majnu* etc. This new readership included a range of classes, genders and levels of literacy. It is interesting that in this matrix of literary culture and cinema, Urdu writers began to reshape the popular Urdu imaginaire of the 1930s and 40s in new and exciting ways as the next section will explore.

URDU POPULAR CULTURE: URDU-PARSI THEATRE AND EARLY CINEMA

During the period between the first Parsi theatrical performances in 1853 and about 1890, amateur Parsi theatre clubs and professional companies in Bombay made use of English, Gujarati, and Urdu (also called Hindustani at that time) for their productions. Kathryn Hansen's pioneering research on Urdu Parsi theatre has provided a nuanced understanding of its forms and practices in India, and has pointed to the intrinsic link between linguistic forms and cultural productions.[53] According to Hansen, until the 1920s, Urdu was the main language used in Urdu-Parsi Theatre; almost all the hundreds of Urdu dramas written were from before the 1920s, after which Hindi gradually became the language of choice. Hansen has demonstrated how the universe of Urdu expression and thought gave the Parsi stage a tremendous aesthetic and commercial advantage but the Parsi stage in turn also exploited the expressive and inherent theatricality of Urdu.[54] Hansen argues that the relationship between the Parsi stage and the Urdu public sphere was forged through a series of complex negotiations.

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[53] Kathryn Hansen, "Making Women Visible: Gender and Race Cross-Dressing in Parsi Theatre," *Theatre Journal* 51, no. 2 (1999): 25.
[54] Kathryn Hansen, "Languages on Stage: Linguistic Pluralism and Community Formation in Nineteenth-Century Parsi Stage," *Modern Asian Studies* 37, no. 2 (2003): 381-405.

> The adoption of Urdu was not merely a gesture of inclusion directed toward non-Parsi spectators. It was part of a larger context of expansion in the musical, poetic, and visual economies of the stage. It coincided with the rise of popular performers like the comic actor Khurshedji Balivala and the female impersonators 'Pesu Avan,' the opening of new theatres in Bombay, and travel of Parsi companies to Delhi, Calcutta, and the Deccan. Although the choice of Urdu was undoubtedly instrumental to the project of touring as well as audience-building at home in Bombay, the language was also (if not principally) favoured on aesthetic grounds, based upon its advantages in terms of poetry and song.[55]

Analysing Urdu literary history and sources on Urdu drama, Hansen suggests that Parsi companies eagerly sought out *Urduwalahs* offering them attractive salaries and facilitating their relocation to Bombay. Urdu writers and poets (men of letters) began to seek opportunities in Bombay as theatre became a new site of patronage; "courtly employment, always precarious, became even more so after the events of 1857, and poets and entertainers (actors, musicians, singers) found a welcome source of income in the Parsi companies."[56] In Hansen's work, the Parsi stage emerges as a space of cosmopolitanism with endless possibilities of linguistic fluidities and diverse identities. This multilingualism of oral and performative traditions in India found its way easily into theatre and early cinema, creating an exciting matrix of popular cultural practices and convergence of new media technologies in the early twentieth century.

Alain Desoulieres, through his analysis of Imtiaz Ali Taj's Urdu historical drama *Anarkali,* illustrates the impact of Urdu drama on cinematic practice but also how the different forms of popular culture fed into each other. The story of the romance between Mughal prince Jahangir (Salim) and Anarkali has been adapted many times and Taj's version specifically has been the subject of many productions. Desoulieres writes that "it is fair to balance stressing the impact of Imtiaz Ali's work on cinema with pointing out that the influence goes both ways. As he rewrote his play, Imtiaz Ali did so with a view to attracting filmmakers, as he says himself (1931a: preface 6). He included very precise stage directions, dialogues, descriptions, songs,

[55] Ibid., 396.
[56] Ibid., 399.

and dances." [57] The case of *Anarkali* furthers our understanding of how Urdu literary, performative and popular cultures contributed to shaping cinematic language in India.

The circuits of entertainment in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were intrinsically tied to each other. In my M. Phil, *Cinema and the Reinvention of the Self: Women Performers in Bombay Cinema (1925- 1947)*, I highlight this interaction between the various modes of performance like theatre, *nautanki*, the music recording industry and cinema, which made it possible for performers to negotiate and navigate these routes with ease. Cinema was a hybrid space for the convergence of various artists and performers from different backgrounds. The history of Bombay cinema is full of anecdotes and characters that traverse the realms between performative and linguistic diversity. Many artists and film personnel who came to Bombay via the theatre route brought a vast repertoire of performance traditions to cinema which impacted the cinematic texts that were produced by them.[58]

The transition to sound technology catalysed the mushrooming of new studios and dispersed the field of cinematic experimentation into a new phase in the 1930s. Even though older traditions of visuality and pleasure were still in use, the new aurality made possible by the introduction of sound technology transformed the landscape of silent cinema, infusing its spectre-like forms with vernacular jargon and musicality. The talkies were not merely "speaking silents" and they demanded new conditions of work.[59] The interactions and labour flows between the Parsi theatre repertoire and the rich *ṯawā'if/kotha* tradition had contributed to the prevalence of Urdu as a language of cinematic address.[60] In this phase, lyrics, poetic metre, dialogue and music became crucial to the new cinematic form. Speech became an important component in the production of films and many performers had to undergo special

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[57] Alain Desoulieres, "Religious Culture and Folklore in the Urdu historical drama *Anarkali* revisited by Indian cinema," In *Indian Literature and Popular Cinema: Recasting Classics,* ed. Heidi Pauwels (London: Routledge, London, 2007), 124.

[58] For example, Jahanara Kajjan who was a courtesan, worked for the Alfred Company in Calcutta and then transitioned to Madan Theatres, both companies were owned by Jamshedji Framji Madan. In fact, during the early sound period, Kajjan became a singing sensation due to her melodious voice and singing talent, she was nicknamed as the "Nightingale of the Bengal Screen". She was also appreciated for her command of Urdu language and good diction. See Chapter 5 for more details. Similarly, Patience Cooper and her sisters worked as dancers in the Bandmann's Musical Comedy; they were hired by Madan for his Corinthian Theatre and eventually they moved to Madan's film company. For details, see Sarah R. Niazi, "Cinema and the Reinvention of the Self: Women Performers in the Bombay film industry" (M.Phil diss., Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2011).

[59] B.L. Bedam, "The Indian Talkies," *Filmland*, June 11, 1932, 11.

[60] I discuss this in chapter 5.

training from experts in Urdu diction; munshis from the Parsi stage were hired to correct grammar and ensure proper use of Urdu.[61]

There is clear indication that the Urdu language was chosen, not without contestation, as the appropriate language for the new phase of cinematic texts as, in Hansen's words, "the universe of Urdu culture conveyed idealized realms of romance, sweet speech, and lofty thought."[62] This formidable connection extended to the choice of Urdu poetry for song lyrics, especially through the genre of the Urdu ghazal. Many of the early talkies immediately adapted to a musical style incorporating imagery from the repertoire of Urdu poetry. Agha Hashr Kashmiri's stage play *Shirin Farhad* was turned into a film by Madan Theatres and had 42 songs, which were sung by Jahanara Kajjan in Urdu. Madhava Prasad in *Ideology of the Hindi Film* has argued that while film narratives, despite certain consistencies, possess endless possibilities of internal variation,

> …the lyrics are written in a language which has its own set repertoire of images and tropes for themes like romantic love, separation, rejection, maternal love, marriage, etc. The song adopts a literary style which has a predilection for certain recurrent motifs: the *mehfil*, *shama/parwana*, *chaman*, *bahar*, *nazaren*, and so on. This repertoire of images is drawn from the frozen diction of romantic Urdu poetry. It is the task of poets, who figure here as traditional artisans with control over their own means of production, to supply these songs…[63]

Prasad's notion that the repertoire of images within Urdu poetry are based on "frozen diction" is perhaps a misreading; as Pritchett and others have shown, the ghazal repertoire is based on a play of metaphors and even established canonical images are subject to revisions and continuous metamorphosis.[64] Within the Urdu ghazal, each two-line verse (*sher*) mirrors

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[61] The editor of *Filmland* gives credit to Seeta Devi, Sulochana and Patience Cooper for having "taken great pains to learn Urdu and Hindi dialogues for appearing in the talkies." Seeta Devi, we are told, learnt Urdu songs with such perfection that she was able to earn the approbation of experts who saw her talking on the screen at a private show in Hyderabad. See, "Editorial," *Filmland* 111, no. 114 (June 18, 1932): 2.
[62] I explore this further in Chapter 4. Also, see Kathryn Hansen, "Passionate refrains: the theatricality of Urdu on the Parsi stage," *South Asian History and* Culture 7, no. 3 (2016): 222.
[63] Madhava Prasad, *Ideology of the Hindi Film: A Historical Construction* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008), 44.
[64] Frances Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and its critics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft10000326/.

the consciousness of the passionate lover, who longs for the presence of their inaccessible (human or divine) beloved. The ghazal universe is built up and expanded chiefly by metaphors that inhabit the realm of romance and longing. Pritchett persuasively argues that the universe of the ghazal is inhabited by gardens, deserts and wine houses and, if "metaphor is the essence of real poetry", it is also a tool for (culturally specific) perceptions and "by means of metaphor, meaning is expanded" within the ghazal genre.[65] Al-Jurjani has noted, "the meanings in metaphors are not those of the words that we have used, but rather those of the *maẓmun* (theme) that has been presented by means of those words."[66] Thus, the metaphor-making process is called '*maẓmun afirini*', which might in common usage be translated as theme creation but which Pritchett argues in the case of the ghazal tends to mean something like "metaphorical-equation creation". This process is based on an extended, proliferating, free-wheeling use of metaphor, one that generates a constant supply of new images, thoughts, and propositions about the ghazal universe. Over time, if a particular leap of metaphor is admired and widely adopted, it undergoes a kind of concretization, becoming a well-established part of the ghazal landscape.[67] As such, it can readily become the jumping-off point for further leaps of metaphor. The persistence of metaphorical play is crucial to the ghazal and later, through the film ghazal/song, cinema in India became imbued with these poetic myths, which I will later argue for as images of the Urdu imaginaire.[68]

Carla Petievich has explored the notion of the gendered voice within the ghazal. She has argued that "among the reasons why poetry as an expressive medium is valued over just about all others in the Islamicate cultures is that it represents a bridge between the private and the public. The ghazal legitimizes the public expression of intimate emotions, an act that would otherwise be socially unacceptable."[69] This is crucial to the evolution of gender-neutral conventions within the ghazal universe that deflect highly personal experiences thereby shielding a worldview and "metaphorically reiterating the social practice of *parda*".[70] Scholars

[65] Ibid.
[66] Abd al-Qahir Al-Jurjani was a Persian grammarian and literary theorist. Al-Jurjani as quoted in Frances Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and its critics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft10000326/.Also see, Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, "Constructing a Literary History, a Canon and a Theory of Poetry: *Ab-e Hayat* (1880) by Muhammad Husain Azad," *Social Scientist* 23, (1995): 269- 271.
[67] Ralph Russell, "The Pursuit of the Urdu Ghazal," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 29, no. 1 (1969): 107-124.
[68] In Chapter 4, I discuss the impact of Urdu imaginaire on song lyrics and the film ghazal.
[69] Carla Petievich, "Gender politics and the Urdu ghazal: Exploratory observations on *Rekhta* versus *Rekhti*," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 38, no. 3 (2001): 240.
[70] Ibid. p. 240.

such as Saleem Kidwai, Ruth Vanita and Naved Shad explore the notion of sexuality within the Urdu ghazal.[71] Their work has been significant in enabling a nuanced discussion on homoeroticism or *amradparasti* ("boy-love") within the Urdu public sphere. The concept of *ishq*/love/eros was not just a thematic, representational element of the ghazal; it has a philosophical dimension as well. Shad has argued that "any attempt, historical or metaphysical, at a cultural or social assessment of this poetry requires an evaluation of what sexuality means in this particular society and culture."[72] The ghazal genre thus was crucial to meaning making and to expressing mutating realms of emotion. Since the earliest talkies, this potential of the ghazal has been exploited by Indian cinema, as I will show.

The ghazal genre used in Indian cinema has quite a distinct form from its literary variant. Naseem Hines, in her article on *Mirza Ghalib* (d. Sohrab Modi, 1954) and the eponymous TV series directed by Gulzar (1988), compares the use of Ghalib's Urdu ghazals in both the productions. Her article is of particular interest in its discussion of two specific styles of performance of the ghazal *ba-tarannum* (with melody) and the ghazal in *tahtul-lafz* (recitation).[73] Hines compares the two styles in relation to Ghalib's ghazal *"Ishq mujhko nahin/* This is not Love I feel" sung by Chitra Singh in the TV series and recited by Talat Mahmood in the film. Her arguments and comparisons lie within the context of the use and interpretation of Ghalib's poetry by the directors and their omission of certain couplets from the ghazals. She suggests that this "completely robs the ghazal of its broader mystical meaning."[74] A term she uses which is interesting for my project is "romanticizing the ghazal", where the limiting of the song to two and a half minutes necessitates this abbreviated use of "original" ghazals.[75] She refers to this method as a "cut and paste" process, whereby the ghazal is "tailored" to entertainment needs.[76] In her analysis of Ghalib's poetry she rues that "most audiences would

[71] Saleem Kidwai and Ruth Vanita, *Same-Sex Love in India: Reading from Literature and History* (New York: Palgrave, 2000).
[72] Naved Shad, "The Erotic Conceit: History, Sexuality and the Urdu Ghazal" (PhD diss., University of California, 2012), 39.
[73] Naseem Hines, "From ghazal to film music: The case of Mirza Ghalib," In *Indian Literature and Popular Cinema: Recasting Classics*, ed. Heidi Pauwels (London: Routledge, 2007), 158-159.
[74] Ibid., p. 159.
[75] Ibid., p. 162-164.
[76] History of early gramophone recordings reveal the shifts in musical and poetic paradigms of entertainment. This "tailoring" of poetry was fashionable before the advent of cinema as the reproducibility of the voice and the quantification of musical performance (through the collapse of time to three-minute gramophone recordings) had revolutionised the ways in which musical entertainment was imagined, produced and consumed. The first recordings that were made of Indian musicians were of two *nautch* (dancing) girls − Soshi Mukhi and Fani Bala of the Classic Theatre. They sang extracts from the popular theatre shows of the time such as *Shri Krishna*, *Dole Lila* and *Alibaba*. For a history of gramophone see, Michael Kinnear, *The Gramophone Company's first Indian recordings (1899-1908)* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1994).

agree that these couplets simply are not in sync with the kind of romantic situations expected in a common popular film production."[77] The distinction between the ghazal *ba-tarannum* and the ghazal in *tahtul-lafz* style is important and a marker of what distinguishes a literary Urdu ghazal from its film version. While Hines is quite sceptical about the use of the ghazal and fears for the mutilated form of the ghazal in new media, there is still reason to celebrate the persistence of Urdu within popular culture. She writes,

> I suggest that popular film and television's representation of Urdu literature brings with it a distortion. On the one hand, the changes make ghazals more accessible to the audience, by skipping lines from the poems to produce a unity of mood, and by changes in word choice from less Persianite (sic) to more Hindustani. Yet, through the selective focussing on the love story aspect and ignoring broader mystical meanings, the ghazal is also deprived of its purpose and identity.[78]

Hines attributes this dilution of the original ghazal to fewer avenues for Urdu education and thus to the inaccessibility of the Urdu cultural heritage. This lament of loss of the 'original' is perhaps not new. Popular cultural practices like theatre and cinema have often suffered from elitist attitudes that have dismissed these forms on account of their dilution. Further, Hines argues that "we should not blame the directors' entertainment agenda, though the decline in understanding of Urdu poetry and its conventions may also have contributed to the exclusion of good couplets from the ghazals." This concessional tone seems misplaced. While it may be true of the contemporary public sphere, in the 1930s and up till the 1950s, Urdu was still one of the major languages in India, and thus the exclusion of couplets in film lyrics in my opinion was an aesthetic choice that defines the film ghazal and makes it distinct from the literary ghazal in Urdu. It might be worth recognizing that an obsession with fidelity to original source texts runs into the dilemma of comparisons and often reduces popular filmic reiterations to an inferior status.[79] Perhaps a more productive perspective would be to recognize the value in reading adaptations as part of an intertextual and intermedial framework which allows the flow of affect between different mediums, the literary and the filmic, as argued by John Hodgkins,

[77] Naseem Hines, "From ghazal to film music: The case of Mirza Ghalib," In *Indian Literature and Popular Cinema: Recasting Classics*, ed. Heidi Pauwels (London: Routledge, 2007), 164.
[78] Ibid., p. 166.
[79] For a longer discussion on film adaptation refer to Chapter 5.

which I elaborate upon in Chapter 5.[80] Graham Allen writes that "[i]ntertextuality seems such a useful term because it foregrounds notions of relationality, interconnectedness and interdependence in modern cultural life" and this would pose a challenge to the notions of cultural hegemony of 'originality' or 'uniqueness' over reproductions/ adaptations.[81]

'URDU'- 'HINDI'- 'HINDUSTANI' CINEMA: A BRIEF DIGRESSION ON NOMENCLATURE

Cinema produced in India, primarily in Bombay, has been variously labelled as 'Hindi' or 'Hindustani' and post globalisation as 'Bollywood'. While this project is not concerned with attributing a label, it is important to digress and contextualise the debates on nomenclature for this project that considers the literary and semantic use of language as an important feature that defines cinema produced in India. When and in what context did cinema produced in Bombay begin to be called 'Hindi' or 'Hindustani' cinema? While the Hindi-Urdu divide was not marked out as sharply in the cinematic public sphere in the early 1920s as it was in the literary public sphere, one has to ask whether this scenario had changed by the late 1930s when the call for Hindi nationalism was at its crescendo.[82] Cinema produced in Bombay, Lahore, Poona, Madras and Calcutta in the 1930s deployed multiple languages (Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Marathi, Tamil and Telegu) and even within the same film switched between Hindi and Urdu registers seamlessly; the separation was not marked out as sharply as it was in the literary public sphere. In the silent period, according to the *Indian Cinematograph Committee Report* (1927-1928), the question of language was primarily related to its use in captions and intertitles. Even though Western films did not have vernacular captions they were nevertheless popular in India. According to the report,

> An Indian film is expected to have captions in a familiar vernacular. It is in fact one reason why the Indian film is preferred in spite of its artistic and technical inferiority. It is true that a considerable proportion of the audience are illiterate even in their own vernacular; but the custom is for those who can read to repeat the caption aloud for the benefit of the others…There are innumerable

[80] For debates on intertextuality in film adaptations, see *Adaptation Theory and Film Criticism: Postmodern Literature and Cinema in the USA* ed. Gordon E. Slethaug (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014) and John Hodgkins, *The Drift: Affect, Adaptation and New Perspectives on Fidelity* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013).

[81] Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (London: Routledge, 2000) 6.

[82] For further details, see chapter 2.

vernaculars in India. The main vernaculars are Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil and Telegu. A producer who wishes to exhibit his film throughout India must have each caption in three or four of these vernaculars as in English.[83]

For the *Indian Cinematograph Committee*, as "there is no *lingua franca* for all India", film producers needed to adopt innovative strategies that did not increase the length of the film and add to the cost of production.[84] The Committee's facile assertion about the lack of a common language can be punctured if we recall the efforts of early colonial linguists and orientalists to search for a *lingua franca* of India. Here a short digression is necessary.

The advent of the British and their desire to master the perceived *lingua franca* of their subjects in the subcontinent for everyday interactions prompted the documentation and classification of languages.[85] G.A. Grierson, the man responsible for the monumental *Linguistic Survey of India* (1898-1928), believed that individuals could come together to form language communities which were mappable to specific regions.[86] Grierson's work of documentation impacted subsequent language-based research, education policies and linguistic mapping of the nation.[87] Scholars suggest that 'Hindustani', both as the name of a language and as an adjective, begins to appear in Persian texts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[88] However, the wider diffusion of the term is attributed to eighteenth-century British

[83] The Committee recommended the use of interpreters and prompters to combat the difficulties of language. See, *Report of the Indian Cinematograph Committee (1927- 1928)* (Calcutta: Central Publication Branch, Government of India, 1928), 41-42.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Bernard Cohn suggests that the British interest in the languages of India was an exercise in power consolidated after the establishment of direct political authority. See Cohn, "The Command of Language and the Language of Command," In *Subaltern Studies IV*, ed. Ranajit Guha (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), 276- 329.
[86]Javed Majeed, "'A State of Affairs which is Essentially Indefinite': The Linguistic Survey of India (1894–1927)," *African Studies* 74, no. 2 (2015): 221-234.
[87] According to David Lelyveld, "The census turned out to be an imperfect and controversial guide to the languages of India. Categories and data varied wildly every ten years as Indians came to consider the implications of their answers. Although the 1901 and 1911 censuses attempted to gather data according to Grierson's classifications, the 1921 report contented itself with simple aggregates. The report for Punjab and Delhi noted that large number of people listed as speaking Hindustani or Punjabi ten years before now said they spoke Hindi or Urdu. In addition, some twenty-three language names were simply lumped together as Hindi. The number of people reporting themselves as speakers of Urdu went from less than half a million in 1911 to well over a million and a half in 1921. The report for the United Province only gave statistics for Hindustani." See, Lelyveld, "Colonial Knowledge and the Fate of Hindustani," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 35, no. 4 (1993): 677. Also see, Javed Majeed, "'A State of Affairs which is Essentially Indefinite': The Linguistic Survey of India (1894–1927)," *African Studies* 74, no. 2 (2015): 221-234.
[88] David Lunn, "Looking for common ground: aspects of cultural production in Hindi/Urdu, 1900-1947" (PhD diss., SOAS, University of London, 2012), p. 21.

philologists.[89] In 1796, John Gilchrist published *A Grammar of the Hindoostanee Language* in an act to codify the language of the common people. Grierson too proposed to disentangle and separate Hindustani from Urdu and Hindi rather than view them as overlapping synonyms. He wrote,

> We may now define the three main varieties of Hindostani as follows:- Hindostani is primarily the language of the Upper Gangetic Doab, and is also the *lingua franca* of India, capable of being written in both Persian and Deva-nagari characters, and without purism, avoiding alike the excessive use of either Persian or Sanskrit words when employed for literature. The name 'Urdu' can then be confined to that special variety of Hindostani in which Persian words are of frequent occurrence, and which hence can only be written in the Persian character, and, similarly, 'Hind' can be confined to the form of Hindostani in which Sanskrit words abound, and which hence can only be written in the Deva-nagari character.[90]

Both Gilchrist and Grierson have been criticized for their flawed categorisations and misplaced distinctions. In fact, Kavita Datla has argued that, "widespread government patronage of Hindi and Urdu was linked to the fact that, unlike other vernaculars that had long and complicated histories of laying claims to specific regions, these languages (or literary variants) were recognized in the colonial period to be transregional."[91] Thus, the idea of the universality of versions of Urdu and Hindi which were termed 'Hindustani' could be turned to as a common ground for communication.

The coming of cinema sound in 1931 destabilised the universalist approach of silent cinema and re-animated the question of the language of cinema. Film producers looked to a variety of languages as a base for their films and the contest over the question of the language of cinema were far from over.[92] Through their connections with the Urdu-Parsi theatre networks, Urdu-Hindustani became the preferred mode of address of the cinemas of north India. But as language-based nationalism and identity politics gained momentum, both Urdu

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[89] Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, *Early Urdu Literary Culture and History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001).
[90] George Abraham Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India 1903-1928, vol. 9 pt. 1* (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, 1916), 47.
[91] Kavita Saraswathi Datla, *The Language of Secular Islam: Urdu Nationalism and Colonial India* (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2013), 8.
[92] I discuss how these debates were animated within the film journals. See Chapter 2.

and Hindi began to be religiously identified and contested within the literary public sphere. H.K. Apte from Hubli, in a letter to the editor of *filmindia* in 1945, inquired, "which do you like better, Hindi or Urdu?" Baburao Patel, the editor replied, "Personally, I like Urdu better. It has equipment for all occasions and all emotions. And it has some rare romantic poetry. In comparison Hindi is a more prosaic and chaste language. Hindustani, a combination of both, is about the right language for all. But to the scholar Urdu is a beautiful world by itself."[93] Patel repeated a common argument about Urdu's aesthetic capacities, highlighting the often-repeated praise of its emotive and romantic possibilities as opposed to platitudes that described Hindi as "prosaic and chaste". Hindustani was offered in the mix as the appropriate compromise to both. Patel's response to the language question in *filmindia* fluctuated considerably. A year later, in 1946, when he was asked a similar question by another reader, "What is the difference between Urdu and Hindustani?", he replied with his more usual, abrasive tone, "Urdu is a provincial tongue, while Hindustani is the nation's language."[94] This inversion of the erstwhile colonial understanding of the difference between Urdu and Hindustani is fascinating, as this was aligned to the push against Urdu immediately before and after Independence.

David Lunn has argued that the term 'Hindi film' obscures the fact that the language of cinema was embedded within multilingual registers in the 1940s.[95] He prefers the term "Hindustani film" as it retains the linguistic fluidity and hybrid inclusivity of the early talkies. Alternatively, Madhumita Lahiri shows how the aesthetic project of Hindustani attempted to produce a common idiom and not a language. This idiom, she argues, has survived in post-1990s cinema instead of the domain of the literary. Further, she writes, "Bollywood, I want to argue, is Hindustani cinema, not simply because its characters speak in Hindustani but because it inherits Hindustani's conceptual aspiration."[96] It is crucial to remember that the term 'Hindustani' emerged through complex negotiations within the realms of politics and literary culture.[97] What Lunn does not discuss, and Lahiri only makes cursory reference to, are the proceedings on language at the Indian Motion Picture Congress held in Bombay in 1939. These

[93] *filmindia*, February 1945, 27.
[94] "Editors' Mail," *filmindia*, May 1946, 33.
[95] David Lunn, "Looking for common ground: aspects of cultural production in Hindi/Urdu, 1900-1947" (PhD diss., SOAS, University of London, 2012).
[96] Madhumita Lahiri, "An Idiom for India: Hindustani and the Limits of the Language Concept." *Intervention: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, (2014), 19, doi: 10.1080/1369801X.2014.994545
[97] In 1925, the Indian National Congress declared Hindustani as the lingua franca of India. In 1937, Jawaharlal Nehru published a pamphlet "The Question of Language" in which, with Gandhi's approval, he advocated for Hindustani as a national language. See David Lelyveld, "Colonial Knowledge and the Fate of Hindustani," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 35, no. 4 (1993): 665-682.

are important to consider in relation to the use of the term 'Hindustani' in Indian cinema. The Congress, keeping in line with the nationalist call for Hindustani as the national language, passed a resolution to adopt Hindustani as the language of Indian cinema.[98] This call aligned with Bombay's desire to propagate and in fact formulate the parameters of its imagination as a 'national industry' that produces a 'national cinema' for a 'national audience'.[99] Six years later, in a column "Bombay Calling", Baburao Patel urged film producers to follow the lead of All India Radio on the issue of national language.[100] The Broadcasting Department of the Government of India had taken a decision that there would not be separate broadcasts in Hindi or Urdu and declared Hindustani as the "official language".[101] In the column, Patel lamented that,

> In India, pictures are still produced in Hindustani, Urdu, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, Canarese, Bengali and Punjabi… Some deep-dyed Muslim producers insist on calling their production-language as Urdu even though seven-eighths of it is good Hindustani understood by all. This courtesy is returned by the die-hards among the Hindu producers, who use hundreds of Urdu words in their dialogues and yet unblushingly label their production-language as Hindi.[102]

For Patel, the Indian film screen should be mobilised to promote Hindustani as the national language. He blamed producers from both Hindu and Muslim communities for their stubborn insistence on labels that went against the unifying call for a national language. Patel also suggested that producers should scrap production of films in "provincial languages" as this was getting "our tongues twisted up just because our politics are all mixed up".[103] His oversimplified advice also undermined the linguistic diversity and traditions of other states in India. For example, his assertion that "The South Indians and the Bengalis who live in Bombay do seem to enjoy their entertainment fare in Hindustani. They don't seem to ache for their mother-tongue in motion pictures, because they get enough practice in their homes",[104] was a

[98] For details see chapter 2.
[99] Kaushik Bhaumik, "The Emergence of the Bombay Film Industry, 1913-1936" (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2002).
[100] "Bombay Calling", *filmindia,* April 1945, 7- 8.
[101] David Lelveld has shown how AIR initial language policy was aligned to the nationalist discourse of Gandhi and Nehru. A.S. Bukhari (Director General, AIR) had appointed well known writers S.H. Vatsyayan "Ageya" and Chaudhuri Hasan Hasrat to compile a lexicon for Hindustani news broadcast in 1940. The lexicon took five years to complete. See Lelyveld, "Colonial Knowledge and the Fate of Hindustani," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 35, no. 4 (1993): 679.
[102] "Bombay Calling", *filmindia,* April 1945, 7.
[103] Ibid., 8.
[104] Ibid., 8.

complete negation of the language movement in other parts of India and the significance it attached to linguistic representation in cultural production.[105] The Hindustani project was short-lived and abandoned soon after independence and similarly the term 'Hindustani cinema' slowly made way for 'Hindi cinema'.

Harish Trivedi has expressed his apprehensions about the term 'Hindustani' and has challenged the "entitlement of Urdu", critiquing the claims of *Urduwalahs* in labelling Urdu as the language of cinema in India, or what he suggests should be called 'Hindi cinema'. He takes issue with Mukul Kesavan and others who attribute significance to the Urdu language, pointing out that there are a far greater number of Hindi- and Sankritized Hindi-sounding titles of films in India than Urdu as claimed by these scholars.[106] Without getting into this highly pedantic quarrel over numbers and film production statistics, considering so many film titles are lost from the early period and also that many film producers, post-Independence, sought Hindi-language certificates from the censor board in light of the changing position of Urdu, I want to briefly look at some of his other claims about Urdu and cinema. While mostly dismissive of Urdu and the contribution of Urdu writers, Trivedi does reluctantly acknowledge the role of Urdu language in the film songs. He writes, "the free-floating songs of Hindi films have enjoyed a kind of linguistic autonomy of their own. They have often been the most 'Urdu' part of Hindi films…"[107] He attributes this to the fact that Urdu/Hindustani vocabulary has been linked to the discourses of romance, while its alternatives in Hindi were "always tied up allegorically with the love of gods, mainly Krishna, and [were] thus not readily available for secular and particularly 'vulgar' commercial use."[108] Trivedi regurgitates some of the early twentieth-century biases about the cinema as 'commercial' and 'vulgar', and also without reflection ascribes these as causes for the departure of Hindi writers from the cinema.[109] What

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[105] Here I am thinking of the Anti-Hindi movement in Tamil Nadu (1937-50s). See, S. Theodore Baskaran, *The Message Bearers: The Nationalist Politics and the Entertainment Media in South India 1880- 1945* (Madras: Cre-A, Madras, 1981).

[106] I discuss Kesavan's use of the term 'Islamicate' further below in the chapter. See, Mukul Kesavan, "Urdu, Awadh and the Tawaif: The Islamicate Roots of Hindi Cinema," In *Forging Identities: Gender, Communities and the State in India,* ed. Zoya Hasan (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 244-257.

[107] Harish Trivedi, "All kinds of Hindi: The Evolving Language of Hindi Cinema," In *Fingerprinting Popular Culture: The Mythic and the Iconic in Indian Cinema*, ed. Vinay Lal and Ashis Nandy (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006): 62.

[108] Ibid., p. 63.

[109] Trivedi cites three Hindi writers, Premchand, Amritlal Nagar and Bhagwati Charan Varma who worked briefly in the film industry as examples of the contribution of Hindi writers to cinema which he argues is overlooked because of excessive discussion of Urdu writers, the Progressive Writers Association and the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA). He writes, "Both Premchand and Varma left the world of films sooner than later (Premchand in fact within a year), prizing their artistic integrity above financial gain, to return sadder and wiser men…Varma at least had to continue to bear the stigma of having once written for films." Ibid., p. 60. Refer to

remains to be unpacked is why the romance tradition in Urdu has had such an enduring presence in the films. I would attribute this to the ghazal tradition which I discuss above and in Chapter 4.[110] Also, there are examples where idioms of *Vaishnavite bhakti* are mobilized by films such as Mahesh Kaul's *Gopinath* (1948).[111] Trivedi proposes that the language of cinema must be considered to be "all kinds of Hindi", in which he includes dialects of Hindi such as Braj, Avadhi, Bhojpuri and Khari Boli, as well as Sanskritized Hindi, Bambaiya Hindi[112] and Hinglish.[113] He also suggests that Perso-Arabic Urdu had to be diluted in order to be included in the films (through the example of Sahir Ludhianvi's *Chaklet*). Trivedi's position remains inadequate and skewed. As Lunn argues, it does not account "for the choices made, proactively, by writers and lyricists themselves operating as agents within a wide horizon of linguistic and artistic possibilities."[114] The language of cinema is constantly evolving and in many ways is a reflection of the larger public sphere. Lunn's position is far more convincing and accommodating of the range of linguistic registers within the films, especially of the 1930s and 40s, that oscillate between Urdu, Hindi and Hindustani.

A crucial part of the discussion between writers on Hindi and Urdu was premised on the script of the two languages. Hindi written in *devnāgrī* and Urdu in *nasta'līq* became the basis through which the intertwined languages could be separated. It is important to signpost the discussion about script, the Urdu *rasm-ul khat* or Hindi *lipi*. Can a language survive and flourish when abstracted from its script? Should a film written in *nasta'līq* be called an 'Urdu film' and one in *devnāgrī* labelled a 'Hindi film'? This is a complicated issue; as Kathryn Hansen has pointed out, in the early years of Parsi theatre and its use of Urdu, often Urdu was

footnote no. 44 for details about Premchand's departure from Bombay and the film *Mill/Mazdoor*. For an insightful article on Amritlal Nagar and his film work, see Suzanne L. Schulz, "The Writer in the Film World: Amritlal Nagar's Seven Years of Film Experience," *Synoptique – An Online Journal of Film and Moving Images Studies* 3, no. 1 (2014), 151- 159.

110 It is good to flag that the "film song" in cinema in India is not a homogenous entity and has its own genres and styles which I do not have the space to elaborate. For details, see Anna Morcom, *Hindi film songs and the cinema* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2007) and Gregory Booth, *Behind the Curtain: Making Music in Mumbai's Film Studio* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

111 For a longer discussion of the film and its use of the idiom, see Ira Bhaskar, "Emotion, Subjectivity and the Limits of Desire: Melodrama and Modernity in Bombay cinema 1940s- 50s," In *Gender Meets Genre in PostWar Cinemas*, ed. Christine Gledhill (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 161- 176.

112 Drawing from Ranjani Mazumdar's argument on the *tapori/bambayya* language, as a combination of English, Gujarati, Marathi, Hindi, Tamil and various other linguistic registers. See Mazumdar, "The Rebellious Tapori," In *Bombay Cinema: An Archive of the City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 41- 78.

113 Code-switching mixture of Hindi and English vocabularies in the same sentence. See, Trivedi, "All kinds of Hindi: The Evolving Language of Hindi Cinema," In *Fingerprinting Popular Culture: The Mythic and the Iconic in Indian Cinema*, ed. Vinay Lal and Ashis Nandy (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 79-81.

114 David Lunn, "The Eloquent Language: Hindustani in 1940s Indian Cinema," *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 6, no. 1 (2015): 23.

written in Gujarati script as there were few people in Bombay who could read the Perso-Arabic script. There appears to be no standardised form and literary scripts in the early period were in a constant state of experimentation. It is unfortunate that very few film scripts have survived from the period of early cinema, though there is evidence that many filmmakers wrote their scripts in *nasta'līq*, Kamal Amrohi being one prominent example. Bombay Talkies film scripts were written in Romanised Urdu as their crew was diverse.[115] However, the multilingualism of India is apparent in the film memorabilia and song booklets that accompanied or acted as supplementary material to films in the 1930s and 40s. These were often bi- or tri-lingual (Hindi/Urdu, Bengali/Marathi, and/or English). A brief survey of the film memorabilia from the 1930s and 40s clearly indicates that there was a demand and readership for different scripts in the cinematic public sphere, where Urdu *nasta'līq* was a prominent presence.

The act of labelling is a complex process of "mutual imbrication", as Iftikhar Dadi suggests in relation to 'Urdu cinema' from Pakistan. He writes:

> The impossibility of fully disentangling cinemas identified as 'Hindi' from those designated 'Urdu' presents very specific challenges to the task of situating Pakistani Urdu cinema as an object of scholarly study. Although my intention is to address cinema from Pakistan after 1947, the persistence of intimate connections between Pakistani 'Urdu' cinema and Indian 'Hindi' cinema means linguistic labels tend to obscure important aspects of mutual imbrication. As an industrial form seeking mass address, it is debatable whether it is even possible to identify cinema produced in Bombay, Lahore and other sites as recognizably 'Hindi' or 'Urdu', either before or after 1947.[116]

Dadi's concern with labels stems from the deeply entwined history of cinema in India and Pakistan in the 1940s and 50s. The difficulty is also aggravated because of the indistinguishable quality of the Hindi and Urdu language as spoken in the cinema. Where does Hindi begin and where does Urdu stop? I attempt to address this in my chapter 4 when I look at dialogues and lyrics in key films from the 1930s and 40s. I am more interested in the use of

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[115] Debashree Mukherjee as cited in Tejaswini Ganti, ""No One Thinks in Hindi Here": Language Hierarchies in Bollywood," In *Precarious Creativity: Global Media, Local Labor*, ed. Michael Curtin, Kevin Sanson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016), 118- 131.

[116] Iftikhar Dadi, "Lineages of Pakistan's 'Urdu' cinema: mode, mood and genre in *Zehr-e Ishq/ Poison of Love (1958)*," *Screen* 57, no. 4 (Winter 2016): 480- 487.

certain vocabularies, specifically those related to the Urdu imaginaire, as they appear in the 'final' filmic version of the film, though it would have been useful to have film scripts to compare the transition of words from script to screen. But few film scripts have survived from the early period. Alain Desoulieres, in discussing Imtiaz Ali Taj's *Anarkali* and its film adaptations, writes that "the Urdu or Hindi label does not make much of a difference for the cinema directors, but it is an indication of the level and style of language, inspired by literature." [117] He thus prefers to use the terms "Urdu literature influenced films" or "Urdu literary films". However, one has to ponder whether these are workable concepts for classifying films. As mentioned above, in the context of my work, I prefer to locate the cinema within the cities of production and hence, I use Bombay cinema or cinema produced in Calcutta, Poona, Lahore and Madras.

LITERARY CULTURE, FILM HISTORY AND THE 'URDU IMAGINAIRE'

Sheldon Pollock, in his book *Literary Culture in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*, writes:

> all literary cultures exist in time and space, and they acknowledge this by their specific internal processes of spatialization and temporalization. They all use language and thereby create literary language; they all appropriate and adapt existing conceptions of the literary and invent new ones…Our inquiry into what constitutes the literary showed that stipulative definitions are often nothing more than unwarranted universalizations of this or that particular; instead, the literary needs to be understood as a historically situated practice: how people have done things with texts.[118]

Urdu literary culture has been a fascinating and complex world. It did not grow in pristine and obscure isolation. It was part of an exciting, living, ever-mutating literary heritage specific to South Asia. Despite the numerous mythologies regarding its evolution, linguistic structures, Perso-Arabic interface and the eventual debates linked to nationalism and identity

[117] Alain Desoulieres, "Historical fiction and style: The case of *Anarkali*," *The Annual of Urdu Studies* 22, (2007), 80.
[118] Sheldon Pollock, 'Introduction' in *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 16-18.

formation, what remains intriguing are the multifaceted transactions that have fundamentally conditioned and defined Urdu literary and popular cultures over the years. As literary scholars have argued, the use of any language has two aspects: its public and its political use. Urdu was part of an expansive and diverse linguistic landscape and its significance was not limited to Muslims in India. Urdu's fortunes underwent tidal highs and lows throughout its long history in the subcontinent. Following on from Pollock's assertion of the importance of the literary, this project attempts to bind together literary culture and film history in a mutually complementary symbiosis. Any critical historical account of cinema in India needs to take into serious consideration the shifting domain of literary culture and the creative ways in which people mobilized the literary to find meaning in those representations.

Concepts are crucial to the methods by which we make sense of the world. The intellectual history or the epistemological engagement with concepts has been an active field of enquiry. Margrit Pernau in "Provincializing concepts: The language of transnational history" points out that, in its initial stage, conceptual history was developed as a tool to avoid anachronistic readings of sources. She writes, "the acknowledgment that the meaning of concepts changes over time made it necessary to investigate the precise meaning to which the author of a text referred instead of assuming that later interpretations could be read back into older texts, even within the same culture and the same language."[119] Guided by Dipesh Chakarvarty's work on provincializing Europe, Pernau takes forward this methodological framework. She writes cogently about the relationship between concepts, their use by historical actors, problems of translation and contesting analyses that are hinged on binaries of derivative discourse and apologetic modernity.[120] For our purpose, Pernau's enquiry into modes of thinking within analytical frameworks about the past pushes us to acknowledge that, while it is crucial to trace the genealogical and intellectual history of concepts, it is also imperative to understand that concepts are guided by reconfigurations and cannot be devoid of their implications in the present. Pernau stresses that conceptual unity is "already inherent in the copresence of different layers of meaning".[121] What is necessary for historians is not to create mere equivalences in the different uses of terms but to analyse them as historical constructions

[119] Margrit Pernau, "Provincializing Concepts: The Language of Transnational History," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 36, no. 3 (2016): 484.
[120] Pernau analyses the concept of Middle class, *Ashraf* and *Bürgertum.* Ibid. Also see, Pernau, *Ashraf into Middle Classes: Muslims in Nineteenth- Century Delhi* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013) and Faisal Devji, "Apologetic Modernity," *Modern Intellectual History* 4, no. 1 (2007): 61- 76.
[121] Margrit Pernau, "Provincializing Concepts: The Language of Transnational History," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 36, no. 3 (2016): 485.

with a continuity of concepts. Past meanings remain embedded in the present by their constant re-evocation, but new meanings do implicate concepts and problematize their use. Pernau's cautionary argument is crucial in my attempts to define the neologism 'Urdu imaginaire' but also in my examination and critique of the Islamicate (which I discuss further below).

For this project, I suggest it would be productive to use the term 'Urdu imaginaire', to refer to an imaginary shaped by a literary aesthetic which had a palpable presence in South Asia during and after the period under study.[122] What I will call the 'Urdu imaginaire' provided Bombay cinema with a sprawling range of stories, themes and images which acted as a ready reserve of narrative material for use. Why imaginaire? Steven Collins has discussed the imaginaire as alluding to "objects of the imagination, the ensemble of what is imagined…it can also refer to specific imagined worlds".[123] The Urdu imaginaire was produced by an intricate network of literary and cultural sensibilities that emerged from the Urdu public sphere. Tony K. Stewart writes that "as a locus of human thought, the *imaginaire* is itself structured; it is always historically grounded to particular times and places and, as a result, has observable restrictions and an observable horizon. We might best think of the *imaginaire* as the "realm of possibility" for an author to create some kind of text."[124] The Urdu imaginaire as a "realm of possibilities" includes not just texts – oral, written, performative or cinematic – but also a world of perceptions which is governed by discursive parameters rooted in material contexts that are defined by socio-political and historical conditions. Stewart is not concerned with the "act of imagining" but with "the *imaginaire* as metaphorical space" where the imagination is concretized as a cultural product.[125] What are these material contexts and socio-political historical conditions within which the Urdu imaginaire of the 1930s and 40s was produced? In

[122] I take cue from Steven Collins who has used the term Pali Imaginaire in *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities: Utopias of the Pali Imaginaire*. In the Introduction, he argues that the French term Imaginaire has a broader scope than 'imagination'. See Collins, *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities: Utopias of the Pali Imaginaire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 73. Other scholars who have made use of the term 'imaginaire' are Muzaffar Alam uses the term 'Muslim imaginaire' in *The Languages of Political Islam: India, 1200- 1800* (London: Hurst and Co., 2004), 22 and Tony K. Stewart for his discussion of the Bengali imaginaire in "Mapping the Imaginaire: The Conditions of Possibility," In *Witness to Marvels: Sufism and Literary Imagination* (Berkeley: California University Press, 2019), 110- 154.
[123] Steven Collins writes, "Used as a noun *imaginaire* can refer to objects of the imagination, the ensemble of what is imagined, without implying falsity; it can also refer to specific imagined worlds, and so can be used in this sense in the plural. English 'imagination' primarily refers to a faculty or activity of the mind; while it can also refer to the objects of that faculty, the domain of the imagined, it is not usually used to specific imagined worlds, and cannot be used thus in the plural". See, Collins, *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities: Utopias of the Pali Imaginaire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 73.
[124] Tony K Stewart for his discussion of the Bengali imaginaire in "Mapping the Imaginaire: The Conditions of Possibility," In *Witness to Marvels: Sufism and Literary Imagination* (Berkeley: California University Press, 2019), 115.
[125] Ibid., 114.

the 1930s, the nationalist struggle became a defining framework for myriad critiques that not only shaped the political imaginary but also impacted socio-cultural imaginaires through its powerful discourses on reform. The transformation of society within colonial modernity was entangled with discourses on the need for individual improvement and ethical conduct (*akhlāq*). For many writers, *ala akhlāq* was a desirable attribute for the individual as well as the nation (*qaum*) – often used as a shorthand for community or nation. These discourses on *akhlāq* became a recurrent trope within the texts that were part of an Urdu imaginaire such as the 'novels of respectability' written by Nazir Ahmad, Rashid ul Khairi and many others.[126] The *akhlāqī* framework as advocated by Urdu writers and film journalists was fraught with underlying contradictions; an overemphasis on indigenous modes of thinking and being was paired with constant comparisons with – and emulation of – the western technical finesse of American and British films.

In my thesis, borrowing from Charles Taylor's ideas of the 'social imaginary',[127] I offer the Urdu imaginaire with an expanded meaning, extending the conceptual boundaries of the term to mean not just texts, but to become a category that includes behavioural patterns, forms of etiquette and ritual, dress code, and intangible objects like images, myths and memories. However, where Taylor's emphasis is on the production of social imaginaries, my focus is on the imaginaire as "a specific imagined world" which is constituted through an interaction between the social and the literary. One theme within the Urdu imaginaire appears to be the consistent references to emancipatory pedagogy for women. This again is not specific to the Urdu public sphere, but very much part of the zeitgeist of the 1930s and 40s. Like literary culture, discourses on respectability / *sharafat* were central to the cinematic public sphere and the emphasis on a certain kind of respectability (which was linked to those newly educated and not merely along the lines of old networks of lineage and patronage) also became a theme that was mobilized within the Urdu imaginaire. Of course, this idea of *sharafat* was not static but in the process of transformation and constantly accommodating newer definitions of respectability due to the changing circumstances of the Urdu elite in India. These narratives of respectability in the films from the 1930s borrowed from the Urdu imaginaire and were fraught

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[126] Gail Minault, *Secluded Scholars: Women's Education and Muslim Social Reform in Colonial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
[127] Charles Taylor, "What is a Social Imaginary," In *Modern Social Imaginaries*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 23.

with tensions that the dichotomies of modernity versus tradition produced (as I show in Chapter 5).

As I mention above, the Urdu imaginaire is informed by the public sphere which in some sense inverses Taylor's focus and is a crucial point of departure and interest for this project. Comparing the 'social imaginary' with 'theory', Taylor explains his choice for the use of the term 'imaginary'. He writes:

> I adopt the term imaginary (i) because my focus is on the way ordinary people "imagine" their social surroundings, and this is often not expressed in theoretical terms, but is carried in images, stories, and legends. It is also the case that (ii) theory is often the possession of a small minority, whereas what is interesting in the social imaginary is that it is shared by large groups of people, if not the whole society. Which leads to a third difference: (iii) the social imaginary is that common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy.

Taylor's ideas are indebted to concepts such as Benedict Anderson's 'imagined communities'[128] and Cornelius Castoriadis' 'social imaginary signification'.[129] The transformation from the 'imagination' as a singular faculty to 'imaginaires' which is shaped by social and cultural frameworks to provide a collective "sense of legitimacy" is why I use the term Urdu imaginaire.[130] The Urdu imaginaire can be seen as an affective, cultural and

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[128] In *Imagined Communities*, Anderson has argued that the nation is "an imagined community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign". Anderson identified print capitalism which led to the formation of modern vernaculars through which the nation was imagined. Anderson's overemphasis on print was challenged by many scholars. Anthony D. Smith, for example, proposed the role of myths and memories in the making of nationalist ideologies. See, Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, (London: Verso, 1983) and Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[129] Castoriadis explains the tripartite typology of signification as *perceived*, *rational* and *imaginary*. For Castoriadis, "reality, language, values, needs and labour in each society specify, in each case, in their particular mode of being, the organization of the world and of the social world related to the social imaginary significations instituted by the society in question." He argued that society exhibits a *central* social imaginary signification which is "world-creating" and not dependant on external referents or "world-referring" whereas second order significations "lean on" the "first natural stratum". For a detailed discussion on Castoriadis' thought on social imaginary signification, See, Suzi Adams, "Castoriadis and the Non-Subjective Field: Social Doing, Instituting Society and Political Imaginaries," *Critical Horizons* 13, no. 1 (2012): 31- 32.

[130] According to Arnason, the cultural hermeneutic shift from the question of knowledge/reason as related to individual to the question of meaning or "model of rationality" as an element of culture is important. He writes that "Imaginary significations shape patterns of perception as well as frameworks and horizons of realization, even when the specific imaginary content appears to merge with a model of rationality and/or fade into a levelling notion of reality." Johann P. Arnason, "Social Imaginary Significations," In *Cornelius Castoriadis: Key Concepts*, ed. Suzi Adams (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 34.

intellectual imaginary with deep roots within the shared heritage of the Indian subcontinent, the *ganga jamunī tahẕīb* – a confluence of cultures and a language universe.[131] The term brings back into sharp focus the syncretic cultural imagination of India and its cinema, which subverts and liberates the assumptions of majoritarian/minoritarian clichés. While the Urdu imaginaire is attached to the linguistic structures of the Urdu language, its expanse is not limited to any geographical or political frontiers. The scope of the Urdu imaginaire and its framework is enriched with borrowings, overlaps and interconnections because the Urdu language was not a monolith and a range of languages and dialects were intricately tied to it. Thus, Arabic, Persian, Hindi, Punjabi, Gujarati and Bengali, among others, seriously impacted and shaped the repertoire of the Urdu imaginaire. For example, Urdu poets were familiar with the literary heritage of the Persian poets, and they followed the conventions, themes, and genres from classical Persianate poetry to the Urdu ghazal.[132] In the early nineteenth century, Bengali novels began to be translated into Urdu; this enlarged the Urdu imaginaire and allowed for the incorporation of newer ways of thinking and being. Or for that matter, Punjabi literary culture had an intricate connection with the Urdu imaginaire via Sufi *qiṣṣas* and romantic folklore. The colonial intervention within the languages of India affected the ways in which the Urdu imaginaire was shaped, as European literary genres and their aesthetic became available in translation and influenced it further.[133] This is particularly visible in the romantic imagery borrowed from Urdu poetry where one can see that there was some amount of literalness through which these tropes and metaphors were visually depicted in the cinema. In many films from the 1930s and 40s, the romantic ghazal is literalised visually to explicate the literary metaphors from the poetic verses or lyrics. In the film *Amrit Manthan*, for example, the idyllic forest or the abundant garden becomes a welcoming haven for the lovers, or in *Mirza Sahiban*, the romantic scenes are embellished by a moonlit night sky and the lake reflecting the lovers' embrace.[134]

[131] The term *ganga-jamunī tahẕīb* is an Awadhi phrase which can be translated as the 'culture of Ganga and Yamuna', from the doab region of rivers Ganga and Yamuna, signifying two distinct yet overlapping traditions. The term is commonly attributed to the confluence of Hindu-Muslim syncretic cultural practices in north India.
[132] In his introduction to the section on Love poetry, Russell writes of the dominance and influence of Persian poetry on early Urdu poets. Ralph Russell, *An Anthology of Urdu Literature*, (Manchester: Carcanet Press Limited, 1995), 127-128 and 211- 212.
[133] The influence of English and other European languages like Russian was profound. Urdu translations of Gorki, Gogol and Chekhov affected the ways in which the short story as a genre evolved. This brought new lands and geographies into the fold of the Urdu imaginaire. As I show in Chapter 3, translation of Russian film theorist Pudovkin on film acting.
[134] For further examples, see Chapter 4.

The processes of standardization of languages within colonial contexts, with their attempts to label, identify and classify, created divisions; recent work by Kavita Datla has shown how Urdu was perceived by intellectuals in Hyderabad as a language through which a common secular future could be imagined.[135] Datla's work is also important as it shows how Urdu was nurtured, and how through this questions of modernity could be articulated. Jennifer Dubrow has also convincingly called Urdu the language of modernity. Following on from Pollock's 'Sanskrit Cosmopolis', Dubrow describes the formations of the 'Urdu cosmopolis', "a transnational language community that eschewed identities of religion, caste, and even class. This community came into being through print, as readers-listeners from across British India were brought into mutual contact and formed a critical community in the pages of periodicals."[136] In this slightly utopian reading, Dubrow is interested in the cosmopolitan community that formed the Urdu public sphere. On the other hand, I argue that the cosmopolitanism of the Urdu public sphere impacts and shapes the Urdu imaginaire, though not without contestations and collisions with other literary imaginaires and communities. In chapter 4, I will discuss many examples of films that were borrowing from an Urdu imaginaire; although the film texts themselves present an eclectic list of narrative influences, they are unified by their treatment of notions of romance, authority, state power and reform. Despite the claims to cosmopolitanism, exclusions and absences were inherent in the Urdu imaginaire. For example, the Sanskrit epics, even if they had been translated into Urdu were still imagined to be part of a different timescape and broader Indic imaginary. The growing associations of Urdu with Muslims and Hindi with Hindus restricted the use of language with specific communities. Often in the dialogues of films from the 1940s, writers made conscious efforts to insert Sanskritized Hindi or Persianized Urdu vocabulary as per the new sensibilities.[137] These tensions underlie the Urdu imaginaire and its cosmopolitan impulse.

The majority of Dubrow's book is based on discussion of the Urdu periodicals *Avadh Punch* and *Avadh Akhbar,* and in her book's concluding chapter, she discusses the 'new spaces' where the Urdu cosmopolis flourishes today, such as film, television and online media. In my thesis, on the other hand, the Urdu imaginaire navigated and contested many strands of the literary; it was produced within an entangled network of production and consumption of

[135] Kavita Saraswathi Datla, *The Language of Secular Islam: Urdu Nationalism and Colonial India* (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2013), 9.
[136] Jennifer Dubrow, *Cosmopolitan Dreams: The Making of Modern Urdu Literary Culture in Colonial South Asia* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2019), 109.
[137] A classic example of this is *Pukar* which I elaborate upon in Chapter 4.

literature and cinema as well as other cultural and performance forms. The Urdu imaginaire was enriched by a circle of intellectuals, writers, artists and filmmakers who worked with literary awareness and produced diverse film texts that were informed by aesthetic, literary and as well as visual vocabulary.

IN SEARCH OF THE 'ISLAMICATE' IN BOMBAY CINEMA

One concept that has been linked to Urdu and Bombay cinema is that of the Islamicate. In this section I would like to query the idea of the Islamicate in Bombay cinema and explore what its relationship may be to the concept of the Urdu imaginaire. Historian Marshall G.S. Hodgson, in his book *The Venture of Islam*, coined the term Islamicate to refer "not directly to the religion, Islam, itself, but to the social and cultural complex historically associated with Islam and the Muslims, both among Muslims themselves and even when found among non-Muslims".[138] Hodgson's well-intentioned critique of the world history project was based on a sense of moral correction and attempts to rid the discipline of its Euro-centricism. The extensive Introduction to the *Venture of Islam* points to Hodgson's desire to posit a kind of universality of Islam and its cultures, a universality of Islam beyond its topographic, legal and political boundaries which is highly essentialized and limiting. Hodgson's carefully articulated definition was picked up by Mukul Kesavan for his article 'Urdu, Awadh and the Tawaif: The Islamicate Roots of Hindi Cinema' in 1994. Kesavan began by attempting to define 'Muslim-ness' and, by his own admission, abandoned the idea for a "ready-made adjective", the Islamicate. He writes, "I have switched boats for three good reasons: one, Islamicate, while every bit as awkward as Muslim-ness, sounds more scholarly; two Hodgson's marvellous definition cannot be detached from the term it defines; and three, Muslim-ness is a noun whereas in Islamicate I have a ready-made adjective."[139] It is with his third assertion, which disambiguates the Islamicate, the "more scholarly" sounding adjective, that the term slips quite easily and forms a complex relationship to a prosaic noun 'Muslim-ness'. Can the term Islamicate be so easily collapsed/confused with Muslim-ness? In Hodgson's articulation the term is not reducible to purely Islamic/Muslim contexts. However, often such slippages are made in academic writing. Since Kesavan's use, the term Islamicate has gained currency and

[138] Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 59.
[139] Mukul Kesavan, "Urdu, Awadh and the Tawaif: The Islamicate Roots of Hindi Cinema," In *Forging Identities: Gender, Communities and the State in India,* ed. Zoya Hasan (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 246.

a cautious acceptance by some scholars working on Bombay cinema. While it is important to assess the various uses of the term Islamicate in the work of scholars on cinema in India, it is perhaps also necessary to initiate a discussion on its place in a project on cinema and its relationship to Urdu public sphere.

Kesavan in his article explores the impact that the practice of the "Islamicate state and its ruling elite had on the cultures of the colonial middle classes and, for our purposes, the cinema that they made."[140] The three protagonists of his essay, Urdu (language and literature), Awadh (the princely state)[141] and Tawaif (courtesan/performer), are key to the Islamicate imaginaries that make up what he terms 'Hindi cinema'. In their book *Islamicate Cultures of Bombay Cinema*, scholars Ira Bhaskar and Richard Allen take forward the arguments of Kesavan's piece to elaborate on the constituent elements of the Islamicate imaginary. They write, "The Islamicate cultures of Bombay cinema are imagined forms of the past, and therefore a contested site of histories and identities. Yet they also form a culturally potent and aesthetically fertile reservoir of images and idioms through which Muslim communities are represented and represent themselves."[142] The book draws attention to examples from genres like the Historical, the Courtesan film and the Muslim Social[143] where the forms and idioms of the Islamicate cultural imaginary have been most intensely realized. For Bhaskar and Allen, the term Islamicate makes possible the discussion of architectural and iconographic forms specific to Indo-Islamic cultural heritage. Close textual analyses of classics like *Pukar* (1939), *Mirza Ghalib* (1957), and *Pakeezah* (1971) delineate the intricate nuances of the Islamicate mise-en-scène, narrative strategies and tropes.

[140] Ibid., 251.

[141] Awadh is the name of the region in North India, part of current Uttar Pradesh, with its capital in Faizabad and later Lucknow. Awadh in popular imagination evokes a range of emotions and images. It is synonymous with the culture of its ruling elite, the nawabs, its lofty architecture, rich cuisine, ornate fashion, grand poetry and most importantly *tahẕīb* (an elaborate complex of everyday etiquette and refinement). Apart from these celebratory images of Awadhi culture, the decline of Awadh evoked a sense of melancholia and nostalgia for opulence, mourning for a bygone era, and an indulgent decadence.

[142] Ira Bhaskar and Richard Allen. *Islamicate Cultures of Bombay Cinema* (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2009), 22.

[143] Ravi Vasudevan in an article explicates the birth of the Muslim Social in the 1940s. He writes, "In the later 1930s, with the acceleration of the political demands for representation of community interests, and the secularized dispositions of critics such as (Khwaja Ahmad) Abbas, we observe the emergence of a more homogenized set of demands on how communities should be represented on screen, that is, through the prism of modern social reform. The Muslim social of the early 1940s emerged in the wake of that recalibration." See Vasudevan, "Film Genres, the Muslim Social and Discourse of Identity c. 1935-1945," *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 6, no. 1 (2015): 41.

One of the reviewers of the book accused the authors, Bhaskar and Allen, of "stereotyping the Muslim in Bombay cinema".[144] In a rejoinder "Islamicate Projections: A reply", the authors argued that "the review misrepresented their arguments and distorted the politics that they were trying to foreground" in their book. While the Muslim social was an industry category, the other sub-genres that the authors formulate are "critically constructed" categories. Like intellectual frameworks that may be exclusionary but are also enabling, these allow the authors to clarify the Islamicate idioms that are consolidated into recognisable patterns of narrative and iconography in the films they discuss. Anand Vivek Taneja, in attempts to problematise the nuances of the 'Islamicate', adds to the confusion as he cites examples such as Vijay reciting Urdu poetry in *Pyasa* or Vijay in *Deewar* who wears a 786 talisman on his arm. These are for Taneja "non-Muslim characters in films speaking, acting and being in ways that are easily identifiable as *Islamic(ate)*".[145] How is reciting Urdu poetry Islamic(ate)? This is precisely the kind of fallacy of propagandist discourse about Urdu's links to Muslim identity and culture that need more nuance and careful articulation. [146] Keeping the academic quibble aside, the review and the clarification foreground the dangers of the ease with which the term Islamicate can be erroneously collapsed with "Islamic". Another important assertion that emerges from this discussion is that the relationship between Bombay cinema and its Islamicate roots is a subject larger than specific genres like the Muslim social or the Historical or even the stock images of Muslim characters/'Muslimness' in films, as Kesavan originally argued. This is highly confusing; does this imply that 'all' films may have 'Islamicate' features? And those films with Muslim themes are 'most' 'Islamicate'?

Film historian Kaushik Bhaumik, in *The emergence of the Bombay film industry from 1896- 1936*, uses the term Islamicate, providing Hodgson's definition in a footnote as the only necessary qualification for his use.[147] He uses the term to describe orientalist *bazār* films of the silent and early sound era with a heavy dose of adventure, stunt, romance and a generous lumping together of motifs from imagined Muslim cultures like Arabia, Iran, Turkey etc. He argues for the presence of the Islamicate from the inception of cinema in India through its links to the Parsi theatre, the tradition of Urdu romances and the idioms of the *bazār*, such as the

[144] Anand Vivek Taneja, "Stereotyping the Muslim in Bombay Cinema," *Economic and Political Weekly* 45, no. 4 (2010): 30-32.
[145] Ibid., p.30
[146] Yousuf Saeed, "The Muslim Exotica of Hindi Filmdom," *The Book Review South Asia Special*, Aug-Sept XIV, (2009): 23-24.
[147] Kaushik Bhaumik, "The Emergence of the Bombay Film Industry, 1913-1936" (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2002), 59.

nautch. What Bhaumik defines as a significantly Islamicate feature, the “Urduised Oriental tilt”[148] evident in the titles of the films from the late silent period, in fact points to the matrix of interactions between cinema and the Urdu public sphere, the area that I will be exploring further in this thesis. Bhaumik elaborates on the fascinating networks of early film culture and experience in Bombay, Lahore and Calcutta, demonstrating that nationalist debates favoured a Hindu ethos and were, in fact, sceptical of the diversity and hybridity of the film form. In seeking a coherent and culturally unified form, these discourses sought strict codes on language, costume and locale that could provide legitimacy and respectability.[149] Is it possible to argue that what Bhaumik describes as the Islamicate are strains that come from contemporary Urdu popular culture? A key task of my thesis is to disentangle this network and ask whether the vast and varied complex of nineteenth- and twentieth-century cultural practices in north India were deriving their repertoire of images, fantasies and imaginaries from an Urdu imaginaire. Bhaumik provides a rich account of the puritanical Hindu discourse emerging in the late 1920s; what he calls the “Hindu ethnoscape” began to edge out the Islamicate/ Urdu cultural ethos at precisely the same period when the advocacy for Hindi nationalism was at its peak. It is interesting that there existed a consciousness within the public spheres about the need for reform and reorganization. The demand for bourgeois and ‘respectable’ cinema was also a call for the legitimacy of the form, with the prerequisite that elements of popular low-brow genres, whether literary or otherwise, be expelled. Popular cinema, however, reconfigured the thrill, the risqué and the adventure story, along with the continuing use and significance of the Urdu imaginaire.

Ravi Vasudevan has pointed out that Bhaumik “forecloses too rapidly on the durability of the “Islamicate” form”.[150] More recently, Rosie Thomas, in her book *Bombay before Bollywood*, shows how the Islamicate was to have a vivid life well after this time. The book offers an alternative perspective to the conventional history of cinema in India through a focus on popular ‘subaltern’ genres like fantasy, costume and stunt. The Islamicate imaginary within these films, Thomas argues, was somewhat loosely constructed and appealed to a broader audience. The fantastical ‘orient’ drew heavily on the “fashionable orientalism that infused Euro-American art, literature, cinema and the performing arts of the eighteenth to early

[148] Kaushik Bhaumik, “The Emergence of the Bombay Film Industry, 1913-1936” (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2002), 129.
[149] Ibid., 157-184.
[150] Ravi Vasudevan, “Film Genres, the Muslim Social and Discourse of Identity c. 1935-1945,” *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 6, no. 1 (2015): 28.

twentieth centuries in the construction of which the *Arabian Nights* has played a major role."[151] Thomas reminds us that these subaltern films were engaging with a modernity that had a global form and were placed within a very cosmopolitan and exotic Orient. The Islamicate appears as an orientalised simulacrum. Like Bhaumik, Thomas delineates the diverse range of references that are evoked by the Islamicate in these films about 'other' Muslim lands like Persia (Iran), Arabia and Misr (Egypt). Films like *Lal-e-Yaman* (1933) and *Noor-e-Watan* (1935) foregrounded essentialized images of the 'other', as cinema became a site where local literary culture was strongly informed by global images of the orientalised Islamicate world. The term 'Islamicate' when used in the context of cinema produced in Bombay, with all its good intentions, can be easily deflected into a loaded essentialist term. The relationship between Urdu and Bombay cinema extends far beyond the Islamicate. For this reason, the term (and these debates) will not figure further within the thesis.

Urdu imaginaire as a category draws our focus to the importance of Urdu popular culture in the making of a significant repository for cinema's visual and aural vocabulary. The cinematic public sphere was informed by literary images and ethical frameworks provided by an Urdu imaginaire. Instead of linking the traces of Urdu language in Bombay/ 'Hindi' cinema to Islam(icate) imaginaries, I believe it to be more productive to ground these within literary frameworks rather than only in the 'sacred/ religious' domain. This is not to assume that the sacred/religious connotations were insignificant or without consideration to the political contestations of language and identity. Here I am thinking of Nasiruddin Hashmi's review of the 1933 film *Mahabharata* (starring Zubeida and Jal Merchant), where he critiques the film for its references to the medieval/ Mughal period as being incongruent and almost unnecessary to the narrative's period.[152] This complexity that emerges from the coming together of different imaginaries is fascinating. I would argue that within the Urdu imaginaire, even though narratives may not always be linked to Islamic(ate) contexts like the Mughals, the semantic use of Urdu vocabulary to evoke power, nobility and status was associated with disparate imaginaires, thereby creating overlaps between historical periods.[153] This may also be a trend that came from the Urdu-Parsi theatre tradition which contributed to the elaboration of the Urdu

[151] Rosie Thomas, *Bombay Before Bollywood: Film City Fantasies* (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2014), 33.
[152] Nasiruddin Hashmi, *Film Numa: Film ke muta'alliq iṣlāḥī aur tanqīdī maẓāmīn ka majmū'a* (Hyderabad: Shams-al Mataba Machine Press, 1940), 72-75.
[153] I further discuss this in Chapter 4.

imaginaire of this era.[154] The association of the Urdu language with Muslim identity already did enough harm to the language; in fact, I will argue in Chapter 5 that this communalisation stripped the Urdu imaginaire of its cosmopolitanism in 1940s film genres like the Muslim social.

URDU PUBLIC SPHERE: THEORIES AND APPROACHES

Jügern Habermas in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962) conceptualised the public sphere as a community, "made up of private people gathered together as a public and articulating the needs of society with the state".[155] Habermas maps the emergence of the public sphere in Europe in the eighteenth century through the growth of coffee houses, literary societies, voluntary associations, and most importantly through the newly emergent printing press. He suggests that the public sphere put the state under critical scrutiny and was a significant contributor to the formation of "public opinion" which addressed representative governments in Western Europe. The public sphere was devoted to arbitration, reaffirmation and realignment of the affairs of the state through acts of assembly and dialogue. However, Habermas recognized that an ideal public sphere was far from achievable. The state, in an effort to legitimize its authority and ensure the smooth functioning of democracy, in turn sought to discipline this public sphere.[156] Habermas intervened in the burgeoning debates in the political theory of democracy to understand the mediated flows of communication within the public sphere. Since its appearance in 1962, the theory of the public sphere has been subject to much debate, discussion and criticism.[157] Nancy Fraser has pointed out that "*Structural Transformation* took for granted that public sphere discussion was fully comprehensible and linguistically transparent. Tacitly presupposing a single shared medium of public communication, Habermas effectively assumed that public debate was conducted in a national language."[158] This is significant in the context of colonial India, where plurality and

[154] Historical plays were common in the repertoire of Parsi theatre companies in Bombay. See Hansen, "Languages on Stage: Linguistic Pluralism and Community Formation in Nineteenth-Century Parsi Stage," *Modern Asian Studies* 37, no. 2 (2003): 381-405.
[155] Jügern Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a category of Bourgeois Society*, tr. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), 176.
[156] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977).
[157] Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge challenged the homogeneity of the public sphere within the Habermasian framework and proposed a dialectic of the bourgeoise and proletariat public spheres. See, Negt, Oskar, et al. "'The Public Sphere and Experience': Selections," *October* 46, (1988): 60–82.
[158]Nancy Fraser, "Transnational Public Sphere: Transnationalizing the Public Sphere: On the Legitimacy and Efficacy of Public Opinion in a Post-Westphalian World," *Theory Culture Society* 24, no. 7 (2007): 10. And

multiculturalism were key aspects of the configuration of the public spheres. Thus, the public sphere in India needs to be articulated in the context of linguistic pluralism and the overlaps between languages such as Hindi, Urdu and others.

Francesca Orsini has persuasively argued that the Habermasian public sphere is an attractive formulation in relation to India as "it was the European (in particular, English) public sphere that Hindi and other Indian intellectuals had in mind while evolving their own visions of progress and the modern nation."[159] However, she points out significant blind spots in the concept of the public sphere in its exclusion of women and subaltern groups, and cautions against a linear application of public sphere theory to the colonial Indian context.[160] The socially subordinate middle class that constituted the bulk of the literary public sphere in India bore little resemblance to the ascending and self-confident bourgeoisie of Habermas' account. "In the Indian public sphere exclusion was both explicit and implicit." English was explicitly a "symbol of colonial inequality" while Hindi was implicitly exclusive as it attempted to effect distance from Indo-Persian/ Urdu culture. This exclusivity in an area which had potentially low rates of literacy and groups of "uneducated speakers who had not mastered 'pure Hindi'" affected the discourses and sensibilities that emerged in this Hindi public sphere. Orsini highlights how the Hindi public sphere was distinct even from the Bengali *bhadralok* which had adopted English and were culturally diverse and bilingual.[161] In this context, what were the distinct features of the Urdu public sphere in India?

The profusion of newspapers, periodicals and literary journals in Urdu by the early twentieth century indicates the vibrancy of the Urdu public sphere in India. Scholars have shown how this new print revolution aided in the formation of the middle classes, especially from among the *ashraf*.[162] Through print technology, the Urdu middle class actively engaged in dispensing advice on the moral and social reform of society. These discourses of reform of

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Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text*, no. 25/26 (1990): 56–80.

[159] Francesca Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere: Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 9.

[160] Ibid., 11- 13.

[161] *Bhadralok* can be translated from Bengali to gentlemen, the term was used for the new class of elite Bengalis in colonial India. See Aryendra Chakravartty, "Understanding India: Bhadralok, Modernity and Colonial India," *Indian Historical Review* 45, no. 2 (2018): 257- 285.

[162] Markus Daechsel, *The Politics of Self-Expression, The Urdu Middle-Class Milieu in Mid- Twentieth Century India and Pakistan* (New York: Routledge, 2006) and Margrit Pernau, *Ashraf into Middle Classes: Muslims in Nineteenth-Century Delhi* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013).

the social and political conditions of Indians under colonialism had a profound impact.[163] The proliferation of journals for women or the inclusion of women's pages in literary journals was a sign that colonial modernity was urging Indians to reflect on their relationship to gender and identity.[164] In most research the Urdu public sphere has been understood through a study of daily newspapers, literary journals and women's magazines. The fluidity and fluctuations of the fast-changing Urdu public sphere highlight the divergent literary and social spaces occupied by Urdu through the centuries. Megan Robb, who studied the debates produced in the Bijnor-based Urdu newspaper *Madīnah*, shows "how institutions of communication technology and print capitalism interacted with urban spaces to impact the tempo of knowledge transmission",[165] adding that the dimension of time was crucial to the dissemination and production of knowledge within a *qasbah* town like Bijnor. This foregrounds the uneven spread of technologies like the railways, telegraph and print, and shows how these in turn affected the experience of time and space in a *qasbah* that "shaped the horizon of knowledge for interlocutors". Robb has further argued that in the case of *Madīnah*, Islam functioned as an aspect of a common language employed to consolidate the Urdu public sphere. Her work draws attention to the multiplicity of voices, the contested place of religion, region, identity and community in the networks within the Urdu public sphere in India. The Urdu public sphere can be conceived as trans-local during this time, as various versions of literariness (ranging from Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati to Marathi, Tamil etc.) were circulating and influencing it over a wide geographic area across the Indian subcontinent. The writers and film journalists from the Urdu public sphere who were invested in the production of cinematic discourse were in fact a product of this diverse network that was spread across cities and towns in India (from Lahore and Delhi to Calcutta, Bombay and Hyderabad among others). Urdu film material like journals, manuals and texts in translation reflect a hybrid and cosmopolitan voice. The Urdu film journals have barely been included within the studies that reflect on the vital role of the public sphere in shaping discourses on class, caste, gender and religious identities. These film journals and other film-related texts in Urdu complicate such readings of the Urdu public sphere through the lens

[163] C. Ryan Perkins, "A New Pablik: Abdul Halim Sharar, volunteerism, and the Anjuman-e Dar-us-Salam in late nineteenth-century India," *Modern Asian Studies* 49, no. 4 (2015): 1049-1090.

[164] Gail Minault, "From *Akhbar* to News: The Development of Urdu Press in Early Nineteenth Century Delhi," In *A Wilderness of Possibilities: Urdu Studies in Transnational Perspective*, ed. Kathryn Hansen and David Lelyveld (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), 101-121 and *Secluded Scholars: Women's education and Muslim social reforms in Colonial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). Also, see Megan Robb, "Women's Voices, Men's Lives: Masculinity in a North Indian Urdu Newspaper," *Modern Asian Studies* 50, no. 5 (2016): 1441-1473.

[165] Megan Robb, *Print and The Urdu Public: Muslims, Newspapers, and Urban Life in Colonial India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 7.

of Islam. Even though I show how *akhlāq* was used as a shorthand in many of these journals and texts, these ideas sat neatly, though not without contestation, with images of tantalizing literary and visual materials like photographs of actors and actresses, film stills, illustrations and other poetic interventions.

CHAPTER 2

FILM JOURNALISM AND THE URDU PUBLIC SPHERE (1930-50)

The printing press, which arrived in India in the sixteenth century, added novelty to the literary public sphere. By expanding the sphere of public debate and discussion, the printing press democratised existing modes of information and knowledge production.[1] Throughout the 1840s, it established itself firmly in different cities across India; by the twentieth century, publishing as an industry was slowly and steadily consolidating its reach.[2] In this chapter, I map the entangled history of the Urdu press and film journalism and explore their role in the creation of a cinematic public sphere. In the 1920s, films were advertised in several mainstream newspapers (*Bombay Chronicle* and *Times of India*) and periodicals (*Adīb*, *Nairang-i Khayāl*, *Sudha* and *Ćand*) but the growing circuits of cinema accelerated the interest among publishers in launching journals exclusively or primarily about film. The place of film journalism in the matrix of cinema and its networks of distribution, circulation and consumption cannot be overstated. By the 1930s, film journals had become part and parcel of the complex of cinema consumption and a vital source of information. These journals not only fulfilled the needs of average cinema-goers but were also aimed at distributors, exhibitors, advertisers and potential film financiers.

One of the earliest film magazines in Bengali was *Bijoli*, started in 1920.[3] In 1924, *Mouj Majah* was launched in Gujarati by J.K. Dwivedi in Bombay. Other film journals like *PhotoPlay* started in Kolkata in 1926,[4] while *Movie Mirror*, edited by S.K. Vasagam in

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[1] C.A. Bayly has aptly cautioned against the tendency to see print as a 'revolution', pointing to the existence of sophisticated systems of written social communication in the pre-print era. He suggests that print in itself did not create an information revolution rather "it speeded up the velocity and range of communication among existing communities of knowledge." See Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 243.

[2] B.S. Kesavan, *History of Printing and Publishing in India: A Story of Cultural Reawakening* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1985). Ulrike Stark, *An Empire of Books: The Naval Kishore Press and the Diffusion of the Printed Word in Colonial India* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2008). Also see, Gail Minault, "From *Akhbar* to News: The Development of Urdu Press in Early Nineteenth Century Delhi," In *A Wilderness of Possibilities: Urdu Studies in Transnational Perspective*, ed. Kathryn Hansen and David Lelyveld, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), 101-121.

[3] Ashish Rajadhyaksha and Paul Willemen, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Cinema* (London: BFI and Oxford University Press, 1999), 18.

[4] The journal was edited by Govind Sahai until 1937 and B. R Oberoi was the editor from 1943 onwards. In 1943, 300 copies were printed at Jainti printing press. See, Salim al-Din Quraishi, *Urdu Books: A Descriptive Catalogue of Pre-1947 Publications* (Islamabad: National Language Authority, 2000), 190.

Madras,[5] and *Kinema* (Bombay) started in 1927. In 1929, Gujarati film periodical *Chitrapat,* edited by Nagin Lal Shah, was launched in Bombay. Shailaja Nanda Mukherjee started the Bengali film weekly *Bioscope*. Two other Bengali film magazines, *Weekly Batayan* edited by Abinash Chandra Ghoshal and *Ćitralekha* edited by Bibhuti Bhusan, were launched in 1931. The Hindi weekly *Cinema Sansar* was launched in 1932 in Bombay. In 1934, the Hindi film journal *Chitrapat*, edited by Hrishamcharan Jain, was launched in Delhi. In the same year, another film weekly *Rūplekha* also started. Baburao Patel's popular *filmindia* was launched in 1935.[6] In the same year, the Tamil film journal *Cinema Ulagam*, edited and published by P.S. Chettiar, was launched.[7] Other journals circulating up to the late 1940s were the monthly *Film Art*, edited by N.S. Bhel, *Picture Goer*, edited by Satyendra Shayam, and *RupVani.*[8] V.P. Sathe and K. A. Abbas established the journal *Sound* in 1942. Kalish Mukhopadhyay started the Bengali film monthly *Rupamancha* in 1943. The Indore-based Hindi tabloid *Cinema*, edited by Manohar Prasad Gupta, started publication in 1952. *Filmfare* was launched in 1953. These film journals successfully expanded the reach of cinema and created a space for thinking and engaging with cinema and cinema related content. The Urdu film journals, which are the subject of this chapter, began in the 1920s: the record of the earliest film journal in Urdu, published from Lahore and called *Shābistan*, is from 1929.[9]

The stark absence of Urdu film journals in [almost] all film encyclopaedia and library catalogues is striking, especially as we have anecdotal and informal evidence that these were flourishing by the mid-twentieth century.[10] The aim of this chapter is to address these lacunae

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[5] *Fort St. George Gazette Supplement*, no. 35 (September 1930), Madras, 118.

[6] Initially *filmindia* was edited by D.K. Parker, it was later taken over by its proprietor Baburao Patel and lasted till 1961. See, Ashish Rajadhyaksha and Paul Willemen, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Cinema* (London: BFI and Oxford University Press, 1999), 20.

[7] Swarnavel Pillai has shown how Madras based studios, Modern Theatres (*Chandamarutham*, 1940 by T.R. Sundaram), Gemini (*Ananda Vikanta*) and Vijaya-Vauhini (*Chandamama/ Ambulimama*) had their own printing press and Gemini and Vijaya-Vauhini got into film production after entrenching themselves as successful publishers of popular magazines. See, Pillai, *Madras Studios: Narrative Genre, and Technology in Tamil Cinema* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2015), 67.

[8] *RupVani* was a monthly till 1937 and then became a weekly periodical from 1943. Its editors were Ajit Parshad, and Miss Neehar Bala. From 1939, Satyendra Shayam was the editor. It was printed at the Rupvani Printing Press and apparently had 1500- 2500 copies in circulation. See, Salim al-Din Quraishi, *Urdu Books: A Descriptive Catalogue of Pre-1947 Publications* (Islamabad: National Language Authority, 2000).

[9] As told to me in an email exchange (Jan 25, 2020), David Farris who works with the Shabistan Film Archive. Unfortunately, I found out about their work only recently, too late for this thesis. The Shabistan Film Archive are attempting to collect and digitize film material, especially Urdu film journals.

[10] The authoritative *Encyclopaedia of Indian cinema* makes a stray insignificant remark about the launch of Hindi monthly *Sushma* in 1959 calling it an "offshoot of the famous Urdu periodical *Sham'ā* (edited by Yusuf Dehlvi in Delhi). But in the section on the 1940s, *Sham'ā* or Yusuf Dehlvi find no other mention. See, Ashish Rajadhyaksha and Paul Willemen, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Cinema* (London: BFI and Oxford University Press, 1999), 24. Ravikant makes brief reference to *Sham'ā -Sushmā*, see, "Popular Cinephilia in North India: *Madhuri*

and recuperate Urdu film journals of the early twentieth century from archival amnesia. In doing so, I attempt to bring the Urdu film journals back into the conversation and compare them to contemporary Hindi- and English-language film journals as well as Urdu literary journals from 1930- 50.[11]

In the absence of the films themselves, most scholars of early cinema in India rely heavily on printed material. It is surprising that, despite this reliance, so few studies on film journalism in India are available. Some noteworthy contributions have been made by Rachel Dwyer on the English-language film journal *Stardust.* Dwyer focusses attention on the film magazine as a visible site of cultural production that shapes stardom and "star texts". She argues that the magazine "constituted an 'imagined', interpretative community of readers".[12] Others have focussed on *filmindia*. Kaushik Bhaumik's work on early film culture in Bombay highlights the interconnected networks of film production and consumption where film journalism emerged as an important facilitator in the discourse of respectability for cinema. Bhaumik, however, cautions that a popular journal like *filmindia* can at best be viewed as "a useful barometer of the opinions of the educated class….and sometimes reveal remarkable expressions of class bias."[13] Neepa Majumdar in her book on early female stardom describes film journalism in the 1930s as marked by reticence and innuendo. Studying the production of star discourse in film journals like the English-language *filmindia* and Hindi-language *Rangbhoomi*, Majumdar observes that the star profiles used "colloquial expressions of Indian aesthetics" like the *rasa* theory or the poetic conventions of *roopa varnana*.[14] Debashree Mukherjee's research on *filmindia* and K.A. Abbas' film columns in the *Bombay Chronicle* explores "how they were imbricated within networks of privilege, desire, class, and influence

shows the way (1964- 1978)," *Journalism Studies* 16, no. 5 (2015), 637- 650 and "Film Patrika ka ādi-kāl: Ćānd, Ćitrapat aur anya kahānīyāń" *CSDS DigiPapers*, (Nov. 2020): 1- 67. In a recent memoir by *Biswin Sadi,* Jamil Urfi writes about experiences in Delhi in the 1960s and has references to reading Urdu journals, see, Urfi, *Biswin Sadi Memoirs: Growing up in Delhi during the 1960s and 70s* (Goa: CinnamonTeal Publishing, 2018). There are a few blogs on the internet about *Sham'ā* Publishing House. More recently the book, *Yeh Un Dinoñ ki baat hai: Urdu Memoirs of Cinema Legends* by Yasir Abbasi has select translations from Urdu film columns from 1970s and 80s. See, Abbasi, *Yeh Un Dinoñ ki baat hai: Urdu Memoirs of Cinema Legends* (New Delhi: Bloomsbury, 2018).

[11] I have been able to recover only a fraction of the Urdu film journals produced in this period as the list in the next section will indicate, despite extensive fieldwork in India (Delhi, Aligarh, Rampur, Amroha, Patna and Hyderabad), UK (London and Cambridge) and U.S (Chicago and Washington D.C).

[12] Rachel Dwyer, "Shooting Stars: The Indian Film Magazine, *Stardust,*" In *Pleasure and the Nation: The History, Politics and Consumption of Public Culture in India*, ed. Rachel Dwyer and Christopher Pinney (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 249.

[13] Kaushik Bhaumik, "The Emergence of the Bombay Film Industry, 1913-1936" (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2002), 151.

[14] Neepa Majumdar, *Wanted Cultured Ladies Only! Female Stardom and Cinema in India, 1930s-1950s* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 35.

and how they aligned themselves with particular visions of the future nation and its cinema."[15] The journal has also been studied for promoting gendered discourses and the creation of idealised role models as part of the nation building project.[16] Ravi Vasudevan and Salma Siddique's work on the Muslim social and its reception has drawn our attention to the inherent communalism of *filmindia* and its editor Baburao Patel.[17] Vasudevan argues that *filmindia* adopted "a gentrified Hindu outlook of liberal persuasion and modern ethos" which later "assumed a strident Hindu chauvinist attitude defensive of the majority population's interests in the face of the threats perceived to emanate from Islam and Pakistan, on the one hand, Communism, on the other."[18]

Recent studies that have mobilized literary and film journals in Hindi have made useful contributions to the debates on print culture. Lalit Joshi's work on the Hindi literary journals *Madhurī*, *Sudha* and *Ćānd* demonstrates the fascinating ways in which content related to cinema was incorporated within Hindi literary journals in the form of film criticism, reviews and advertisements.[19] Joshi highlights that these Hindi periodicals pushed for the use of Hindi in cinema (as I will discuss in the later section on the Hindi-Urdu divide). Ravikant in two articles on *Ćānd*, *Ćitrapat*, and *Madhurī* points out that the journals were engaged in attempts to create "cinematic civic consciousness" through campaigns for the improvement of cinema halls and theatres, but also carried discussions on film viewing and film-going etiquette, the presence of women on screen and the issue of language of film.[20] Ravikant maps the stylistic strategies of the Hindi film journals to localise cinema through literature.[21] Further he writes

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[15] Debashree Mukherjee, "Creating Cinema's Reading Public: The emergence of Film Journalism in Bombay," In *No Limits: Media Studies from India*, ed. Ravi Sundaram (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013), 166.
[16] C. Yamini Krishna and Emilia Teles Da Silva, "Construction of Indian femininity and masculinity in *Filmindia* magazine 1946-1948," *South Asian Popular Culture* 13, no. 3 (2015), 183-198.
[17] Saadat Hasan Manto in his inimitable style makes a similar suggestion about Baburao Patel in his sketch which was published in the Urdu daily newspaper *Afaq* from Lahore, see *Manto aur Filmī Shaksiyatein* (Delhi: Mashwara Book Depot, 1960), 25-41. Also available in translation as "Baburao Patel: The soft-hearted Iconoclast" in *Stars from Another Sky*, tr. Khalid Hasan (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1998), 122-132. See, Ravi Vasudevan, "Film Genres, the Muslim Social and Discourse of Identity c. 1935-1945," *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 6, no. 1 (2015): 29-30 and Salma Siddique, "Between Bombay and Lahore: A Partition History of cinema in South Asia (1940-1960)" (PhD diss., University of Westminster, 2015), 49.
[18] Ravi Vasudevan, "Film Genres, the Muslim Social and Discourse of Identity c. 1935-1945," *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 6, no. 1 (2015): 29-30.
[19] Lalit Joshi, "Cinema and Hindi Periodical in India (1920- 1947)," In *Narratives of Indian Cinema*, ed. Manju Jain (New Delhi: Primus Books, 2009), 19-51.
[20] Ravikant, "Popular Cinephilia in North India: *Madhuri* shows the way (1964- 1978)," *Journalism Studies* 16, no. 5 (2015): 637- 650 and "Film Patrika ka ādi-kāl: Ćānd, Ćitrapat aur anya kahānīyāń," *CSDS DigiPapers*, (Nov. 2020): 1- 67.
[21] Similar efforts of incorporating literary and filmy content were made by *Sham'ā* and will be discussed later in the chapter.

that "literature was profusely used to package and naturalise the cinematic content, including colourful images of the film players, and campaigns for Nagri credits were used to assure the Hindi-reading public that the magazine was actually working towards extending the frontiers unconquered by Hindi."[22]

On similar lines, David Lunn reads the Urdu literary journal *Adīb* from the 1940s for its film advertisements, as these provide, in his words, "an excellent lens through which to examine the dynamics of film advertisements' interaction with print media, due to the wide variety of film adverts that it carried. The languages, scripts, and styles employed by advertisers not only reveal more about the marketing strategies they used but also provide a window into the readership of the journal—a print audience reimagined as a film audience."[23] These relevant articulations on film journalism are significant to our understanding of the place that Urdu film journals occupied within the cinematic public sphere. What we need to assess is the legacy of Urdu film journalism and how it shaped cinematic discourses of the 1930s and 40s.

The chapter throws light on the issue of cinema's complex relationship to language through the Urdu film journal. It explores how literary public spheres impinged on the cinematic and reflected the tensions and anxieties that had arisen over the question of the Hindi-Urdu language divide during the 1930s. The intersection between – and transformations of – literary and cinematic cultures effected by commercial printing produced a series of complex negotiations. However, when it came to the films of this period, these continued to draw on their cache of resources from the Urdu imaginaire, specifically in the dialogues and the lyrics. Through the specific cases of the Urdu film journals *Film*, *Sham'ā*, *Film Stage* and *Nigārkhāna,* I look at the structure of these journals, and ask: How were they similar or different to contemporary Urdu literary journals and to film periodicals in other languages? Can we think of the Urdu film journal as an extension of the literary, i.e. amalgamating *adab* (literature, etiquette) with film? Mapping the profound influence of literary journals on Urdu film journals, this chapter attempts to gauge the ways in which these journals were responding to – or how they expressed continued engagement with – notions of *akhlāq* (moral conduct) and *iṣlāḥ* (correction) which were central to contemporary articulations on reform and morality. Film

[22] Ravikant, "Popular Cinephilia in North India: *Madhuri* shows the way (1964- 1978)," *Journalism Studies* 16, no. 5 (2015): 648.
[23] David Lunn, "Looking for common ground: aspects of cultural production in Hindi/Urdu, 1900-1947" (PhD diss., SOAS, University of London, 2012), 16.

publicity and advertisements are crucial to our understanding of the entangled networks of film culture, public consumption and the Urdu public sphere.

ARCHIVAL CONUNDRUM AND THE URDU FILM JOURNALS

The state of archives can throw up complex questions for the researcher. No histories of Indian cinema mention Urdu film journals in any significant manner. While the National Film Archive of India (NFAI) has copies of the Hindi film journals *Ćitrapat* and *Rangbhūmī*, as well as English journals like *filmindia*, *Filmland*, and *Movietone*, not a single copy of any Urdu journal has found a place in the archive. It is surprising that not even a popular journal like *Sham'ā*, which had a long and successful span of circulation from 1941 to the late 1990s, was deemed important enough for archivisation.[24] How does one address this archival conundrum?

There are two apparent issues at stake here. First, in writing the history of cinema in India, film historians have mostly made use of existing material in English, Hindi and Bengali, with a few scholars extending out to include Marathi and Tamil film sources. This neglect of Urdu sources within film history on Bombay cinema can be attributed to the fact that scholars have been unable to access Urdu film journals for a number of reasons, including lack of expertise in the language. However, one of the prime factors is the unavailability of material and the inadequacies of the processes of archivisation and preservation. As I have discovered, it has been extremely difficult to trace Urdu film journals and it must be acknowledged that film ephemera of this kind may not have been considered worthy of attention by film collectors and archivists of printed materials, which led to their absence in major libraries today. A scene from the play *Ak͟hbār ka Daftar* (*The Newspaper Office*) by Prakash Pandit provides a glimpse into the status of the film journal in literary circles and illustrates the bias that film journals suffered from.[25] In this short comic drama on the daily business of a newspaper office, the editor is besieged by a series of people interested in getting their writings published in the newspaper. In an important scene, a poet has come to visit the editor with a bundle of his poems for publication. The editor, unsure of his poetic merits, wants to get rid of the adamant poet.

[24] According to the figures of the *Audit Bureau of Circulations*, *Shama*'s popularity from the 1950s peaked from 33,628 copies in circulation in 1953 to 95,710 in 1955 & 70,423 in 1960.
[25] Prakash Pandit, *Ak͟hbār ka Daftar: t̤anziya aur mazahiya istej aur radio drāme* (Bombay: Star Pocket Book series, 1960), 99- 132.

The comic exchange between the two reaches a hilarious turn when the editor asks if the poet has been published before. The poet makes a roundabout suggestion that he has been widely published. As the editor probes, "*…āp rozāna akhbāroṅ meṅ likhte haiṅ*? (Do you write daily for the newspapers?)" The poet responds, "*Ji nahin to*/ No not really", to which the editor suggests "*to filmī parchoṅ meṅ likhte hongeiṅ*/ so you must be writing in film journals?" The poet, offended, responds "*Lā haul wala quwat*".[26] It is compelling that this sketch was written by Prakash Pandit who was the editor of an Urdu film journal *Filmkār* in the 1930s. Pandit captures the disdain the literati felt towards film journals with classic Urdu *ṭanz* (satire) and humour. This similar bias and dismissive attitude exits even now and I encountered it when I was on fieldwork. Many librarians and collectors constantly stressed that film journals were trash and had nothing valuable and were mostly sold off as "*raddī*"/scrap/wastepaper – referencing perhaps the putative 'cheap' material and content of film journals. The only film journal that was favourably spoken of was *Sham'ā* and some made concessions for *Ruby* (1980s).

The other prejudice that Urdu film journals had to encounter was related to the nature of scholarship in Urdu and its lack of attention to cinema. The bulk of attention has gone to Urdu journals that focussed on *adab* (literature),[27] *tahẕīb* (culture),[28] *iṣlāḥ* (reform)[29] and *khawātīn* (women).[30] The Khuda Baksh Oriental Library in Patna published a series of compilation books on journals of the early nineteenth and twentieth century. These include

[26] Abbreviation of the Arabic statement "*lā ḥawla wa la quwwata illa billah*" which is usually translated as "There is no initiative or capability except from God (Allah)". This expression is mentioned whenever seized by a calamity or in a situation beyond one's control. The English translation does not completely convey the full meaning of the phrase. It is definitely not meant to be used for sarcasm, but colloquially people use it when displeased or upon hearing or seeing odd or shocking news.
[27] Ryan Perkins' work on Halim Abdul Sharar's journal *Guzishta Lakhnau.* See, Perkins, "A New Pablik: Abdul Halim Sharar, Volunteerism, and the Anjuman-e Dars-us-Salam in the Late Nineteenth-Century India," *Modern Asian Studies* 49, no. 4 (2015), 1049-1090.
[28] Margrit Pernau, "The *Dehli Urdu Akhbar* Between Persian Akhbarat and English Newspapers," *The Annual of Urdu Studies* 18, (2003): 105-131.
[29] Scholars of Indian Islam have shown the profound impact of the printing press in the dissemination and spread of reformist literature and tracts. See, Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Islamic revival in British India Deoband, 1860-1900* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2016) and Francis Robinson, "Technology and Religious Change: Islam and Impact of Print," *Modern Asian Studies* 27, no. 1 (1993), 229-251.
[30] Gail Minault, *Secluded Scholars: Women's Education and Muslim Social Reform in Colonial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). Also, Minault, "Sayyid Mumtaz Ali and *Tahzib un Niswan*: Women's Rights in Islam and Women's Journalism in Urdu," In *Women and Social Reform in Modern India,* ed. Sumit Sarkar and Tanika Sarkar (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2007), 70-98. Megan Eaton Robb, "Women's Voices, Men's Lives: Masculinity in a North Indian Urdu Newspaper," *Modern Asian Studies* 50, no. 5 (2016), 1441–1473.

selections from the monthly *Hindustānī* (Allahabad),[31] *Zamāna* (Kanpur),[32] Maulana Azad's weekly *Paighām*, *Adīb* (Allahabad), *Subah Umīd* (Lucknow), Qazi Abdul Wadood's *Mĕʻyār* and *Zubān* (Gujrat).[33] Abid Raza Bedar's *Urdu ke Aham Adabī Risāle aur Akhbār* is a study of important literary journals and newspapers in Urdu but film journals are missing from these narratives.[34] Several important books in Urdu on journalism have been published, such as the authoritative Imdad Sabri's multi-volume *Tārīkh-e Sahāfat-e-Urdu* on the history of Urdu journalism,[35] *Urdu Sahāfat ka Irtiqā: Tārīkhī, Fani, Taknīki* by Masoom Moradabadi on the formal and technical development of Urdu journalism in India,[36] while Nadir Ali Khan's *Urdu Sahāfat ki Tārīkh* rehashes material from Sabri and presents a concise history of Urdu journalism.[37] More recently, Zia Ur Rahman Siddiqui's short form monograph *Tārīkh-e-Azādī meṅ Urdu Sahāfat ka ḥiṣṣa* explores the role of Urdu journalism in the history of Independence and gives film journalism a complete miss.[38] It is unfortunate that, despite the powerful effect of cinema on the cultural life of people, most lists of or commentaries on Urdu *risāla* /journals have turned a blind eye to the film journal.

My search for Urdu film journals began with *Shamʻā* - one of the most popular Urdu film journals, published from Delhi. I had heard anecdotes from family and friends about their experiences of reading *Shamʻā* in their youth, sometimes illicitly and sometimes through columns being read out to each other in film clubs in the 1960s and 1970s.[39] Even though *Shamʻā* enjoyed a vast readership, it had an ambiguous status as it was a cinema journal with pretentions to some literariness. When I began the project, at most libraries and archives I was on the lookout for this one journal. But at the British Library I found more than a dozen references to other Urdu film journals scattered throughout the library's *Catalogue of Books*

[31] *Tārīkh: Risāla Hindustānī Allahabad (1931- 1948) se Intekhāb* (Patna: Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, 1993).
[32] *Bāqiyāt-e-Zamāna: Daya Narayan Nigam ke risāla Zamāna Kanpur (1903-1942) se Intekhāb* (Patna: Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, 1995).
[33] See, *Harf-e-ćand* (Preface), ibid., 4
[34] Abid Raza Bedar, *Urdu ke Aham Adabī Risāle aur Akhbār* (Rampur: Rampur Institute of Oriental Studies, 1969).
[35] The 5 volumes were published between 1953- 75. See, Sabri, *Tarikh-e Sahafat-e-Urdu Vol.1* (Delhi: Jadid Printing Press, 1953).
[36] Masoom Moradabadi, *Urdu Sahāfat ka Irtiqā: Tārīkhī, Fani, Taknīki* (New Delhi: Urdu Academy, 1961).
[37] Nadir Ali Khan, *Urdu Sahafat ki Tārīkh,* Educational Book House, Aligarh, 1987.
[38] Zia Ur Rahman Siddiqui, *Tārīkh-e-Azādī meṅ Urdu Sahafat ka* (Aurangabad: Savera Offset Printers, 2003).
[39] I am grateful to Prof. Hasan Ahmad Nizami for narrating experiences of reading *Shamʻā* at reading groups in Rampur. I also thank Prof. Mohammad Talib for sharing anecdotes about the *Shamʻā* crossword and the incredible prize money offered by the magazine. The *Shamʻā* crossword was a special feature and appeared at the end of the magazine. According to Prof. Talib, often people would only buy the last pages of the *Shamʻā* crossword, almost like a lottery ticket. These mutilated copies of the magazine then would be sold for a much cheaper price to the delight of young college students.

Published and Registered Under the Provision of Act XXV of 1867, NWFP, Oudh, Punjab. The details given below have been assembled from the printed catalogues in the British Library's Department of Oriental Manuscripts and Printed Books and in the India Office Library and Records, as well as from their printed catalogues of Hindustani books and the *Indian Cinematograph Yearbook 1938*. The holdings of the British Library and the India Office Library have also been examined to provide more information. Quarterly lists were published by the colonial government as part of their meticulous surveillance of vernacular journalism in India after the uprising of 1857. These lists have some inconsistencies and do not provide a complete or composite view of the range of Urdu film journals published. However, they do open a crevice through which we get a glimpse into the world of Urdu film journalism in India in the 1930s and 1940s. Scouring all these lists, I was able to find more than two dozen titles (in alphabetical order).

Actress (weekly, 1942, editor: Mahendra Ashk Bareilvi, Dayal Printing Press)
Adakār (also published in English) (Lahore, monthly, editor: Syed Ata Ullah Shah Hashmi)
Art (weekly, March 1944, editor: M.S. Qaisar, publisher: Mohd. Rafiq)
Artist (weekly, March 1944, editor: Rafiq Khaliq, publisher: Mohd. Rafiq)
Aryavrat (monthly, March 1946, editors: Lal Chand Sehgal, M. Nazir Ali)
Chitra (Lahore, weekly, editor: D.D. Bhatia)
Dilchasp (Madras, weekly, editor: Mohd. Ismail)
Director (Lahore, monthly, 1943- 1947, edited by Chaudhri Fazle Haq)[40]
Fankār (Delhi, monthly, Oct- Nov 1935, editor: Prakash Pandit)[41]
Film (Hyderabad, Bilingual, 1939-1941)
Film Art (Delhi, monthly, Sept- Oct 1933, editor: S. H. Qureshi)[42]
Filmī Duniya (Calcutta, monthly, August- Sept- 1935, editor: Wali K. Tariq)
Filmistān (Lahore, monthly, 1933- 1943, editor: Jameel Sapkarvy and Bashir Hindi)[43]

[40] Saadat Hasan Manto also wrote for this journal after he moved to Pakistan in 1948. See Manto, *Stars from Another Sky*, tr. Khalid Hasan (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1998), xvii

[41] Prakash Pandit was an Urdu writer but his main contribution to the world of literature was as a publisher of Urdu/ Hindustani/ Hindi books. He owned the publishing house Hind Pocket Books. A pioneer in introducing affordable and cheap pocket- sized books to readers. In the 1960s, Pandit also wrote plays for All India Radio, his play *Akhbār ka Daftar* (The Newspaper Office) is a hilarious take on the plight of editors. In the 1960s he moved to Bombay and wrote film stories and dialogues.

[42] An English version of the journal was edited by N.S. Bhel in 1940s. See Salim al-Din Quraishi, *Dehli ke Akhbarāt-o-Rasā'il: 1925 ta 1947 (Ik Tauzihi Fehrist)* (Islamabad: National Language Authority Pakistan, 2009), 10-11. Also, Fehrist – *Rampur ki Saulat Pablik Library men Mahfūz Urdu rasail/ A list of Urdu Periodicals in Saulat Public Library Rampur*, (Patna: Khuda Baksh Oriental Public Library, 1995).

[43] 700 copies in circulation according to *Catalogue of books and periodicals*.

Filmistān (Delhi, weekly, 1943, editor: Hamid-ud Din, Kamal Hind Press)[44]

Filmkār (Lahore, monthly, Feb special number1935, editor: C. L. Sharma, Lala Sohanlal)

Film Noor (Delhi, monthly, August – Sept 1933, editor: S. H. Qureshi)

Film Review (Calcutta, 1932-33)

Film Sansar (Bombay, editor: M. Alam)

Film Stage (Calcutta, Vol II, No.VI, date not mentioned)[45]

Film Stage (Lahore, monthly, editor: Khwaja Kudwai)[46]

Karwān/Caravan (Bombay, weekly, editor: Abid Gulrez, Saadat Hasan Manto)[47]

Musawwir (Bombay, weekly, 1936 -1940, and then in 1942, editor: Saadat Hasan Manto and Mohd. Nazir Ludhianvi)

Nau Watan (Delhi, weekly, March 1941- 1947, editors: Balbir Singh, Masood Hussain Najam Amrohavi)[48]

Nigāristān (Delhi, *pandrah rozah* (bi-monthly), 1935- 1943 (weekly)- 1947, editors: S. N. Rai and Govind Sahai)[49]

Nigārkhāna, (Delhi, weekly, 1937- 1947, editor: S. M. Ishrat Ali)[50]

Shabistān (Lahore and Bombay, monthly, 1929)[51]

Sham'ā, (Delhi, 1939-1998, editor: Yusuf Dehlvi)

Stār (Lahore, 1940, editor: Qamar Jalalabadi)[52]

The Film Weekly (Hyderabad, 1941)

Taswir (weekly, editor Abdul Hamid, Bombay)[53]

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[44] Salim al-Din Quraishi, *Dehli ke Akhbarāt-o-Rasā'il: 1925 ta 1947 (Ik Tauzihi Fehrist)* (Islamabad: National Language Authority Pakistan, 2009), 86.

[45] Possibly from 1932-33 as it contains images of Jahanara Kajjan and Sulochana.

[46] B.D. Bharucha, *Indian Cinematograph Yearbook 1938* (Bombay: Motion Picture Society of India, 1938).

[47] After losing his job at *Musawwir*, Saadat Hasan Manto went to seek assistance from Baburao Patel who owned *Karwan*. He worked there for briefly 6-7 months. See, Manto, *Stars from Another Sky*, tr. Khalid Hasan (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1998), 126. Also see Ayesha Jalal, *The Pity of Partition: Manto's Life, Times, and Work across the India-Pakistan Divide* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2013), 69.

[48] 1700 copies in circulation, printed at coronation printing works. See, *Catalogue of Urdu books and periodicals,* British Library.

[49] Printed at Layl Art Press from 1934- 42; from 1943 at the Pratab printing press. See Salim al-Din Quraishi, *Dehli ke Akhbarāt-o-Rasā'il: 1925 ta 1947 (Ik Tauzihi Fehrist)* (Islamabad: National Language Authority Pakistan, 2009), 110.

[50] Published at the Asami Barqi Press and then from 1943 onwards at Urdu Press. In 1947, 2500 copies were printed. See Salim al-Din Quraishi, *Dehli ke Akhbarāt-o-Rasā'il: 1925 ta 1947 (Ik Tauzihi Fehrist)* (Islamabad: National Language Authority Pakistan, 2009), 109.

[51] Dewan Sharar worked in *Shabistan* when it began to be published from Bombay.

[52] Qamar Jalalabadi would go on to become a lyricist and poet in the Bombay film industry. He was part of the Progressive writers' movement and an important member of the Film Writers' Association in 1954. He worked in 150 films and wrote over 700 songs.

[53] The *Indian Cinematograph Yearbook 1938* has a brief list of Urdu film journals. See B.D. Bharucha, *Indian Cinematograph Yearbook 1938* (Bombay: Motion Picture Society of India, Bombay, 1938), 505-508.

Film (Hyderabad, 1939-1941)

Film Sansar (Bombay, editor: M. Alam)

Stār (Lahore, editor: Qamar Jalalabadi)

Sham'ā, (Delhi, editor: Yusuf Dehlvi)

So far, despite extensive time and effort, I have been able to find only a few issues of *Film, Film Review, Film Stage, Film Weekly, Nigārkhāna, Sham'ā* and *Stār* from the 1930s and 1940s.[54] Although I have not been able to source all the issues from the list, this evidence of the range of printed copies and wide distribution of Urdu film journals indicates that such journals were attractive to a broader Urdu speaking/reading public. Through their structure, content and tone, these remained in conversation with other prominent film publications of the period, regularly republishing their columns and responding to entries in film journals published in Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi, Hyderabad, Lahore and elsewhere.[55]

The rest of this chapter draws on the evidence I have found of a vibrant Urdu film journalism culture to explore four areas in which this discovery is significant. I look at: i) how Urdu film journals contributed and responded to the Hindi/Urdu language divide; ii) how Urdu film journals related to – and differed from – Urdu literary journals and film journals in other languages; iii) how Urdu film journalists imported themes on ethics and reform from Urdu literary culture (and more broadly the Urdu imaginaire) and how these inflected their discussion of cinema; iv) how Urdu film journals engaged with their readership and what advertisements and letters to editor columns tell us about the journals' presumed audience and reach.

THE HINDI-URDU DIVIDE AND THE FILM JOURNALISTS ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

The early twentieth century saw a heated debate around questions of language in India. As discussed in Chapter 1, the growing Hindi language movement began to pose a challenge to the Urdu public sphere that had held sway since the 1860s. The Hindi-Urdu debate became central to the communal identity politics that had intensified throughout the late colonial period. This Hindi-Urdu split created a deep sense of anxiety and exclusion within the press.

[54] Many libraries and private collectors have copies of *Sham'ā* from the 1960s but the early period is poorly archived.

[55] A good example is *Stār*'s statement urging that the film conference to be held in Lahore be rescheduled and relocated to Delhi. It was felt that Delhi might attract a large number of visitors and also shifting the month from Easter to Christmas (December) might be more favourable for the conference. The statement was undersigned by film personnel from Lahore; G. Desai (Empire Talkies Distributors, Lahore), V. Desai (Wadia Paramount Pictures, Lahore), L.T. Desai (Desai and Co. Lahore), Lala Ganesh Das (Basant Film Exchange, Lahore), Daulat Ram (Manoranjan Pictures, Lahore), M.L. Anand (Shri Vishnu Cinetone Company) etc. See, "Film Conference in Lahore/ *Lahore meṅ hone walī film conference*" *Stār*, 29 March 1941, 4.

The language policies of the colonial government had abetted the growing rift between the *Urduwalahs* and the *Hindiwalahs*. The tensions caused by the rivalry between the Hindi and Urdu camps in the literary arena were clearly felt within the cinematic public sphere. Lalit Joshi has demonstrated that Hindi periodicals like *Madhurī*, *Sudha* and *Ćānd* became spaces for the vicious Hindi-Urdu debate and the issue of the language of Bombay cinema was not beyond the pale of discussion. He writes, "the continued use of Hindustani by the film industry was seen as a transgression intended to subvert the basis of the 'Hindi' movement which, most believed, had reached a decisive phase of struggle."[56]

In 1939, the Urdu journal *Film* published a special issue dedicated to the subject of the language of cinema. Contributions in Urdu and English were requested on the theme, *What language will suit the Indian Films most?*[57] In an article titled, *Hind meṅ film kī zabān (The language of film in India)*, the author, Aqa Syed Mohammad Ali, wrote that Urdu fulfilled the necessity for an ordinary language (*ām zabān ki ẓarūrat thī*) and was created by both Hindus and Muslims together. In his examination of the cause of the current rift between Hindi and Urdu, he blamed the foreign government (*baharwāloṅ kī salṯanat*) and its interference in matters of local culture. He regretted the misconception that had taken root among Hindus that Urdu was a language of Muslims (*hinduoṅ meṅ ahsās paida ho gaya ke Urdu musalmānoṅ ki zabān hai)*.[58] He declared that Urdu was the medium of cinema due its expansive reach and was a language understood by the people of Hindustan. For Ali, regional languages in films were necessary for the sake of verisimilitude and to highlight specific vernacular characters and plots. His advice to producers was that if business sense prevailed, they should continue to use Urdu as their medium in order to target a larger profitable audience.[59] In a similar vein, the other articles in this 1939 issue of *Film* urged recognition of the importance of Urdu within popular culture, specifically cinema. It is not surprising to find these apprehensive responses from the Urdu press to the diatribe from the Hindi periodicals like *Ćitrapat*, *Ćānd* and *Sudha*.

[56] Lalit Joshi, "Cinema and Hindi Periodical in India (1920- 1947)," In *Narratives of Indian Cinema*, ed. Manju Jain (New Delhi: Primus Books, 2009), 44.
[57] Printed at the Osmania University Press, Hyderabad. *Film*, April 1939.
[58] Similar points were raised by the author Hafiz Hakim Liyaqat Hussain in the article "*Urdu ki Gul-o-tarāshi"* in Calcutta-based Urdu journal *Film Stage*. He lamented that the biggest misfortune of Hindustan is that it has to carry the burden of the differences in religion (*tafrīq-e-mazahib*) along with the failure of the differences in language (*tafrīq-e-zabān*). Every individual (*fard)* is familiar with Urdu, is interested but is constrained by the prejudice and by attributing Urdu to Muslims expresses the feelings of hatred (*tanaffur)*. See, *Film Stage*, vol. 2, no. 6 (n.d.), 14-16.
[59] *Film,* April 1939, 13-15. The economic considerations are similar to the motivations of the Parsi stage and its use of Urdu as a medium of it plays. Also, See Kathryn Hansen, "Languages on Stage: Linguistic Pluralism and Community Formation in Nineteenth-Century Parsi Stage," *Modern Asian Studies* 37, no. 2 (2003): 381-405.

This spillage of the language controversy from the literary into the cinematic public sphere brought a new dimension to the debate.

In an article *Urdu aur Film* published in the Calcutta-based Urdu journal *Film Stage,* Suhail Jamili addressed the issue of the attack on Urdu. He specifically made digs at the Hindi press which objected (*ĕʻtirāẓ karte*) to the use of Persian and Arabic words that, according to Jamili, had been in use for a long time (*muddat se Urdu meṅ mustaʻmal haiṅ*). He claimed that Urdu writers were accused of trying to colour language with a Persian and Arabic tint (*aise likhne waloṅ ko kaha jata hai ke ye log zabān ko farsi aur arbi ke rang meṅ rangna chahte haiṅ*). Even though Jamili suggested that he was not opposed to syncretism of vocabulary and grammatical elements from Hindi and Sanskrit, he preferred some form of linguistic purism. [60] He wrote,

> Hindi and Sanskrit words are being inserted into Urdu in abundance. We do not consider the insertion of other language words (loanwords) as bad. But this is only acceptable till the time it sounds like Urdu, or at least does not seem inappropriate in use.[61]

Jamili's prescriptive linguistic purism was specifically addressed to the use of Urdu in films, especially talkies (*nāṯiq film*). Recognizing that the influence of cinema was far greater than the limited reach of newspapers and journals to the educated class (*kyunke akhbarāt-o- rasā'il ka aṣar taʻlīm-yāfta ṯabqe tak maḥdūd hai lekin film ki maqbūlīyat ām hai*), he suggested that the real battle for the survival and future of Urdu had to be secured in the arena of the talkies. Similar ideas were expressed by Hakim Mohammad Yusuf Hasan, editor of the literary journal *Nairang-i Khayāl*, who believed that the talkies would have a massive impact on Urdu language and the way it was spoken which was why it was important for educated and progressive individuals to focus on film. Hasan's writings were influenced by the Swadeshi movement as he asked, "why when we boycott foreign clothes and goods, can't we boycott foreign films?" He does, however, go on to suggest that he does not support censorship and

[60] Suhail Jamili, *Film Stage*, vol. 2, no. 6 (n.d.), 7-8.

[61] Urdu original: *Urdu meṅ Hindi aur Sanskrit ke alfāz kaṣrat se bhare ja raheiṅ haiṅ. Hum kisi zabān ke alfāz ko dākhil karna bura nahi samajhte. Lekin woh usi hadd tak ke zabān Urdu suni rahe. Ya kum se kum istĕʻmāl meṅ buri na maʻlūm ho.* Suhail Jamili, *Film Stage*, vol. 2, no. 6 (n.d.), 7-8.

banning, instead he advocated for production of Indian films that had potential to compete with foreign films.[62] With a similar urgency to his pen, Jamili wrote,

> Talkies have brought the attention of people to the need to protect Urdu and demand should be made to film companies that those films that are called Urdu are Urdu and those in Hindi or other languages should be purely in those languages. Because if a similar practice to that which has been adopted by some newspapers and journals is used then truly Urdu will be destroyed and mutilated.[63]

Cinema emerged as a new site through which the language question could be fought for. Hindi journals like *Ćitrapat* and *Rangbhūmī* also believed that films were better at advocating for Hindi as a 'national language' (*rashtra bhāsha*) than decades of work done by Hindi literary conferences or Hindu Mahasabha.[64] In both Urdu and Hindi camps, the desire for chastity of language emerged from the concern that 'their language' was under attack and the threat from the 'other' required mobilisation of film companies and producers in their favour. Many authors invoked metaphors of violent decimation, mutilation and exclusion of the language. In the article *Film Companiyoṅ ki 'Hindi Nawāzī' aur Musalmanoṅ ki sarparastī/ Favouring of Hindi by Film Companies and Muslim Mentorship*, Nasiruddin Hashmi claimed that Urdu will be slaughtered (*Urdu ke gale par chhurī chalai jayegi*) as prevalent words in Urdu were being excluded (*Urdu ke murawwaja alfāz bhi khārij kiye ja raheiṅ haiṅ*). Unlike other contributors to the special edition of *Film* (1939) which attempted to show the 'universal appeal of Urdu', Hashmi delved into the politics of Urdu and its identification with the Muslim community. While he reiterated his misgivings about favouritism of Hindi by film companies in India, he blamed Muslims for not taking ownership of Urdu and continuing to support films that promoted Hindi in the name of Urdu. Some instances he cites, which implicate the film producers, were in the films' excessive use of Hindi not only in the dialogues but also in the use of Hindi songs instead of the Urdu ghazal and the preference of Hindi *nagri* script in the

[62] "Editorial" in *Nairang-i Khayāl*, Special Film No., July 1931, 2-3 &.5.
[63] Urdu original: *Nāṯiq filmoṅ ne is umar ki ẓarūrat ki taraf logoṅ ki tawajjŏh kar diya hai ke Urdu ki ḥifāẕat ki jaye aur film companiyoṅ se muṯālaba kiya jaye ke jo film Urdu zabān ki kehlaye woh Urdu ho aur jo Hindi ya dūsrī zabān ke hoṅ k̲h̲āliṣ un zabān meṅ hoṅ. Kyunke agar wohi surat jo bāz akhbārat-o-rasail ikhtiyār kar raheiṅ haiṅ iss jagah bhi ikhtiyār ki gayi to yaqīnan̲ Urdu ki ṣūrat maskh ho kar reh jayegi.* Suhail Jamili, *Film Stage*, vol. 2, no. 6 (n.d.), 8.
[64] Editorial, "*Film ne humeiṅ kya diya?*" *Ćitrapat*, 1933, 12-13. As quoted in Ravikant, "Film Patrika ka ādi-kāl: Ćānd, Ćitrapat aur anya kahānīyāń," *CSDS DigiPapers*, (Nov. 2020): 42.

titles before Urdu *nastaliq*.[65] Hashmi urged Muslims to initiate a blanket ban on these films through revoking their support as audiences; he believed that it was their duty to safeguard the language, as Urdu was their "mother tongue" (*zabān-e mādrī*).[66] In another article, *Film se istifāda karne wāle/* 'Those who seek advantage from Film', Hashmi lashed out at the film producers, expressing his disappointment with their profit hungry enterprises which ignored the Urdu language.[67] Furthermore, he wrote, "To have expectations from this congregation that they will make films which show Islamic history or are for the welfare and reform of Muslims is our severe mistake and a great lapse in judgement."[68] Hashmi's alignment of Urdu with Muslims - and by extension his desire to see representation of Islamic history or films with Muslim-centred themes - articulates the varied positions within the Urdu film press on the question of language and the identity politics that posed a threat to the very idea of the 'universalist appeal' of Urdu.

The cinematic public sphere did not remain immune to these controversies around language and the spillage from the literary public sphere. In March 1939, a few journalists came together in the office of *filmindia* in Bombay and formed the Film Journalists Association of India. Baburao Patel, editor of *filmindia*, was elected as its President. The Association consisted of the Who's Who of film publishing. In an article celebrating the inaugural meeting, the two Vice-Presidents were listed as K.A. Abbas, film editor of *Bombay Chronicle*, and Clara Mendonca, film editor of *Times of India* and *Evening News*. Mahomed Nazir, the editor of *Mussavvir* (sic),[69] and Bakoolesh were appointed as joint Secretaries, along with eight members and a treasurer. S.V. Kirpa Ram,[70] editor of the journal *Movies* (Delhi), was asked to represent Delhi and United Provinces, and L. C. Bhalla, editor of *Movieland*, was invited to represent Hyderabad and Madras. Ram Baghai was put in charge of "Hollywood Correspondence" and P. G. Bhagwat was made the auditor.[71] While *filmindia* celebrated this journalists' association in their magazine, not everyone felt included. In the April 1939 issue

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[65] Nasiruddin Hashmi, *Film*, 1939. Reprinted in Hashmi, *Film Numa: Film ke muta'alliq iṣlāḥī aur tanqīdī maẓāmīn ka majmū'a* (Hyderabad: Shams-al Mataba Machine Press, 1940), 55-58.
[66] Ibid., 57.
[67] Hashmi, *Film*, 1939. Reprinted in Hashmi, *Film Numa: Film ke muta'alliq iṣlāḥī aur tanqīdī maẓāmīn ka majmū'a* (Hyderabad: Shams-al Mataba Machine Press, 1940), 58- 63.
[68] Urdu original: "*Is jamā'at se ye tawaqqǒ rakhna ke Islāmi tārīkh ya musalmāno ki bhalā'ī aur iṣlāḥ ke liye koi film tayyar kiya jaye to humārī sakht ghaltī aur 'aẓīm-o-shān bhūl hai.* Hashmi, *Film Numa: Film ke muta'alliq iṣlāḥī aur tanqīdī maẓāmīn ka majmū'a* (Hyderabad: Shams-al Mataba Machine Press, 1940), 61-62.
[69] Was it the owner Nazir Ahmad Ludhianvi, who was Baburao Patel's friend and Manto's boss eventually?
[70] Kirpa Ram was also the proprietor/ chief patron of *Musawwir*.
[71] "Film Journalists' Association of India: Sjt. Samaldas Gandhi inaugurates the 1st Meeting," *filmindia*, April 1939, 35.

of the Urdu journal *Film*, (the fortnightly bilingual journal of Sayyid Sa'ad Ullah Qadri Medal Committee, Hyderabad, Deccan, mentioned earlier) the editors wrote:

> This is an appreciable step taken by the Bombay Journalists, and we support its aims and aspirations. At the same time, it will not be out of place to remind this Association of the great work of Urdu (Hindustani) Journalism done to the cause of Indian Film Industry. While it was in its infancy it was Urdu (Hindustani) which nourished it and made it what it is today. It is a matter of regret that none of the Urdu (Hindustani) Film Journalists of India has been asked to join this association.[72]

The statement was undersigned by nine Urdu journalists who are now obscured by time and history. A similar protest was staged by the English-language film journal *Mirror*, calling the Film Journalists Association "Illegal and Unconstitutional".[73] *filmindia* published a two-page detailed report of the proceedings and membership process for the Film Journalists Association of India, claiming that the association was "a brotherhood of Men who earn with the Pen"[74] and the membership would be opened "occasionally" to writers working in/on the film industry – scenario writers, scriptwriters, film publicity writers etc.[75] In another column, 'Notes and News', the journal made tall claims for inclusivity and joint representation by listing the leading papers who were in support of this endeavour. Some of the newspapers and journals listed were "*Bombay Chronicle*, *Bombay Sentinel*, *Janmabhoomi*, *Free Press*, *Hindusthan Praja Mitra*, *Hilal*, *Al Hilal*, *Al Islah*, *Carvan* (sic)[76], *Bombay Samachar*, *Jame Jamshed*, *Sanj Vartman, Mouj, Iquilab, Prabhat, Cinema Fan, Chitra, Pratod* etc. from Bombay and *Movies*,

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[72] The journal *Film* was published in Urdu and English. The excerpt reproduced is the English version printed in the journal. Further the statement published the names of the "famous energetic Urdu (Hindustani) Film Journalists" who had been contributing to the "progress and furtherance of the Industry." Some of the names listed were Ovais Ahmed Esqr. (Author of the book *Film va Drama*, Allahabad, 1935 which I discuss in the next chapter). Mahsher Abidi, Masood Sabiri, Zafer Tabrezi, Mahboob Tarzi, Y. K. Tariq, Khwaja Qadwai (who could possibly be the lyricist Khwaja Kidwai? He is credited for *Arzoo* (d. R.N. Vaidya, 1944), Latif Ahmed Alvi (Author of *Filmī Ishāre*, Hyderabad, 1957) and Basheer Hindi (editor of *Filmistān*, Lahore). See, *Film,* April 1939.

[73] Debashree Mukherjee, "Creating Cinema's Reading Public: The emergence of Film Journalism in Bombay" in *No Limits: Media Studies from India*, ed. Ravi Sundaram (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013), 186- 187.

[74] "Film Journalists' Association of India: Sjt. Samaldas Gandhi inaugurates the 1st Meeting," *filmindia*, April 1939, 35.

[75] The life membership fee was Rs. 50. Patron of the Association were to pay a one-time fee of Rs. 500. Annual membership was Rs. 5 or 8 annas monthly for individual membership. See, *filmindia*, April 1939, 36.

[76] According to Manto, the Urdu language film journal *Caravan* was owned by Baburao Patel and Abid Gulrez was the editor. See, Saadat Hasan Manto, *Stars from Another Sky*, tr. Khalid Hasan (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1998), 126.

Nigaristan, *Nawai Watan* (sic)" and others from Delhi.[77] In light of the fact that this list includes Urdu newspapers like *Al-Hilal*, *Al-Islah*, *Inquilab* and Urdu film journals *Nigāristān* and *Nawai Watan*, one can perhaps read the assertion by *Film* as a contestation to *filmindia*'s claim to be the centre of film journalism. Clearly the association was not an objective union and the alliances were based on mutual interests and friendships which played an important role in the process of its formation.

A month prior to the formation of the Film Journalists Association in Bombay, the Indian Film Journalists' Conference was held on 30 April 1939 in the Congress Pandal near Churchgate Station. According to the *Proceedings of the First Session of the Indian Motion Picture Congress and other Sectional Conferences*, the Speaker Mr. Natarajan[78] addressed the members present and proposed:

> It is the business of the film journalists to see that this new mechanical innovation (cinema) that has come from the West does not attempt to dominate social conditions…Here in my opinion there is a great room and special scope for the film journalists. You must stand between this new mechanical innovation and your own society and help society and this innovation adjust themselves to each other.[79]

The film journalist was to be a mediator between the technological marvel from the "West" and the values of the East; the film journalist was to dilute the impact of cinema with a critical voice. These assertions about the role of the film journalist as enabling the crossover from the traditional to the modern were crucial to the ways in which film journalists perceived themselves. The Conference gave momentum to Baburao Patel and his associates to come together and take the shape of a regulatory body that functioned to reform film practice and culture.

[77] *filmindia*, April 1939, 47.

[78] Chandulal Shah as the Chairman of the Reception committee invited Nataranjan to inaugurate the conference. The proceedings note "Mr. Natarajan needs no introduction because he is well known throughout the whole country." This is perhaps the J. Natarajan who was the editor of *The Tribune* and author of the book *The History of Indian Journalism*, Part II of the Press Commission, 1955.

[79] *Proceedings of the First Session of the Indian Motion Picture Congress and other Sectional Conferences 1939* (Bombay: Motion Picture Society of India, 1939), 4.

Another significant contribution of the Indian Motion Picture Congress (IMPC) was in its attempts to intervene and address the widening gaps between the Hindi and the Urdu literary public spheres. The IMPC passed a resolution on language and its use in cinema.

> This Conference feels pride in the achievement of the Motion Picture Industry in contributing more than any other institution towards the evolution of "Hindustani" as a national language for India. It appeals to Producers to consider the feasibility of gradual elimination of production in provincial languages, for the better dissemination of a knowledge of Hindustani. Resolution moved by B.R. Oberoi and M. Nazir.[80]

Taking cognisance of the growing anxieties and hostilities caused by the Hindi-Urdu divide, the issue of the language of cinema for the IMPC was under serious consideration. The IMPC affiliated themselves with the position of the Indian National Congress and Gandhi's call for Hindustani as *rashtra bhasha* (national language).[81] This declaration of Hindustani as the language of cinema by the film community was indeed a significant intervention. The resolution brought the cinematic public sphere within the confines of the national struggle for self-rule, reiterating that cinema was to play a crucial role in nation building. The self-assigned association was also part of the process of seeking legitimation for cinema and popular culture, which had been dismissed by Gandhi and others.

The question of language and its use in cinema significantly expanded the contours of the Hindi-Urdu divide, adding new actors and agents with specific interests and motivations. It is hard not to see the efforts of the Indian Motion Picture Congress - and the film journalists proposition to use Hindustani in cinema in the wake of the national debate on language - as an attempt to neutralise the conflict and appease both *Urduwalahs* and *Hindiwalahs*. The engagement with the growing conflict around language was extended to the role of the film journalist who was viewed "primarily as a man of letters" with a "*literary* conscience". The discovery of these debates in Urdu film journals highlights that the cinematic public sphere, which was perceived as a space where Urdu was patronized and flourished in the films eventually, did not become this secular cosmos without contestation and debate. These

[80] Ibid., 26.
[81] Jawaharlal Nehru, "The Question of Language," *Congress Political and Economic Studies* 6, 1937.

discourses significantly shaped the format, style and content of the film journals of the time, with the Urdu film journals specifically trying to negotiate a balance between *adab* (literature) and film.

WHERE *ADAB* MEETS FILM: STYLE, FORMAT AND CONTENT

Literary journals were part of the vibrant Urdu public sphere and embedded within a strong network of production, distribution and circulation. While film culture was expanding and proliferating in the 1930s, as evident from the list of Urdu film journals, the status of cinema was far removed from that of literary and art circles. Film journals struggled for acceptance and inclusion within the Urdu public sphere. The editorial (*ʻarz-e hāl*) of the literary journal *Nairang-i Khayāl* offers a peek into the anxieties around and contempt for film journals, because the material published was considered to be "arzāń" (cheap).[82] While these concerns were couched within an *akhlāqī* framework, as I show in the final section of this chapter, when read more closely these comments actually reveal that the film journals posed a threat to the revenues generated by literary journals. Urdu literary journals not only had to share their readership within an already small literate public sphere, where people would need spare money to subscribe to multiple journals, but also there were fears of a palpable shift among readers from literary to film journals. Editor Hakim Mohammad Yusuf Hasan admitted that film magazines had attracted a fair amount of readers and begun to lure the "public" with glossy photographs and film content. Moreover, he worried that these journals had created a market for "obscenity".[83] In fact, *Nairang-i Khayāl* had had a regular film column since the early 1930s and, in 1931, it published a special film number to satiate those that were "hungry for film content", in a bid to encourage people to subscribe to literary magazines instead of film journals.[84] Thus, he urged editors of Urdu literary and educational journals to recognize that film needed to be "tamed" and thus film material must be included within literary journals, just as *Nairang-i Khayāl* had done.[85] The film magazines were often printed by publishing houses that had other literary pursuits or in some cases the success of the film journal helped editors

[82] "Editorial" in *Nairang-i Khayāl*, January 1940, 2.
[83] *Inka daur khatam hote hi fahash nigār, ariyań mazamīn wale aune darje ke ʻarzān rasʻail ne market ko ganda kar diya aur pablik unki taraf jhuk gayi, dunya-e adam meń bhonćāl āgaya aur ilmī adabī rasʻail ki buniyadeń tak laraz gayiń*". See "Editorial" in *Nairang-i Khayāl*, January 1940, 2.
[84] "Editorial" in *Nairang-i Khayāl*, Special Film No., July 1931, 2-3 &.5.
[85] Hasan also argued that Cinema was closely linked to literature and art and thus special attention from the literati was imperative. See, "Filmī Duniya" in *Nairang-i Khayāl*, January 1940, 55-56.

establish their own publishing house.[86] These close connections with the Urdu press and their desire for legitimacy affected the style, format and content of the early film journals in Urdu. Based on the sample of Urdu film journals recovered during fieldwork, this section is an attempt to study and compare their style, format and content. The main case study is *Sham'ā*. However, examples from film journals *Nigārkhāna* (Delhi), *Stār* (Lahore), *Film Stage* (Calcutta) and Urdu literary journals like *Nairang-i Khayāl* (Lahore) and *Zamana* (Kanpur) will also be used to substantiate the arguments.

Sham'ā, when it launched in 1939, entered a tough market. By the 1940s, film journalism had become a legitimate publishing enterprise with possibilities for financial gain and, as the case of *filmindia* had demonstrated, recognition and its own kind of stardom for film journal editors.[87] By the mid-1940s, *Sham'ā* had become a huge success. Yusuf Dehlvi, the editor of *Sham'ā*, was a man of letters and a sound businessman.[88] In 1947, he started a publishing house in Delhi along with his three sons. Shama Publications catered to the Urdu reading public in both India and Pakistan (post- Partition) and had an office in London through which it reached out to readers of Urdu and Hindi in Europe. In addition to *Sham'ā*, the publishing house brought out two other monthlies in Urdu: *Bano*, a journal for women and *Khilona*, for children. *Khilona* was edited by the youngest son, Ilyas Dehlvi, assisted by his elder brother Idrees Dehlvi. *Bano* was targeted at middle-class women, it contained articles and essays framed as advice for women on etiquette, domesticity, culture and taste. These were carefully curated by the editorial team with images of women, cartoons of the cantankerous *khālā*/maternal aunt, illustrations of patterns for cross stitch, contemporary advertisements for trends in fashion and make up, recipes, but also poetry and short stories suitable for women. The journal was edited by Zeenat Kausar Dehlvi and later her daughter Sadia Dehlvi. The Shama publishing house published various Urdu and Hindi books, both fiction and non-fiction, and had a subsidiary called the Khilona Book Depot which published books for children. Their

[86] The classic example of this is *Sham'ā* which was first published in 1939.
[87] Debashree Mukherjee has looked at the stardom of Baburao Patel and his proximity to the glamour of the film industry and a simultaneous critical distance from it added to his elevated status. In addition, Baburao Patel also marketed his own persona very aggressively. See, Mukherjee, "Creating Cinema's Reading Public: The emergence of Film Journalism in Bombay," In *No Limits: Media Studies from India*, ed. Ravi Sundaram (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013), 177-178.
[88] Yousuf Dehlvi also had an interest in *unānī* medicine (traditional medicine from *unān/*Greece, widely practiced in South Asia) and manufactured this under the brand Bara Dawakhana. See Nikhat Sattar, 'Of Days Gone By', July 1, 2013, http://www.zubeidamustafa.com/of-days-gone-by

Hindi journal *Sushmā* had a huge readership as well. These three Urdu magazines formed a powerful triad that most Urdu-literate families of North India subscribed to.[89]

Sham'ā was one of the most popular Urdu film journals and included literary columns that contained short stories and poems. The literary columns ensured that the ambit of its readership was varied and diverse. Other Urdu film journals like *Stār* and *Nigārkhāna* had their share of *adabī* (literary) content as well. For example, the column *Mushahidāt* (Observations) by Qamar Jalalabadi which appeared in *Stār* was written very much in the style of contemporary literary columns focussed on poets and poetic *iṣlāḥ* (correction). Jalalabadi wrote about his meeting with the controversial poet Yagana Changezi in Bhopal.[90] In his praise of Yagana and his style of poetry, Jalalabadi took pot shots at other literary rivals and was clearly engaging with the on-going contemporary literary debates on poetic merit. A similar article *Mirza Wajid Hussain Yās Yagānā: Ayāt-e Wajdāni par ik naẕar* (A look at the verses of Mirza Wajid Hussain Yaas Yagana) by Mulk Ram appeared in the February 1938 issue of the Urdu literary journal *Zamāna.*[91] Qamar Jalalabadi was very conscious of his footing in the literary world. In "*Mukẖtaṣar Note*/ Brief Note" which advertised the publication of Jalalabadi's book of poetry, *Caravān*, he was referred to as the "famous revolutionary poet" (*mash'hūr inquilābī shayar*).[92] These overlaps between the literary and film cultures draw our attention to the ways in which the Urdu public sphere informed film culture in print in this period.

The 1946 Annual *Sham'ā* contained a total of 45 stories, poems and ghazals (pages 41-190) with the rest of the issue dedicated to film, critical writings, advertisements of films and other sundry commodities. This was a special issue and hence the size was large format with approximately 270 pages. In the editorial, Dehlvi elaborated on the process of selection of *adabī* (literary) stories and poems by dividing the writers into two categories: 'established' and 'new' writers. Very much like a literary magazine, the film journal was another avenue for young poets and writers to get their material published.[93] Dehlvi claimed that *Sham'ā* was the

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[89] Nikhat Sattar recalls in a blog that postage was low and this enabled avid readers in Pakistan to buy subscriptions to all three magazines. *Khilona* cost 50 paisa in the 1960s; by the time it was eventually closed in 1987, the price had been raised to just 75 paisa. Sattar, "Wistful Recollections," *The Hindu,* August 5, 2013, http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-newdelhi/wistful-recollections/article4990774.ece

[90] *Stār*, November 25, 1940, (n.p)

[91] *Zamāna*, February, 1938, 59.

[92] *Stār,* October 13, 1940, 14.

[93] Hindi film journals like *Ćitrapat* too had literary columns, in fact as Ravikant has shown, the magazine included verses and ghazals by Urdu poets, thus debunking the myths about the bitter rivalry between Hindi and Urdu

right platform for these new writers and that they would gain success and prestige after publication in the magazine.[94] In 1940, *Stār* published the story *Sitāroṅ ki Duniya* by writer Bismil Ishrati (also known as Lalchand Bismil).[95] Previously Bismil had worked on dialogues for *Sapera* (d. Debaki Bose, 1939) and *Bharosa* (d. Sohrab Modi, 1940). These mediated and structured transactions between literary and film journals provided endless possibilities for struggling writers and lyricists in the film industry, thereby enabling the continued and persistent influence of the Urdu imaginaire on film culture.

It is difficult to assess the average proportions of the literary and 'filmi' material in Urdu film magazines because of the dearth of available issues. But looking at another issue of *Sham'ā* from June 1949, one can claim that the balance was not as lopsided as in the annual issue. The average issue of *Sham'ā* was roughly 90-100 pages.[96] The inclusion of stories, poems and ghazals of varying lengths formed an important part of the journal (almost 30 pages), which made *Sham'ā* distinct from many of its contemporary film journals like *filmindia*, *Rangbhūmī* and *Film*. The columns that appeared in *Sham'ā* changed over the years, but a few persisted up to the 1980s. The section on films was called *Filmī Maqāle* (Film Articles). This section contained the "*Filmī Tabsira*" (Film Review) which regularly analysed contemporary films and their techniques.[97] The Urdu literary journal *Nairang-i Khayāl*, regularly included a 2–3-page review of films, comprising brief paragraphs about recent film releases. These were comparatively different in style of writing, heavily focussed on the story, with brief analysis of performance of actors, their dialogue delivery and Urdu diction. For example, in the review of *Jailor* (Sohrab Modi, 1938) Hasan celebrated the film for its literary merit and theme which made the film "absorbing and effective" (*adbiyāt ka mauzūń bhi rang liye hue hai, jis se bāz fiqre behad jazib-o mo'asir ban jāte haiń*). [98] The story, according to Hasan, was also instructional (*sabaq-āmoz afsāna*) and had potential for learning for viewers. The film review column in the film journal *Nigārkhāna* had an interesting rating system/score

journals. See, Ravikant, "Film Patrika ka ādi-kāl: Ćānd, Ćitrapat aur anya kahānīyāń," *CSDS DigiPapers*, (Nov. 2020): 43.

94 *Sham'ā*, Annual 1946, 15-16.

95 *Stār*, October 13, 1940.

96 This observation is based on collection of *Sham'ā* from late 1960s to 1980. I am grateful to Mr. Ghazanfar Zaidi, a private collector in Rampur, who gave me access to his father, writer and poet Urooj Zaidi's private library.

97 For example, "*Filmī Tabsira: Kedar Sharma maẕāḥiya film banāne meṅ nā-kām- "Neki aur Badi" bekār be-maqṣad aur māyūs-kun*" (Film Review: Kedar Sharma fails at making a comedy film – "*Neki aur Badi* – Useless, Aimless and Disappointing" in *Sham'ā*, June 1949, 91- 92.

98 "*Duniya-e-Film*" in *Nairang-i Khayāl*, October 1938, 51.

card where each film was judged on the basis of direction, story, music, dialogues and acting.[99] These marksheets of sorts created parameters for film criticism and review. In the article "*Hidāyatkār*/ Director", Irshad Chughtai writes about the role of filmmakers and directors in creating meaningful realistic cinema and creating parameters for judging films which were not merely formal and technical, but also ideological. He stressed the need for an ideological criticism, "*āj naẕaryātī ḥaiṣīyat se tanqīd ko manẕar-e'ām par lāna aur naẕaryātī tanqīd ko riwāj dena dunīya-e film ka aham-tarīn masla hai"* (The most important issue for the film world today is to bring (film) criticism to the common view at the level of ideology and to make such criticism a tradition).[100] Expanding on the role of filmmakers and film practice, he broadly divides the article into sections titled, "*Hidāyatkār ka takhayyul"* (Director's imagination) and "*Hidāyatkār aur ĕḥsasāt*" (Director and Emotions). These will be discussed further in the next chapter, which looks at Urdu texts on cinema and the production of an imaginary which was emerging from the Urdu public sphere. Texts such as these were intervening within an existing corpus of writing on cinema but bringing to it their knowledge of the literary traditions embedded within the Urdu imaginaire.

Another film column that regularly appeared in *Sham'ā* was *"Producer aur Director kya kar raheiṅ haiṅ"* ("What the Producers and Directors are doing"). This was similar to studio news that appeared in other film magazines like *Cinemāyi Jhalkīyāṅ* (Glimpses of Cinema) in the Urdu film journal *Stār*. But unlike *filmindia* these columns were not divided under different studio headings but had sensational and titillating titles that involved salacious word play with film titles, for example, "*Nargis ka "Rumāl"* (Nargis' *Rumaal*/Handkerchief), *"Munawwar Sultana "Pyar ki Manzil" meṅ"* (Munawwar Sultana (in) *Pyar ki Manzil*/on the road to love), *"Meena "Dil ki Rānī"* (Meena *Dil ki Rani*/Queen of Hearts), *"Veena "Kashmir" meṅ* (Veena in *Kashmir*), *"Geeta Bali ki "Shādi ki Rāt"* (Geeta Bali's *Shaadi ki Raat*/wedding night) etc.[101] This kind of creative presentation of film material, enabled by a play with innuendo in Urdu, made *Sham'ā* and *Stār* stand apart from other journals of their time. These titles plugged into the contemporary star discourse by titillating readers, but the promise of salacious gossip was very quickly thwarted by mundane news about the progress of studios and the production of particular films.

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[99] For example, the review for Inder Movietone's *Mard-e-Panjab* in *Nigārkhāna*, February 1941, 4.
[100] Irshad Chughtai, "*Hidāyatkār,*" *Sham'ā*, Annual 1946, 199.
[101] All the names of the films are in inverted commas and the actresses are the main point of entry into the news about the studios. These titles are suggestively incorporated and full of sexual innuendos. In *Sham'ā*, June 1949, 93- 94.

The column "*Ye Filmistãn Hai*/This is the Film World" by the author Bhari Bharkam (literally translated as Heavyweight) was a regular feature in *Sham'ā*. The author's use of the pseudonym allowed for flexibility and validated claims of "*be-lāg tabsire*" (unbiased analyses). Often readers wrote to the editor at *Sham'ā* to ask about the identity of the author, "*Janāb ye to batlaiye ke ye Bhāri Bharkam sahab kaun haiṅ*? (Sir, who is this Mr. Bhari Bharkam?). In a typically evasive witty remark, Dehlvi would write back "*wohī haiṅ jo bhāri bharkam haiṅ*." (It is the one who is a heavyweight).[102] The column provided a hilarious take on celebrities, often putting them into imaginary/real scenarios. For example, the section "*Nūn ka harf film istāroṅ ke liye shubh*" (The Letter N, Lucky for film stars) talks about how the success of Nargis has created a buzz for the letter N; *"Maiṅ Pardah nahi karuṅgī"* (I won't wear a veil) took a dig at director Wali Mohammad Khan and actress Mumtaz Shanti. Narrating an episode when the actress came to the sets of a film veiled in a burqa, Bhari Bharkam writes, *"sau ćūhe khā-ke billi hajj ko ćālī"* (after eating a hundred mice, the cat goes on a pilgrimage).[103] In *"Hum Kunware haiṅ"* (We are single), Bhari Bharkam took a jibe at the brewing romance between *filmindia* editor Baburao Patel and Sushila Rani:

> In recent days, Baburao of *filmindia*, in the presence of his two wives, married his beautiful secretary Sushila Rani, but when people came to congratulate him, he denied it. Sushila Rani blushed as she still considered herself single. However, people say that both have been living as husband and wife for a long time.[104]

"*Freelancing tabāhī ka pesh-k͟hema*" (Freelancing a prelude to destruction) mocks Noorjehan for working in *Anmol Ghadi* (d. Mehboob Khan, 1946), *Jugnu* (d. Shaukat Hussain Rizvi, 1947), *Humjoli* (d. Ismail Memon, 1946), *Mehndi* (d. S. Fazli, 1947) and *Dil* (d. S.F Hasnain, 1946) at the same time. Not sparing her partner-director Shaukat Hussain, Bhari Bharkam writes,

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[102] *Sham'ā* Annual 1946, 241.
[103] *Sham'ā*, June 1949, 22.
[104] Urdu original: "*Guẕishta dinoṅ filmindia-wāle Baburao ne do biwiyoṅ ki maujūdgi meṅ apni k͟hūb-ṣūrat secretary Sushila Rani se shādī raća-li, magar jab log badhai dene ke liye gaye to ye bole ke shādī ki k͟habar jhūṭī hai, Sushila Rani bhi sharma gayi kyun ke wo ab tak k͟hud ko kaṅwārī samajhtī haiṅ halanke logoṅ ka kehna hai ke ye dono to muddat se miya-biwi ki zindagī guzār rahe haiṅ",* Ibid., 23.

It seems that unless both husband and wife make efforts together on their film, it is not successful from a business point of view. Thus, taking advantage of his wife, Shaukat Hussain has established a private institution. But they say that the greedy are never satisfied. Noorjehan's *noor*/splendour will not only shine in *Jugnu*/firefly but also in Hasnain's *Dil*/heart.[105]

This column is comparable to *filmindia*'s regular feature "Bombay Calling", which, in the words of the editor, was "the monopoly of "JUDAS" and he writes what he likes and about things which he likes. The views expressed here are not necessarily ours, but still they carry weight because they are written by a man who knows his job."[106] The similarities are obvious in the ways both lay emphasis on the use of a pseudonym for the author, the gender as male, his physical *weight* as well as his unrestricted words. However, when comparisons are drawn between the issues of *Sham'ā* and *filmindia* from the same year (1946), the difference in tone and content becomes ever more apparent. While Bhari Bharkam's content was predominantly salacious gossip and jibes at film stars and directors through an innovative use of Urdu flourishes,[107] Judas had a more varied canvas of themes. His tone was authoritative and assertive, in line with *filmindia*'s style in this period.[108] In his columns he addressed the government's restriction on raw stock,[109] took issue with the publicity campaign of the film *Bisvi Sadi* (d. Mohan Bhavnani, 1945),[110] campaigned against foreign films like *Gunga Din* slandering Indians,[111] and at the same time did not shy away from taking jibes at film actors, actresses and directors.[112] This points to a significant difference between the Urdu and English

[105] Urdu original: "*…ma'lūm hota hai ke ye dono miya-biwi jab tak ek sāth mil kar koshish na kareiṅ taswīr karobārī aitbār se kāmyāb hi nahi hoti, ćuna-će biwi ke sahāre se pūra pūra fayeda uthāne ke liye Shaukat Hussain ne ẕātī idārā qaiyim kar liya hai, magar wo khu kehte haiṅ ke lalć burī bala hai, Noorjehan ka nūr na sirf jugnū meṅ ćamke-ga balke Hasnain ke Dil meṅ bhi…*" Here he is playing with the words *Nūr* (splendour), *Jugnū* (firefly) and *Dil* (heart). Ibid., 24-25.

[106] The column was penned by Baburao Patel himself, *filmindia,* 1932- 1950.

[107] See the example quoted above 'Freelancing as prelude to destruction' where he uses innuendo and suggestively inserts names of films- Dil/ Heart etc.

[108] *filmindia* in this period was very conscious of its influence on film production, policy making and censorship. The magazine was actively engaged with film producers, exhibitors and journalists to push for the consolidation and organisation of film business, and in that sense, it played a significant role in the creation of a cinematic public sphere.

[109] *filmindia,* January 1946, 11.

[110] Many of the entries in the column would begin with the quintessential "Believe it or not…" in Bombay Calling, *filmindia,* January 1946, 7.

[111] *filmindia*, April 1946, 10. Also see Prem Chowdhry, *Colonial India and the Making of Empire Cinema: Image, Ideology and Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001).

[112] In the section "You'll Hardly Believe it", Judas takes a dig at the actress Mumtaz Shanti, "That Film-actress Veena is also reported to have adopted the latest a-la-Mumtaz-Shanti vogue and now sits with her face to the wall, with all others looking at the wall and wondering what was wrong with it." Or see, "That Film-actor Motilal has

public spheres that the two columns were addressing. However, *Sham'ā* editorials did engage with film policy, the film production code and other issues related to film business in the same way as *filmindia* did in order to influence state policy around film.[113]

The masthead of *Sham'ā's* 1946 Annual summarises the essence and the public address of the journal poetically. It reads:

> Beloved of millions of youth, a unique quality monthly which persistently, with wit and irony and good intentions, brings interesting new articles on films, beautiful evergreen instructive stories, bewitching ghazals, tunes, unbiased reviews of films, fun-filled film-related questions and answers, a variety of pictures of film faces and other exhilarating treasures, all published regularly.[114]

Some basic assumptions can be gleaned from observing the language and intent of the masthead, which points to the nuanced process through which *Sham'ã* differentiated itself from other contemporary film and literary journals. The masthead also provides a sense of the motley mix of genres which drew readers into the world of *Sham'ã.* Dehlvi's use of poetic Urdu laden with Persian flourishes and the insistence on "*sabaq-āmoz afsāne*", the instructive stories/romances/tales, brings *Sham'ã* closer to many other Urdu journals of its time like *Ismat*, *Nairang-i Khayāl*, *Adīb* etc. These visible attempts at mirroring the format of contemporary literary journals that tried to present stories of *iṣlāḥ* (reform) and reform placed *Sham'ã* within the Urdu literary public sphere and gave a push to its claims for legitimacy, self-worth and respectability. The continuities between literary and film journals were significant; however, the film content was the other significant part of the attraction and this oscillation between '*filmī*' titillation and *iṣlāḥ* is what creates an important bridge between two worlds that were often imagined as distinct but presented as a whole in *Sham'ã.*

invented a new working technique on the set; every time he touches Mumtaz Shanti in a scene, he calls for soap and water. Any way, what's wrong with Mumtaz?" in *filmindia*, February 1946, 17.

[113] *Sham'ā*, June 1949, 9-10.

[114] It is difficult to translate the poetic meter of this proclamation. Urdu original: "*Lakhoṅ nau-jawānoṅ ka maḥbūb-tarīn yagāna ṣifat mahāna jo har mah mustaqil 'unwānāt ke taḥt ṯanz-e laṯīf aur nit-nayi dilćaspiyoṅ par mushtamil filmī maẓāmīn, dil-kash sabaq-āmoz afsāne, phaṛakti hui ghazleiṅ, tān, filmoṅ par be-lāg tabsire, muzāḥ ki ćāshnī meṅ ḍūbe hue filmī sawāl-o-jawab, matā-e-dīd filmī ćehroṅ ki taswīreiṅ aur dīgar kaif-o kam ka ẕaḵẖīrā julu meṅ liye pābandī waqt se shā'ě' hota hai*". See, *Sham'ā*, Annual 1946, 13.

A<u>KH</u>LĀQ AND *IṢLĀḤ* IN THE URDU FILM JOURNAL

The discourses of improvement and reform were central impulses of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. The Urdu public sphere had a long-standing engagement with discussions on *a<u>kh</u>lāq* (ethical conduct) and *iṣlāḥ* (reform). Muzaffar Alam has highlighted that *a<u>kh</u>lāq* texts were chiefly concerned with providing a philosophical, non-sectarian and humane solution to emergent problems encountered by Indian society.[115] While *a<u>kh</u>lāq* texts had their beginnings in a tradition of dissent, they were gradually integrated within the elite discourses on jurisprudence and 'practical philosophy' as highlighted by Alam.[116] It is beyond the purview of this chapter to map the historical transformation of the *a<u>kh</u>lāq* texts, but suffice it to say that these texts were more than mere digests of norms of individual good behaviour, ethics, and urbanity; these texts were intended to articulate and transmit what ought to constitute correct conduct and action in varying political contexts. The *a<u>kh</u>lāq* texts in circulation from the eighteenth to early twentieth centuries were addressing the encounter with colonial modernity in new and novel ways. It is not surprising that Urdu film journals too were preoccupied with the discussions on *a<u>kh</u>lāq* and *iṣlāḥ* emerging from the Urdu public sphere in relation to the modernising impulse of cinema. The paradoxical place of cinema continued to embody the tension between the commodification of culture and articulations of ethical and moral selfhood in the Urdu film journal. Urdu film journalists felt that they had an important role to play in purging the perception of cinema as a den of bad morals and a base/shameless profession (*bad-a<u>kh</u>lāqī ka aḍḍā aur z̤alīl tarīn pesha*); they urged filmmakers to strengthen their commitment to reform as "*qaumi-<u>kh</u>idmat*" (service to the nation).[117] This invocation of the *qaum* (community/ nation) has resonances with the writings of social reformers like Sir Syed Ahmad Khan in *Tahzīb-ul A<u>kh</u>lāq*.[118]

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[115] Muzaffar Alam has studied the *a<u>kh</u>lāq* texts in circulation from the thirteenth century and analyses their influence on Mughal political theory. Alam argues that *a<u>kh</u>lāq* literature "focussed on statecraft, political culture and philosophy, not merely practical and pragmatic, but also theoretical." See Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam in India (1200 – 1800)* (London: Hurst and Co., 2004), 12.
[116] Ibid., 80.
[117] *Star*, March 29, 1941, 19.
[118] For further details on *Tahzīb-ul A<u>kh</u>lāq* and the discussion on the use of *qaum* for community and nation. See, Pernau, "The Virtuous Individual and Social Reform: Debates among North Indian Urdu speakers," In *Civilizing Emotions: Concepts in Nineteenth Century Asia and Europe*, ed. Margrit Pernau et. al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 169- 186; Faisal Devji, 'Qawm' accessed from https://www.soas.ac.uk/south-asia-institute/keywords/file24810.pdf; and Ira M. Lapidus, "Knowledge, Virtue and Action: The Classical Muslim Conception of Adab and Nature of Religious Fulfilment in Islam," In *Moral Conduct and Authority: The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam*, ed. Barbara Daly Metcalf (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 38- 61.

In "*Film ka aṣar akhlāq par*/ The effect of film on ethical conduct", Khalil ur Rahman argued in *Film Stage* that cinephilia was a modern impulse and film viewing had become part of the weekly activities of the young.[119] His views resonated with contemporary writings on ethical conduct. In light of the ubiquitous consumption of cinema, Rahman believed that film journalists had the important job of publishing useful articles which would lead to the moral correction and reform (*iṣlāḥ*) of the industry (*mufīd aur kār-āmad maẓāmīn jis se film industry ki iṣlāḥ hoti rahe*).[120] However another article in the same issue of *Film Stage* suggested that the first group of Urdu journalists (*pehla saḥāfatī ḥalqa)* had published critical writings which were based on observations and had adopted an aggressive point of view (*mubaṣṣarāna rang ke sāth sāth jarehāna pahlū ikhtiyār kar liya*).[121] This author lamented that, instead of accepting these attempts at *iṣlāḥ* and making social films with good *akhlāq* (*ache akhlāq māshratī- iṣlāḥ film*), many film companies considered these sincere counsels (*pur-khulūs mashware*) from the elders of the community/nation (*buzurgān qaum*) as meaningless chatter (*la-yāni bakwās*). These artists, directors and film company owners promoted films that destroyed the modest and ethical conduct of the nation (*haya soz aur mulk ke akhlāq ke tabāh barbād karne wale filmoṅ ko tarvīj di*) and considered the art critic (*naqqadāṅ fan*) as a thorn in their shiny path (*apni sunehrī rū-pahlī rah meṅ kāṅta khayāl kiya*).[122]

The limitless desire (*be-ḥadd shauq*) for cinema necessitated the production of films that would lead to the transformation of the *qaum*. Rahman's article argued that cinema had radical potential for change and repeatedly urged filmmakers to avoid making films that would lead to the destruction of future generations (*aisī film tayyār na ki jayeiṅ jo āinda nasl ke liye tabāhī ka bā'iṣ ṣābit hoṅ*).[123] Taking cognisance of the many rituals and customs in the country that needed *iṣlāḥ*, he urged that, instead of following the path taken by social reformers, film companies must present these ordinary states of helplessness on screen and, by showing these realities, infect the public (*awām*) with a gradual potential for revolution (*inquilāb)*.[124] Critical of the contemporary trends in cinema and theatre that focused on outdated versions of romance (*maḥẓ ḥusn-o-ishq ke farsūda drama aur be-buniyād afsāne pesh karta raha hai*), Rahman

[119] *Film Stage*, vol. 2, no. 6 (n.d.), 10-11.
[120] Ibid.
[121] "Cinema Association" in *Film Stage*, vol. 2, no. 6 (n.d.), 42.
[122] Ibid., 42.
[123] Ibid., 10-11.
[124] *Inquilāb Zindabād* was a slogan popularised by the Urdu poet and revolutionary Hasrat Mohani in 1921 and was adopted by many contemporary freedom fighters like Ram Prasad Bismil, Ashfaqullah Khan, Chandra Shekhar Azad and Bhagat Singh. This reference to *inquilāb* subtly signals to the ways in which Urdu film journalists viewed cinema as radically aligned to the struggle for independence and nation building.

recognized that romance was a great part of human life and was not necessarily bad (*Romance jo yaqīnan insānī zindagī ka juzv-e āzam hai fi'l-ḥaqīqat buri shai nahi*) but romantic scenes in films must be infused with culture (*tahzīb)* and civilized purity (*shāistagī*). Genres like the social, devotional and historical were considered to lend nicely to this *akhlāqī* enterprise.[125] He specifically targeted the film *Zarina* (d. Ezra Mir, 1932), calling it "useless" and responsible for erasing decorum and social propriety (*"Zarina" jaisī nākara film meṅ mŏ'āsharat ko miṭāyā gaya hai*). In contrast he was all praise for the Bengali talkie *Chandidas* (d. Debaki Kumar Bose, 1932).[126]

The concern with *akhlāq* and the *iṣlāḥ* of cinema extended to the portrayal of wit and humour (*ẕarāfat-e-taba*) in films. Rahman wrote that comic scenes in contemporary cinema were inferior and of low (*past*) grade. He declared that wit and humour does not mean ruining the face of culture and gentility (*tahzīb aur shāistagī ki shakal bigāṛne ka nām ẕarāfat nahi hai*). Comparing Indian films with foreign (Euro-American) films, he argued that famous comic stars in the west (*wilāyat*) infused their acting with innovation (*jiddat*), novelty (*nudrat*) and mischief (*shokhī taba)*.[127] Meanwhile, the custodians of culture claimed that Indian comedians considered *bad-akhlāqī* (rudeness/incivility) as wit and humour (*Hindustani maskhare bad-akhlāqī ko ẕarāfat khayāl karte haiṅ*). Here, the corporeality of comedy barely fits into the framework of culture (*tahzīb*) in the *akhlāqī* tradition. The need to reform comedy from *bad-akhlāqī* to good moral humour was particularly crucial in relation to film consumption and the harmful effects on women and children (*Comic ke scene iss liye khās tor par qābil-e tawajjŏh haiṅ tāke 'aurtoṅ aur baććoṅ ke akhlāq par inke bure āṡarāt na paṛe*).[128] The need for *iṣlāḥ* of the film industry was especially urgent as cinema audiences were expanding to include women and children (*kamsin aur nau umar baććoṅ ke alāwa 'aurtoṅ aur*

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[125] The historical was significant genre in the *akhlāq* tradition. It was argued that by showing "living examples of praiseworthy dispositions and preferred qualities", films can instil those virtues in the young that would be the secret for future progress (*In tamām akhlāq-ĕ ḥamīda aur auṣāf-e pasandīda ki zinda miṡāleiṅ dikhla kar naujawāno ke diloṅ meṅ wo khūbiyaṅ paida ki ja sakti haiṅ jin par āinda taraqqī ka rāz pinha hai).* A similar view was held by the director Sohrab Modi who felt that historical films would provide role models for the young. Modi made a series of films on figures from Indian history like *Pukar*, *Sikander*, *Mirza Ghalib* etc. Further discussed in Chapter 4.

[126] *Chandidas* was remade in Hindi in 1934. The film was directed by Nitin Bose and based on the fifteenth century Vaishnavite poet Chandidas. This version starred K.L. Saigal and Uma Shashi.

[127] Tom Gunning demonstrates that before Charlie Chaplin's rise to fame, he was a controversial figure and his comedy was viewed with scepticism and suspicion. It is interesting that initial reactions to Chaplin's style of comedy mirror the charges against Indian comedians from the 1930s. Chaplin's bodily humour was considered 'horrid', 'nasty' and 'vulgar' with questionable moral compass. See, Tom Gunning, "Chaplin and the body of modernity," *Early Popular Visual Culture* 8, no. 3 (2010), 237-245.

[128] Comedy in early cinema in India is still an under studied area. See, *Film Stage*, vol. 2, no. 6 (n.d.), 10-11.

laṛkīyoṅ meṅ bhi film ke dekhne ka be-ḥadd shauq paida ho raha hai).[129] The anxieties about the effects of cinema on spectators were articulated in many contemporary film journals. The homogenised perceptions of the cinema-going public as uncouth, uncivilized masses were recurrently referenced as the "*ćawannī class*" or "*ćār āna darje wale*" (Four Anna class) in need of *a<u>kh</u>lāqī* teaching and *iṣlāḥ*. The association with the lower working class was apparent as *ćawanni* or *ćār āna* was the price of the cheapest ticket in the theatre.[130]

Some writers generously gave credit to the sensibilities of the audiences even if momentarily, "thank god that the public has developed some film viewing competence and, if not today, soon they will learn the etiquette of discerning between good and bad films."[131] While the individual viewer's autonomy, discretion and agency were considered questionable and in need of intervention, this lower-class audience with 'poor' taste and lack of proper *a<u>kh</u>lāq* also made theatres fraught and precarious spaces. In light of these anxieties, it is significant to point out here that cinema theatres in this period devised many innovative strategies to address the issue of female spectatorship. Film shows exclusively for women were called *zanāna* shows, referring to the inner domain of women in the household.[132] The term *zanāna* literally means "of the women" and pertains to the women's quarters/space of the home belonging to women. This association with the private domain of the home was essential; through this the scope of the cinema theatre was expanded into a 'respectable' secluded safe space for female audiences. The *zanāna* show for women was crucial to the domestication of the cinema-space, as it connoted a space reserved for women and created overlaps between the cinematic public sphere and the Urdu imaginaire, in that ideas of *a<u>kh</u>lāq* and *iṣlāḥ* were brought into cinema consumption.[133] This mediation of film consumption through literary and social

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[129] Ibid.

[130] *Ćawanni* is colloquial for 25 paise (i.e. a quarter of an Indian Rupee). According to contemporary writers, this class of people needed special attention (*ćār ana darje walon ka lehaz rakha jaye*) as they were considered illiterate and possessing lascivious tastes (*ghair talīm yafta wa shauqīyāna* (sic., *suqīyana*) *ẕauq*). See, Nasiruddin Hashmi's article "*Hindustānī film companiyoṅ ki tawajjŏh ke liye ćand umūr*", first published in *Movieland*, December 1938, reprinted in Hashmi, *Film Numa: Film ke muta'alliq iṣlāḥī aur tanqīdī maẓāmīn ka majmū'a*, Hyderabad, 1940, p. 37- 42. Similar concerns emerge in the writings of Hindi film journalists who wrote for film journal *Ćitrapat*, calling this group of audiences as '*ćawannī varg*'. See, Ravikant, "Film Patrika ka ādi-kāl: Ćānd, Ćitrapat aur anya kahānīyāń," *CSDS DigiPapers*, (Nov. 2020): 58.

[131] Urdu original: *<u>Kh</u>udā ka shukr hai ke public meṅ film dekhne ki ṣalāḥiyat paida ho chuki hai aur achhe bure filmoṅ ke imtiyāz karne ki tamīz āj nahiṅ toh kal ho hi jayegi".* See, "Cinema Association" in *Film Stage*, vol. 2, no. 6 (n.d.), 42.

[132] The *zanāna*/ inner domain of the household was a common feature in both Hindu and Muslim households in the Indian subcontinent. The *zanāna* space was separated from the outer quarters which was called the *mardāna makān* (manly/of men) part of the household.

[133] In Bombay, the *zanāna* shows of Bombay Talkies' *Jawani ki Hawa* drew packed houses and the hall was besieged by 'hundreds of women', dispersing only when promised an extra show. (*Times of India*, October 5, 1935). Sabita Devi made a personal appearance at the *zanāna* show of *Jivan Lata* (1936) with a 'powerful plea

tropes was a hallmark of *a<u>kh</u>lāq* texts that focussed on the condition of women and the creation of a moral and ethical self.[134]

Within an *a<u>kh</u>lāqī* framework, the role of cinema was to enable the progress of the nation (*qaumī tarraqī*) where film viewing instilled notions of *himmat* (courage), *shujāt* (bravery), *'azm* (conviction), *istiqlāl* (firmness of mind, perseverance), *muruwwat* (affection, kind heartedness), *ī<u>s</u>ār* (sacrifice, selflessness), *<u>kh</u>ud-dārī* (self-respect), *jānbāzī* (bravery), *jān-nisārī* (devotion), *raḥm* (mercy, compassion), *iffat* (purity, chastity) and *ḥayā* (modesty).[135] These fetishized ideals of empowerment were thought to be attainable through the disciplinary efforts that valourized mental strength, considered crucial for the formation of the ethical individual. The *a<u>kh</u>lāqī* films (if there was such a genre) would emancipate the people (*'aqvām*) and propel the nation (*mulk*) and the community (*qaum*) to emerge out of its current state of despair under colonial rule. These new, improved, ethical viewers would then contribute to the progress of the nation and create possibilities for India to compete with other developed nations of the world (*dīgar taraqqī yāfta mumālik).* The Urdu film journals explored these ideas of nation building and ethical citizenship, which were tied together neatly through the discourse of *a<u>kh</u>lāq* and *iṣlāḥ* in relationship to cinema.

For many of the Urdu film journals, the *a<u>kh</u>lāqī* and *iṣlāḥī* work of cinema had to be linked to the fight in the domain of language. The Hindi-Urdu language debate had created bitter rivalries. In an article, *Filmoṅ ki zabān/* 'Language of Films', Nasiruddin Hashmi reiterated apprehensions about the inclusion of Hindi or Sanskrit words in films labelled as 'Urdu'; he suggested that this "promotion of Hindi" (*Hindi ki tarwīj*) would hamper the work of reform (*iṣlāḥ*) that films needed to undertake.[136] Regardless of whether this would promote Hindi or not, inconsistency in language would mean that the impetus of *a<u>kh</u>lāq* was stalled due to use of obscure and unfamiliar words that the common people would fail to comprehend.[137]

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for the abandonment of the attitude that regarded a screen career as something leading to loss of respectability and social status'. (*Times of India*, September 18, 1936). See, Kaushik Bhaumik, "The Emergence of the Bombay Film Industry, 1913-1936" (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2002), 180.

134 This will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

135 *Film Stage*, vol. 2, no. 6 (n.d.), 10-11.

136 Nasiruddin Hashmi, *Film*, 1939, Reprinted in Hashmi, *Film Numa: Film ke muta'alliq iṣlāḥī aur tanqīdī maẓāmīn ka majmū'a* (Hyderabad: Shams-al Mataba Machine Press, 1940), 52-55.

137 Urdu original: "*Iss qism ke Hindi ya Sanskrit alfāz ṭhūs kar ye <u>kh</u>ayāl karna ke iss se Hindi ki tarwīj hogi ek 'abaṣ <u>kh</u>ayāl hai. Iss ke qate naẓar ke 'Hindi' ki tarwīj ho ya na ho, magar film se jo iṣlāḥī kām maqṣūd hota hai wo alfāz ke samajh meṅ na āne se ḥāṣil nahiṅ ho sakta*". See, Nasiruddin Hashmi, *Film*, 1939. Reprinted in *Film Numa: Film ke muta'alliq iṣlāḥī aur tanqīdī maẓāmīn ka majmū'a* (Hyderabad: Shams-al Mataba Machine Press, 1940), 54.

The crucial dimension of the *a̲k̲h̲lāqī* project as proposed by Hashmi was that films should also be made in the Urdu language, where choice of vocabulary was crucial. Hashmi, as previously discussed, did not shy away from evoking a politics of language and identity, thereby making a link between Urdu and Muslims. It is safe to assume that, within the ambit of the voices proposing *a̲k̲h̲lāqī* cinema, there was also a section of Urdu film journalists that tapped into other interpretations of *adab* and *a̲k̲h̲lāq* from the Islamic past.[138] However, the films that were predominantly used as representative examples of good *a̲k̲h̲lāqī* cinema remained varied and diverse, just like the discourse on the *iṣlāḥ* of cinema and its language use.

One dimension of the use of the Urdu language for cinema was not only linked to the idea of *iṣlāḥ* but also to the articulation of romance and love that the Urdu film journals revitalized effectively. These Urdu film journals were spaces of excess, titillation and romantic digressions. The balance had to be struck between these two putatively opposing modes of behavioural urges. The column "*Ishq ke k̲h̲uṭūṭ* /Letters of Love" which appeared in the 1946 *Sham'ā* Annual began with the following note:

> Mentioned below are letters collected from the letterbox of film actresses. These letters are not merely published for fun. The grand motive is to reform (*iṣlāḥ*), the acts of those misled youths and fans of actresses through treatises of their own actions.[139]

The published love letters to actresses were written in an old-fashioned style that authors in *Sham'ā* were otherwise wary of and critiqued for their use of hackneyed and archaic romantic jargon. Amorously signed off by love struck fans with "*āpka rūmānī premī*" (your romantic lover) or "*tumhāre ḥusn ka saudā'ī*" (crazy about your beauty) from addresses in Delhi, Kanpur, Aligarh and similar cities, these letters can be placed within the longer tradition of epistolary exchange between lovers in Urdu literary culture. Contemporary film journals in all languages created innovative content to address and feed into the excitement and curiosity generated by modern women on screen.[140] The actress was the site of desire and anxiety;

[138] Barbara Metcalf Daly, *Moral Conduct and Authority: The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

[139] Urdu original: *Mandarja ẕail k̲h̲uṭūṭ ba-rāh-e rāst film actressoṅ ki dāk se ḥāṣil kiye haiṅ. Ye k̲h̲uṭūṭ maḥẓ tafrī taba ke liye shai nahi kiye jāte. Inki ishāt ka maqṣad āla āj kal ke gumrāh naujawānoṅ aur film actressoṅ ke paristāroṅ ki iṣlāḥ karna hai aur wo bhi inhi ke amāl nāmoṅ ki roshnī meṅ*. See, *Sha'mā,* Annual 1946, 215.

[140] Letters to Sulochana, Sabita Devi's letter to society ladies to join films in *Filmland*.

Sham'ā's attempts to present titillating material in the garb of *a<u>kh</u>lāq* texts as tools for *iṣlāḥ* was a master stroke. The column was popular, as can be gleaned from the letters to the editor, where readers made inquiries as to how Dehlvi had access to the letters of the actresses. They asked how these letters came to *Sham'ā* or did Dehlvi procure them through the actresses? To which Dehlvi gave a vague reply that these were letters taken from the actresses' mail,[141] thereby leaving it to the readers' discretion and imagination.

Despite the desire to instil good *a<u>kh</u>lāq* and to reform (*iṣlāḥ*) the wayward youth, the Urdu film journals were full of images and imaginary scenarios of love and romance. From the poetry to the letters to the artwork, the journals had a particular visual vocabulary (even though limited to hand-drawn illustrations in the early period) which was amorous and erotic.[142] The cover page of the 1946 *Sham'ā* Annual was designed by Shafiq Ahmad: the hand-illustrated design depicts a couple entwined in a loving embrace representing the proverbial "moth to the flame" imagery, already implied by the very title of the journal, i.e. *Sham'ā*. The woman's body, in a translucent garment, emerges out of the lamp - the arduous flame of passion - while a man with diaphanous wings envelops the woman in an irresistible caress. This image was a reference and ode to the readers of *Sham'ā* (light), who were lovingly called *Parwāne* (moth/lover). It is interesting but perhaps not surprising that the journal *Sham'ā* was depicted as female and the fans/readers as male. In a letter to the editor, one reader wrote, "*Qānūn-e qudrat hai ke parwāna Sham'ā ki taraf khiṅcha ćalā āta hai. Lekin āp ki Sham'ā parwānoṅ ke pas chali āti hai. Is ki kya wujuh hai."* (The law of nature is that a moth is attracted to a flame, but your *Sham'ā (flame)* comes to the *parwāne*/moth. What are the reasons for this?). To this Dehlvi replied, *"Purānī bāteiṅ chhoṛiye. Pahle chirāgh ke nīće andhera hota tha, ab ūpar hota hai"* (Let bygones be bygones, earlier the darkness was beneath the lamp, now it is above).[143]

This encounter between the Urdu public sphere and the cinema was significant in encouraging a readership of Urdu film journals that showed significant overlaps between the literary and film. How do we imagine the readership for the Urdu film journal? Who consumed these journals and how do the Urdu film journals address their readers?

[141] *Sham'ā,* Annual 1946, 245.
[142] The Urdu film journals especially *Sha'mā* had a lot more images and photographs after the 1950s.
[143] *Sham'ā,* Annual 1946, 229.

READING URDU FILM JOURNALS: ADVERTISEMENTS AND PUBLICITY

The process of mapping patterns of readership and consumption of the Urdu film journals is challenging in the absence of the complete range of available magazines, adequate circulation figures and census data. These inadequacies demand creative strategies to address the problems of imagining the readership and the consumption of Urdu film culture in India in the 1930s and 40s. My approach has been to look at the journals themselves and read what they can tell us about their readers. While I am aware that these journals were heavily edited and curated, they do open up the possibilities of engaging with the Urdu film journal reader and consumer. Columns such as letters to editors, as well as advertisements and publicity material for films, provide crucial clues to the address of Urdu film journals and to their reading publics.

Even though we have scant information about the circulation of some of these journals, the issue of literacy and readership in the context of the Urdu film journal is tricky.[144] Priti Ramamurthy has suggested that the English-language newspapers *The Statesman* and *The Times of India* were mainly read by British and Indian English-educated elites; however, these contained a large variety of visual material like photographs and film advertisements.[145] English-language media was perhaps accessible to a larger group of non-English readers through these visual materials and sometimes articles were read aloud and translated to others less literate. I have come across similar anecdotal references to the possible readership and consumption pattern of the Urdu film magazine. The expanse of the Urdu public sphere suggests that the Urdu-speaking and reading territory was large, with specific centres in the north like Delhi, Lahore, Agra, Lucknow and other parts of United Province (now Uttar Pradesh), Hyderabad, Calcutta and Bombay as important locations. Urdu film journals often published letters sent to them from across the country and sometimes across its borders, from Rangoon, Bahrain, Colombo etc. These significantly expand our understanding of the reach of the Urdu film journal. However, one needs to reiterate that the reading and consumption of the Urdu film journal may have been disaggregated and the disproportionate rate of literacy and language census data can be inadequate sources for information on the subject.[146]

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[144] Sketchy data is available in the Audit Bureau circulation report and the Urdu Catalogue of Books and Periodicals at the British Library.

[145] Priti Ramamurthy, "The Modern Girl in India in the Interwar Years: Interracial Intimacies, International Competition, and Historical Eclipsing," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 34, no.1-2 (2006): 199.

[146] Javed Majeed in his work on Grierson's linguistic survey of India has highlighted the inadequacies of the grand linguistic project. Javed Majeed, "'A State of Affairs which is Essentially Indefinite': The Linguistic Survey of India (1894–1927)," *African Studies* 74, no. 2 (2015): 221-234.

A sense of *Sham'ā*'s readership can be assessed from the letters that were received by the journal for its column "*Sawāl Jawāb*" (Question Answers). This column was not unique to *Sham'ā*, and many contemporary journals had similar columns. The Urdu film journal *Stār* had a column "Wireless" which was a similar question-and-answer style section where readers addressed the editor.[147] *filmindia*'s "Editor's Mail" was a favourite of many readers: readers wrote brief questions for the editor, to which he responded with wit and humour. Most often *Sham'ā*'s questions were enquiries about actresses' filmographies, their age, marital status, address, educational qualifications etc. While most letters were signed by male readers, some letters appeared to be written by women as well. Often these letters by women were seeking friendships with contemporary actresses like Nargis or Khurshid.[148] Sometimes these tantalising questions seeking gossip received vague and elusive responses from the editors.

The letters to the editor column was essential to the film journal's popularity as it gave the impression of an interpersonal relationship between the editor and the readers of the journal. In *Sham'ā*, often the readers addressed Yusuf Dehlvi with a lot of familiarity, beginning their questions with "Yusuf Mian…",[149] "Yusuf Bhai...",[150] or "Yusuf Bhaiyya…".[151] One reader wrote, "Yusuf, you are shy like a newly wedded bride. If you are not shy, then publish your photo. (*Amā Yusuf! āp to nayī navelī dulhan ki tarha sharmāte haiṅ. Agar nahiṅ sharmāte to apni photo shai kījīye*)". Dehlvi obliged his readers, "Now you will be shy after looking at the photograph (*Ab to is parće meṅ tasvīr dekh kar shayad āp sharmayeiṅ*)".[152] Other readers gestured to the prevalent competition between contemporary film journals. A reader from Sitapur wrote, "Many editors swear at you but you remain silent? (*Āp ko kai editor gālīyaṅ dete haiṅ magar āp phir bhi khāmosh haiṅ*?); Dehlvi took the upper hand and responded, "Brother, they merely give, what do they take from me? This gives them an excuse to get a morsel (*Bhai, kućh dete hi haiṅ, mera kya lete haiṅ. Isī bahāne gharībоṅ ko tukda mil raha*

[147] *Stār*, October 13, 1940, 9.
[148] *Sham'ā,* Annual 1946, 240.
[149] Ibid., 240.
[150] "*Yusuf Bhai meṅ military line ćhhor kar film company meṅ jana ćahta hūṅ*!" (Yusuf Brother, I want to quit the military and join a film company." Ibid., 227.
[151]*Bhaiyya* can be literally translated as brother; often elder / sometimes younger brother. Also, used in casual address than the more formal *Bhai* (brother).
[152] The photograph published in the *Sham'ā* Annual was quite innocuous - typical of the formal studio portraits published during this time. This was Dehlvi's way of humouring his readers, perhaps modestly alluding to his unappealing appearance, even though he was far from unattractive. Ibid., 235.

hai)".[153] Another reader gestured to Dehlvi's tours and travels undertaken for the promotion of *Sham'ā*. He wrote, "Whenever you have travelled other journals have made fun of you. Why? (*Āp ne jab bhi safar kiya to dūsre risāloṅ ne āpka bahut maẕāq uṛāya. Akhir kyūṅ?*" In his typically confident way, he replied, "The envious always roll on embers, it is not new (*ḥāsid hamesha hi angāroṅ par lota karti hai koi nai bāt nahin*)".[154] These exchanges give us a sense of the rivalries between the presses but also position the editor as a vulnerable man who, despite the attacks, emerges unfazed and unbothered. The one-liners edited and presented by Dehlvi as quick repartee were styled to narcissistically present his superior intelligence. In the *Sham'ā* Annual, the narcissism reached a new height as 5-6 pages were devoted to the "*Sawāl Jawāb*" column, contributing to the creation of Dehlvi as a star editor. In later issues of the journal, Dehlvi would publish photographs of himself at parties with film stars and other personalities from the film world, creating parallels with *filmindia*'s Baburao Patel. In one letter, a reader teased Dehlvi, "I have heard that you have married Nargis, and you haven't offered sweets to your fans. (*Maine suna hai ke āpne Nargis se shādī ki hai lekin parwānoṅ ko āp ne miṭhai tak nahi khilai*)". Pat came the reply, "You are already salivating, what would become of you if you had the sweets. (*Waise hi āp ki rāl tapak rahi hai miṭhai khā kar to pata nahi kya hāl hogā*)".[155] These letters to the editor are less about the readers and more a showcase of Dehlvi's quick wit and humour, expanding the editor's role as celebrity.

The film magazine provided a fundamental link between social communication and the market economy through its advertisements and publicity machinery. These advertisements were not merely an important source of revenue for the film journals but were effective ways through which consumption of material and film culture was encouraged. The advertisements in *Sham'ā* give a sense of the possible consumers that were addressed and the widespread reach of the journal. Advertisements for goods and services sold in Delhi, Lahore, Karachi, Jalandhar, Amritsar, Calcutta, Meerut and Bombay also point to the interconnecting networks of businesses related to film investment. Apart from advertisements for Lipton tea, Hamam soap, Tata Steel, First National Bank Ltd. Lahore, a skin lightening cream called White, Tibet Snow, Hollywood hair curling creams, hair removal creams for women, hair tonics and oils,[156]

[153] Ibid., 227.
[154] Ibid., 228.
[155] Ibid., 227.
[156] Hair oils (London commercial, Lahore offering Rs. 10,000/- worth "fancy set" of watches as free gifts with the purchase).

perfumes, cigarettes, cameras,[157] jewellery (something called *Anguṭhiyaṅ bambai* fashion), and American pistols sold in Lahore, *Sham'ā* carried a range of advertisements from pharmaceutical companies and *unānī* laboratories.[158] These ranged from medicines for the common cold, cough, fatigue, tuberculosis, dental hygiene and care to *Muḥāfiẕ Aulād* (for child birth), vitamin tonics for sweetening of the voice and throat, tonics for blood purification, menstrual cramps, pain and irregularities, and *Breastin* creams and potions for a youthful body/firm breasts (especially for women after lactation/breast feeding). There were even advertisements for medicines for *Doshīzgī* (maidenhood/virginity) and *Rejuvin* – a revitalising and energizing medicine for men – by Aksiri Dawakhana, Delhi, (*Aksīr* means elixir). Many of the advertisements were addressed to both male and female readers, and a significant proportion of the ads were related to the sexual health and sex lives of the consumers, including for sexually transmitted diseases like Leukorrhea,[159] Gonorrhea (*Sozak*), Spermatorrhea/excessive involuntary ejaculation (*Juryān*), *Dhāt kī bimārī* (disorder of semen in urine), sound plasters for hernias, medicines for *Bawāsīr* (piles) and *Amsāk* (medicine to prolong pleasure in carnal intercourse/*mardāna timing ka nuska*).

Some advertisements promised *ruhānī ilāj* (spiritual treatment), *qismat ka motī* (pearl of fate), *daulat ki kūnjī* (treasure trove), *muḥabbat ki dorī* (string of love),[160] "*Aṣlī vāshi karn yantr*"- *Aṣlī Shivji jantr* and *Trikal Darshi Shīshā/ Ā'īna* (a glass/mirror to enable omniscience, seeing the past, present and future), including a booklet for *ṯilismī sawāl ke jawāb* (answers to magical questions). Other books were regularly advertised in the magazine, especially from Shama Publishing House and Khilona Book Depot, including a series of racy books with claims to reveal the secret lives of women: *Pahli rāt kis tarha guẕrī* (How did you spend your first night?), *'Aurat ki ćālākiyaṅ* (The Cunningness of Women), *Darbār-e ḥusn* (The Court of Beauty) and *ḥusn ki Dunīya* (The World of Beauty), which carried attractive sketches of women, presumably to attract both male and female readers. Despite the fact that Dehlvi would often discourage his readers from joining the film business, the magazine carried a recruitment ad by a Lahore-based film company for 'beautiful, educated faces" for Progressive Pictures'

[157] Cameras ranging from Rs.5- 15 with free manual for use, and other material for photo processing.
[158] *Unānī* is a traditional system of healing and medicine based on Arabian doctrines. The origins of the *unānī* can be traced to Greek physicians Hippocrates and Galen. It is commonly practiced in South Asia.
[159] Urdu journal for women *Saheli* (Amritsar) also carried an advertisement for Curine-A for the cure of Leukorrhea, see *Saheli*, Feb- March 1941, che (letter che).
[160] The String of Love promises, "*kisi se muḥabbat ho aur usko ghulām bana kar us se shādī ki tammanā ho to muḥabbat ki dorī se kām lījīye"* (If you love someone and want to make them your slave and desire to marry them, then make use of the String of Love).

film *Geeton ki Bahar* to be produced by M. S. Malik. The ad promised that an "exquisite studio has been established and initial preparations for the film have been completed." The producer announced that the film will present approximately 90 percent of new "educated faces". As part of the selection process, three photographs in different poses were requested from girls and boys interested in joining the film world.[161] The advertisements give a sense of the conspicuous consumption of luxury and foreign brands encouraged by the magazine, and the dominant contemporary perceptions about the bodies and health of men and women.

The Urdu word '*Ishtihār*' can be translated as notification, announcement, proclamation and advertisement. This multivalent connotation was an attribute of the specific format of these *ishtihār* which were mostly in long copy with hardly any or no visuals. Unlike the English press, which probably had better resources and financial support, the Urdu film press had little to work with. So, most of the journals studied have very few images; a lot of the film *ishtihār* were made provocative and exciting through words and long copy. Sketches accompany them sometimes, like the ad for the film, *Diamond Queen* (Wadia Movietone). The copy reads in first person, with Nadia addressing the readers and inviting them to come watch her new film (*Meṅ bahut jald āa rahīṅ hūṅ Wadia ke shahkār Diamond Queen meṅ*/ I am coming very soon in Wadia's masterpiece *Diamond Queen*). Further, she informs the readers that while casually riding her bicycle she encountered some goons (*badmāsh)* who were attempting to kidnap a beautiful dancer (*raqāsā*). She got off her bike and punched the *badmāsh* (*meṅ ne ik badmāsh ke jabṛe par ik zor ka ghūṅsa rasīd kiya*). The ad is signed off as (*Āpkī Mukẖliṣa, Bekẖauf Nadia*/ Yours Sincerely, Fearless Nadia).[162]

These advertisements were not specific to *Sham'ā*. Many contemporary journals and newspapers carried similar promotional material.[163] Markus Daechsel has pointed out that, during the 1930s and 1940s, a prevailing concern for the body, associated with hygiene, food, and sex, was central to self-definitions and social identity among the Urdu middle class, as reformist concerns in newspapers, medical tracts, and pamphlets focused on the dangers of easy pleasure.[164] The size and frequency of appearance of these advertisements in *Sham'ā*

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[161] *Sham'ā,* Annual 1946, 132.
[162] *Stār*, October 13, 1940, 4.
[163] For a quick overview of advertisements in popular Urdu journals, see, Yousuf Saeed, "Ishtihar Tasveeren: Visual Culture of Early Urdu Magazines," *ArtConnect* 7, no. 2 (2013): 4- 20.
[164] Markus Daechsel, *The Politics of Self-Expression, The Urdu Middle-Class Milieu in Mid- Twentieth Century India and Pakistan* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 106.

suggests that companies felt that the journal had a sizeable readership and this would ensure that their advertisements reached a vast audience. While other Urdu literary journals like *Saqi* or women's magazines like *Tahzīb-al Niswań, Ismat* or *Banat*, kept their distance from such advertisements, perhaps considering them inappropriate for their male and female readers, *Sham'ā* clearly did not take such a stand.[165] Commercial considerations necessitated the publication of these advertisements to generate revenue for the business. The advertisements made possible the free circulation and availability of commodities that usually lay outside commonly acceptable frameworks of propriety, and provided readers with the choice of purchasing these anonymously.[166] However, these ads created a dissonance with the overall tone of *iṣlāḥ* (reform) and moral correction that the editor of *Sham'ā* adopted in the columns. Considering traditionally accepted binaries between film and literary journals, *Sham'ā*'s position on the cusp between two distinct print formats contributed to its success and acceptance within the Urdu public sphere. The journal's focus on literary (*adab*) and cultural (*tahzīb*) texts, using terms that it borrowed from the Urdu imaginaire, elevated the status of cinema. At the same time, the '*filmī*' content made possible the insertion of advertisements that were contrary to the rules of good behaviour proposed by the Urdu reform model. These advertisements opened up the world of Urdu to remarkable encounters with the perils of a modern life of consumption and pleasure. The case of *Sham'ā* aids our understanding of the role and contribution of Urdu film journals in cementing the relationship between cinema and the Urdu public sphere.

CONCLUSION

Urdu film journals have had a marginal position in the written histories of Indian cinema. Film scholarship has paid little attention to journals that were published in the Urdu public sphere from the 1920s onwards. Urdu literati too have had their own set of biases against film journals, treating them as a diversion and without merit. This lack of interest in the journals has contributed to their disappearance from both the public and the academic domain. This

[165] *Banat* (Delhi) was a religious Urdu journal for Muslim girls. The objective of this monthly publication was to promote education amongst adolescent girls. On the other hand, the Urdu monthly *Ismat* (Delhi) was addressed to married women. *Banat* contained poetry, short stories, and articles which were a reflection on the social life of Muslim girls. For an analysis of Sanatogen tonic ads in *Tahzīb-e Niswan*, see Margrit Pernau, "Modern Masculinity, Bought at Your Local Pharmacist: The Tonic Sanatogen in 20th century Indian Advertisements," *Tasveer Ghar: A Digital Archive of South Asian Popular Visual Culture*, November 4, 2019), http://www.tasveergharindia.net/essay/sanatogen-masculine-advert.html#sdendnote19sym

[166] Many of the advertisements for sexually transmitted diseases promised complete confidentiality if medicines/ tonics were ordered through the Value Payable postal system (commonly known as VP).

chapter has attempted to address the dearth of journals in film history by consolidating a list of Urdu film journals from a range of archives and libraries. While the act of recuperation and retrieval is significant, it is not without its own challenges. The list provided in the chapter is in no way comprehensive and there is still more work to be done and resources required to complete this daunting challenge. However, the current list attempts to begin a conversation and discussion about the role and importance of Urdu film journals in contributing to a cinematic public sphere akin to coffee shops and local town halls. It is unfortunate that so few copies of the journal have survived but, like most archival expeditions, there is always the promise of more.

Hum ki māyūs nahīṅ haiṅ unheiṅ pa hi leṅge
Log kahte haiṅ ki dhundne se khudā milta hai

I am not disappointed, I will find them
People say that if you look, you can find god.[167]

The Urdu film journals were part of a burgeoning popular culture in the 1930s and provide an important insight into the discourses prevalent at the time. The vicious Hindi-Urdu language debates in the public sphere, and the role of the Film Journalists Association of India, found articulation and an outlet in the journals. The rivalries between film journals like *Film*, *filmindia*, *Ćitrapat*, *Stār*, *Sham'ā* and others make apparent the language hierarchies in India and also bring to the fore the ways in which regional film production centres like Lahore, Calcutta and Hyderabad were challenging the hegemony of Bombay. The overlaps between the cinematic public sphere and the Urdu imaginaire created space for the articulation of taste, culture and good moral conduct through the film journals. Campaigning over the *iṣlāḥ* of films and their audiences through the *akhlāqī* framework allowed Urdu film journalists to define and refine their role as film critics with a "*literary* conscience". Many of the Urdu film journals, by incorporating literary genres, expanded the reach of cinema and brought new entanglements of cinema with the literary. Yusuf Dehlvi's *Sham'ā* or Qamar Jalalabadi's *Stār* were successful formats incorporating literary genres like *afasānā* (short story), *naẕm* (poetry) and Urdu drama with film reviews, criticism and advertisements. Thus, were Urdu film journals an extension of the literary? In their style, format and address they attempted to emulate literary journals,

[167] Arsh Siddiqui, 1927- 1997.

creating stylistic continuities but content related to cinema needed new strategies of engagement. The creative use of the Urdu language in *Sham'ā*, *Nigāristān* or *Stār* for the presentation of film material added to these journals' uniqueness. The wide spectrum of their address and varying tones produced inherent tensions between the project of *a<u>kh</u>lāq* and *iṣlāḥ* and the titillations and salacious star gossip with which it coexisted. These discontinuities with Urdu literary journals allow us to view the Urdu film journals as material objects that reflected their times; they were deeply engaged in new intermedial and intertextual formats that expanded and enlarged the domain of the Urdu public sphere.

CHAPTER 3

CINEMATIC DISCOURSE AND TEXTS FROM THE URDU PUBLIC SPHERE (1930- 50)

The overlaps between the cinematic public sphere and Urdu literary culture produced a series of fascinating texts that fed into and shaped an Urdu discourse around film. At the turn of the twentieth century, the spread of ideas and concepts was calibrated by the burgeoning print and information networks. Urdu was an important medium through which individuals and institutions were able to articulate the ideas emerging from the complexities of negotiating with colonial modernity. The notion of cinema as a western technological import needed to be embedded within a series of vernacular modes of cognition and practice. This elaboration, dissemination and translation of cinematic discourse and the use of its technology generated a series of serious pedagogical engagements. The transfer of technological knowledge, skill and cultural capital was based primarily on two modes of cognition and application. The first mode was formal and institutionalised while the second was informal and autodidactic. The institutional route meant learning the disaggregated jobs of filmmaking through apprenticeships at studios or attending courses at technical schools of filmmaking in India and abroad.[1] The early film studios were considered to be important training grounds for different kinds of film jobs.[2] Many believed that the early studios provided a hands-on learning environment and held tremendous possibilities of mobility within the studio hierarchy. By the 1930s, the expanding film studios were invested in debates on education and technical skill that were linked to notions of respectability and legitimacy. Competing studios tried to acquire sophisticated, educated and skilled personnel for their business in bids to outdo each other. The importance of this discourse of skill and specialisation was also evident from the Indian Cinematograph Committee's (ICC) exploration of questions around technology and existing

[1] There are innumerable accounts of early filmmakers travelling to Europe and America to learn filmmaking through visits to studios in Hollywood or German studios like UFA. American sound engineer Wilford Dening was hired by Ardershir Irani to assist on sound for *Alam Ara.* V. Shantaram visited and trained at UFA studios in Berlin in 1932. Himanshu Rai and Devika Rani too had access to foreign studios for learning and transfer of skills in England and Germany. In the 1930s, the Abdulla Fazalbhoy Technical Institute of Radio and Cinema in Bombay provided courses to learn the technical aspects of film and radio production; later the institute was affiliated to the St. Xavier's Technical Institute. Also, see Indian Cinematograph Committee Report's observations on the "artistic and technical training" of film personnel in India; see, *Report of the Indian Cinematograph Committee (1927- 1928)* (Calcutta: Central Publication Branch, Government of India, 1928), 31-32.

[2] Kaushik Bhaumik writes that Kohinoor Film Company was the "training ground of almost all major performers, directors and technicians of the silent-film era who made their name in the second half of the 1920s". See, Bhaumik, "The Emergence of the Bombay Film Industry, 1913-1936" (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2002), 48.

technical prowess within the industry. In their report, the committee lamented the "dearth of trained men" and offered to provide "technical and business advice" to Indian film concerns.[3] There was also a suggestion for the institution of a "scholarship for studying the various technical subjects connected with the industry, tenable in foreign countries, such as Germany, America and England" which was proposed by the ICC.[4]

A second, slightly divergent practice emerging within these institutional efforts of technical pedagogy were the guidebooks and how-to manuals circulating through print networks. These didactic texts encouraged alternative ways to produce and share skill. For amateur film enthusiasts/autodidacts, these manuals opened up a world of opportunities to acquire technological skill and film craft. The production of film manuals and guidebooks can be placed within the longer tradition of instruction books available on diverse subjects because of the print boom in India. These texts were aimed at autodidacts, entrepreneurs and aficionados who were keen to acquire technical skills as well as basic know-how of a variety of 'new' emerging trends like cricket, crochet, Western style tailoring among others.[5] To keep abreast of the new cosmopolitan cultures, texts were produced in a variety of languages, and Urdu was a dominant language in which these texts were made available to readers and connoisseurs. It is no surprise that the texts to assist in the transfer of cinematic knowledge and skill were produced in and translated into Urdu. These texts fulfilled a variety of needs, ranging from pedagogy to cinephilia.

In this chapter, I map the networks of Urdu print culture that impacted, disseminated and institutionalised cinematic discourse and skill sharing. Many contemporary writers considered Urdu as a language particularly suitable for translation of cinematic concepts as it was able to act as a bridge between transnational global ideas and concepts that circulated within the Indian public sphere in the 1930s and 40s. This chapter also points to the crucial connection between Urdu language texts on cinema and the Urdu imaginaire to show how this transaction was mediated and enriched by mutual interactions. By bringing into discussion

[3] *Report of the Indian Cinematograph Committee (1927- 1928)* (Calcutta: Central Publication Branch, Government of India, 1928), 33.
[4] Ibid., 77.
[5] The British Library has a list of interesting manuals on how to play cricket, do crochet, learn English, tailor English style clothing etc. Debashree Mukherjee has called Baburao Patel an autodidact in the context of his ability to learn the English language and then run his *filmindia* empire. See Mukherjee, "Creating Cinema's Reading Public: The emergence of Film Journalism in Bombay," In *No Limits: Media Studies from India,* ed. Ravi Sundaram (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013), 165-198.

material previously overlooked by scholars I highlight a few texts that can be seen as part of this project of cinema literacy and experience.

The proliferation of print enabled the production of Urdu song booklets which traversed a transmedial landscape extending from gramophone to theatre, radio and cinema. These cheaply printed booklets accompanied performances on stage or the screening of films, and were like souvenirs that audiences were able to take home with them after a particular show, for free or at a nominal price. The song booklets helped audiences to memorise and memorialise song sequences, and to re-enact, re-imagine and essentially extend the life of the film through the poetic/lyrical framework of the printed text. During the 1930s, many studios were producing short films like *Songs of Mukhtar Begum, Id Songs* etc. which points to the importance of the song within popular culture.[6] Recent film scholarship such as Rakesh Sengupta's work on screenwriting manuals for beginners in English, suggests that "the widespread circulation of screenwriting manuals for amateurs constituted a pedagogical infrastructure separate from, but parallel to, the other infrastructural flow of ideas and professionals from the Parsi theatre into the film industry".[7] Thus print played a crucial and enabling role in promoting film pedagogy. As well as manuals on screenwriting, guidebooks on film acting were available in the market for aspirants to film studios. This institutionalisation of film crafts like screenwriting and acting through print was premised on promises or guarantees of jobs within the industry.

In this chapter I look at Urdu acting manuals such as *Film Acting Guide* (Prithi Singh, 1935, Lahore), *Filmī Adakāri* (Film Acting, A translation of Pudovkin's *Film Acting* by Balam Firdausi, 1937, Lahore) and *Film-va Drama* (Film and Theatre, Ovais Ahmad Abid, 1935, Allahabad). What was the purpose of these texts? Who were the proposed readers/listeners/consumers of these texts? These acting guides propose various methodologies and offer ways to dissect acting into emotive registers that can potentially help struggling actors to become successful 'stars'. Another series of books that I explore in this chapter are the books

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[6] B.D. Bharucha, *Indian Cinematograph Yearbook 1938* (Bombay: Motion Picture Society of India, 1938).

[7] Rakesh Sengupta, "Writing from the Margins of Media: Screenwriting Practice and Discourse During the First Indian Talkies," *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 9, no. 2 (2018), 117–136. While Sengupta focusses only on English screenwriting manuals, the Urdu *Filmī Kahani Kaise Likheiṅ* (How to write a Film Story) by Maqsood Shamim was published from Hyderabad, while I haven't been able to locate the book in the archives, it has been referenced in *Filmī Ishāre* by Latif Ahmad Alvi as an important text on film in Urdu. See, Alvi, *Filmī Ishāre* (Hyderabad: National Fine Printing Press, 1957), 10. Apart from screenwriting manuals, many articles regularly appeared in Urdu film journals on the subject of screenwriting.

on acting/actresses such as *Filmī Pariyaṅ* (*Film Fairies* by Gauhar Ramnagri, 1936, Delhi), *Filmī Titliyaṅ* (*Film Butterflies* by Bijli Jampuri, 1945, Hyderabad) and *Filmī Sitāre* (*Film Stars*, Mohammad Taher, 1944). These biographical compendiums are a compilation/list of contemporary actresses in India, with brief descriptions of the actresses' faces alongside a sketchy filmography and a sprinkling of biographical details. These texts can be understood as engaged within a multi-pronged approach to the circulation and distribution of the 'star' text in the 1930s and 40s. Often written in an exaggerated poetic metaphorical style typical of Urdu genres such as the *tazkira* that deal with writings on famous/important personalities, these manuals and actors' *tazkiras* were part of the extensive institutional apparatus of the cinematic public sphere and highlight the intricate flows of cinematic cultures that overlapped with other mediated forms of the Urdu imaginaire in the twentieth century.

As I showed in the previous chapter, the Urdu public sphere through the Urdu film journals' engagement with notions of *akhlāq* and *iṣlāḥ* (reform) provided a philosophical and practical framework to influence film culture. Apart from the film journals, how were these concerns with the need for *akhlāqī* cinema prioritised by Urdu books on cinema? In this chapter, I focus on the text *Film Numa: Film ke muta'alliq iṣlāḥī aur tanqīdī maẓāmīn ka majmū'a* (*Film Numa: A compilation of reformist and critical essays on film*), by Nasiruddin Hashmi (1940, Hyderabad).[8] This text was invested within the debates on *akhlāq* and the production of ethical and moral cinema for its consumers. In *Film Numa*, Hashmi's concerns range from a variety of contemporary topics on cinema like the need for educated actresses, the *iṣlāḥ* of studios, improvement of film form, the question of the language of cinema and most interestingly on how to become a film critic. At the end of the book, Hashmi presents two examples of how to evaluate a film, using two articles that had previously been published in the Urdu film journal *Movieland.* From these examples of how to assess a film, I ask what was the role of the film critic envisioned by Hashmi and how did he employ film criticism? In some ways, Hashmi's *Film Numa* also attempted to produce film literacy and develop skills that were related to the appreciation of film culture and practice. It is crucial to reiterate that cinematic concepts were translated and transcribed into Urdu as it was considered to be the language of cosmopolitanism. Hashmi's text was embedded within a longer tradition emerging from the

[8] Nasiruddin Hashmi (1895- 1964) worked initially in the Finance Department of the Nizam's government, but later taught Urdu at Osmania University, Hyderabad. He is best known for his book, *Dakkan meṅ Urdu* (*Urdu in the Deccan*, 1922), but he wrote several other books that are considered to be invaluable to women's biography, social and cultural history like *Hyderabad ki Niswānī Duniya* (*Women's World of Hyderabad*, 1944).

Urdu public sphere that engaged with the formulation of ethical codes of conduct and comportment of behaviour, as I discuss in more detail in the final section of this chapter. However, what was fascinating was the insertion of a kind of Eurocentric and Americanized view on the industry, that perhaps can be linked to the ICC Evidences and Reports 1928, that produced complexities and contradictions within the writing and thought. Thus, an interesting mix of colonial pedagogy with earlier forms of knowledge production from the Urdu public sphere act as competing forces within Hashmi's *Film Numa*.

These Urdu texts are not an exhaustive list of books on cinema produced in India in Urdu in the two decades under study. References to books such as *Filmī Doshīza*, *Miṭṭī ki Murtoṅ meṅ, Filmī Sangīt* (Prabhulala Garga, 1939) and *Photography* (Mohammad Shuja Munami, 1930s) were found in other books but due to the unavailability of these texts, these have not been included in the chapter. A lot more research needs to be done to understand the print history of these texts, the publishers involved, the intended target readers/listeners/ consumers or even the range of impact of these texts. Suffice it to say that these texts suggest an exciting and engaged interaction between cinema and the Urdu public sphere in India. This chapter attempts to provide a fragmentary glimpse into the world of Urdu texts on cinema from the 1930s and 40s.

FILM ADAKĀRI: TRANSLATING AND TRANSLOCATING ACTING GUIDES AND MANUALS IN URDU

The intersection of Urdu print with film culture enabled the proliferation of texts related to cinema. In the 1930s, the acting manual became a staple as curiosity around film and film actors became mainstream. The presence of women on screen created anxieties and excitement within the public sphere and this obsession with actresses in this period has been well documented.[9] As film circuits were expanding, the need for well-trained film actors familiar with cinematic techniques and processes was most urgently felt. Prithi Singh's *Film Acting*

[9] Rosie Thomas, "Not Quite (Pearl) White: Fearless Nadia, Queen of the Stunts" in *Bollyworld: Popular Indian Cinema through a Transnational Lens,* ed. Raminder Kaur and Ajay J. Sinha (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005), 35-69; Neepa Majumdar, *Wanted Cultured Ladies Only! Female Stardom and Cinema in India, 1930s-1950s* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009); Debashree Mukherjee, "Notes on a scandal: writing women's film history against an absent archive," *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 4, no. 1 (2013), 9-30 and Sarah Rahman Niazi, "White Skin/Brown Masks: The Case of 'White' Actresses from Silent to Early Sound Period in Bombay," *Culture Unbound* 10, no. 3 (2018): 332–352.

Guide was published in Lahore in 1935.[10] The guide was addressed to people interested in film acting and aimed to provide "basic yet complete understanding of the art". The book was intended as a "practical course" for the uninitiated, for those who can learn the art of being successful by becoming popular actors and at the same time generate a decent income from the profession.[11] Linking notions of success, popularity and the possibilities of generating a livelihood were important shifts in the ways in which film acting as a profession was being configured through such texts in the 1930s. The importance of this book lies in the interesting ways it tries to create equivalences and translate cinematic concepts and ideas from different languages into Urdu for audiences but most crucially for aspirants who want to participate in the filmmaking process. For example, in the chapter "The Invention of Motion Pictures" (*Mutaḥarrik taṣwīr ki ijad*), Singh explains the process of filmmaking as '*film bandī*', shooting as '*taṣwīr kashi*' and how celluloid (*musawwir fīta*/film strip) works. He writes that aspiring film actors and actresses need to familiarise themselves with the different specialised film processes, personnel involved and their duties. In one section, he discusses in detail the role of the producer (*film-sāz*), production manager (*mŏʻāwin film-sāz*), property man (*mir sāmān*), cameraman (*akkās*), continuity man (*tasalsul nigār*), recordist (*ṣadā band*), scenario editor (*mŏʻāwin film-nama*), technical advisor (*mushīr fănī*), film editor (*mudīr-e film*), casting director (*muqassim*), make-up man (*bah-rūp ka mahir tabdīl haiyyat ka nāẓir*), director (*hidāyatkār*), stage manager (*mŏhtamim nigār<u>kh</u>āna*), still man, décor chief (*ārā'ish ka mŏhtamim*), dialogue writer (*mukalma nigār*) and star (*istār*).[12] In other parts of the book, he discusses the role of the scenographer (*manẓar nigār*), director of lighting (*mahir-e barq*) and the chief set designer/ architect (*mĕʻmār <u>kh</u>ās*).

Many of these terms had become popular in film literate circles in the 1930s and these terms were also used by film journals in discussion of the filmmaking process. A term that was recurrently used was '*hidāyatkār*' for director; formed by combining two words '*hidāyat*' (to guide, instruct, direct) and '*kar*' (profession, work), so the '*hidāyatkār*' was one who guides,

[10] Prithi Singh was also the author of the book *Zinda Jādūgari ke Karishme* (*The Miracles of Live Magic*) which was published in 1929 in Lahore. Prithi Singh was the publisher and editor of the journal *Mast Qalandar*. His book *Film Acting Guide* was sold for Re. 3 and was printed at Amrit Electric Press in Lahore. A note in the book suggests that the book was protected under the copyright act of 1914 and any attempts at plagiarism or re-printing without the author's permission was a violation and punishable offence. This indicates that Singh was a seasoned and cautious publisher.
[11] The lines on the title page were "*Film acting, make up aur film se mutaʻalliq dīgar sāda qism ki maʻlūmāt ka mukamal jāmā aur practical course. Jiske muṭālĕʻ se ek na-wāqif ādmi bhi gintī ke dinoṅ meṅ kāmyāb adākār ban kar maʻqūl āmdanī paida kar sakta hai.*" See, Singh, *Film Acting Guide* (Lahore: Amrit Electric Press, 1935).
[12] Ibid., 28-30.

instructs and directs.[13] Singh uses the term '*akkas*' for cameraman which can be interchangeably used for photographer or painter. '*Akkas*' comes from the word '*aks*' (image, to reverse, reflection). It is interesting that the term 'star' remains untranslatable. In the chapter, "A Glimpse of the film studio" (*Nigārkhāne ki ik jhalak*), Singh lists the different components of a studio, the studio floor (*flor/ṣaḥn*) as a site where interior scenes are created (*ik ḥiṣṣe meṅ andarūnī manẓar bhī banāye jāte haiṅ iss ḥiṣṣa ko flor ṣaḥn kahte haiṅ*), the property room (*baṛha'ī ki dukān*/ carpenter's room), dressing room (*libās pahanne ka kamrā*/room to wear costume) etc. [14] While he translates some terms, he merely transliterates the English terms for scenario department, moulder's workshop and does not provide Urdu translations for them. His examples of studios are often from America and Britain. For example, he cites, without referencing the author, an account of an "English tourist (*Angrez saiyāḥ*)" who had the opportunity to visit Universal Studios in America. Narrating the Englishman's experience of witnessing the impressive and grand set of *Phantom of the Opera*, Singh details how the film mobilised visual trickery very cleverly (*is meṅ naẓarī shǒ'bada baṛī ćālākī se dikhaye gaye the*).[15] Through this narration the studio emerges as a site full of magic, amusement and the spectacular ("I saw some incredibly unfamiliar things there"/ *maine wahāṅ bāz bahut ajīb chizeiṅ dekhiṅ*).[16] These descriptions of the visit to a film studio were not unique but were part of a corpus of writing that attempted to familiarise people with the art of filmmaking and its processes, but also keep the thrill of the moving pictures alive. In comparison, Singh's account of a visitor to an Indian studio was that of dilapidation and decay:

> If you glimpse at the environment of this studio you will find a heap of material goods, unnecessary impure and unclean junk everywhere. Broken chairs, torn curtains, rotten sacks, old bamboo, paint boxes, dirty rugs, decaying gunny, broken vessels, scattered make up provisions…in the end you will see a world which is destroyed like the path of the moon.[17]

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[13] Journalists in Hindi film magazines attempted to translate the word 'Director' in Hindi as *nirdeshak* or *digdarshak*. While *nirdeshak* was also sometimes interchangeable used for Producer, *digdarshak* did not particularly catch on and the use of these remained limited and sparing. See, Ravikant, "Film Patrika ka ādi-kāl: Ćānd, Ćitrapat aur anya kahānīyāń," *CSDS DigiPapers*, (Nov. 2020): 59.
[14] Prithi Singh, *Film Acting Guide* (Lahore: Amrit Electric Press, 1935), 21.
[15] Ibid., 21.
[16] Ibid., 22.
[17] Urdu original: "*is (nigārkhāne) ke māḥaul par nigāh dāliye to har jagah mādi sāmānoṅ aur ghair ẓarūrī khatrag ka ek ambār ghalīz-o kaṣīf āpko milega. Tuṭi hui kursiyāṅ, phaṭe hue parde, saṛi hui boriyāṅ, purāne baṅs, rang ke dibbe, mailī dariyaṅ, bosīda tāt, shakista ẓurūf, make up ka muntashir sāmān; gharaz ik aisī dunīya āp ko naẓar āyegi jo ku-rah-e mah-tāb ki tarha barbād kardi gayi ho*." Ibid., 22.

Singh insisted that these were not mere matters of complaint (*shikāyat ki bāt nahiṅ*). Exhorting Indian studios to do better, he maintained that there was no reason for this difference between foreign and Indian studios. What emerges throughout *Film Acting Guide* is Singh's knowledge of and fascination for foreign studios. In the opening chapters to the book, he traces the history of motion pictures from Muybridge's photographic experiments with horses, to Edison's Kinetoscope and the later developments in camera technology, laying out the linear history of film inventions.[18] In other chapters, Singh discusses the important techniques of editing, specifically Kuleshov's famous experiment with actor Ivan Mosjoukine's close-up and a bowl of soup.[19] Further, Singh also elaborates on the various techniques used by Sergei Eisenstein in his legendary *Battleship Potemkin*.[20] This concise yet rehearsed history of the birth of cinema and the refinement of its techniques points to the ways in which this narrative of film development was formulated, endured and circulated globally in different vernacular contexts. In another chapter on "Scene and Scenography" (*Scenery aur tasvīr kashi*), Singh discusses different ways of filming, scene construction, set design and on-location shooting. Providing illustrative examples from Kilm Film company, London, Gaumont British Corporation's *Rome Express* (d. Walter Forde, 1932) and other unnamed American film studios, Singh attempted to present the marvels of film production in foreign studios.[21] In a similar vein, he writes of the "miracles" of the talkies (*Filmī karishma saziyaṅ*). Citing Pudovkin's *The End of St. Petersburg* (1927), Singh explains in detail how the war sequences were shot using dynamite, magnesium fuse/wick (*magnesium fatīla*) and of course Pudovkin's

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[18] Ibid., 8-9.

[19] Singh only mentions Mosjoukine who was a matinee star during the silent era, he glosses over Kuleshov's name by merely referring to him as a "*Rusī/* Russian film editor". Ibid, p. 14. It is interesting to note the persistence of Kuleshov's experiment within pedagogic textbooks on cinema in Urdu. The experiment also finds mention in Patras Bokhari's talk at the Minerva Club in Lahore which I discuss in chapter 5. Norman Holland has argued that the Kuleshov experiment has "passed into the mythology of film". See, Holland, "Film Response From Eye to I: The Kuleshov Experiment," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 88, (1989): 416. For an analysis of the Kuleshov Experiment and its theoretical implication on cinematic language, see Stephen Prince and Wayne E. Hensley, "The Kuleshov Effect: Recreating the Classic Experiment", *Cinema Journal* 31, no. 2 (1992): 59-75. For Patras Bokhari's article see, *Nairang-i-khayāl*, Special Film No., 1931, 14.

[20] Prithi Singh, *Film Acting Guide* (Lahore: Amrit Electric Press, 1935), 15.

[21] Singh discusses how a film company with the guardianship of railway experts was able to install a whole set of railways engine, carriages and other paraphernalia in the studio. This was an incredible feat bringing together two of the greatest inventions of the twenty-first century, railways and cinema. He discusses the challenges in trying to capture night scenes and how these scenes were directed using mobile tracking cameras, innovative light sources and editing techniques. Further he also discusses the intricacies of shooting with automobiles which required skill and patience. He describes the process as extremely alluring/ fascinating (*nihāyat dil fareb*). Ibid., 26.

use of editing techniques by mixing/juxtaposing shots to produce the desired effect and meaning. [22]

Pudovkin and his ideas had become popular in India and his work was in circulation from the time of its first publication in the form of translations.[23] In 1934, a series of lectures delivered by Pudovkin at the State Institute of Cinematography was published as *The Actor in Film*, with an introduction by Iezuitov.[24] Pudovkin's writings such as "Types instead of Actors" (1929) and his remarks in *The Film Director and Film Material* (1926) included a substantial discussion on acting in film and were part of the theoretical engagements produced by Soviet avant-garde film practitioners.[25] These texts dealt with theoretical questions about the peculiarities of acting in film, including the interrelation between stage and film acting, that were pressing concerns of the 1920s. In 1937, Balam Firdausi's *Film Adakāri* was published in Lahore.[26] The text was a loose translation of Pudovkin's *Film Acting*, with significant additions, as I will discuss. Firdausi begins the Introduction (*Ta'arruf*) with the contemplative question, "Who can be an actor?" and claims that this book presents a detailed and complete discussion on the topic. He refers to Pudovkin as the "Great Russian craftsman" who has written an extraordinary book on acting.[27] Firdausi stresses that cinema has had a great influence on Indian society and significantly affected cultural practices. He writes that the mentality of the young was changing and a predilection for film acting was growing among them. However, he laments that despite such an interest in cinema, there was a lack of the right mentors who would guide these young individuals in the art of acting.[28] Firdausi considers Pudovkin's book pertinent as it tried to shed light on the key aspects of film acting and used relevant illustrative examples from Russian films that had pedagogic potential. For Firdausi,

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[22] He erroneously calls it *The Winter of St. Petersburg*, Ibid., 36. Also, this section is a translation from Pudovkin's introduction to *Film Technique* (xvi) which Singh doesn't reference.

[23] B.D. Garga in a blog on Pudovkin's visit to India writes, "Pudovkin's fame (which squarely rested as much on his two remarkable books as on his many films) had long preceded his arrival in India. There was hardly a cineaste worth his salt who had not heard of Pudovkin, and had not richly drawn on the fund of knowledge that was concentrated in the two slim volumes, *Film Technique* and *Film Acting*." See Garga, "The Prophet of Cinema", blog accessed on November 5, 2019, http://garga-archives.com/writings/the-prophet-of-cinema/

[24] Amy Sargeant, *Vsevold Pudovkin: Classic Films of the Soviet Avant-garde* (London: I.B Tauris & Co. 2000), 155.

[25] Other writings on acting such as Petrov's *What a Cinema Actor Needs to Know* (1926) and those written by Stanislavsky. See, Amy Sargeant, "Introduction", Ibid., xvi.

[26] The book was printed at Gilani Electric Press, Hospital Road, Lahore. The cost was Re. 1/-. It is difficult to assess the reach of the text and how influential Firdausi's ideas were within the cinematic public sphere. The text does find mention in other books on cinema like Latif Ahmad Alvi's *Filmī Ishāre* (Hyderabad: National Fine Printing Press, 1957).

[27] Balam Firdausi, *Film Adakārī* (Lahore: Gilani Electric Press, 1937), 9.

[28] Ibid., 9.

Pudovkin's text and the Russian case studies were crucial. However, he was careful to situate the discussion within the Indian context, constantly referring to and drawing sources from the Urdu imaginaire on notions of the *a<u>kh</u>lāq* and *iṣlāḥ* of actors and their craft.

Fidausi sets out the discussion on film acting as a distinct craft which replicates reality through a deep understanding of human psychology and emotions. Quoting from Pudovkin, he explains the difference between the crafts of stage and film acting. He writes that film actors complain that the kind of respect that stage actors receive does not come their way, but he assures the reader that the book carries a discussion on the topic to help those aiming to pursue film acting.[29] Firdausi provides a clear understanding of the disaggregated structure of a film shoot, and the lack of continuity in the way sequences are filmed, and stresses that this process requires a whole different structure and code of conduct from an actor than in theatre.[30] He writes that to come to grips with this highly complex and difficult process, the "Russian chief of film" (perhaps referring to Pudovkin) has come up with rehearsal (*peshkāri*) as the solution.[31] Firdausi stresses that to compete with the stage actor, a film actor must be able to delve deep and pull out his emotions with immediacy. However, the actor has to remember that only when mental faculties are appropriately mobilised can physical movement be controlled.[32] In Firdausi's reading of Pudovkin, the yardstick of good acting depended on the successful translation of emotions which had to be enhanced through one's own moral conduct (*a<u>kh</u>lāq*). An actor must attempt to translate their emotions without words; as if an actor could portray through the eyes a complete assemblage of emotions.[33] Further, Firdausi discusses how stage acting demanded a kind of exteriorization of emotions, gestures and modulation of voice which was not necessary for film. Film actors on the contrary, he stressed, needed 'natural' (*qudratī*) gestures, speech and emotions in acting.[34]

In the Preface (*Pairā-i-āghāz*), Firdausi notes that the scale of cinema was so large that 'anyone' could find work in the business.[35] This notion of the unlimited possibilities of cinema provided a crucial attraction to the professionalisation of cinema in the early period. However,

[29] Ibid., 12.
[30] Ibid., 12.
[31] Ibid., 12.
[32] Ibid., 13.
[33] Ibid., 12.
[34] Ibid., 15.
[35] Ibid., 10.

the democratisation of cinema needed to be embedded within an *akhlāqī* purview to legitimise and make it more palatable. Firdausi wrote that,

> …despite many objections, cinema has gathered momentum and has become an important part of our society. Even respectable (*sharīf*) families have begun to consider film viewing as enjoyable. And thus, it is incumbent on film acting that apart from portraying characters on screen, the actor's personal capability (*istĕʻdād*) and code of conduct (*akhlāq*) should set an example of high standard. Wouldn't it be splendid if, along with achieving success by acting in a few films, that people would have immense regard in their heart for you from the point of view of *akhlāq* too?[36]

Firdausi stressed that short-sightedness (*ʻāqibat na-andeshī*) and repugnant habits (*ādāt-e qabiha*) cannot support acting as it was commonly imagined in Hindustan.[37] For Firdausi, more or less every actor in the country possessed an inferior *akhlāq*, and he wrote, "this excuse is perceived to be so reasonable that one leaves one's *akhlāq* at the doorstep of the studio."[38] This he considered was absolutely erroneous as, with one's personal *akhlāq*, whether it was as a leader or an actor, one could create discerning grandeur. Firdausi urged the reader/actor that through their high moral conduct (*alā akhlāq*) they could strive to become a great actor because in the translation of emotions, good *akhlāq* was of considerable assistance. He does concede that not all actors who perform the roles of villains and criminals were bad. However, one had to take care and ensure that the bad elements of a character did not seep into an actor's own *akhlāq*.[39] This sermonising was very different from Pudovkin's own text on film acting and one can visibly see the influence of the Urdu public sphere on Firdausi's understanding of the role of the actor. In another example, Firdausi recommends the actor to regularly practice softening the speech (*lafẕ meṅ takhfīf karna*) and using conversational poetic couplets to heighten the expressions of their face.[40] The use of couplets (*shĕʻr*) to punctuate a

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[36] Urdu original, "*…hazār mukhālafatoṅ ke ba-wajūd cinema zor pakaṛta jā raha hai. Yahaṅ tak ke humari mŏʻāsharat ka ek jazu ban gaya hai. Sharīf se sharīf khandān bhi ise dekh kar sāmān tafri paida karte haiṅ is liye filmī adakāri par lāzim āta hai ke wo kirdār-e haiyat ke ʻilāwa apni zāti istĕʻdād aur akhlāq-e alā ka namūnā ban kar logoṅ ke sāmne aye. Kya khūb hogā agar āp ćand filmoṅ meṅ kāmyāb adakāri kar ćuke hoṅ aur sāth hi akhlāqī nuqṯa naẕar se bhī logoṅ ke diloṅ meṅ āp ki qadar ho…*" Ibid., 18.
[37] Ibid., 13.
[38] Ibid., 13.
[39] Ibid., 13.
[40] This however he quickly warns can come across as trite, so must be done with caution and casual ease. Ibid., 13-14.

conversation for expression was seen as a sign of erudition and education and was a fairly common practice in the Urdu public sphere. The Preface is full of such practical advice. For example, Firdausi wrote that being merely beautiful was not enough for the screen; emoting was essential and he recommended practicing expressions and gestures in front of the mirror. He urged that "…if you are successful in this exercise then you must send an application to the studios immediately."[41] This was, however, followed by a word of caution in the end:

> … the youth is requested to not run to the studios blinded by their zeal for acting. Actually, only those youngsters with limited mental faculty who watch heroes and heroines in films get restless and in their scant comprehension want to emulate them. It is an open secret that there are unlimited difficulties in this profession which one discovers only when one enters the studio. If any youngster does not possess the special craft of acting then they should have doubts, as you may be ruining your life.[42]

Firdausi's warning to the cinema-crazed youth is followed by further wise counsel. He recommends to actors that they must (1) never look straight in the eye of the camera unless you are asked to; (2) Never argue with the director; (3) Don't move anything where you are acting; (4) Never smoke where you are shooting; (5) Don't talk in a loud voice for no reason; (6) If the director calls you, go to him without delay; (7) Always carry your food to the studio, you may have to work there for 24 hours; (8) Don't wear uncomfortably tight shoes; (9) Don't be intimate with the women.[43] This list of disparate advice ranges from useful and feasible to moralising. It draws on hierarchies of power within the studio, defining an actor's labour in relation to the director, with implicit suggestions of obedience and reverence. Another layer within this volley of guidelines to an actor (presumably male) is to maintain decorum by maintaining professional boundaries with female co-actors and other crew on set. These words are another deviation from Pudovkin's text and embed Firdausi's text within the Indian film milieu. Even in the other chapters of the book which claim to be translations of Pudovkin,

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[41] Ibid., 11.

[42] Urdu original, "*…āk̲h̲ir meṅ nau-jawanoṅ se guẕārish hai ke wo andhā-dhun adakāri ka shauq dil meṅ liye nigārkhānoṅ ki taraf mat dauṛeiṅ, dar asal maḥdūd zehniyat wale nau-jawān film meṅ hero aur heroine ko dekh kar betāb ho jāte haiṅ aur apni kam-fahmi ki wajah se khud bhi waisa hi banna chahte haiṅ. Ye to ek khuli hui ḥaqīqat hai ke is peshe meṅ jis qadar dushwāriyaṅ haiṅ wo ṣirf nigārkhāne meṅ dāk̲h̲il ho kar hi maḥsūs ho sakti haiṅ. Agar kisi nau-jawān meṅ fan-e adakāri ka khās jauhar na pinhna ho toh us ko adakār banne ka wahm bhi nahiṅ hona chahiye varna apni zindagī to nahi tabāh kar dega*." Ibid., 20.

[43] Ibid., 21.

Firdausi takes liberties with the source text. For example, while he translates many of Pudovkin's ideas, he often resorts to using Urdu poetic metaphors to embellish and explain the prose.[44] This strategy in translating Pudovkin was crucial to the efforts of translocating and domesticating cinematic practice within the framework of the Urdu imaginaire.

It is worth digressing and reflecting on the nature of Firdausi's translation of Pudovkin. Taking my cue from theories of translation, I argue that Firdausi's text departs from Pudovkin's source-text in terms of its syntactical construction not only because of the difference in the languages but also because Firdausi does not adhere to producing lexicographical equivalences. His translation is an act of creation that mobilises intra-textual material and through the translation radically recontextualises the source text. Emulating Pudovkin's style of writing with precision was not his objective; Firdausi's aim was the coherent transference of ideas and their translocation within the Indian mindscape. What do we make of material that is 'lost' in translation or essentially reproduced with myriad new meanings? Lawrence Venuti's work on understanding translation as an interpretive act is useful to our analysis of Firdausi as a translator. Venuti argues that "we should view the translator as a special kind of writer, possessing not an originality that competes against that of the source-text author, but rather an art of mimicry, aided by a stylistic repertoire that taps into the literary resources of the translating language."[45] Venuti's exploration of questions around the translator's unconscious and translation ethics are useful in understanding Firdausi's project of translation. He suggests that many choices in translation are premised on linguistic and cultural frameworks that are "unconscious", unstated or based on personal preference.[46] In a similar vein, to explicate the material complexity of translation, Derrida writes,

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[44] For example, "The act of perception of a fragment of reality, recorded and fixed by the artist in the work he creates, resumes life and repeats itself in perception by a multitude of spectators. In concert with the artist, the spectator likewise perceives a part of reality, and, in his act of doing so, thereby transmutes the work of art to a social-historical phenomenon, i.e. from a paper, or canvas or celluloid symbol to an actual process." See, Pudovkin, *Film Technique and Film Acting: The Cinema Writings of V.I Pudovkin*, tr. Ivor Montagu (London: Vision Press Limited, 1958), 13. This Firdausi translates as, "*Artist jis ḥaqīqat ko maḥsūs karne par use apne makhsus fani ṯarīqe se āshkār karta hai us ke tamāshā'īyoṅ meṅ ye ḥaqīqat dobāra zindagī paida karti hai aur hazār ha tamāshā'īyoṅ ke ẕamīr meṅ judāgāna tor par jalwa gir hoti hai. Jis tarha sha'mā-e ḥaqīqat* artist ke *takhayyul ko roshan karti hai. Usi tarha tamāshā'īyoṅ ke ẕamīr meṅ bhi mauj noor banke sirāyat kar jati hai. Wahi ḥaqīqat jise artist maḥsūs karta hai tamāshā'īyoṅ par ẕāhir ho jātī hai. Goyā is tarha artist ki paida kardah shai art ki dunīya se nikal kar majlisī dunīya meṅ dākhil hotī hai. Kāghaz (paper), pardah*-e simi *(silver screen) aur saṅg-e marmar (marble) jo ba-zāt-e khud be-jān ćīzeiṅ haiṅ tamāshā'īyoṅ ke ẕamīr meṅ zindagī aur ḥarkat ki manẕar ban jati haiṅ*." See, Firdausi, *Film Adakāri* (Lahore: Gilani Electric Press, 1937), 23-24.

[45] Lawrence Venuti, *Translation changes everything: Theory and Practice* (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2013), 113.

[46] Ibid., 32.

> The materiality of a word cannot be translated or carried over into another language. Materiality is precisely that which translation relinquishes. To relinquish materiality: such is the driving force of translation. And when that materiality is reinstated, translation becomes poetry (Derrida 1978: 210).[47]

Following Derrida and Venuti, Firdausi's translation as an interpretive act inevitably diverges from the source-text in its form but is layered with affective meaning. Firdausi extends Pudovkin's linguistic and stylistic features by inserting his own authorial stamp and incorporating Urdu poetic metaphors. When I compared the English translation to the Urdu text, in some instances Firdausi had omitted passages, or condensed or elaborated on Pudovkin's translation.[48] One is unsure if this translation was authorised by Pudovkin (unlikely), or through which channels Firdausi accessed the text, as the role of the publisher also remains unclear. What remains clear is that Firdausi's text is an innovative reordering of Pudovkin within the Urdu imaginaire that produced cultural meaning and signification for the cinematic public sphere in India. Through Pudovkin, we find Firdausi was imparting knowledge of acting within the *a<u>kh</u>lāqī* framework. Another pressing concern for him was the proverbial anxiety around the presence of women in the film business and the morality of film studios. The question of whether 'educated women/girls (*paṛhī likhī laṛkīyaṅ*) should join the studios or not' had generated a substantial debate within the cinematic public sphere in Hindi, English, Bengali and other presses in the 1930s. A topic of discomfort for some, and for others a matter of reform, these oscillating positions were a recurrent motif in the writings in this period. Firdausi wrote that "those against such a proposition consider the film business as an immoral occupation (*ẕalīl pesha*). In some eyes, filmmakers have such deplorable conduct (*past a<u>kh</u>lāq*) that no woman can remain safe there. But both these assumptions are wrong as the previous pages have shown that acting is an esteemed profession (*mu'azzaz pesha*)."[49] Much like his contemporaries, he squarely lays the blame on the women who worked in the early studios: "it is known that the studios are filled with women who have bad/poor *a<u>kh</u>lāq* and their whole life is dedicated to sin. To hide their wrong-doings they have wrongly accused filmmakers. In my opinion, women with lofty thoughts and good *a<u>kh</u>lāq* who are qualified can

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[47] Derrida as quoted by Venuti. Ibid., 34.
[48] Due to the lack of expertise in Russian, I rely on the English translation which has been considered good. However, I do acknowledge that like any translation, there may be elements from the original text that have been subject to interpretive translation practices. I used the translation by Ivor Montagu, *Film Technique and Film Acting: The Cinema Writings of V.I Pudovkin* (London: Vision Press Limited, 1958).
[49] Balam Firdausi, *Film Adakārī* (Lahore: Gilani Electric Press, 1937), 20.

acquire this craft without fear or threat."[50] Thus we see that the drive to cleanse the studios and recruit women who possessed "lofty thoughts and good *a<u>kh</u>lāq*" competed with the fascination for the figure of the actress, the performer on screen.

FILMI FAIRIES OF BOMBAY: BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARIES AND MEMORIALISING CONTEMPORARY STARDOM IN URDU

The biography has had a crucial place in narrativizing and addressing the personal within the Urdu public sphere in India. There has been a long tradition of life history writing in a variety of coded genres and modes in Urdu.[51] Film related biographical material in the 1930s and 40s borrowed from these different genres in Urdu.[52] The two biographical dictionaries I have managed to access, *Filmī Pariyaṅ* (*Film Fairies* by Gauhar Ramnagri, 1936, Delhi) and *Filmī Titliyaṅ* (*Film Butterflies* by Bijli Jampuri, 1945, Hyderabad), can be loosely placed within the genre of *taẕkira.* The *taẕkira* is a compilation of literary memoirs, almost like biographical dictionaries, with brief information about the life of the subjects (often poets, saints) with verses, commentaries on their life, and (in the case of poets) poetic style and composition.[53] Often these *taẕkira*s were arranged alphabetically or were based on historical chronology.[54]

[50] Ibid., 21.
[51] Within the Islamic tradition, the '*sira*' on the life of the Prophet Muhammad is the earliest written biography. According to Siobhan Lambert Hurley, "No wonder that biography and its related genre, the biographical dictionary, flourished as the key mode of historical writing in the Arab world and beyond at least from the eleventh century onwards." See, Hurley, "Life/History/Archive: Identifying Autobiographical Writings by Muslim Women in South Asia," *Journal of Women's History* 25, no. 2 (2013), 65. Also, see works by Nile Green on saint biographies and other hagiographic texts in Urdu in Green, "The Dilemmas of the pious Biographer: Missionary Islam and the Oceanic Hagiography," *Journal of Religious History* 34, no. 4 (Dec 2010): 383- 397. The biographical writings in Urdu derive from literary traditions in Arabic and Persian. H.A.R Gibb's work on *taqabat* (Islamic biographical dictionaries) suggests that these were important for the building up and transmission of Islamic culture. See Gibb, "Islamic Biographical Literature," In *Historians of the Middle East*, ed. B. Lewis and P.M Holt (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 54-58.
[52] The Urdu terms *sawāniḥ-e umrī* or *sawāniḥ-hayāt* are used for biography. *<u>Kh</u>ud gazasht* (autobiography), travelogues (*safarnāmā*) or travel diary (*roznamcha*) also are part of life-writing genres.
[53] According to Marcia Hermansen and Bruce Lawrence, the earliest *taẕkira* of poets in South Asia were written in Persian, even those of Urdu poets. See, "Indo-Persian Tazkiras as Memorative Communications," In *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia*, ed. David Gilmartin and Bruce B. Lawrence (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 156. Also, Farman Fatehpuri has suggested that Muhammad Hussain Azad's *Ab-e Hayat* (Water of Life) written in 1880 was the earliest *taẕkira* in Urdu. See, Fatehpuri, *Urdu Shu'āra ke Taẕkire aur Taẕkira Nigārī* (Lahore: Majlis-e Taraqqi-e Adab, 1972). Also, see, Muhammad Hussain Azad, *Ab-e Hayat*: *Shaping the canon of Urdu poetry*, tr. Francis Pritchett and Shamsur Rahman Farqui (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001).
[54] According to Ralph Russell, the traditional *taẕkira* or the biographical dictionary provided "the poet's name, his *ta<u>kh</u>alluṣ* (pen-name), the city of his birth, his patrons, the date of his death, a description of the quality of his poetry, couched in rather conventional terms, and one or two specimen couplets from his ghazals." Ralph Russell, *The Pursuit of Urdu Literature* (London: Zed Books, 1992), 121–22.

Marcia Hermansen and Bruce Lawrence argue that "*Taẕkira*s are not mere mnemonic repetitions. They are conscious remembrances, and therefore they are both cultural artifacts and cultural reconstructions."[55] The *taẕkira* as a genre is imbued with elements of nostalgia and exaggeration in praise of its subject but is also a crucial document that projects the desired virtues and established norms of worthiness for individuals.[56] While in no way do I claim that the authors Gauhar or Jampuri intended to write *taẕkiras*, as they do not specifically spell out their generic choice, their style of writing and the similarity in construction of the texts is striking. In the late-nineteenth century, *taẕkiras* of women poets especially queens, courtesans (*ṯawā'if*) and aristocratic veiled women (*parda-nashīn k͟hawātīn*) were becoming a novelty as these claimed to provide access into their inner worlds through their poetic expressions, thus creating a haloed space for consumption of their writing.[57] These *taẕkiras* used similar formats employed by anthologisers who compiled biographical dictionaries of male poets and saints, thereby installing the *ṯawā'if* within the networks of Urdu literary and performative culture.[58] The inclusion of the 'ordinary' actress within the *taẕkira* genre was unsurprising as the actress was the new celebrity entertainer who was generating fandom and curiosity among readers and consumers of cinema. Authors Jampuri and Gauhar mimic the style of *taẕkira* compilers and for them the film actresses were 'fairies' and 'butterflies' from a different constellation of star order. Therefore, I explore the possibilities of reading the two texts not as simply randomly assorted biographical entries on actresses but rather as part of a longer tradition of memorialisation of stardom in Urdu.

[55] Hermansen and Lawrence argue that the South Asian iteration of *taẕkira* has elements that can be traced back to Jahiliyyah poetry of the Arabs. See, "Indo-Persian Tazkiras as Memorative Communications," In *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia*, ed. David Gilmartin and Bruce B. Lawrence (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 150.
[56] Ibid., 149- 175.
[57] Richard David Williams has discussed 'feminine *taẕkiras*' such as Muhammad Fasihuddin Ranj's *Baharistān-i Nāz* (*Springtime Garden of Coquetry*, 1864), Durgaprasad Nadir's *Gulshan-i Nāz* (*Rose Garden of Coquetry*, 1876) and *Taẕkirat al-Nisā Nādirī* (Nadir's Anthology of Women, 1878) and Maulvi Abdul Bari's *Taẕkirat-ul k͟hawātīn* (*Anthology of Ladies*, 1930) to show how the *taẕkira* genre was expanded to include women who were beginning to be recognized as skilled poets. See, Williams, "Songs between cities: listening to courtesans in colonial north India," *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society* 3, no. 27 (2017): 591- 610.
[58] Carla Petievich in her study of Muhammad Fasihuddin Ranj has shown how his *taẕkira* compilation pointed to the importance of the *ṯawā'if* as poet, but also that his annotations were full of salacious innuendo. See Petievich, "Feminine Authority and Urdu Poetic Tradition," In *A Wilderness of Possibilities: Urdu Studies in Transnational Perspective*, ed. Kathryn Hansen and David Lelyveld (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), 230- 342. Also, see Shweta Sachdeva Jha, "Tawa'if as Poet and Patron: Rethinking Women's Self Representation," In *Speaking of the Self: Gender, Performance, and Autobiography in South Asia*, ed. Anshu Malhotra and Siobhan Lambert-Hurley (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 141- 164.

These biographical dictionaries of film actresses and actors are curious objects, with a few photographs but mostly brief entries and descriptions. *Filmī Pariyaṅ* by Gauhar claimed to be the first of its kind in Urdu literature (*Urdu adab meṅ apni qism ki pahlī kitāb*).[59] The book proclaimed to unveil (*be- niqāb*) the secret mysteries of the life of beautiful and elegant film actresses (*ḥasīn-o jamīl actressoṅ ke ḥālāt aur filmī zindagī ke sar-basta rāz be- niqāb kiye gaye haiṅ*).[60] In the preface to *Filmī Titliyaṅ*, Jampuri explained the contents of his book as a compendium of the faces (*ćěhra*), graceful manners (*adāyeiṅ*), physical features (*k͟had-o k͟hāl*) and states of being (*halāt*) of the actresses.[61] He suggested that to collate dispersed and unfettered beauties into one place was almost like organising a beauty pageant (*numāyish-e ḥusn ke muqāble*).[62] In similar terms, Gauhar described his book as the "land of fairies/ *paristān*" and suggested that in this new culture (*naye tamaddun*) by merely spending a few coins the reader could bring the whole '*paristān*' to their own home.[63] Gauhar further enticed his readers by suggesting that, along with the brief biographies and the salacious reveals, the book carried photographs of a few actresses who may have made the reader's nights fragrant with their beauty.[64] Both authors conceded that compiling the book was not an easy feat and Jampuri hoped that, more than the photographs (*tasāvīr),* these literary images (*qalmī nuqūsh*) would be favoured by the readers.[65] Thus the pleasures that these books offered to their readers were more than visual and mobilised literary tropes and metaphors from the Urdu imaginaire. While the texts included limited and low-quality photographs, these were perhaps less important to the promised textual pleasures as the literary poetic descriptions were means for engagement with titillation and excitement for the reader/lover of film (*āshiqān film*). The entry on actress Madhuri (Beryl Clasessen) in *Filmī Titliyaṅ* began with the following paragraph:

> Well-proportioned but extremely beautiful body, a moving statue of beauty, neat and clean complexion like snow, black long tresses that smell of musk, forehead like the moon, eyebrows like the crescent, intoxicating eyes, apple-

[59] The first edition was published in 1936 with 1500 print copies. There were 5 editions till 1940 with each year 3000 to 2000 printed copies on an average. In 1942, a revised edition with 3000 copies was published and had 4 editions with a print run of 2100 copies each year. A second revised edition was published in 1946 and 1949 with 3000 print run each year. Gauhar Ramnagri, *Filmī Pariyaṅ* (Delhi: Bīsvi Sadī, 1949), title page.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Bijli Jampuri, *Filmi Titliyāṅ* (Hyderabad: Raj Publishing House, 1945), 7.
[62] Ibid., 7.
[63] Gauhar Ramnagri, *Filmī Pariyaṅ* (Delhi: Bīsvi Sadī, 1949), 5.
[64] Ibid., 6.
[65] Bijli Jampuri, *Filmi Titliyāṅ* (Hyderabad: Raj Publishing House, 1945), 7.

> like cheeks, red and soft lips like the bud of pomegranate, teeth that shine like pearls, bosom that creates unrest...restless like the butterfly.[66]

In another example from *Filmī Pariyaṅ*, Gauhar's description of Devika Rani was similar in tracing her facial features; "A face that is innocent and caresses the heart, sharp piercing eyebrows, mischievous and meaningful eyes, attractive dense tresses which are like dark spirits that can race the hearts of the insipid ascetic (*zāhid-e khushk*)."[67] Neepa Majumdar in her work on early stardom has suggested that attempts at "profiling of the face" by film journals in English and Hindi can be read as stylistic strategies in formulating star discourses in India.[68] She emphasises the crucial place of reticence and literary innuendo in the construction of star profiles. She writes, "The focus on the face, rather than the body, is a further form of innuendo, but it also participates in a more general tendency to substitute the face for the body, as in star profiles…the persistence of innuendo can be explained in terms of reticence, but more specifically by norms of respectability and notions of what is appropriate for public discussion."[69] However, the Urdu biographies relished in the description of the body of the actress through Indo-Persian literary conventions which allowed for the description of the body within appropriate codes for discussion. Both Gauhar and Jampuri's use of literary conventions like the genre of *sarāpa* ('from head to toe'), which was devoted to the detailed praise of the body of the *ma'shūq* (beloved), was crucial. Within this sensibility, the physical charms and sartorial adornments of the beloved are described in a frank, playful manner, allowing the readers to visualise the body of the beloved through the gaze of the poet/lover - *āshiq*. In another example from *Filmī Pariyaṅ*, Shanta Apte was described as "A playful and mischievous Marathi beauty, her body is well-shaped and firm, height is ordinary…"[70] Elsewhere I have argued that Jampuri's (and Gauhar's) use of the genre of *sarāpa* can be placed

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[66] Urdu original: "*Su-ḍaul lekin be-hadd khub- ṣūrat jism, husn-o-jamāl ka ek chalta phirta paikar ṣāf-o-shaffāf burf ki tarha rang, siyah darāz aur musk-bu gesū, ćand si peshānī, hilālī abrū, mukhmūr ānkheṅ, seb ki tarha rukhsār, anār ki kali ki tarha surkh aur narm hoṅṭh, motīyoṅ ki se ćamakdār dāṅt, ḥashr saman sīna ...har waqt titli ki tarha be-qarār rehti haiṅ*." Ibid., 119.

[67] Urdu original: "*ma'ṣūm aur dil-nawāz ćĕhra, tīkhī bhaveiṅ, aṅkheṅ shoḵẖ aur ma'ānī-ḵẖez, ghanī zulfeṅ aisi kāli balayeiṅ ke dekh ke har zāhid-e khushk ka bhi dil dhaṛakne lage*." Gauhar Ramnagri, *Filmī Pariyaṅ* (Delhi: Bīsvi Sadī, 1949), 7.

[68] Neepa Majumdar, *Wanted Cultured Ladies Only! Female Stardom and Cinema in India, 1930s-1950s* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 35.

[69] Ibid., 46-47.

[70] Urdu original: "*ek ćanćal aur shoḵẖ Marathi ḥasīna hai, jism su-ḍaul aur maẓbūṭ, qad ma'mūlī …*" Gauhar Ramnagri, *Filmī Pariyaṅ* (Delhi: Bīsvi Sadī, 1949), 25.

within attempts to visualise the 'star-body' in hyperbolic appraisals and plug into prevailing conventions of beauty.[71]

The biographical dictionaries in Urdu were infused with awareness of the appropriate and contemporary norms of decorum and the shifting terrain of stardom. In the Introduction (*Ta'arruf*) to *Filmī Pariyaṅ*, Gauhar wrote that "the *ṭawā'if* had acquired an important place in antiquated Hindustani culture, often individuals from respectable families would head to the *bazārs* with their shops for beauty to rid them of their mental fatigue."[72] Gauhar lamented that the attitude to these *ṭawā'ifs*, who were polite, gentle and well-bred, had been altered by the twentieth-century disdain and morality. However, he made the observation that the erstwhile *ṭawā'if* had been replaced by the new age actress. He wrote:

> A labourer who earns 8 annas per day and a capitalist who earns 1000 rupees every day, both spend their nights in the imaginary embrace of the actress, thus the actress is the joint mistress of both the labourer and the capitalist…They appear in the same row (*ṣaf*)…Now the actress is an important part of our culture who can equally please the heart of a worker or that of an ordinary capitalist. You will find this actress in this book with different faces (*shakloṅ*); sometimes she will manifest in the form (*ṣūrat*) of Devika Rani, in others in the shape of Nargis.[73]

This association of the erstwhile *ṭawā'if* with the "new age actress" was a prevalent mindset. The publicness of both women allowed for such easy slippages and, for some contemporary commentators, this was a matter of anxiety and moral outrage. Gauhar did not load his observation with moral judgement and left it up to the readers to make up their minds about how their response was to be shaped. After the basic introductory pages, *Filmī Pariyaṅ* contained 80 profiles of actresses which were organised randomly beginning with Devika Rani and ending with "an undiscovered actress" (*ik an-dekhī actress*). Jampuri's *Filmī Titliyaṅ* was

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[71] Sarah Rahman Niazi, "White Skin/ Brown Masks: The Case of 'White' Actresses from Silent to Early Sound Period in Bombay," *Culture Unbound* 10, no. 3 (2018): 332–352.

[72] Gauhar Ramnagri, *Filmī Pariyaṅ* (Delhi: Bīsvi Sadī, 1949), 5.

[73] Urdu original: "*Āṭh āne rozāna kamāne wale mazdūr aur ek hazār rupey rozāna wāle sarmayedār dono kī rāteiṅ actressoṅ ki khayālī āghosh meṅ basar hoti haiṅ goya mazdūr aur sarmayedār dono ki mushtarka maḥbūba actress hai…Ik hi saf meṅ naẕar āte haiṅ…Ab actress humāre tamaddun ka ik ẕarūrī juz ban gayi hai jo mazdūroṅ ka dil bhi khush karti hai, ām samayedār ka bhi. Iss kitāb meṅ yehi actress āpko mukhtalif shakloṅ meṅ dikhāyī degi- kabhi woh Devika Rani ki ṣūrat meṅ jalwa-gar hogi toh kahiṅ Nargis ki ṣūrat meṅ*…." Gauhar Ramnagri, *Filmī Pariyaṅ* (Delhi: Bīsvi Sadī, 1949), 5-6.

organised alphabetically like traditional *tazkiras* with 83 profiles. In most entries, the *sarāpā* was followed by biographical details such as date and place of birth, first film and year of entry into film business, successful films, skills as an actress like singing, dancing and prowess in Urdu. For example, take the case of Jampuri's description of Mehtab:

> This star in the film sky dawned on the expanse of Bombay (*faza-i Bambai*) like the moon (*mah-tāb*) on Friday, April 20, 1918 with a blossoming smile after the gentle breeze's playful mischiefs at 4am in the morning. Her parents named her Najma but after she adorned the cultural gatherings, from Najma she became Mehtab. In 1919, for the first time, for the completion of her mother's personal company's silent film *Kamal-e Shamshir*, she appeared before the camera and exhibited tremendous swordsmanship (*shamshīr*) with her brow.[74]

There are a few biographical errors in this passage, such as, according to later sources, Mehtab was born in Gujarat to the Nawab of Sachin, Sedee Ibrahim Khan, and her first film was in 1930 and not at the age of 1 as Jampuri suggested.[75] While these biographical inaccuracies could be subject to fallacies of orally transmitted research and knowledge systems (or simply a misprint – 1919 instead of 1929), what remains of interest are the ways the text became an avenue through which the author could showcase his literary erudition and create metaphorical images of star bodies. The play with Mehtab's name, which in Urdu means moon, or her first film *Kamāl-e Shamshir* as the 'swordsmanship of her brow' (*abrū ke shamshīr*) were familiar Urdu literary strategies to make the text full of poetic innuendo.

Other texts within the biographical dictionary genre on film personnel, with slight variations, were Ovais Ahmad Abid's *Film-va Drama* (Film and Drama, 1935)[76] and

[74] Urdu original: "*Āsmān-e film ka yeh sitāra Māhtāb ban kar 20 aprail 1918 ko bā-roz juma phuloṅ ki muskurāhaṭ aur bād-e nasīm ki aṭhkheliyoṅ meṅ subah ćār baje fazā-i Bambai par ṯulū' hua. Wālīdeiṅ ne Najma nām rakha lekin uss ne bād meṅ jis tarha anjuman-ārāī ki uss ne uss ko Najma se Mehtāb bana diya. Pehli martaba 1919 meṅ apni mā ki zātī company meṅ ek khamosh tasvīr "Kamal-e Shamsheer" ki takmīl ke liye camera ke sāmne ayi aur apni ābru ke shamshīr ke khūb khūb kamāl dikhlāye…"* Bijli Jampuri, *Filmi Titliyāṅ* (Hyderabad: Raj Publishing House, 1945), 17.

[75] Mehtab's interview from 1986 in "Yesteryear actress Mehtab remembers her husband Sohrab Modi," *Cineplot*, September 14, 2013, http://cineplot.com/yesteryear-actress-mehtab-remembers-her-husband-sohrab-modi/

[76] The book was printed at Capital Printing Works, Allahabad and was sold at a price of Rs. 2. Abid had been a regular contributor to Urdu film journals such a *Film* (Hyderabad), *Sarpanch* from Lucknow etc. For *Sarpanch* (Film Edition) from 1934, he had contributed articles titled "Brief History of Film (*Film ki mukhtaṣar tārīkh*)" (August 1934) and "The genesis and gradual progression of cinema in India (*Hindustān meṅ film ka aghāz aur uski tadrījī taraqqī*)" (Sept-Oct 1934). Both these articles were reproduced in the book. He was also one of the

Mohammad Taher's *Filmī Sitāre* (*Film Stars*, 1944).[77] The crucial difference between these books and the ones previously discussed was that they were not exclusively centred on the actresses and had a more general/historical approach to consolidating film biographies. *Film-va Drama* included a brief history of film (*Film ki muk͟htaṣar tārīk͟h*), a list of contemporary actors and actresses followed by their date of birth, and details of film companies (*Hindustan ki film-sāz companiyaṅ*). The second section of the book was dedicated to theatre with chapters on the origin of Urdu drama (*Urdu drame ki ibtidā*) and suchlike. *Film-va Drama* also included photographs of actresses from the cinema such as Ratan Bai, Sabita Devi, Sultana, Jahanara Kajjan, and Zubeida, as well as Bai Munni Bai and Ranga Bai from the stage.

Taher's *Filmī Sitāre*, on the other hand, contained the profiles of both actors and actresses (52 profiles) and included chapters on popular songs, lists of directors, music directors, screenplay writers, addresses of actresses, actors, directors and film companies. In the introduction to *Film-va Drama*, Abid dedicated the book to the growing love of cinema and theatre and acknowledged that the motivation to write the book was an act of service to the lovers of film (*āshiqān film*) who were in great need of appropriate texts in Urdu on the subject. Abid's efforts to collect and present material on film and theatre in Urdu, he claimed, had been contingent on the support of and assistance from actors and actresses in the film and theatre industry. He apologetically wrote,

> A few people will find some things lacking in this book, however, my endeavours are not to be blamed instead there were constraints put by unavailable and disobliging actresses and actors. The excellence of the book depended to a large extent on the assistance from actresses and actors, but alas, barring a few, most responded with disappointment. Instead of sending their biographies, some didn't even bother to respond to my letters.[78]

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undersigned members of the letter published in *Film* as a statement against the exclusion of Urdu film journalists in the Film Journalists' Association of India. See previous chapter 2 for more details.

[77] *Filmī Sitāre* was published by Gulabchand and Sons Publishers, Lahore and was priced at Rs. 2/- per copy.

[78] Urdu original : "*Bāz aḥbāb ko merī is kitāb meṅ kuć kamī maḥsūs hogi, lekin iss meṅ meri koshish ka quṣūr nahiṅ hai balke meri majbūriyoṅ ka, kyun ke iss kitāb ki umdigī ik badi ḥadd tak actressoṅ aur actoroṅ ki imdād par munḥaṣir thī, lekin afsos ye ke mahdūdah ćand ke siwā ik akṣariyat ne iss bāre meṅ nihāyat hi māyūs-kun be-niyāzī se kām liya, jis ki adna miṣāl yeh hai ke unhoṅ ne sawāniḥ-hayat bhejna toh dar kinār k͟huṭūṭ ke jawāb dene ki bhi zaḥmat gawāra nahiṅ ki, natīja ye hua ke mujhe unn ki sawāniḥ ke liye k͟hārija shahādatoṅ ki imdād leni padhi jinkī durusti aur na-durusti ke* muta'alliq *kaise faiṣale kiye ja sakte haiṅ!*". See, Abid, *Film va Drama* (Allahabad: Capital Printing Works, 1935), *jīm* (the Urdu alphabet).

Abid's attempts to authorize his text through declarations of support from the film industry and position himself as a mere compiler, and not a biographer who was 'constructing' these biographies, was interesting. He thanked Bai Munni Bai for providing photographs and material on theatre for the book. Further, he urged those actors and actresses who did not contribute to this edition to do so for the second revised edition of the book, work for which he claimed was already underway.[79] Abid and Taher's style of writing was quite different from Jampuri and Gauhar, the crucial difference being the absence of the *sarāpa* in the profiles. Abid used the terms '*sawāniḥ-e umrī*' (incidents of life) or '*sawāniḥ-hayat*' (biography) when discussing the profiles of the actors and actresses. Thus it would be more appropriate to place *Film-va Drama* within the general biographical compendium than the *taẕkira* genre.

The biographical dictionaries were crucial in presenting models of ideal life but, more specifically, these texts were important in the way they promoted the larger set of *akẖlāqī* values of the Urdu imaginaire. More than biographical accuracy, often these works revealed more about the value system of the 1930s and 40s. Through the use of the poetic canon and traditions as a fact of mastery, an allusion to sophistication and the construction of an ethical subject was always a point of discussion. In writing about actress Zarina, Abid wrote,

> Regarding Miss Zarina, nothing more could be discovered about her circumstances other than the fact that, in the year 1933, she worked in the films of Radha Film Company in Calcutta. It is also known about you (*āp*) that prostitution (*ḥusn faroshī*) is not agreeable to your disposition. That is to say that you consider the profession of courtesans (*ṯawā'ifoṅ*) as highly reprehensible. You are in love with knowledge and literature (*ilm aur adab*)- you spend your time by reading novels and dramas. You are truly and extremely shy. Complexion is clear and there is something attractive about it. It is said about you that you appear more beautiful than Miss Kajjan when you are on the silver screen. Your ideals are lofty and your ethical disposition (*akẖlāq*) is extremely extensive.[80]

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[79] Ibid., (no page number).

[80] Urdu original: "*Miss Zarina ke muta'alliq is se ziyāda halāt ma'lūm na ho sake ke guẕashta sāl yānī 1933 tak āp Radha film company Kalkatta ki filmoṅ meṅ kām karti haiṅ. Āpke muta'alliq ye bhi mashūr hai ke ḥusn faroshī apki ṯabī'at ko marghūb nahiṅ haiṅ. Yānī ṯawā'ifoṅ ke peshe ko āp bahut ziyāda mayūb samjhti haiṅ. Āp* ko ilm *aur adab se ishq hai, novel aur drame padhkar āp apna waqt guzara karti haiṅ. Āp nihayat sharmilī vaqe hui haiṅ. Rang ṣāf hai aur is meṅ ik dil-kashī ma'lūm hoti hai. Kaha jata hai ke āp parda-e* simi *par Miss Kajjan se*

This description interestingly points to some key attributes that were expected of the female performer in the 1930s and 40s. The style of writing of the biographical entry produces an illusion of a dialogic exchange, where the actress was directly, almost personally addressed by the author. By using a formal you (āp), Abid produces the effect of a collaborative biography where the actress was a participant/ present in the very act of compilation. This strategy was crucial to heightening the impact of the *akhlāqī* project. Abid's emphasis on Zarina's disdain for prostitution (*ḥusn faroshī*) and *ṭawā'if* culture placed her within the bounds of respectability. This was further enhanced by her pursuit of knowledge (*ilm*) through reading novels and plays. Once the profile established Zarina's credentials as an educated actress, it could celebrate her good disposition (*wasī' akhlāq*) and lofty thoughts (*buland khayalāt*). On actress Sultana's entry into the film industry at the young age of 12 in 1922, Abid wrote,

> At this time her emotions were in a strange state of turmoil. This is to say that stepping into the film world she was experiencing the feeling that she was guilty of an extraordinary crime. She felt that she had crossed the bounds of custom (*rasm-o-rawāj*) and culture (*tahẕīb-o-tammadun*) into a world where her life was going to be completely different. The reason for the conception of this thought was the narrow view of Indians who considered this profession as extremely low and disgraceful (*ẕalīl*).[81]

In some sketches, Abid highlighted the issue of women in the film industry as a problem of morality and proper conduct. The sketches point to the ways in which film culture was received and moulded by the Urdu imaginaire despite the tensions and excitement produced by the presence of women that was palpable within the diegetic and extra diegetic discourses about film cultures from the 1930s onwards. These biographical entries become interesting documents that highlight what was expected from the actors and actresses in physical and technical terms through their description of bodies and the kinds of skills that were admired. For example, the entry on actor Anant Ram Sharma described him as "knows how to horse ride

bhi ziyāda khubṣūrat ma'lūm hoti haiṅ; apke khayalāt nihāyat buland haiṅ aur akhlāq nihāyat wasi hai." Ibid., 34.

[81] Urdu original: "*Us waqt āp ke ahsasāt aur jaẕbāt meṅ ek ajīb talāṭum barpa ho raha tha yāni āp filmī duniya meṅ qadam rakhte hue ye maḥsūs kar rahiṅ thīṅ ke āp kisi ghair-ma'mūlī jurm ki murtakib ho rahiṅ haiṅ aur rasm-o rivaj aur tahẕīb-o tammadun ke dayre ko choṛ kar ik aisi duniya meṅ ja rahīṅ haiṅ jahāṅ āp ki zindagī bilkul mukhtalif hogi aur is khayāl ke paida hone ki wajah ye thi ke Hindustānī apnī tang-naẕri ki wajah se is peshe ko nihāyat ẕalīl taṣawwur karte the*." Ibid., 39.

and swim in the river. Height is 5 ft $11^{1/2}$ inch and chest is approximately 40 inches. You (formal *āp*) excel at English, Hindi and Urdu. You also possess the knowledge of music."[82] In his profile on actor Haidar Shah Nizami, Abid wrote that Nizami struggled to find good roles in the theatre/film companies, yet he persevered and one important source of learning was acting guides, "*āpkī ye k̲h̲uṣūṣīyat qābil-e ẕikr hai ke is daurān meṅ āpne acting ke muta'alliq kitābeiṅ dekhnā shurū' kar diṅ aur un se bahut kućh ḥāṣil kar liya*."[83] Thus the text made apparent the required decorum of reading practices for an aspiring actor in the 1930s and 40s, and created a crucial link between the acting manuals and the biographical dictionaries produced in the Urdu public sphere. In the profile of actor Mazhar Khan, Abid celebrated his educated background and erstwhile profession as a sub-inspector.[84] Nandram Pahlwan was described as having received an education (*ta'līm*) and excelling at wrestling (*kushtī*) and boxing (*ghūṅse-bāzī*). Abid suggested that Pahlwan had won many medals and certificates which were evidence of his finesse as a film star.[85] In many other profiles Abid tried to provide details of actors' erstwhile professions to establish their respectability (*sharāfat*) and discussed their educated backgrounds; in some cases the names of family and fathers' professions as lawyers/*wakīl* etc. were also mentioned to bolster the tag of respectability. Thus, the biographical compendiums were like catalogues of actors and actresses and, like portfolios, provided descriptions of the actor's body and face, their skills, salaries, the types of roles they were popular for, whether they can sing, speak in Urdu and what other languages they know. These texts were important in domesticating the pleasures of cinema through poetry, training the gaze and cultivating readers and audiences through continued investment in literary forms from the Urdu imaginaire. The discourse of respectability was fostered through discussion on the education of actors and their *sharīf* backgrounds; their lofty thoughts and good *ak̲h̲lāq* were crucial to the discourse of stardom and cinema.

[82] Urdu original: "*Ghode par ćaṛnā aur dariya meṅ tairna jante haiṅ. Āpka qad pāṅch foot sāṛe gyārah inch hai aur sīna taqrīban ćalīs inch hai. Āp Angrezi, Hindi aur Urdu waghera meṅ kāfi maharat rakhte haiṅ. Ilm-e mūsiqī meṅ bhi āp ko kućh dastars hai*." Ibid., 60.
[83] Translation: "One of your distinguishing feature worth mentioning is that during this time (actor training), you started going through books about acting and were able to gain a lot from them." Ibid., 69.
[84] Urdu original: "*Āp ek ta'līm-yāfta naujawān haiṅ. Filmī zindagī ik̲h̲tiyār karne se qabl āp sub-inspector the*". Ibid., 87.
[85] Ibid., 89.

DISCIPLINING CINEMA AND PRIORITISING *AKHLĀQ* AND *IṢLĀḤ*

The discourse on the key components of the Urdu imaginaire – *akhlāq* and *iṣlāḥ* – was crucial to attempts to discipline cinema. Through the *akhlāqī* framework, the Urdu public sphere provided remedies against the projected anxieties of westernisation and the harmful impact of cinema on the *qaum* (nation). *Film Numa* by Nasiruddin Hashmi, attempted to collate previously published articles in Urdu film journals on the subject of cinematic reform and criticism.[86] Other texts discussed in this chapter, like *Film-va Drama* and *Film Acting Guide*, were also invested within discussions of reform and the improvement of cinema. What is fascinating is that while the Urdu texts emphasised the need for *akhlāqī* cinema, the texts abound with examples from foreign studios which accounts for the presence of contradictions and overlaps between ideas of 'modernity' and 'tradition'. These discourses fed into the Urdu imaginaire of the 1930s and 40s producing tenuous connections between diverse literary and performative traditions which contributed to the underlying tensions within. While American and European films were often considered to be "morally different" and opposed to the desired *akhlāqī* cinema in India, these foreign studios and films cited in the texts were not merely models for emulation but served pedagogic needs for skill development and improvement. The Urdu texts on cinema, through their engagement with foreign films and studios, provide a rich understanding of foreign film exhibition and consumption circuits in India. The abundant references to foreign films, especially early American cinema, as a yardstick for desirable aesthetic and cinematic language comes as no surprise. Miriam Hansen in her work on 'classical cinema as vernacular modernism' has argued that the influence of and enthusiasm for an American aesthetic and mass culture propagated though Hollywood films pushed a form of Americanism that acquired a transnational and global charge.[87] This 'vernacular modernism' spread to all corners of the world and produced a shared global language. But scholars of Indian cinemas have persistently argued that the many cinemas of India retained their own dominant aesthetic and ideology.[88] It was precisely because of the efforts of writers and critics of cinema who pushed for *akhlāqī* cinema that notions such as "skill from the west with values of the

[86] *Film Numa: Film ke muta'alliq iṣlāḥī aur tanqīdī maẓāmīn ka majmū'a* was published from Hyderabad by Mohammad Shamsuddin Khan at Shams-al Mataba Machine Press in 1940.

[87] Miriam Hansen argues that this modernism was 'vernacular' because "the term vernacular combines the dimension of the quotidian, of everyday usage, with connotations of discourse, idiom, and dialect with circulation, promiscuity, and translatability" in Hansen, "The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism," *Modernism/ modernity* 6, no. 2 (1999): 59-77.

[88] Rosie Thomas, "Indian Cinema: Pleasure and Popularity," *Screen* 26, no. 3-4 (1985): 116-131 and Madhava Prasad, *Ideology of the Hindi Film: A Historical Construction* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008).

east" became pervasive within the cinematic public sphere of the early twentieth century. Hashmi's *Film Numa* was compiled to address the film industry through the lens of *akhlāq* and *iṣlāḥ*. In the Preface, Hashmi wrote,

> there are mostly reformist (*iṣlāḥī*) essays in this compilation, and one or two critical (*tanqīdī*) ones. You will not find an alluring biography (*sawāniḥ-e zindagī*) or a pleasurable tale (*dāstān*) of any actress in this book. And neither are there interesting or colourful essays that are attractive to the youth.[89]

Hashmi did not shy away from taking a dig at contemporary Urdu *tazkiras* of film actresses like *Filmī Titliyaṅ* or *Filmī Pariyaṅ* by emphasising the absence of 'pleasurable' and 'colourful' (*rangīn*) material that was preferable for the youth.[90] He did however insist that his book contained useful material for actresses and film company owners and also sought the attention of the public (*pablik*) to his words of wisdom.[91] Thus, Hashmi wrote with a clear intention, defining his authorial role as a mentor, reformer and critic of the film industry and advisor to the public/audience. In the first essay, "The actress of Europe and Hindustan" (*Europe aur Hindustān ki Actress*), Hashmi lamented the lack of proper institutional support for pedagogy and the training of film personnel in India and set out to show the differences in approaches to film acting in Europe and India.[92] Similar to contemporary concerns in other texts on film in Urdu, English and Hindi, Hashmi intervenes within the discussion on the need for educated and respectable women in the film industry. Repeating a common contemporary platitude that "even though to become a film actor is not considered inappropriate or bad (*ma'yūb*) and there are many educated and respectable people (*shurafā*) who have adopted this profession, the representation of women from this class is still limited."[93] Hashmi pointed out that while students were encouraged to participate in dramas in colleges, stage acting was very different from film acting as a profession. Stressing on the specific increase in the demand for

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[89] Urdu original: "*is majmū'a meṅ ziyāda-tar iṣlāḥī maẓmūn haiṅ aur ek do tanqīdī. Is meṅ āp ko kisi actress ki sawāniḥ-e zindagī ki dil-kash aur pur- luṭf dāstān nahi milegi. Aur na koi aisā dilćasp aur rangīn maẓmūn dastīyāb hogā jo nau-javānoṅ ke liye jazbiyat rakhta ho*." Hashmi, *Film Numa: Film ke muta'alliq iṣlāḥī aur tanqīdī maẓāmīn ka majmū'a* (Hyderabad: Shams-al Mataba Machine Press, 1940), 5.

[90] Hashmi was familiar with *Filmī Pariyaṅ* and *Film-va Drama* which he referred to as Urdu books on cinema published recently. Ibid., 24.

[91] Urdu original: "…*actressoṅ aur mālikān company waghera ke liye ćand kārāmad bāteiṅ mileṅgi jo ghaur se dekhne ke qābil haiṅ. Ik do maẓmūn pablik ki tawajjŏh ke mŏḥtāj haiṅ* …" Ibid., 5.

[92] This article was originally published in the Urdu film journal *Mussawwir* (Bombay, July 1936). See, Ibid., 7-16.

[93] He uses the metaphor of salt in dough (*āṭe meṅ namak*) to describe the presence of educated women in the film industry. Ibid., 8.

film acting, he expressed surprise that this did not lead to the formation of schools and colleges (*madāris*) that would impart training and teaching of film acting.[94] He cited Europe and America where the provision of film schools ensured synergy between studios and companies, thus providing a steady flow of educated film personnel into the industry. He lamented that there was no such institution in India and advised that educational institutions must be set up in big cities like Bombay, Calcutta and Lahore, and students who have graduated from schools and colleges must be enrolled in the programme.[95]

Hashmi maps the attitudes to film acting in Europe and Hindustan as showing contrasting values; he wrote, "to become an actor there (in Europe) is an act of the highest achievement (*wahāṅ actress bannā mĕ'rāj-e kamāl hai*) and here (in Hindustan) it is an act of lowest decline and regression (*yahāṅ mĕ'rāj-e zawāl*)".[96] The Eurocentrism embedded within Hashmi's statement comes as no surprise; colonial modernity had firmly established the dichotomy, with the west as a site of progress and education while the east was its inferior 'other'.[97] The comparison and distinction were based on the observation that education in the west enabled 'a fuller, more comprehensive, emotional understanding of the world' which was lacking in the contemporary Indian film industry. For Hashmi, education was crucial to the success of any actor, as an educated actor would not remain dependent on the instructions from directors and educators (*amozgār*) in order to perform with efficacy and efficiency. Hashmi believed that educated actors possessed more information (*ma'lūmāt*) and experience (*tajarba*) in comparison to others. This was again not only considered to be crucial to their performance in the films but such success would lead to their ability to negotiate an inevitable increase in salaries (*in umūr ke liḥāẕ se tank͟hẉāh ka iẓāfa lāzimī hai*).[98] Further on, Hashmi hinted that contributions to journals were a sign of education and good *a<u>kh</u>lāq*; this was especially true for actresses as their writings would produce an impact on the public which ensured that they received more respect (*'izzat*) and fame (*shuhrat*).[99] However, Hashmi warned against the endorsement of cheap *bāzārī* journals related to film which uneducated actresses could fall

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[94] Ibid., 8.
[95]Ibid., 19.
[96] Ibid., 9.
[97] Similar view was expressed by Prithi Singh in *Film Acting Guide* where he regurgitated a colonial stereotype that the moral and ethical conduct of the people in Europe and India was diametrically opposite. The actors and actresses in India lacked the moral and respectable conduct and hence film acting as a profession was ill reputed in India. See, Singh, *Film Acting Guide* (Lahore: Amrit Electric Press, 1935), 48.
[98] Hashmi, *Film Numa: Film ke muta'alliq iṣlāḥī aur tanqīdī maẓāmīn ka majmū'a* (Hyderabad: Shams-al Mataba Machine Press, 1940), 10.
[99] Ibid., 10.

prey to. He believed that uneducated actresses were unable to discern good journals from the bad. As they failed to distinguish between the journals, they sent their photographs to be published in 'bad ones' to acquire quick popularity. However, the popularity achieved by these actresses through the *bāzāri* film magazines, in Hashmi's opinion, was fake, as 'genuine popularity' (*ḥaqīqī shuhrat*) was eventually achieved through 'perfect skill' (*kāmil-e fan*).[100] Hashmi plugged in generalised statements of appreciation such as "many European actresses write articles in journals…which is a sign of their skill, merit and knowledge…"[101] This not only validated his advice by presenting desirable models of emulation for the *iṣlāḥ* of the film industry but also reiterated the importance of education within the discourse of *ak̲h̲lāqī* cinema. Even though actresses such as Seeta Devi, Sabita Devi and Shanta Apte did write in film journals, encouraging other women to join the film industry, Hashmi dismissed the entire group of 'educated actresses' from Hindustan as being inadequately educated.[102] He wrote that in his opinion none of the actresses possessed the knowledge/information (*ma'lūmāt*), ideas (*k̲h̲ayālāt*) or states of being (*ḥālāt*) that could be put down with pen on paper.[103] He wrote a separate essay on the subject of the lack of education among Indian actresses (*Hindustanī actressoṅ meṅ ilm ka fuqdān*).[104] In this essay as well, Hashmi correlated education and literariness with respectability and realism. He wrote that educated actresses were able to comprehend and justify their characters with ease,[105] elaborating that "on a happy or sad occasion, an educated actress can be expected to externalise her real (*aṣlī*) emotions because she is fully aware of how to imitate the real."[106]

Hashmi's didactic essays addressed to the film industry – and specifically to the actresses – made a pertinent observation that empowered and educated women would not be

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[100] Ibid., 11.

[101] Urdu original: "*Europe ki akṣ̱ar-o beshtar actresseiṅ risāloṅ meṅ maẓāmīn likhti haiṅ jis ke bā'iṣ̱ un ki shuhrat aur 'izzat hoti hai na ṣirf unki adākāri balke qābilīyat, liyāqat aur ma'lūmāt ka shohra ho jata hai*." Ibid., 10.

[102] In my work on actress Sabita Devi, I have analysed her articles encouraging women to work in the film industry and promoting the image of the studios as a professional space of work suitable for modern educated women. See, "Sabita's Journey from Calcutta to Bombay: Gender and Modernity in the Circuits of Cinemas in India" in *Industrial Networks and Cinemas of India: Shooting Stars, Shifting Geographies and Multiplying Media*, ed. Monika Mehta and Madhuja Mukherjee (London: Routledge, 2021), 48-60.

[103] Hashmi, *Film Numa: Film ke muta'alliq iṣlāḥī aur tanqīdī maẓāmīn ka majmū'a* (Hyderabad: Shams-al Mataba Machine Press, 1940), 10-11.

[104] This essay was first published in *Movieland*, September 1938 and was republished in *Film Numa*. See, Ibid., 16-20.

[105] Urdu original: "*Apnī adakārī aur apne muṯāla'a faraez ko ta'līm-yāfta actress āsānī se samajh sakti aur kamyābī se is ko anjām de sakti hai*". Ibid., 18.

[106] Urdu original: "*ta'līm-yāfta actress hone se k̲h̲ushī-o gam vaghera ke mauqoṅ par aṣlī jaẕbāt ẕāhir karne ki ziyāda tawaqqŏ ki ja sakti hai kyunke wo in umūr se ba-k̲h̲ūbī wāqif hoti hai ke aṣal ki naqal kis tarha ki jaye*." Ibid., 18.

exploited by the company owners and film producers, thus to some extent implicitly conceding that the film studio was a place of precarity for women. He claimed that "educated women will face less problems and there will be no scope for inappropriate and excessive behaviour from film personnel."[107] In his essay on the difficulties faced by actresses in India (*Hindustānī actressoṅ ki mushkilāt*), he cited challenges to film performance; as the studios had a limited number of educated women in the companies, the actress was expected to perform all kinds of characters.[108] Another difficulty that the film actress encountered was kissing on screen which was inappropriate in Indian culture (*Hindustānī tahẕīb*).[109] Hashmi made similar arguments in another essay on the early decline of Indian actresses (*Hindustānī actressoṅ ka jald zawāl kyoṅ hota hai*), listing seven points of reasoning.[110] Hashmi claimed that the paucity of actresses added to extra work and stress for the few in the studios, causing fatigue and illnesses. Other causes for the decline of actresses were listed as accidents (*zak͟hm ya ćoṭ*) on sets, ill-treatment by studio bosses and company owners, consumption of alcohol in bad company (*sharāb-noshī ki ʻādat*) and, bizarrely, the hot Indian weather (*Hindustan kī garm āb-o hawā*), which apparently caused early ageing and loss of youth.[111] Hashmi made a crucial plea for the establishment of associations (*anjuman*) for actors. He recommended that film actresses must unionise (*mutāʻhid ho jayeiṅ*), so that they could accomplish their requests (*k͟hẉāhishāt*) and demands (*muṭālabāt*) before the film companies.[112] Hashmi reserved this advice especially for actresses like Jahanara Kajjan and Zubeida who were from the *ṯawā'if* background and whose careers were fading, thus they needed more protection to secure their future.[113]

While, on one hand, Hashmi advocated for feminist reforms, oddly in his other essays he also insinuated that the majority of the actresses in the film studios were professional women (*pesha-var ʻaurateiṅ*) who were allegedly engaged in executing their "services to carnal pleasures" (*k͟hẉāhishāt-e nafsānī*) outside of the film studios which made them good for

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[107] Ibid., 11. In another essay, he wrote that "…the reason (for the lack of educated women) is explained by the fact that the ambience in the film company is loathsome. It is an actress' duty to keep the company proprietor, director, cameraman and co-actor happy, otherwise she cannot succeed in her acting career. There is a possibility that this is the truth and that such difficulties arise in some companies…" (*film companiyoṅ ki faẓā ghinaunī hoti hai. Actress ke farāeẓ haiṅ ke wo malikān company, director, cameraman aur hero ko k͟hush rakhe warna actress maqbūl nahi ho sakti aur na uski adakāri kāmyāb ho sakti hai. Mumkin hai ye bayān sahi ho aur bāz companiyoṅ meṅ ye dushwāriyāṅ maujūd hoṅ*). Ibid., 31.

[108] The essay was first published in *Movieland*, October 1938. It was reprinted in the book, see Ibid., 19-24.

[109] Ibid., 23.

[110] This essay was first published in *Movieland*, May 1939. It was reprinted in the book, see Ibid., 24- 28.

[111] Ibid., 26- 28.

[112] Ibid., 36.

[113] Ibid. 36.

nothing (*nā-kārā*) for the film industry.[114] This moral judgement was fuelled by perceptions of the actress as a public woman/ courtesan /prostitute. In drawing parallels between the *ṯawā'if* and the contemporary actress, Hashmi wrote,

> One more incentive achieved through film acting is that it accords glory (*'izzat*) and respect (*waq'at*). Befriending or familiarity (*dostī ya rāh-o rasm*) with a *ṯawā'if* was never publicly divulged (*'alāniya ĕ'lān*) but now when the same *ṯawā'if* chooses a life of film then friendly relationship with her are not imagined as reprehensible and in this way she has gained a special status in society.[115]

Hashmi's beliefs here have echoes of similarities with Gauhar's (as discussed in the previous section). The crucial difference was the reformist critique (*iṣlāḥī tanqīd*) of the actress as a site of decadence in need of correction through the *a<u>kh</u>lāqī* framework. Hashmi compared the salaries of film actresses to the erstwhile *ṯawā'ifs*, especially the legendary Gauhar Jaan who he claimed to have seen at a performance in Hyderabad. Hashmi was highly impressed by the fact that she had employed a European man to assist her during the performance who was seen straightening the carpet on the stage.[116] Film acting was a means of reinvention and livelihood for women.[117] In the essay, 'Film Actress', Hashmi specifically addressed the need for educated Muslim women to come forward for the *iṣlāḥ* of the nation (*qaum*) and take inspiration from their Hindu sisters.[118] He argued that so far most Muslim women in the film industry, except for Begum Khurshid Mirza (Renuka Devi), were from professional backgrounds or specialised occupational groups (*Musalmān pesha-var ṯabqe ki actresseiṅ*). The lack of suitable Muslim women in the film companies had made it possible for women from 'other' backgrounds to make inroads into the film studios which was detrimental to the growth of the film business and its attempts at progress (*taraqqī)* and reform (*iṣlāḥ*).[119] He urged that unless Muslim businessmen invested in film studios and produced films this would

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[114] Ibid., 27.
[115] Urdu original: "*Filmī adākāri ke bā'iṣ ek aur ćīz ḥāṣil ho gayi hai wo 'izzat aur waq'at hai, agar kisi ko kisi ṯawā'if se dostī ya rāh-o rasm ho to is ka 'alāniya ĕ'lān nahi kiya jata tha, magar ab wahi ṯawā'if filmī zindagī i<u>kh</u>tiyār kar leti hai toh us ke sāth rāh-o rasm rakhne ko samāj ma'yūb taṣawwur nahi karta, is tarha samāj meṅ film actress ik <u>kh</u>ās martaba ḥāṣil kar ćuki hai.*" Ibid., 36.
[116] Ibid., 34-35.
[117] This is something I discuss in my M. Phil thesis, See Sarah Rahman Niazi, "Cinema and the Reinvention of the Self: Women Performers in Bombay cinema" (M.Phil diss., Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2011).
[118] The essay was first appeared in *Movieland*, December 1939. It was reprinted in the book, see Ibid., 28-37
[119] Ibid., 33.

remain a challenge, as there were enough Hindu, Christian and Jewish women from respectable families in the film industry. In the end, Hashmi reiterated that the life of a film actress was full of trials (*āzmā'ish*), filth (*ālā'ish*) and obscenity (*makrūhāt*) and required immense sacrifices. But these challenges could be overcome with a firm temperament (*mustaqil mizāj*) and resolute character (*maẓbūṯ kirdār*).[120] The role of the actress within the *a<u>kh</u>lāqī* enterprise was essentially a service to the nation (*qaumī <u>kh</u>idmat*); it would be beneficial (*mufīd*) if the actress' work would awaken the nation (*qaum ko bedār karna*), arouse their courage (*himmat*), fervour (*walwala*) and passions (*josh*); also it would help the youth keep away from bad customs (*bure rasūmāt se bāz rakhna*) and thus reform the nation (*qaum ki iṣlāḥ*).[121] It is interesting to see how Hashmi coalesced the *a<u>kh</u>lāqī* tradition with the prevalent nationalist discourse on women, thus attempting to discipline cinema by discipling the women in cinema.

CONCLUSION

The texts produced on cinema within the Urdu public sphere fulfilled a variety of needs for film enthusiasts and professionals. From acting guides and manuals to the film *taẕkiras*, the texts engaged readers, titillating them, schooling them and even discipling their excesses. Film discourses were shaped, translated and disseminated through innovative literary strategies that the Urdu language made possible. While the texts presented in this chapter are representative of a small sample produced within the decades 1930-1950, this diverse collection of books on cinema in Urdu brings to the fore the crucial concerns of cinematic discourse, skill development and pedagogy, just as the Urdu film journals had aimed to address contemporary concerns around the language of cinema, and the production and consumption of cinema within a framework of *iṣlāḥ* and *a<u>kh</u>lāq*.[122]

The biographical dictionaries and the *taẕkiras* of actresses like *Filmī Sitāre*, *Filmī Pariyaṅ*, *Filmī Titliyaṅ* and others disciplined the gaze through literary poetic strategies but provided the lovers of films (*āshiqān-e film*) with a plethora of pleasures beyond the visual. An advertisement for the book *Miṭṭī ki Murtoṅ Meṅ* (*In the Idols of Clay*) read:

[120] Ibid., 31.
[121] Ibid., 31.
[122] This is discussed in detail in chapter 2 where I talk about the debates in Urdu film journals on the question of language of cinema and the genres that were considered to be suitable for *a<u>kh</u>lāqī* cinema.

> This album contains realistic photographs (*muṅh boltī tasvīr*) of the most beautiful women, coloured photographs of the most gorgeous Indian actresses…you may have seen these beautiful women many times but had the desire to see them in private…the photographs accompany their biographies penned by the actresses themselves…if you would like to meet or write to your favourite actress, complete address is provided. The beautiful and coloured photo block images are so 'real' that you may feel that they are short of being infused with life.[123]

Miṭṭī ki Murtoṅ Meṅ promised life-like photographs "*muṅh boltī tasvīr*" to its readers in the privacy of their homes. Many of the biographical dictionaries under study had limited visual material though. It can be argued that there may have been printing constraints involved in decisions to include or exclude photographs, but it is also worth considering that the literary was seen as the gatekeeper of "*tahzīb*" (culture). So, while the biographical dictionaries promised to titillate the readers through revelatory life stories, secrets and physical descriptions, the Urdu imaginaire provided an expansive vocabulary for the expression of the charms of the actresses within acceptable codes of *a<u>kh</u>lāq*. The inclusion of date of birth and addresses of actresses meant that fans could write to their favourites, wish them on their birthdays and create forms of correspondences which were new and exciting.

What emerges recurrently in the Urdu texts is the idea of cinema as transformative but in need of being domesticated with an appropriate dose of *a<u>kh</u>lāq*. In *Film Numa*, Nasirduddin Hashmi compared the predilection (*ishtiyāq, shauq*) for cinema with addiction to tea, cigarettes, betel leaf and opium.[124] Cinema had opened up a world of possibilities to the Indian youth who wanted to emulate actors and actresses on screen. As well as new technologies, modes of behaviour and fashion were deeply impacted by the global circulation of cinema.[125] Cinema consumption raised serious concerns for the Urdu authors, Balam Firdausi and Hashmi; both warned against the harmful effects of cinema that were filtering down into *sharīf*

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[123] Unfortunately, I haven't been able to trace any copies of *Miṭṭī ki Murtoṅ Meṅ.* Advertisement for the book appeared in Prithi Singh's *Film Acting Guide*. Thus, this book may have been published in the late 1920s or early 1930s. It is difficult to say.

[124] Hashmi wrote, "*hum ko film ka shauq hi nahiṅ balke is ki ādat ho gayi hai jis tarḥa chai, cigarette, pān, afīm waghera ki ādat ho jati hai usi tarḥa ab cinema-binī ki ādat hoti jā rahi hai.*" Ibid., 64.

[125] Like many other contemporary critics of cinema, Hashmi also blamed cinema for encouraging certain forms of romance, love for actresses, obsession with fashion (*fashion-parastī*), preference for western clothes and crimes like theft, robbery and murder. Ibid., 64-67.

households.[126] In the essay 'What we gain from watching cinema' (*Cinema-binī se ham kya ḥāṣil kar raheiṅ haiṅ*), Hashmi discussed the role of cinema not merely as entertainment but as instructive (*sabaq āmoz*) and a means for acquiring vast knowledge (*wus'at ma'lūmāt ka zariyā*).[127] In Europe, he claimed, cinema was mobilised for the spread of information (*ma'lūmāt*), public expositions (*inkishāf ki tashhīr*), ideas (*k̲h̲ayālāt*) and innovations (*ijādāt*).[128] Hashmi believed that the Europeans (*Ahl-e Europe*) were making the 'correct' use of cinema as they did not merely profit from cinema but were able to transform their society by mobilising cinema for *ak̲h̲lāqī* and educational (*ilmī*) benefits.[129] On the other hand, he did not see the same merit in viewing Indian cinema. Also, Hashmi argued that improvement of Indian films was necessary as cinema consumption was on the rise and a large part of the profit was going to European companies.[130] The constant comparisons with foreign studios were meant to illustrate and re-emphasise the need for reform (*iṣlāḥ*) of Indian cinema and, as this chapter demonstrates, a large part of the burden of improvement was on the women in cinema.

For the Urdu authors, education of the actors and specifically the actresses was imperative and thus there was a proliferation of acting manuals and guide-books in Urdu. The acting manuals translocated global ideas of form, technique and skill and attempted to educate Indian actors and film enthusiasts by creating linguistic equivalences that could help in the process of the domestication of cinema. Prithi Singh's *Film Acting Guide* was a prescriptive manual for actors with abundant examples from American and European studios used to illustrate his arguments. From discussion of Mary Pickford's *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (Alfred E. Green, 1921), where she played the role of both mother and daughter,[131] and the success of Rudolph Valentino in *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (d. Rex Ingram, 1921)[132] to anecdotes on how Mildred Davis struggled in Los Angeles to find a break in the film business,[133] Singh's immersion in American and European cinema is fascinating. The book

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[126] Firdausi wrote, "*sharīf se sharīf k̲h̲andān bhi ise (film) dekh kar sāmān tafrīḥ paida karte haiṅ.*" See, Firdausi, *Film Adakārī*, Gilani Electric Press, Lahore, 1937, p. 18. Also see, Hashmi, *Film Numa: Film ke muta'alliq iṣlāḥī aur tanqīdī mażāmīn ka majmū'a*, Shams-al Mataba Machine Press, Hyderabad, 1940, 6.

[127] The article was first published the journal *Film*, May 1940. It was reprinted in the book, see Hashmi, Ibid., 63-69.

[128] Ibid., 63.

[129] Ibid., 63.

[130] Urdu Original: "*Bāz aṣḥāb roz cinema dekhne ke ādi ho ćuke haiṅ aur akṣar aṣḥāb ek hi khel ko mŏ'tadd martaba dekha karte haiṅ. Is tarha muflis, Hindustān ki baṛī daulat cinema ke naẕar hoti ja rahi hai aur is ka baṛa ḥiṣṣa muk̲h̲talif zariye se Europe waloṅ ki jeb meṅ ja raha hai.*" Ibid., 64.

[131] "The Miracle of Sound Film," In *Film Acting Guide* (Lahore: Amrit Electric Press, 1935), 34.

[132] "Assessing your capabilities". Ibid., 53.

[133] Ibid., 52.

details methods of acting with didactic and practical advice on how to become an actor. Singh's discussions range from Lon Chaney and Colleen Moore's use of research and observation (*muṭālĕʻ aur mushāhida*) in acting,[134] to mundane yet important clues on how American actresses Joan Crawford, Mary Pickford and Greta Garbo maintained their fair complexion and how they applied their make-up,[135] as well as actresses Agnes Ayres, Olga Petrova and Betty Compson's tales of changing their hair colour.[136] Even though Singh's text was full of engrossing narratives of contemporary American and European film, he was careful to remind his readers that the taste (*maẕāq*) of the Hindustani public was in need of reform (*iṣlāḥ*) and the production of films which exhibited the glorious history of India and its chaste moral culture (*pākīzah a<u>kh</u>lāq-o tamaddun*) was necessary.[137] The Urdu texts on film highlight the tensions that existed within the cinematic public sphere; the desire for cosmopolitanism was accompanied by an acceptance of piecemeal curated aspects of western modernity that had to be made palatable through the disciplinary drive of the *a<u>kh</u>lāqī* project of the Urdu imaginaire of the 1930s and 40s.

Similar concerns for *a<u>kh</u>lāqī* cinema were present in Firdausi's *Film Adakārī*. As a translator of Pudovkin, Firdausi appears to take massive liberties with the source-text. While Pudovkin's intervention into the discourse of film acting was crucial, as it attempted to formulate the theoretical backbone of what is considered acting in film and film acting as art in its own right, Firdausi's interpretive translation of Pudovkin intervened within the discourse of film acting, transforming Pudovkin's text by re-aligning and situating it within *a<u>kh</u>lāqī* pedagogy. It becomes apparent that Firdausi was schooled in pre-cinematic literary and aesthetic practices though he was thoroughly cognizant of emergent discursive responses to film acting. Firdausi effectively localised the global vocabulary of film theory and produced a compelling translation of Pudovkin's seminal text, which was full of practical advice laced with flourishes from the poetic universe of the Urdu imaginaire.

These Urdu texts enhanced the discourses of cinema and its institutionalisation in the 1930s and 40s. The production of film manuals in Urdu and the translation of seminal theoretical texts on cinema into Urdu allowed transnational global ideas to be formalized,

[134] "Research and Observation". Ibid., 68.
[135] "How to become beautiful and methods to maintain it". Ibid., 61-63.
[136] "Film Beauty". Ibid., 64-66.
[137] "The History of Filmmaking in India". Ibid., 6-7.

disseminated and circulated in the public sphere. Through their intervention into discourses of cinematic practice, skill-sharing and debates on performance and stardom, the Urdu film texts attempted to offer crucial tools for cinema literacy in this period. Beyond the film journal, Urdu writers delved deep to produce texts on cinema which were enriched by new ways of looking and writing about cinema. Film pedagogy was informed by the discourses from the Urdu public sphere to enhance and extend the pleasures of cinema, spilling over from the screen to the pages of these texts, thereby creating networks across the literary and cinematic public spheres.

CHAPTER 4

EXPRESSION OF THE URDU IMAGINAIRE: DIALOGUES AND LYRICS IN THE EARLY TALKIES

The Urdu imaginaire resonates evocatively in the early sound cinema and its traces are present in the dialogues and song lyrics from the 1930s, when sound technology was introduced in India. While early silent cinema borrowed a wide range of narratives, genres and themes from the Urdu literary culture, as discussed in chapter 1, the advent of sound brought to cinema a series of challenges over the issue of language and its use. 1931 is marked as a momentous year in the history of Indian cinema. One of the moguls of the silent film industry, Ardeshir Irani of Imperial, the leading studio of the time, began to look for equipment that he could use for the new endeavour. He also contacted an eminent playwright of the Urdu Parsi stage, Joseph David, to work with him on the scenario for a new film that would have spoken dialogues in Urdu. Irani's experiments with sound technology were not unique or isolated; Madan Theatres in Calcutta too were in the race to produce their 'first' sound film, *Shirin Farhad* (d. J.J. Madan, 1931), but were outdone by a few months. *Alam Ara* (d. Ardeshir Irani) released first on March 14, 1931 at Imperial's Majestic Theatre in Bombay. The film created a furore, with a virtual stampede to witness this new indigenous cinematic form. Thus was born the "Indian Talkie" that would dominate the entertainment circuits, incidentally carrying forward the themes and narratives borrowed from the Urdu Parsi theatre repertoire. This collaboration between the early film producers and the Urdu Parsi stage reinforces the point that the encounters between cinema and Urdu literary culture were deliberately mediated.

As language became an important aspect of the new technological boom, films were often overtly advertised as Urdu/Bengali (or Hindustani/Bengali or Hindi/Bengali) talkies. *Sachchi Mohabbat* aka *Wamaq Ezra* starring Indira Devi by Radha Films was advertised as an 'Urdu romantic talkie';[1] Madhu Bose's *Selima* (1935) starring Gul Hamid and Madhvi was billed as an 'Urdu talkie',[2] along with films like *Insan ya Shaitan*[3] *and Hamaan*.[4] New Theatres' *Karwan-e-Hayat* directed by Premankur Athorthy was promoted as "A Talkie in

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[1] *Filmland*, Art Supplement 5, no. 220 (n.d).

[2] In other advertisements, it was also promoted as a "Muslim picture." In *Filmland*, Art Supplement 5, no. 219 (n.d.).

[3] Eastern Art Production starring Jaddan Bai and Ermeline was advertised as "*Urdu ka sarvottam vachal chitrapat*"/ "Best talking film in Urdu". See, *Cinema Sansar*, April 1933, 31.

[4] Madan Theatres production directed by Sorabji Kerawala in 1934, starring newcomer Mahejebin. See, *Filmland*, Art Supplement 5, no. 193 (n.d.).

Urdu of Astounding Romance", while advertisements for *Gul Sanobar* starring Sulochana and Zubeida called it Persian folklore.[5] Other films like *Bhakt ke Bhagwan*[6] and *Daksha Yagna*[7] were advertised alternatively as 'Hindi' and 'Bengali', while Sagar Movietone's *Premi Pagal* aka *Mad Cap*[8] was advertised as 'Hindustani'. This quick survey of a small but diverse list of film advertisements from popular film magazines suggests that language specificity was a key strategy in the marketing of early talkies in India, enabling new and exciting patterns of distribution of cinematic texts. These publicity strategies indicate that the language of a film was part of the process of diversification of film product, aiming films at specific linguistic communities and, through trial and error, eventually creating a form of cinema that had an 'all-India' appeal.

Film producers in India in the early sound period worked diligently to broaden the scope and reach of their films. Genre diversification played an important role in this expansion of cinema and its audiences. Scholars have broadly identified these genre categorisations as mythologicals, devotionals, the oriental/fantasy film, historical, stunt and social films.[9] In the sound era, these genres from the silent period acquired new literary zest and musical inflection. This chapter focusses on the ways in which cinema of the 1930s and 1940s incorporated the Urdu imaginaire within its narrative frameworks, dialogues and song lyrics. Urdu was an important source, as well as being considered to provide the malleability and creative imagination writers needed to write dialogues and song lyrics. I show how Urduisation was used across various genres in varying degrees of intensity. It has been argued that the most obvious film contenders for a substantial use of Urdu were the historicals (especially those based on the Mughal emperors)[10] and oriental/fantasy/costume films, but I argue that other

[5] The film directed by Homi Master was based on a Persian dastan. The film was a remake of a 1928 silent film. Interestingly, the *Encyclopaedia of Indian cinema* lists it under the category of 'Hindi' film. See, Ashish Rajadhyaksha and Paul Willemen, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Cinema* (London: BFI and Oxford University Press, 1999), 259.

[6] Directed by Dada Gunjal in 1934 for Bharat Laxmi Studios, Calcutta. See, *Filmland*, Pictorial News, issue, date unknown; sourced from National Film Archive of India collection of early film advertisements.

[7] Hindi/ Bengali version of Radha Film company's "*Daksha Yagna*" directed by Jyotish Banerjee advertised. See, *Filmland*, Pictorial News, issue, date unknown; sourced from National Film Archive of India collection of early film advertisements.

[8] Comedy directed by Ezra Mir in 1933, starring Noor Mahomed. See, *Filmland*, Pictorial News, issue, date unknown; sourced from National Film Archive of India collection of early film advertisements.

[9] Kaushik Bhaumik, "The Emergence of the Bombay Film Industry, 1913-1936" (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2002); Rosie Thomas, *Bombay Before Bollywood: Film City Fantasies* (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2014); Ravi Vasudevan, "Film Genres, the Muslim Social and Discourse of Identity c. 1935-1945," *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 6, no. 1 (2015): 27- 43; and Ira Bhaskar and Richard Allen, *Islamicate Cultures of Bombay Cinema* (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2009).

[10] Mukul Kesavan, "Urdu, Awadh and the Tawaif: The Islamicate Roots of Hindi Cinema," In *Forging Identities: Gender, Communities and the State in India,* ed. Zoya Hasan (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 244-57.

genres used Urdu liberally in song lyrics and dialogues. The choice of the use of Urdu was also not limited to particular studios, as often films were shot in two or more languages by the same production companies. In studios in areas where Urdu was not locally spoken by a majority, like Bombay, Poona, Madras or Calcutta, often one version of the film was shot in the local language(s) and a second (or third) in Urdu/Hindustani to cater to the pan-Indian audience.

In this chapter, I use six films from different studios and cities – Prabhat's *Amrit Manthan* (d. V. Shantaram, 1934), Minerva Movietone's *Pukar* (d. Sohrab Modi,1939), *Rattan* (d. M. Sadiq, 1944), *Shahjehan* (d. A.R. Kardar, 1946), *Mirza Sahiban* (d. K. Amarnath, 1947) and *Chandralekha* (d. S.S. Vasan, 1948) – as case studies to illustrate my argument. Even though only a fraction of films from this period have survived, my selection of six films attempts to present a range of genres and styles from six different prominent studios of the time. Through these examples, I aim to illustrate the various ways in which the cinema engaged with the shifting registers of languages in India. Kathryn Hansen's discussion of the "stylized structures of language, thought, and feeling associated with the Urdu language" offers useful insights on how the language and its culture became integral to Parsi theatre. She writes:

> The adoption of Urdu as the principal medium of the stage was a strategy that enabled the Parsi theatre to extend its audience far beyond Bombay. Urdu was much more than a *lingua franca*. The universe of Urdu culture conveyed idealized realms of romance, sweet speech, and lofty thought. It celebrated a distinctive sensibility by means of poetic utterance, particularly in the form of the lyric poem, the ghazal. Supplemented by the elegant rhythms and melodies of Hindustani music, Urdu expression gave the musical stage a tremendous aesthetic and commercial advantage. The Parsi theatre, in turn, exploited the sonorities of Urdu and enhanced Urdu's inherent theatricality.[11]

Prompted by Hansen's argument about the qualities of the Urdu language and the culture associated with it, the chapter explores how the films convey the "idealized *realms of romance*, *sweet speech*, and *lofty thought*". I use this handy framework to divide the various sections of the chapter as I discuss the dialogues and song lyrics in the films. While in Hansen's use the three terms – 'sweet speech', 'realms of romance' and 'lofty thought' – perhaps

[11] Kathryn Hansen, "Passionate refrains: the theatricality of Urdu on the Parsi stage," *South Asian History and Culture* 7, no. 3 (2016): 222.

incorporate both dialogues and song lyrics within each term, I mostly segregate the dialogues and lyrics into separate sections in order to allow a convenient space for detailed discussion. The section 'sweet speech' focusses on Urdu dialogues, 'realms of romance' looks in detail at song lyrics which draw from the long tradition of the romantic poetic tradition of the Urdu ghazal[12] and the section 'lofty thoughts' analyses both dialogues and song lyrics which are focussed on reform. This chapter relies on visual and textual material, including contemporary film reviews, in order to fully understand the broad sweep of the Urdu imaginaire of the 1930s and 40s – which emerged from the 'universe of Urdu culture'.

What I refer to as the Urdu imaginaire was a powerful literary imaginary that provided early theatre and cinema with a range of overlapping conceptual frameworks. The songs and dialogues of the early talkies were constructed in a variety of expressive registers, sometimes more Urdu than Hindi, and other times more Braj than Urdu. The experimentation with language and the layering of systems of enunciation was not new to the Indian imagination; people in India used a wide range of 'linguistic repertoires'.[13] This inherent heteroglossia is apparent in the films from the 1930s and 40s. It is crucial to signpost that languages Urdu-Hindi-Hindustani as well as other languages of India (Bengali, Marathi, Punjabi etc.) were subject to fluid transactions and borrowed liberally from each others' literary genres, with the result that tastes were constantly reinvented and reinterpreted in line with this process of cross-fertilisation. As I suggested in chapter 1, this reflected a multilingual public sphere but also a literary culture imbued with overlaps and complex linguistic economies. Colonial frameworks eventually found their way into the twentieth-century definitions of Hindi, Urdu and Hindustani which were placed on the nationalist agenda by leaders like Gandhi and Nehru in the 1930s. The cinematic public sphere was also informed by these slippages between Hindi-Urdu-Hindustani, as discussed in chapters 1 and 2.

Considering that language markers had begun to have polarised associations – Hindi for Hindus and Urdu for Muslims – in the 1940s, film producers choosing to overtly label and market their films as Hindi, Urdu or Hindustani did so with a clear address to specific people,

[12] Classical Urdu lyric which has an important place in the history of Urdu literary tradition but has been a regular feature in the films in India. For detailed discussion on the ghazal, refer back to the Introduction.
[13] As David Lelyveld writes, "People (in India) didn't have languages; they had linguistic repertoires that varied within a single household, let alone the marketplace, school, temple, court or devotional circle." quoted in Francesca Orsini ed., *Love in South Asia: A Cultural History* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 21.

communities and linguistically marked markets. It is remarkable that the Urdu imaginaire remained a powerful literary signifier and was recurrently drawn on for film narratives, that film dialogues used Urdu vocabulary, and songs borrowed from the Urdu ghazal genre. These choices by filmmakers, writers and lyricists covertly punctured dominant perceptions of the linguistic divide. How do we identify the features of the Urdu imaginaire in Indian cinema? I will argue that one of the main ways in which films from this period reference the Urdu imaginaire is through a linguistic vocabulary.

In the first section, I explore how Urdu language and vocabulary is used in dialogues to evoke *sweet speech*, signalling decorum, civility and authority. A diverse range of genres, from the Mughal-themed historicals *Pukar* and *Shahjehan* to mythologicals and fantasy films like *Amrit Manthan* and *Chandralekha*, made abundant use of Urdu in the dialogues because the Urdu imaginaire in the 1930s and 40s was a familiar imaginary for audiences and producers of films who could tap into its semantic net of emotions. In the second section, I describe how *realms of romance* were evoked through direct reference to the Urdu imaginaire, specifically through the film ghazal and *git*. I use the films as case studies, especially the romantic sequences, to show how the lyrics, along with the mise-en-scène, poetic imagery and play with metaphors, were crucial in creating an ambience through which romance was coded and visualised via strategies deriving from the Urdu imaginaire. In the final section, I describe how *lofty thoughts* of reform became articulated through the framework of the Urdu imaginaire in films like *Rattan*, with the reform (*iṣlāḥ*) of customs (*riwāj*) and of individuals borrowing from codes of behaviour prescribed by narratives of *a<u>kh</u>lāq*. The Urdu imaginaire provides an aesthetic and performative dimension to the cinema, creating a bridge between the various popular cultural traditions in India.

‘Sweet Speech’: Dialogues in Films and the Urdu Imaginaire

Baṛi shaista lahje meṅ kisī se Urdu sun kar
Kyā nahīṅ lagtā ki ik tahzīb kī āvāz hai, Urdu

Listening to someone speak the polite speech of Urdu
Doesn’t it appear that Urdu is the voice of a culture?

-Gulzar[14]

The ‘sweet speech’ of Urdu speakers is a common adage, Gulzar’s verse draws on the consensus that Urdu is a language of politeness, civility and soft-spoken demeanour. Films from the 1930s and 40s mobilise different registers of Urdu for different characters. While, in the public sphere, language associations had become politically motivated, in the films this difference in the use of Urdu vocabulary in the dialogues was not always neatly divided between Hindu or Muslim characters, but often the Urdu word was used to evoke forms of traditional etiquette and due deference. Urdu spoken in the north of India, specifically in Lucknow and Agra, has been characteristically different from its form in Bihar and Deccan. The *Lucknowi* Urdu, often referred to as the *shaista zabān* (gentle, well-bred language), was considered to be the Urdu of the elite nawabs or *ashrāf*. Over the years, it acquired the status as a ‘purer’ form of Urdu and was often used by films to mark nobility and aristocracy. Dialogues in Indian cinema are an important part of the filmic universe, often elaborate, emphatic and stylised as grand soliloquies.[15] The dialogues of films have an afterlife beyond the cinema as they circulate in the public sphere through memorisation and film booklets. I aim to show how different film genres used Urdu in their dialogues, thereby tapping into its sonorous, extravagant evocations and bringing to life literary speech registers of the Urdu imaginaire.

[14] The verse is from Urdu poet- lyricist Gulzar’s *nazm*, “Urdu Zabān/ Urdu Language”. https://www.rekhta.org/nazms/urdu-zabaan-gulzar-nazms

[15] Rosie Thomas, “Indian Cinema: Pleasure and Popularity,” *Screen* 26, no. 3-4 (1985): 116-131 and Madhava Prasad, *Ideology of the Hindi Film: A Historical Construction* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Cover page of the film booklet, 1939


Advertisement for *Pukar* in *Nairang-I Khayāl*, 1939

The first example I draw from Sohrab Modi's historical film *Pukar* (1939), a Mughal saga set in the court of the emperor Jahangir. The film follows the generic conventions of the medieval 'historical' with almost textbook precision and its use of Urdu was one such conscious mobilisation. Modi began his career as an actor on the Urdu Parsi stage and had a self-confessed predisposition for producing historicals.[16] In the early sound era, he produced the Shakespearean adaptations *Khoon ka Khoon* (1935) and *Said-e-Havas* (1936) under the banner Stage Films, which mobilised the conventions of the Urdu imaginaire in dialogues and mise-en-scène. Modi set up Minerva Movietone in 1936. *Pukar* was a big budget production in which the grandeur of the Mughal court was depicted through elaborate costumes, jewels and spectacular palace interiors. The film's dialogues were written by the young Kamal Amrohi, who eventually became an important writer in the Bombay film circuit and was celebrated for his finesse in crafting iconic Urdu dialogues.[17] *Pukar*'s narrative revolves around

[16] In an interview, Modi talks about the importance of history and the role of cinema in making history accessible to audiences, especially students who would find history boring in school. Interview in the biographical film *Sohrab Modi* (d. Yash Chaudhary, 1989) produced by Films Division of India.

[17] In an interview, Amrohi mentioned that he had begun his professional life as 'a writer in Lahore' - and did 'journalistic writing' and was also a 'professor' (perhaps he meant teacher as he was pretty young then) of Persian and Urdu. While there is little known about which Urdu journals he worked with, this highlights the trajectories and interconnections between literary, journalistic and film circuits. His knowledge of Persian establishes that his command of the language ensured he was able to give dialogues in *Pukar* a special kind of complexity that resembled Persianized speech but was of course Urdu. This style of writing then became repurposed in other

two stories, both intertwined with the film's "deeply philosophical" engagement with love and justice.[18] In the first story, Mangal Singh (Sadiq Ali) and Kanwar (Sheela) belong to two different feuding Rajput families but have fallen head-over-heels in love with each other. Kanwar's brother, angered by the knowledge of their brewing romance, challenges Mangal to a duel and gets killed. Kanwar's father too succumbs to death as he tries to save his son. Mangal is now a criminal in the eyes of the law. Mangal's father Sangram Singh (Sohrab Modi) is Jahangir's Rajput chieftain. As an act of duty and reverence for the court, Sangram Singh urges Mangal to surrender; when Mangal flees, it is Sangram who captures his son and brings him back to Jahangir's court, where Mangal is sentenced. Following a typical melodramatic convention, the film showcases the conflict between a father's duty, a mother's love for her son and the ensuing family crisis. There is no reference to these events in the history of medieval India: this whole plotline draws on the Urdu imaginaire, perhaps inspired by the melodramatic historical novels that were circulating in the Urdu public sphere.[19]

The trial of Mangal in *Pukar* begins with an elaborate sequence. The guards on duty announce the arrival of the emperor Jahangir in a poetic enunciation:

Guard 1: *Rahe har ik ko adab ka liḥāẕ aur <u>kh</u>ayāl*
Guard 2: *Kisi ko sar ke uṭhāne ka nā ḥaq hai aur nā majāl*
Guard 3: *Naẕar jhukāye hue aur hāth bāndhe hue*
Guard 4: *<u>Kh</u>ade raho! Raho <u>kh</u>āmosh sāṅs roke hue*
Guard 5: *Ke āa rahī hai sawārī kamāl-e-raḥmat ki*
Guard 6: *Hawāyeiṅ ho gayī sāqit zamīn ki gardish bhi*

Guard 1: Everyone observe the protocol
Guard 2: No one may raise his head
Guard 3: Hands clasped and eyes downcast

Mughal themed films. Interview between Rosie Thomas and Kamal Amrohi on the set of *Razia Sultan*, Kamalistan Studios, Bombay, March 12, 1980.

[18] Ira Bhaskar and Richard Allen view the film as a "deeply philosophical work which sets a benchmark for the Muslim Historical as a genre". See Ira Bhaskar and Richard Allen, *Islamicate Cultures of Bombay Cinema* (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2009), 112. Also, see Urvi Mukhopadhyay on the Historical Genre as reinventing the idea of the 'Medieval' in *The 'Medieval' in Film: Representing a Contested Time on Indian Screen (1920s-1960s)* (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2013).

[19] See discussion in Chapter 1 about the novels of Halim Abdul Sharar (1896-1920).

Guard 4: Be silent and hold your breath

Guard 5: Make way for His Majesty

Guard 6: Winds and earth stand still

These literary flourishes clearly invented by Amrohi to add dramatic flair find no resemblance to historical modes of speech or behaviour attributed to the court of Jahangir, as the primary language was Persian and not Urdu at the time. This style of grand dialogues was borrowed from Urdu Parsi theatre and came into vogue in cinema as a result of *Pukar*'s success: subsequent historicals with Mughal themes used similar poetic enunciation.

In another important trial sequence in the film, the use of Urdu creates heightened emotionalism to articulate ideas of justice. Queen Noorjehan's ill-aimed arrow killed the husband of washerwoman Rani (Sardar Akhtar). Even though it was an accident, Jahangir's tenacious law 'A life for a life' is irrevocable, as it sees no difference between a Queen and a commoner.[20] The sequence opens with loud trumpets and the booming sounds of canon fire. The camera then tracks and takes the eye around the architectural grandeur of the court, reminiscent of the aesthetic of the Mughal miniature paintings with ornate pillars and delicately filigreed arches. While the camera is mobile, the subjects in the scene are still, almost like a tableau. We see the courtiers and guards assembled and awaiting the arrival of the emperor. This scene harks back to the sequence that opens the trial of Mangal Singh. In Noorjehan's trial, Emperor Jahangir slowly makes his way to his throne (*masnad*) and in a Persianized Urdu begins the proceedings of the court. The crime committed is announced in the *darbār*; the Queen and washerwoman Rani are asked to make an appearance. While the Queen remains with her entourage behind a veiled curtain, Rani, accompanied by her son, makes her way with folded hands straight to the centre of the court. As the Queen admits to her inadvertent crime, the tension is built up in the scene through a series of exchanges of looks between the courtiers. The camera zooms closer into Jahangir's face as he angrily announces his judgement.

[20] The idea of an unbiased blind law (*andhā qānūn*) is also gestured to in conversations between Jahangir and Noorjehan in the film.

Screenshot of Queen Noorjehan's trial sequence from *Pukar*

Chandramohan as Jahangir pronouncing his judgement in *Pukar*

Jahangir: *Mujrimā! Tum Malika thīṅ, lekin Malika hone ka tumhara ye matlab nahiṅ tha ke tum ik zindagī ke sāth khel sako.*
Apnī tafrī ke liye tum zindagī jaisī anmol ćhīz ki parwā nā karo.
Tum ćalo to zindagīyoṅ ko ragaṛtī huī chalo,
Tum haṅso to auroṅ ko rulā kar haṅso!
Qanūn kisi ko bhi is fir'auniyat ka ikhtiyār nahiṅ de sakta.
Tumhe yād rakhna ćahiye tha ke inṣāf ik andhe ki lāṭhī hai, ise kućh nahiṅ sūjhta. lihāẕā tumhāre haq meṅ humāra inṣāf yehī faiṣala ṭhahrātā hai,
ke jis tarha tumne ik aurat ke suhāg ko khūn meṅ dūboya hai,
isī tarha tumhāre suhāg ko bhī khūn meṅ dūbo diya jaye.
Mā-badaulat apne is faisle ke mutabiq tumhāre shohar ko maut ke hawale karte haiṅ!

Jahangir: Defendant, you used to be the Queen, but that gave you no right to play with a life. Nor to discard a life for entertainment. Nor to trample life underfoot. Nor to laugh at the tears of another. The law gives no one such despotic powers. You should have remembered that Justice is a blind man's stick. It sees nothing. Our judgement is that the way you drowned a woman's husband in blood, your husband's body must be drowned in his blood. I therefore condemn your husband to death!

This long dialogue puts Jahangir's justice to its most extreme test, as the emperor himself becomes the target for Rani's arrow. Jahangir's announcement is rendered poetically by the actor Chandramohan and makes visible the mobilization of the rhythm of Urdu meter to heighten the crisis in the sequence. The use of rhyming words like *ćalo* (to walk) and *haṅso* (to laugh) gives the dialogue a tempo, while the repetition of word *inṣāf* (justice) builds up the crisis.

Jahangir: *Rani, jis tarha Malika ne tumhāre khāvind par tīr mara hai,*
usi tarha tum bhi Malika ke shohar ki zindagī meṅ tīr ćhubho do!

Jahangir: Rani, the way the Queen has fired an arrow at your husband's life,
the same way you must pierce the Queen's husband's heart with the arrow!

(He is interrupted by shrieks from the Queen and her *kanīz* (lady in waiting))

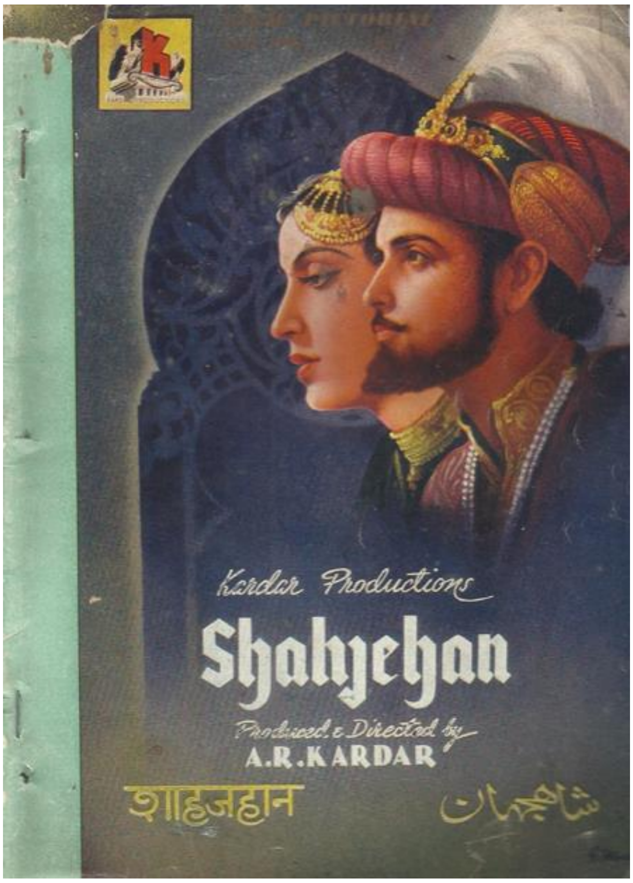
Jahangir: *Rani! Māro tīr humāre sīne meṅ.*
Khūn ka badla khūn yehī Jahangir ka inṣāf hai.
Isī inṣāf ke bal pe humāra khūn baha do.
Humeiṅ khūn meṅ dūbo do,
humeiṅ humāre hi qanūn ke shikanje meṅ rakh ke pīs dālo,
humeiṅ humāre hi inṣāf pe qurbān kar dalo,
humāri hi lāsh humāre inṣāf ki *ṭhokaroṅ meṅ ḍāl* do,
humāre inṣāf ko āb-e- hayāt pila do

Jahangir: Rani, shoot the arrow in my chest. A life for a life is Jehangir's law. On the basis of this law, shed my blood. Drown me in my blood. Grind me within the grip of my own law. Sacrifice me to this justice. Put my corpse at the feet of our justice. Give our justice eternal life.

(Rani lifts the bow but drops it.)

Jahangir: *Ta'amīl ho*! (Obey the order!)

The repetition of the words *humāre* (my/ our- plural) is suggestive of the ways in which Kamal Amrohi inserts the formal style of speech instead of using *maiṅ/mujhe* (singular I). The decision to mobilize this form of Urdu draws on the Urdu imaginaire and the discourse which considered it as a *shā'ista zabān* (polite/genteel/cultured language), most refined and appropriate for formal use. The film's editing too enables and matches the rhythm of the Urdu dialogues to create a sense of authority and force to Jahangir's command. The camera zooms in to a close up of Jahangir's face; his closed eyes open wide and he repeatedly shrieks "*Ta'amīl ho*!"/"Obey the order" as the shots intercut between the tense faces of Rani and her little boy. The juxtaposition of the editing with Jahangir's booming authoritative voice creates a heightened tempo of urgency in the scene. The climax is resolved with Rajput Chief Sangram's intervention and his plea that, as the emperor exists for his subjects, the people have a right to seek another form of reconciliation. The court erupts with shouts from the courtiers, guards and everyone else present. Rani is compensated for her loss and peace is restored. It is Sangram's public address which drives home the pivotal lesson of the film that "if stones are crushed in the mill of justice, so are mountains. That not only wax but iron too melts in its blazing furnaces." This meter-laden speech was inspired by literary and performative traditions of the Urdu imaginaire to represent the values of the elite *ashrāf* where decorum, authority and due deference were highly prized virtues.



Film advertisement for *Shahjehan* in *Film Pictorial*, May 1946

A.R. Kardar’s *Shahjehan* was released almost seven years later in 1946. This period film is also set in the court of the Mughal emperor Shahjahan and fictionalises the construction of the Taj Mahal as the symbol of eternal love. The legend of the Taj Mahal has been the subject of many fictions, from the silent film *Shahjahan* (d. Ardershir Irani, 1924),[21] to Sahir Ludhianvi’s famous poem *Taj Mahal*, and M. Sadiq’s eponymous film starring Bina Rai and Pradeep Kumar in 1963. While these narratives are very different from each other, they highlight the enduring charm that the monument has had for artists, poets and filmmakers. According to contemporary reports, Kardar earned a lot of praise for *Shahjehan* and the film did extremely well at the box office. Even though the film is dubbed as a ‘historical’ and the Shahjehan-Mumtaz Mahal love story is the frame narrative, a large portion of the film is based on the fictionalised romance between Ruhi (Nasreen), adopted daughter of a Rajput chieftain,

[21] According Suresh Chabria, Irani’s film was banned in several provinces on religious grounds. See, Chabria, *Light of Asia: Indian Silent Cinema 1912-1934* (New Delhi: Niyogi Books, 2013), 171. The film *Taj Mahal* (d. Nanubhai Vakil, 1942) was advertised as “The picture that revives the old glory of the Moghul Emperor…TAJ MAHAL…Mammoth Historical Production produced at an enormous cost - showing the real scenes of Moghul palaces at Agra Fort, Delhi, and other places where Shah Jehan & Mumtaz Mahal have lived in their days. Starring Kumar, Sarojini, Indurani.” In *filmindia*, Feb 1942, 24.

and Shirazi (Jairaj), the Persian architect of the Taj. In the sequence when Shahjehan (Kanwar) visits Mumtaz (Ragini) in the *zanāna* (female quarters), the guards announce his entrance in an elaborate style similar to *Pukar*.

> Guard: *Jahān-panāh, Daulat-panāh, 'Aẕmat-panāh, Ālī-jāṅ, Bālā-jāṅ, Zillu'llah, Sultān-ibn-Sultān-ibn-Sultān, Sultān Abu-Muẕaffar Shahāb-ud-din Muḥammad…Pādshāh-e-Ghāzī, Shahansha-e-Hindustān, ṣāḥib-qirān… ṣāḥib-qirān… ṣāḥib-qirān.*[22]

This Persianized-Urdu dialogue is crafted using Shahjehan's official title (i.e. *Al-Sultan al-'Azm wal Khaqan al-Mukarram, Abu'l-Muzaffar Shahab ud-din Muhammad, Sahib-i-Qiran-i-Sani, Shah Jahan-i Padshah Ghazi Zillu'llah Firdaus-Ashiyani*). Here, the 'sweet speech' of Persianized Urdu added to the sequence, demands respect, obedience and polite submission from the subjects in the film and the audiences. The similarities between *Pukar* and *Shahjehan* in the construction of the dialogue, the music and mise-en-scène are striking.[23] The English-language film journal *filmindia* wrote a favourable review of the film. Appreciating the technical finesse of the film, the reviewer made an astute observation with regard to language, "Giving to his players a beautiful tongue with choice words, he [Kardar] has built up the picture with extreme care, both technically and emotionally."[24] This notion of Urdu and its deep links to emotion and expression are significant. Further, in terms of performances and dialogue delivery, the *filmindia* reviewer wrote about Jairaj that "his diction of the dialogue remains staccato and sharp. If he would be less conscious of the Urdu language and less anxious about its correct pronunciation and if he would only use less of his teeth and more of his tongue, his phonetics would certainly improve. His present way of speaking gives too many eiges (sic) to the beautiful Urdu words. And Urdu is such a *sweet* language to speak and hear."[25] Nasreen's acting is deemed to be rather poor and her "Punjabi accent to her Urdu dialogues" is considered inappropriate and misplaced. This reviewer's comments about the proper enunciation of Urdu

[22] His regnal name is divided into various parts - *Shahab ud-Din* means "Star of the Faith", *Sahib al-Qiran* means "Second Lord", *Shah Jahan* means "King of the World". More epithets showed his secular and religious duties, *Zill-I Allahi*, or the "Shadow of God on Earth".
[23] So similar is the style of dialogue writing that many later entries on the film *Shahjehan* have erroneously attributed the screenplay and dialogues to Kamal Amrohi instead of A.R Kardar. See entry on *Shahjehan* on wikipedia.com and imdb.com.
[24] "Kardar Gives India's Best Historical Picture! "Shahjehan", A Beautiful Tribute to the Taj" in *filmindia,* September 1946, 41-45.
[25] Emphasis mine. Ibid., 45.

words was linked to the snobbery of Urdu elites and their insistence on the correctness of *talaffuẕ* (pronunciation).[26]

The affectations of Urdu's *sweet speech* were tied to erstwhile elite courtly Persian. Alexander Jabbari has argued that "the Persianate literary tradition endures through the medium of Urdu".[27] This continuation of intellectual and literary history in some shape or form can be seen to have been transferred to cinematic texts in the 1930s and 40s through the inclusion of Persian couplets familiar within the Urdu cultural tradition. Again, in *Shajehan*, a poem written about Ruhi's legendary beauty by the poet Suhail (played by K.L. Saigal) brings misery and violence to her father, Rajput chieftain Jwala Singh, and family; her five brothers are murdered by a wild mob that obstructs her wedding procession. Moved by the plight of Jwala Singh and his daughter, Shahjehan takes Ruhi under his protection at the royal court. The Emperor launches a contest for eligible men in the kingdom and beyond to woo Ruhi. In the sequence when the emperor announces the contest, Kardar inserts a Persian couplet at the end of the emperor's speech "*Agar firdaus bar rū-e zamīn ast, Hamīn ast-o hamīn ast-o hamīn ast.*"[28] The incorporation of this famous Persian couplet indicative of the literary is signalling the Urdu imaginaire to those familiar with the Persianate legacies of the Urdu language.

In the following sequences of the film, the challenge to create 'paradise on earth' puts many contenders at a loss and the contest is ultimately between Suhail and Shirazi. While Shirazi creates an enchanting *mujassma* (sculpture), Suhail writes a *qaṣīda,* a poem in praise

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[26] Incidentally, these debates about *talaffuẕ* continue to rage as a few recent articles lament the loss of correct Urdu pronunciation in Bollywood today. See, Arsalan Jafri, "Why the Urdu language is fading away from Bollywood," *The Wire*, May 8, 2019, https://livewire.thewire.in/out-and-about/why-the-urdu-language-is-fading-away-from-bollywood/; Rizwan Ahmad, "The Urdu sounds that are disappearing from Bollywood songs," *Dawn*, October 2, 2018, https://www.dawn.com/news/1436357 and Yasir Abbasi, "The Hindi Film Industry should mind its Ks and Qs when using Urdu words," *The Wire*, September 12, 2020, https://thewire.in/film/hindi-movies-urdu-words-lyrics

[27] Alexander Jabbari, 'Abstract' in "Late Persianate Literary Culture: Modernizing Conventions between Persian and Urdu" (PhD. diss., UC Irvine, 2017). https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4dw251wh

[28] Translation: "If there is a paradise on earth, it is this, it is this, it is this." The couplet is commonly attributed to Hazrat Amir Khusrau, however, there is a debate about whether it was in fact written by him or not. According to Sunil Sharma, it is not in his *diwan* or collection of poetry. See, Sharma, "'If There is a Paradise on Earth, It is Here': Urban Ethnography in Indo-Persian Poetic and Historical Texts," In *Forms of Knowledge in Early Modern Asia: Explorations in the Intellectual History of India and Tibet, 1500-1800,* ed. Sheldon Pollock (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 240-56. Also, see Rana Safvi, "Who really wrote the lines 'If there is Paradise on Earth, it is this, it is this, it is this'? *Scroll.in*, November 1, 2019, https://scroll.in/article/942273/who-really-wrote-the-lines-if-there-is-paradise-on-earth-it-is-this-it-is-this-it-is-this?fbclid=IwAR3i3mtWaOkIyZXlVHSIcr2C8a7CaCP8tZyqD1J6fQ1zqVneRbb71MGJM9Q

of the idyllic heaven, '*Kar lījiye ćal kar merī jannat ke naẕāre* (Come witness my Heaven)'.[29] Even though Suhail's *qaṣīda* is not material reality, it enthrals Shahjehan into believing the *jannat* (heaven) conjured up by mere words is a reality. It is interesting that the filmic narrative privileges the literary among art forms and convinces the emperor and the audience that Suhail's *qaṣīda* is the natural winner of the contest. Ruhi, however, falls in love with Shirazi's sculpture as it is an astounding replica of her appearance. This means that Shahjehan's choice is questioned and the disagreement reaches the court. The ensuing conflict puts a strain on the relationship between Shahjehan and Mumtaz, and a struggle between Mughal justice and love unfold. Even though the premise for the articulation of Mughal justice is not as nuanced as in *Pukar,* the film manages to dramatize the conflict as a matter of state importance. In the sequence when the Emperor's subjects beseech him to end the conflict, the dialogues adopt a variety of registers from the Urdu-Hindustani-Hindi triad.

> "*Sulṯān-e mu'aẕẕam ki wafadār riaya apne nek dil imāndār aur inṣāf pasand Bādshah ke ḥuẓūr meṅ ye arz karti hai ke wo tanhaī aur khāmoshī ćhoṛ ke Bāno-e-Hind ke suhāg ko salāmat rakheiṅ… ye iltijā hai, ye faryād hai, ye prārthna hai*."

> "The Noble Sultan's loyal subjects request their kind-hearted, honest and just Emperor to forego the loneliness and silence which is hindering his safekeeping. This is a request, an appeal, a prayer."

Here Kardar's use of the Urdu words *iltijā* (request) and *faryād* (appeal), alongside the Hindi word *prārthana* (prayer), in the same sentence is significant, as these words consciously highlight the diversity of the speech of the 'masses' and take the audiences outside the Persianized Mughal court. The conflict in the film culminates with Suhail renouncing his right to marry Ruhi.

Contemporary film journals in their reviews of both *Pukar* and *Shahjehan* praised the use of Urdu in the dialogues. In the column, "An Eventful Year", film critic Khwaja Ahmad Abbas acknowledged that "*Pukar* succeeded in spite of bad technique and weak direction."[30]

[29] *Qaṣīda* in Urdu poetry is often panegyric, sometimes dealing with an important event. As a rule, it is longer than the ghazal but follows the same system of rhyme.
[30] Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, "An Eventful Year," *filmindia*, December 1939, 45.

He viewed the film as a "refreshing relief from the glut of "Social" pictures" and credited Kamal Amrohi's chaste Urdu dialogues "with their occasional literary flourishes" for the film's success with audiences in northern India.[31] Nasiruddin Hashmi, in his review of the film for *Movieland*, wrote that while the language of Indian films had been "contaminated" through the use of Hindi and Sanskrit words in most other films, *Pukar* had been successful in its use of an Urdu speech (*zabān ki ḥaiṣīyat se ye film nihāyat kāmyāb hai aur dawa kiya ja sakta hai ke Pukar, Urdu zabān ka film hai*) and the language used in the film was an easy, simple and not abstruse (*salis*) Urdu.[32] For Hashmi this was the Urdu that people from the east (*mashriq*) to the west (*maghrib*) and north (*shumāl*) to south (*junūb*) spoke and were familiar with. He concedes that while *Pukar* uses Hindi words, this usage was contingent and necessary (*Goya ye sahī hai ke 'Pukar' meṅ bhī 'Hindi' alfāẓ maujūd haiṅ lekin mauqe' ke liḥāẓ se in ka hona ẓarūrī tha*).[33] In fact, Hashmi insists that the Hindi words in use are part of the Rajput speech (*Rajputoṅ ki zabān*) and if they had not been in use, there would have been an interruption to the realism of the play (*khel ki aṣlīyat meṅ farq ājata*).[34] Further, Hashmi points out that the language of the washer-folk was separate from urban speech, as it should be, although in the conversation between the washerwoman (Rani) and the Queen, it becomes unclear whether she is a villager because of the clarity of the language used which was unsuitable (*Dhoban ki zabān shahrī zabān se alaidah hai aur honi bhi ćahiye, lekin jab wo malika se guftagu karti hai to ye nahi ma'lūm hota ke wo gaonwali hai, iss mauqe' par jo ṣāf zabān istĕ'māl hui hai wo na-munāsib hai*).[35] This scrutiny of the use of language and the appropriate registers of speech employed in the film crucially points to the engagement with varied contemporary language debates: Hindi for Hindu Rajputs and Persianized Urdu for Mughals, with the urban portrayed as a linguistically chaste literary elite while the rural language is rustic and colloquial.

In these reviews, *Pukar* was also celebrated for its effective portrayal of Mughal society and culture.[36] In fact, Abbas observed that "the outstanding contribution of this picture has been a lifting of the taboo on themes pertaining to Muslim history or tradition", and that this is worthy of our attention, considering that communal tensions were on the rise in this period.[37]

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[31] Ibid., 45.
[32] The review was first published in the journal *Movieland*, 1940. Nasiruddin Hashmi, *Film Numa: Film ke muta'alliq iṣlāḥī aur tanqīdī maẓāmīn ka majmū'a* (Hyderabad: Shams-al Mataba Machine Press, 1940), 82.
[33] Ibid., 82.
[34] Ibid., 82.
[35] Ibid., 86-87.
[36] According to Hashmi, "*Pukar meṅ jo tamaddun aur ṭarz-e mŏ'āsharat pesh kiya gaya hai wo aṣlīyat ka ḥāmil naẓar āta hai iss ke dekhne se ṣāf taur par aya jata hai khel Mughliya daur se ta'alluq rakhta* hai." Ibid., 82.
[37] Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, "An Eventful Year" in *filmindia,* December 1939, 45.

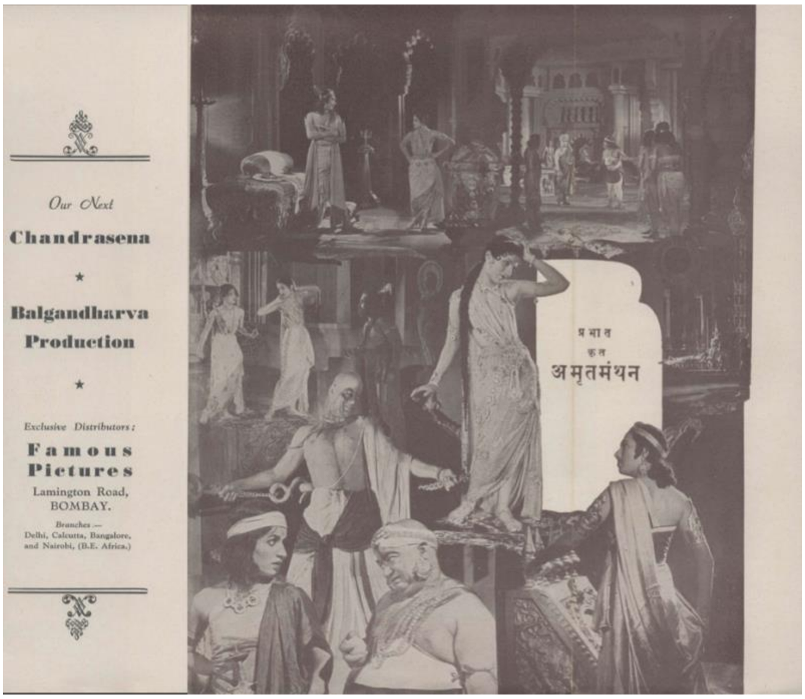
Interestingly enough, as if to prove Abbas right, a 1942 issue of *filmindia* carries a short story "Love in Marble: A Commoner's Symbol Becomes an Emperor's Sigh".[38] Film scholars Ira Bhaskar and Richard Allen have read *Pukar* as a political allegory which intervenes within the contemporary.[39] Abbas' comments that "the sentiment of the picture - an Emperor's devotion to the ideals of justice - appealed to people, while the underlying motif of Hindu-Muslim unity under the Moghals (sic) also helped to make it popular" are significant.[40] Nasiruddin Hashmi had been writing regularly in Urdu film journals espousing *a<u>kh</u>lāqī* cinema. In his review of *Pukar*, he urged other filmmakers to produce similar films on communal harmony, borrowing especially from the history of the Mughal period as it would lend to the project of *a<u>kh</u>lāqī* cinema. *Pukar* was, I argue, able to address this "sentiment" of religious amity between communities through a narrative which was enriched by the use of a variety of registers of Urdu-Hindi-Hindustani.

While contemporary audiences and critics like Abbas and Hashmi celebrated *Pukar* for its freshness, by 1946, the historical genre had become overused according to some reports. In the article *Hidayatkār* (*Director*), Irshad Chughtai in *Sha'mā* Annual 1946 wrote, "Sohrab Modi has created a historical hysteria among the directors. Everyone has forgotten everything and is busy stockpiling films on themes related to Samrat Chandragupt, Samrat Ashok, Shahzada Akbar, Shahenshah Babar, Shahenshah Humanyun…etc. These films are neither mediations of history nor do they mirror history."[41] A.R. Kardar's *Shahjehan* was released in the same year as Chughtai's article. Watching *Shahjehan* it is not a surprise to see the significant carry-overs from *Pukar* and the influence of Modi's "historical hysteria" in mise-en-scène, costumes and literary flourishes, reiterating the presence of the Urdu imaginaire in Indian cinema.

The *sweet speech* of Urdu was, perhaps unsurprisingly, mobilized by genres overtly linked to Mughal themed historicals. However, in some cases, other genres of film also used Urdu in the dialogues to articulate authority and power. The first example that I draw from is

[38] Dewan Sharar, "Our Short Story: Love in Marble: A Commoner's Symbol Becomes an Emperor's Sigh," *filmindia*, January 1942, 53-55-57- 59-61.
[39] Ira Bhaskar and Richard Allen, *Islamicate Cultures of Bombay Cinema* (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2009).
[40] Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, "An Eventful Year" in *filmindia*, December 1939, 45.
[41] Urdu original: "*Sohrab Modi ne hidāyatkāroṅ par ik tarī<u>kh</u>ī hysteria tāri kar diya hai. Sab ke sab, sab kućh bhūl kar Samrat Chandragupt, Samrat Ashok, Shahzada Akbar, Shahenshah Babar, Shehnshah Humanyun…waghera qism ki filmeiṅ ik ambār ki shakal meṅ jama karni shuru kar di haiṅ. Ye filmeiṅ na tarī<u>kh</u> ka sahi muraqqa haiṅ na yeh ek tarī<u>kh</u>ī ā'īna haiṅ*." See, *Sham'ā*, Issue 8, No. 5, Annual 1946.

Amrit Manthan, a significant film in the Prabhat Film Company repertoire, which mobilises Urdu to accentuate dramatic effect. Prabhat, established in 1929, had been producing a series of popular films within the historical-mythological genre. The Prabhat films were known for their elaborate sets, costumes and creative use of songs and music.[42] The success of *Amrit Manthan* (1934) helped to establish Prabhat's formidable reputation. *Amrit Manthan* was based on Narayan Hari Apte's Marathi language novel *Bhagyashri*. Apte's work had already been borrowed with great enthusiasm by other filmmakers in Maharashtra.[43] Film scholar Kaushik Bhaumik has argued that Prabhat's earlier films like *Udaykal* (d. V. Shantaram, 1930), *Maya Machhindra* (d. V. Shantaram, 1932), *Ayodhyecha Raja* (d. V. Shantaram, 1932), *Sinhagad* (d. V. Shantaram, 1933) and *Sairandhri* (d. V. Shantaram, 1933) helped the studio to consolidate the imagination of a 'Hindu ethnoscape', which makes it particularly interesting to examine the influence of the Urdu imaginaire on one of their films.[44]



Advertisement for *Amrit Manthan* in *filmindia*, 1934

[42] Hrishikesh Ingle, "Early Marathi Cinema: Prabhat Studios and Social Respectability," *Synoptique* 5, no. 2 (2017): 79- 100 and Hrishikesh Arvikar, "Between the Shots, After the Cuts: The Political Economy of Prabhat Studio," *Widescreen* 8, no. 1(2019): 1- 20.

[43] In 1925, Baburao Painter had adapted *Sawakari Pash* and *Rana Hamir* for Maharashtra Film Company. In 1933, Painter hired Apte to write the screenplay for *Sinhagad*. After the success of *Amrit Manthan*, he wrote for Prabhat's *Rajput Ramani* (d. Keshavrao Dhaiber, 1936) and the box office success *Kunku/ Duniya Na Mane* (1937).

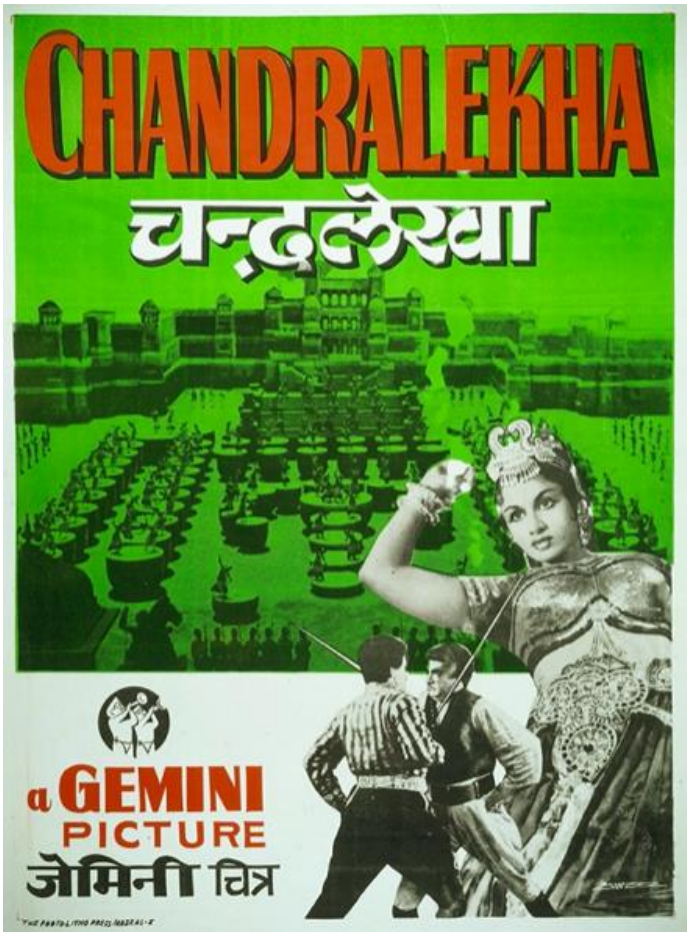
[44] Kaushik Bhaumik, "The Emergence of the Bombay Film Industry, 1913-1936" (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2002).

In *Amrit Manthan*, using the character of King Krantivarma as the mouthpiece to vocalize his reformist views, director V. Shantaram launches a critique of archaic ritualism and superstitions. The film is set in a fictional ancient 'quasi-Hindu' kingdom Avanti Nagar which is ruled by King Krantivarma. One of the kingdom's annual rituals involves human and animal sacrifice as offerings to the chief goddess Devi Ma Chandika. The king issues a ban on the practice, earning the wrath of the temple priest Rajguru (Chandramohan),[45] who plots and incites a group of religious zealots to assassinate the king. The opening sequence of the film has been mostly discussed to date for its spectacular cinematography and lighting, based on knowledge acquired by Shantaram after a visit to Germany. The expressionistic techniques such as its "systematic recourse to artificial lighting, even bleaching the film in places, and in its most famous shot, the telephoto lens focused on the priest's right eye in his opening declaration" give the film an uncanny tone.[46] But, along with the spectacular mise-en-scène, Veer Muhammad Puri's dialogues add a crucial aura of darkness to the machinations of the high priest in the dungeon. The high priest of the Chandika cult speaks in chaste Hindi, but Urdu words and phrases like *z̤ulm* (oppression, injustice), *ḥauṣla* (courage), *buzurgoṅ ki rūh* (spirit of ancestors) and *aulād* (offspring) find their way into his vocabulary. The moral universe conjured by the semantic range of these terms creates the eerie mood necessary for the sequence. Actor Chandramohan's rhythmic style of dialogue delivery derives its charge through the use of Urdu words. This is not to suggest that the high priest speaks in Urdu. However, the choice of Urdu words like *tajurba* for experience instead of its Hindi equivalent *anūbhav* is a carefully articulated placement by the dialogue writer. It works as a kind of familiar normative speech register that produces the much-needed affect. Prabhat's effort to "realistically" portray Hindu mythology in a Sanskritised Hindi register was fully embedded within popular notions about ancient Indian history. Despite such assertions, the significance of the Urdu imaginaire and its resonances find expression in the way that the mythic world of *Amrit Manthan* is punctured by the insertion of Urdu vocabulary.

[45] Chandramohan Watal was born in Narsinghpur in what was then known as the Central Provinces to Kashmiri Pandit parents on July 24, 1906. He left home in 1930 and took a series of odd jobs, including managing a cinema and a film distributorship. During his job at the cinema, he met Shantaram who was struck by his pale grey-green eyes and thought he would make an excellent actor. As an intimidating high priest, *Amrit Manthan* was the perfect debut. After the success of the film, Chandramohan became an undoubted star of the 1930s and was one of the highest paid actors of the time. He worked in *Dharmatma, Amar Jyoti*, *Pukar* and Mehboob Khan's *Roti* (1942). His last film was *Shaheed* (1948) where he played Dilip Kumar's father Rai Bahadur Dwarkadas. Compiled from an obituary by Khorshed Dhondy, "The Chandramohan Story,"*Sound*, April 1949, 54-56 & 76.
[46] Ashish Rajadhyaksha and Paul Willemen, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Cinema* (London: BFI and Oxford University Press, 1999), 258.

The use of Urdu vocabulary time and again in the film underscores dialogues in order to evoke notions of authority and justice. In the film, Yashodharma is chosen by priest Rajguru to kill King Krantivarma. Torn between his devotion to the Chandika cult and his allegiance to the king, Rajguru kills the King before Yashodharma can enact the final blow. But Yashodharma, his young son Madhav and daughter Sumitra (Shanta Apte) are indicted. The story then revolves around Madhav's attempts to clear his family's name. Another subplot is the romance between King Krantivarma's daughter Mohini (Nalini Turkhud) and Madhav (G.R. Mane). In a scene where Madhav has been taken prisoner, the exchange between (by then) Queen Mohini and Madhav is given an additional charge by the use of Urdu vocabulary. Madhav is summoned to the court and is sentenced to death. Madhav openly challenges the judgement, "Queen, tell me the reason for my murder".[47] Mohini, visibly uncomfortable, says "Your father has committed the momentous crime (*saṅgīn jurm*) of murdering the King."[48] Madhav says "But my father has been punished for it, then why murder me? On the happy occasion of your coronation (*ta<u>kh</u>t-e nashīnī*) does the Queen wish to tarnish her hands with the blood of an innocent?".[49] This exchange is significant as it relies on and taps into the erstwhile imagination of Urdu as a language of imperial networks of power. This is an image which is fostered by historical plays and films like *Pukar* and *Shahjehan* that are based on Mughal kings. The conflation of the supposedly "ancient" with the "medieval" through speech and mise-en-scène creates a process of signification that perhaps unintentionally highlights the syncretic history of Urdu as a language of both Hindus and Muslims.

[47] Original dialogue: "*Maharanī mere qatl ki wajah to mujhe bata di jaye*"
[48] Original dialogue: "*Tere pita ne, Maharaja ke <u>kh</u>ūn ka saṅgīn jurm kiya…*"
[49] Original dialogue: "*uskī sazā to unko mil ćuki, phir mera qatl kyuṅ? Maharanī, ta<u>kh</u>t-e nashīnī ki <u>kh</u>ushī meṅ ik be-quṣūr ke <u>kh</u>ūn se hāth rang kar apne rajya ki shurūwāt karna ćahti heṅ*?"



Poster for *Chandralekha*, 1948

Even a fantasy film in Madras drew from the Urdu imaginaire. Gemini Studio's big budget release *Chandralekha* (d. S.S. Vasan, 1948) had been in production for almost five years and was one of the costliest films produced in Tamil and Hindustani/Hindi in the 1940s.[50] The film has been discussed by scholars on Tamil cinema as "the first major effort of a Tamil studio to attempt an all-India distribution"[51] and also as an initiator of "escapist entertainment" by Madras studios in the post-war period.[52] Apart from the massive cost of production, Gemini Studio's elaborate set designs, menagerie of animals, choreography of stunt and dance sequences are part of film lore.[53] The film's narrative is structured like a quintessential Arabian

[50] Barnouw and Krishnaswamy called it "an extravagant contrast to war-effort movies and the most expensive film yet produced", roughly estimated at Rs. 3 million. Barnouw and Krishnaswamy, *Indian Film* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1980), 173-174.

[51] Ashish Rajadhyaksha and Paul Willemen, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Cinema* (London: BFI and Oxford University Press, 1999), 310.

[52] Theodore S. Baskaran, *The Message Bearers: The Nationalist Politics and the Entertainment Media in South India 1880- 1945* (Madras: Cre-A, 1981), 150.

[53] Screenwriter Kothamanglam Subbu recalled, "During the making (of *Chandralekha*), our studio looked like a small kingdom...horses, elephants, lions, tigers in one corner, palaces here and there, over there a German lady training nearly a hundred dancers on one studio floor, a shapely Sinhalese lady teaching another group of dancers

Nights *dastān* with spectacular plot twists interspersed with spectacles: the circus sequence with trapeze artists, tricks performed by animals, the 'longest sword duel' and the famous drum dance at the end of the film. In contemporary film journals, *Chandralekha* evoked the typical reaction reserved for oriental fantasy films. In a column "Woes and Echoes" in *filmindia,* G. Ramjogi from Eluru wrote,

> Nowadays our South Indian producers are producing pictures like "Mohini", "Demonland", "Magic Horse", "Chandralekha" and "Balaraju". These pictures are full of miracles, stunts and absurdities, but they are "box office hits". The public is not in a position to understand, why the Madras Censor Board is allowing to exhibit such pictures. Can't the Madras Censor Board, consisting of 24 intelligent, and venerable personalities, ban such stupid stunt pictures, and save the people's money?[54]

Despite the outrage, *Chandralekha* did spectacularly well. The profit margins of the Hindustani/Hindi version exceeded those of the Tamil version. This exceptional success was partially due to the fact that the film was distributed and exhibited across a wider film circuit. Vasan had spent enormous amounts of money on the publicity of the film as well which ensured a good box office return.[55] Apart from effective strategies of distribution and exhibition, the film's use of Urdu in the dialogues by Pandit Indra and Agha Jani Kashmiri created affective evocations that placed the film within the familiar conventions of the Urdu imaginaire of the 1940s. The film's plot revolves around the rivalry between two siblings Vir Singh (M.K. Radha) and Shashank (Rajan) in their quest for accession to the throne. In the scene when the younger son Shashank confronts his father, the king, claiming his right (*ḥaq*) to the throne, he demands that the king sign (*dast<u>kh</u>aṭ*) the papers or divide the kingdom equally between the

on real marble steps adjoining a palace, a studio worker making weapons, another making period furniture using expensive rosewood, set props, headgear, and costumes, Ranjan undergoing fencing practice with our fight composer 'Stunt Somu', our music directors composing and rehearsing songs in a building... there were so many activities going on simultaneously round the clock." Cited in Randor Guy, "…And thus he made Chandralekha sixty years ago," *Madras Musings* 18, no. 17 (December 2008), http://madrasmusings.com/Vol%2018%20No%2017/and_thus_he_made_chandralekha_sixty_years_ago.html

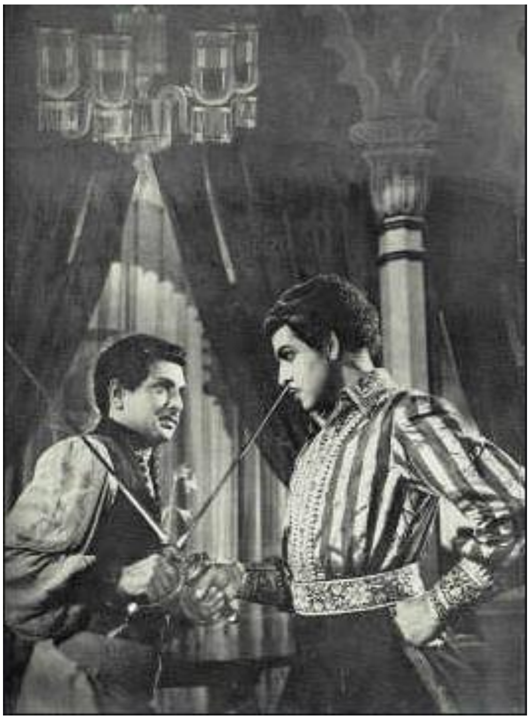
[54] "Woes and Echoes" in *filmindia*, April 1949, 65.

[55] In the column "Bombay Calling", Baburao Patel discussed Vasan's strategy for publicity and how Bombay producers felt threatened by the inroads made by a South Indian studio into the North Indian market. According to the report, Vasan had spent an extraordinary amount of 7 lakh rupees on publicity alone. Patel insinuates that J.B.H. Wadia, the President of the Indian Motion Picture Producers' Association (IMPPA) tried to impose sanctions to punish, fine or boycott producers (such as Vasan) for breaching standards of publicity prescribed by the IMPPA. These sanctions according to Patel were unfair attempts to squash fair competition. "Bombay Calling" in *filmindia*, December 1949, 7-9.

two brothers. The king declares the eldest brother has the first right to rule (*rāj ka pehla ḥaqdār baḍā bhai hota hai*) and burns Shashank's petition. This further aggravates the situation and a heated exchange between the father and son ensues:

> Shashank: *Agar āp nahi dengeiṅ to maiṅ khud le lūṅga*!
> Maharaj: *Tum mere bete ho*!
> Shashank: *āp mere pita heṅ? āp mere dushman heṅ*! *Maharāj, āp mujhe baćā samajh kar meri bāt uṛā raheiṅ heṅ, āp bhūl raheiṅ heṅ ke maiṅ bhi āpki tarha bahādur hūṅ aur badlā lene ki ṭāqat rakhta hūṅ*.
>
> Shashank: If you won't give me (the kingdom), then I will take it.
> Maharaj: You are my son!
> Shashank: You are my father? You are my enemy! Maharaj, you are treating me like a child and dismissing my word. You are forgetting that like you, I am also brave and capable of revenge.

This exchange is interrupted as Vir Singh enters the scene and evokes Shashank's mockery, "*Here comes your heir, Prince Vir Singh ji/ ye aye āpke uttara adhikārī, Rājkumar Vir Singh Ji*". Interestingly enough, Shashank uses the Sanskritised appellation for heir (*uttara adhikārī*) but as he is snubbed by the king, he switches easily back into an Urduised tongue claiming that Shashank can protect his own life (*Shashank apnī jān ki ḥifāẓat kar sakta hai*). As he storms out of the palace, the king orders the arrest of this traitor (*giriftār karo is ghaddār ko*). The good-natured Vir Singh follows Shashank and attempts to reason with his younger brother, "Shashank, what is this foolishness? You want the kingdom, right? I can request the king and procure the throne for you/ "*Shashank, ye kaisi nādānī hai? Tumheiṅ rāj hi ćāhiye nā? Maiṅ Maharāj se arz karke singhāsan tum hi ko dilwa dūṅga*." Shashank is enraged by this charity (*bhīk*). He throws a dagger at Vir Singh which he dodges and entreats his brother, "Don't be obstinate, uphold your distinguished rank/ *ẓidd na karo, apna rutbā sambhalo*." But Shashank has already climbed onto his horse and rides off. This whole sequence in terms of its dialogue construction and exchange plugs into a variety of speech registers, but primarily mobilises Urdu vocabulary. As the film's narrative does not locate the kingdom in any specific era, it effectively mobilises a variety of Indo-fusion vocabularies even in the mise-en-scène and costumes. For example in this sequence, Shashank's costume is a collared western style embroidered shirt with Jodhpur-style horse riding trousers and boots, while the Maharaj is seen wearing an Angarkha-style long embroidered tunic with straight legged pyjama, a few strings of pearl/diamond necklaces and an ornate crown. Vir Singh appears casually dressed in a loose organza silk kurta pyjama (typical of nawabs/*ashrāf*) and the palace guards are dressed in a khaki uniform with turbans worn by Indian soldiers during WWI and WWII. The palace is full of modern colonial era furniture like wall clocks, armchairs, oak desks, glass chandeliers, sculptures and portrait paintings on the walls with heavy drapery.[56] This layering of cultural artefacts and diverse sartorial referents for costumes along with the dialogues provides a rich eclectic tapestry that is the very essence of an Urdu imaginaire.



A scene from *Chandralekha*: Shashank and Vir Singh lock swords

Shashank manages to mobilize a rogue army that creates havoc in the kingdom, and Vir Singh is captured by this rebel army with the help of a palace spy. Vir Singh is trapped by Shashank's army inside a cave and declared dead, the Maharaja and the Queen are jailed, and Shashank declares himself the new King. His speech at his coronation is worth analysis. The scene is carefully orchestrated by Vasan, beginning with soldiers marching to drums and pipes, loud trumpets blaring followed by an oriental dance sequence inspired by Uday Shankar's

[56] The Tamil language magazine *Kumudam* criticized the film for its inconsistency in set design, using modern furniture in what was deemed as a "period film". The king is shown writing with a quill while he has all sorts of modern amenities at his disposal. See, Swarnavel Eswaran Pillai, *Madras Studios: Narrative Genre, and Technology in Tamil Cinema* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2015), 189.

Kalpana.[57] The female dancers present Shashank with the crown but only his allies clap in celebration. To quell the awkward silence, other courtiers are threatened by the guards to join in the applause. The court thunders with the sound of the claps and the scene is intercut with shots of the distressed parents stripped of their fine clothes in the jail.

Screenshots from *Chandralekha:* Shashank's coronation sequence

[57] Uday Shankar's *Kalpana* (1948) was filmed at Gemini Studio and apparently was a source of inspiration to Vasan especially in many of the exotic dance sequences in the film.

An ecstatic Shashank begins his speech:

Priye prajā jano! Jis rāj gaddī par Mahārāj Mayank Sen, Mahārāj Anant Sen aur Mahārāj Nag Sen jaise pratāpī rāja virājmān hue the, usi rāj gaddī ki zimmedārī sambhalne ki shubh ghadī meṅ hum āpke prem aur ādar se muskarāte hue ćehre dekh kar bahut hi khush ho raheiṅ heṅ.
Phir bhi aise anand ke samay humara mann sukhī nahiṅ hai. Pujay baṛe bhai Vir Singh Ji ki kāl mrityu aur unke dukh se pujay māta pita ka sansār choṛ kar sanyās le lena humare liye be-ḥadd dukh ka kāran hai. Lekin honi ko kaun ṭāl sakta hai, afsos Vir Singh ji, unki atmā ko shantī mile.
Lekin ik bāt sabke dhyān meṅ rehni ćahiye, agar koi humārī qānūn se qaiyūm ki huī sarkār ke khilāf baghāwat karega to uskī zindagī, dhan-daulat sab kuć khatam kar diya jayega. Ye koi nā bhule! Hume takht-o tāj lene ke liye āp ne majbūr kiya iska hum humesha khayāl rakheṅgeiṅ, umīd hai ke āp log bhī wafadār raheiṅgeiṅ.

Dear country men! I am delighted to see your faces beaming with love and affection, at this auspicious moment as I take over the responsibility of the throne that has seen legendary kings like Maharaj Mayank Sen, Maharaj Anant Sen and Maharaj Nag Sen.

(in a pretentiously remorseful tone, he continues) Despite this time of joy, my heart is not happy. The inauspicious death of respected elder brother Vir Singh ji – and due to this our parent’s decision to renounce the world – is the reason for my immense sadness. But what has to happen has to happen! Alas, I hope that Vir Singh ji’s soul rests in peace.

(switching to an aggressive tone) But everyone bear in mind, if anyone tries to rebel against our legally constituted authority there will be consequences to their life, their wealth and everything will be destroyed. Let no one forget! You have entreated me to take over the throne, and I will forever be thoughtful of this, I hope that you people will also remain loyal.

This long monologue is fascinating as it begins with formal Hindi to establish the genealogical history of the kingdom. Shashank uses terms such as '*rāj gaddī*' for throne but, at the end of his fake remorse, his vocabulary completely switches to Urduised speech asserting that he has used the rule of law to establish (*qānūn se qaiyūm*) his claim to the throne (*takht-o tāj*). Earlier, Vir Singh had used the Hindi word *singhāsan* for throne. This mobilising of a semantic net of power and authority through an affective switching between a variety of Hindi-Urdu-Hindustani terms clearly punctuates different forms of melodramatic address. Dialogue writer Pandit Indra, in collaboration with Agha Jani Kashmiri, played an important role in transforming a Tamil language film into an all-India blockbuster.[58] It is crucial to remember that the post-independence landscape of language hierarchies was very much at play in this sequence through a conscious balancing of Hindi and Urdu vocabularies.

Amrit Manthan, Pukar, Shahjehan and *Chandralekha* succeed in deploying a variety of registers of speech within the Urdu-Hindustani-Hindi triad. Through the use of Urdu in the dialogues, the films' narratives are embedded with moments of high emotionalism. Even though the films are historical, 'costume film'[59] and oriental fantasy in terms of generic categorisation, at points of crisis, and challenges to power and authority, a morally polarized universe is created which gets resolved through a series of interventions. In this process, the Urdu in the dialogues and their accompanying rhythms of enunciation aid the melodramatic thrust of the film and bring to the fore the associations of Urdu with *sweet speech*, the language

[58] It is beyond the purview of my language expertise and the scope of this chapter, but it would be interesting to compare the Tamil version with the Hindustani-Hindi version in terms of the dialogues. Theodore S. Baskaran has suggested that many of the Tamil films from the 40s employed a literary Tamil in the dialogues. He shows how the Dravidian movement impacted the way that the dialogues were written which was more literary and privileged the written over the spoken or oral. Many of the monologues in the films were structured in a kind of formal "one-way communication" possessing oratory appeal to high formal Tamil. See, Baskaran, *History Through the Lens: Perspectives on South Indian Cinema* (Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, 2009), 62- 64.
[59] *Amrit Manthan* is described as a 'costume film' in Firoze Rangoonwala, *Indian Filmography* (Bombay: J. Udeshi, 1970).

of the courts, of justice, erstwhile power and state authority.[60] This *sweet speech* of Urdu is also evocative of an imaginative world of romance and love that the many cinemas of India effectively employ.

REALMS OF ROMANCE: LYRICS IN THE FILMS AND THE URDU IMAGINAIRE

The experience of love in Urdu is expressed as utopic, erotic and spiritual with often overlapping sensibilities and aesthetics. One of the central creative influences on the conceptualisation of love in the Urdu imaginaire comes from Sufism. The realisation of this Sufi idea is based on the twin force of love as 'phenomenal' (*ishq-e-majāzī)* and 'real' (*ishq-e-haqīqī*).[61] In this duality, the lover and the divine intertwine, exchange and mirror each other. Coming from longer Persianate traditions of poetry and lyricism, the language of romance in Urdu poetry encompasses a rich reservoir of metaphors and imaginaries.[62] The literary landscape of love in Urdu poetry is inundated with images of moths attracted to flames, the anguish of separation, ruined lovers, and even death. Film scholars have noted that song lyrics in Indian cinema are written in "the language of love of the Urdu lyric" and are in fact "irreplaceable because their equivalents in literary Hindi don't resound in the same way."[63] As the film examples I discuss will illustrate, even when films are not overtly in Urdu, they can be considered to be influenced by the Urdu imaginaire, specifically the expression of romance as a diegetic element within the film's narrative often comes from the Urdu imaginaire of the 1930s which had flourished because of a potent poetic imagination of love developed by Urdu poets, writers and dramatists. Like the dialogues, film songs can have an independent life from the films, as they circulate and contribute to the elaboration and sustenance of the Urdu imaginaire in the public sphere through song booklets, radio transmission, gramophone records, *mushā'ara* and public performances.

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[60] Nazir Ahmad was appointed by Lieutenant Governor of the North Western Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh) to translate the Indian Penal code into Urdu from English. It is worth exploring the kind of vocabulary Ahmad used in his translation, which may have found its way into the Urdu imaginaire and popular cultural notions of legality within the film courtroom. See, Malini Nair, "The Silver Tongue: How Urdu lingers on as the language of law," *The Times of India*, February 26, 2017, https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/sunday-times/the-silver-tongue-how-urdu-lingers-on-as-the-language-of-law/articleshow/57350117.cms. Also see, Elizabeth Lhost, "To Flower and Fructify: Rational Religion and the Seeds of Islam in Nazir Ahmad's (1830- 1912) Late- career Religious Non-fiction," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 31, no. 1 (2020): 31-69.

[61] Christopher Shackle, "The shifting sands of love," In *Love in South Asia,* ed. Francesca Orsini (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 88.

[62] Sunil Sharma, "Forbidden Love, Persianate Style: Re-reading Tales of Iranian Poets and Mughal Patrons," *Iranian Studies* 42, no. 5 (2009), 765-779.

[63] Mukul Kesavan, "Urdu, Awadh and the Tawaif: The Islamicate Roots of Hindi Cinema," In *Forging Identities: Gender, Communities and the State in India,* ed. Zoya Hasan (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 247.

The use of the ghazal in film songs as a preferred genre stems from its inherently melodic structure. The origin of the Urdu ghazal can be traced to Arabic and Persianate forms of the ghazal which were ornate and highly stylised. The ghazal is known to possess a wide repertoire of images and metaphors that Urdu poets draw upon readily.[64] Over the centuries, the form of the ghazal developed to incorporate new innovations like the shorter meter for melodic presentation, or the incorporation of the *ta<u>kh</u>alluṣ* (nom-de-plume of the poet) which is attributed to the Persianate influence. The themes of the ghazal have expanded from romance, nostalgia and eroticism to engagements with the contemporary and political reflections.[65] The first couplet of the ghazal is called the *maṯla‘* and is an important part which establishes the form, theme and mood of the ghazal. Sometimes, there is a second *maṯla‘* in the ghazal called the *maṯla‘ -e-ṣānī*. In the Urdu ghazal, the second line of all the couplets (*shĕ‘r*) must end with the *same* word/s. This repetition of common words is the *radīf* of the ghazal. It is preceded by a *qāfiya* which is a repeating pattern of words. The defining feature of the *maṯla‘* is to pronounce the shape and form of the ghazal through the *qafiya* and the *radīf*.[66] The last couplet of the ghazal is called the *maqṯa‘* and in the *mushā‘ara* format the poet inserts his/her *ta<u>kh</u>alluṣ* here. The Urdu metaphors or *maẓmūn* have been rigorously debated and discussed within the Urdu public sphere.

In this section, I focus on the ways in which a variety of literary (and performative) genres from Urdu poetic traditions of romance were drawn on by films of the 1930s and 40s. The ghazal as a genre has been ubiquitous in Indian cinema, specifically in this period. While there are innumerable examples to choose from, I will use the four films already discussed, as well as one other, *Mirza Sahiban* (d. K. Amarnath, 1947) to draw attention to the *realms of romance* expressed through the Urdu lyric.

[64] For elaboration please refer to Chapter 1. Also see Frances Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and its critics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft10000326/
[65] For example, the ghazals of poets Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Majaz Lucknawi and Sahir Ludhianavi.
[66] For further details see Ralph Russell, "The Pursuit of the Urdu Ghazal," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 29, No. 1 (1969): 107-124.

A scene from *Amrit Manthan*: Madhav and Mohini romance in the forest

In *Amrit Manthan,* the romance between Mohini and Madhav is articulated through song lyrics which are full of metaphors from the Urdu imaginaire. When Madhav and Mohini are forced to escape to the forest to save themselves from the onslaught by Rajguru and his henchmen, the idyllic space of the forest becomes the perfect setting for the blossoming of romance between the two. They sing the ghazal, *Ārzū-e-dil ʻayāṅ karne ke bhī qābil nahiṅ.* The lyrics for the song, written by Veer Muhammad Puri, follow the meter and form of the modern ghazal, where the *radīf* in the ghazal is the word *nahiṅ* and the *qāfiya* is *qābil/dil/sāḥil*.

Ārzū-e-dil ʻayāṅ karne ke bhī qābil nahiṅ
Haye kis muṅh se kahūṅ, pahlū meṅ mere dil nahiṅ
Hāth pairoṅ ko hai pata, tilmilāna hai ʻabaṣ
haṅsta-jā is qahr meṅ, jiska kahiṅ sāḥil nahiṅ

Ārzū-e-dil ʻayāṅ karne ke bhī qābil nahiṅ
Pās bhi hūn dūr bhi hūn, ye kashmakash hai ʻajīb
Kya hi mushkil hai ke āsān bhi nahiṅ, mushkil nahiṅ

Ārzū-e-dil ʻayāṅ karne ke bhī qābil nahiṅ
Dhīre dhīre mere bhi, milta nahiṅ dil ko qarār
Jisko hum samjhe the manzil, dar-aṣal manzil nahiṅ

Ārzū-e-dil ʻayāṅ karne ke bhī qābil nahiṅ
Haye kis muṅh se kahūṅ, pahlū meṅ mere dil nahiṅ[67]

The lover yearns for his beloved but is unable to express his deep desires (*ārzū-e-dil).* His restless heart has left him no recourse and there is no end to his misery. The metaphor of the sea-shore (*sāḥil*) signifies that the end is nowhere in sight for the lover (*ʻāshiq*). This Urdu ghazal is unlike the rest of the songs in the film. The forest setting is ideal for the expression of love, which is a repeated scenario in many of the romantic songs in Indian cinema. It is not surprising that the lyricist wrote the one romantic song in the film as an Urdu ghazal considering the lineage of this form of poetic expression in the articulation of romance.

The songs follow a similar pattern in *Pukar*, the film's use of language and characterisation are specifically coded and the various registers of Urdu-Hindustani-Hindi are mobilised for specific character types. While the Mughal court is specifically Persianized Urdu (as the song *zindagī ka sāz bhi kya sāz hai* illustrates), the washer community (*dhobī*) is introduced in the film through a Krishna-Lila. The song *He Ho Dhoye Mahobe Ghāt, Dhobīyā re Dhobīyā Kahaṅ tumhāro* sung by them is performed in a folk song (*lok gīt*) style in Braj. Nasiruddin Hashmi, in his review of the film, made an objection that the song sung by the washerfolk made reference to blouse (*angiyā*) and armpits (*baghal*) – both Braj words – which he considered inappropriate and took the film away from the *a<u>kh</u>lāqī* framework.[68] This critique by Hashmi, which expressed the desire to expunge words suggestive of a certain kind of physicality and sensuality, is reflective of precisely the kind of tension that existed within the Urdu imaginaire of the 1930s and 40s, where new mediated forms of entertainment were

[67] I am unable to express my deepest desires
How do I express myself, my heart is not beside me
Don't know about my hands and feet, restlessness is frivolous
Keep laughing in this fury which has no shore

I am unable to express my deepest desires
I am close and I am distant, this struggle is strange
What is difficult is not easy, not difficult
I am unable to express my deepest desires
Slowly and gradually, my heart finds no peace
The one who I thought was my destination, actually was not destined

I am unable to express my deepest desires
How do I express myself, my heart is not besides me

[68] Nasiruddin Hashmi, *Film Numa: Film ke mutaʻalliq iṣlāḥī aur tanqīdī maẓāmīn ka majmūʻa* (Hyderabad: Shams-al Mataba Machine Press, 1940), 87.

redefining decorum, propriety and the representations of romantic love. In another song sequence we hear Kunwar performing a devotional Bhajan (in Sanskritized Hindi) as a prayer for Mangal's safety. Kamal Amrohi uses different song registers for the characters with meticulous care, in some ways subscribing to the debates which associated specific languages with specific communities.

In *Shahjehan*, singing legend K.L. Saigal, as the lover-poet Suhail, creates the poetic imaginary heaven (*khayāli jannat*) for his beloved Ruhi. The film's creative use of the figure of the poet in the narrative allows poet and lyricist Majrooh Sultanpuri to experiment with the form of the Urdu poetics. The world of the Urdu ghazal and its metaphorical innovations is embedded within a long tradition of instruction, inculcation and *iṣlāḥ* (correction).[69] By the 1930s and 40s, the poet in the Urdu imaginaire enjoyed a phenomenal position of power. It is this status of the poet within the Urdu imaginaire that makes Suhail's victory in the film appear plausible. The classical ghazal poet occupied a special place in the world of his own making, an enduringly powerful world of the imagination. In *Shahjehan*, the poem *Mere Sapnoṅ ki Ranī*, in praise of Ruhi's beauty, is written as a *gīt* with the simple structure of the *sarāpa*, a style of praise of the beloved's physical beauty from head to toe in the Urdu poetic tradition.

Āṅkheiṅ nīṅdoṅ ke khazāne heṅ
Do ulfat ke paimāne heṅ
Zulfeiṅ rātoṅ ki jawāni
Mere sapnoṅ ki Ranī
Ruhi Ruhi Ruhi

Māthe pe ćānd utar āye
Hoṅṭhoṅ pe bhaṅwrā manḍlāye
Mukhḍā phūloṅ ki kahānī
Mere sapnoṅ ki Ranī
Ruhi Ruhi Ruhi[70]

[69] Frances Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and its critics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994, http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft10000326/

[70] Her eyes; a treasury of dreams
Two glasses full of love and affection
Tresses so dark as the midnight
Such is the queen of my dreams
Ruhi, Ruhi, Ruhi

The *gīt* or poetic song describes Ruhi's beauty through the motif of the eyes as a treasury of dreams (*āṅkheiṅ nīṅdoṅ ke khazāne*), her hair like the night's youth (*zulfeiṅ rātoṅ ki jawāni*), the moon descends on her forehead (*māthe pe ćānd utar āye*), the lips so sweet and her face blooming like a flower. These exaggerated metaphors of nature are linked to the beauty of the beloved. These appear recurrently in the film's lyrics in connection with descriptions of Ruhi's incredible beauty, and also in the dialogues. In the sequence when Ruhi pays Suhail a visit to tell him she does not love him, she pleads with him to love her like a poet loves his unattainable beloved. She says, "Love me like the *chakor* loves the moon, the bulbul loves the flower; sucking the nectar from the flower will not fulfil you */ Tu mujhse muḥabbat kar, maiṅ nahīṅ roktī, magar aisi muḥabbat jaise ćakor ćānd se, bulbul phūl se, bhaṅwre ki tarha ras ćūs kar tujhe rāḥat na milegī...*" The *chakor* (an Indian red-legged partridge) and moon is a permanent fixture in most Urdu poets' repertoire. The *chakor* is a fabled nocturnal bird that supposedly spends its entire lifetime staring at the moon and dies pining for it.[71] The other metaphor Ruhi uses is that of the bulbul (Indian songbird) and the flower. In Urdu poetry, the metaphor of the bulbul's yearning for the flower, specifically the rose, is conceived as the lovers longing for a union with his/her beloved.[72] This poetic exchange and the rejection is followed by the song *Jab dil hī ṭūṭ gaya, hum jī ke kya kareiṅ* (What is the point of life with a broken heart). This is perhaps one of the most famous Urdu film ghazals sung by K.L. Saigal.

Moon descends on her forehead
Black bees hover on her lips
Her face tells the story of flowers
Such is the queen of my dreams
Ruhi, Ruhi, Ruhi

[71] The chakor subsists on moon-beams and is fabled to eat fire at the full moon. See, entry on the *chakor* in John T. Platts, *A dictionary of Urdu, classical Hindi, and English* (London: W. H. Allen and Co., 1884).

[72] In this metaphor the bulbul's concern was time's garden where beauty had a short span. The beauty of the blooming rosebud brings joy to the bulbul who sings in celebration. But as the seasons change the rose petals scattered and the bulbul lamented the loss. The bulbul and the rose in time's garden symbolise both the fragility and eternity of love. The bulbul's egg (*baizah-e bulbul)* causes excitement in the garden because a new lover is on the way. This metaphor is used by great Urdu poets from Ghalib to Mir. See, Mehr Afshan Farooqi, "The Bulbul in Urdu's garden," *The Dawn*, October 11, 2015, https://www.dawn.com/news/1212165.

Screenshot from *Shahjehan:* Saigal as Suhail singing *Jab dil hi tūt gaya, hum jī ke kya kareiṅ*

In the song, we see Suhail's study scattered with papers full of Urdu verses, his ink pot and feathered pen strewn on one side. This song transitions into Saigal wandering among ruined buildings to the lyrics *Ćāh barbād karegī humeiṅ ma'lūm na tha* (I didn't know that love/desire will ruin me). Saigal's character in the film follows his long, illustrious career of playing roles as a tormented/unfulfilled lover (here I am thinking of his roles in films like *Devdas* (d. P.C. Barua,1935)).

OUR REVIEW

"Mirza Sahiban" Makes Good Impression!

Trilok Kapoor Improves In Acting

MIRZA SAHIBAN	
Producers:	Madhukar Pictures
Language:	Hindustani
Dialogue & Songs:	Qamar Jalalabadi & Aziz Kashmiri
Music:	Pt. Amarnath
Photography:	M. R. Navalkar
Audiography:	Arora
Cast:	Noorjehan, Trilok Kapoor, Gulab, Gope, Baby Anwari etc.
Released At:	Excelsior, Bombay
Date of Release:	19th March 1948
Directed By	K. AMARNATH

Folk-lore and legend have a peculiar charm of their own when presented on the screen for the simple reason that even the most illiterate among the audience know the story of the film and find it not only easy but also entertaining to follow.

The pity, however, is that a good many folk-tales are distorted in their screening because the story writer, or the director or the producer, each of whom thinks himself to be the world's wisest man believes that the principal events in the story should not have happened as they are recorded but ought to have been otherwise so as to suit his own taste and fancy, and he changes them accordingly or adds some thing which is not there in the original story. This is particularly the case with Gujarati pictures produced from the folk-lore and legend of Kathiawar where the trio consisting of the story writer, director and producer takes a peculiar delight in misrepresenting the most romantic tales and in doing so often brings down the characters of the stories (who are usually idolised by the people as supermen) to its own common level of the ordinary modern people. This has, fortunately, not happened to the popular folk-tale of Mirza Sahiban with which practically every Punjabi is familiar and which is preserved in Punjabi folk literature, as one of the most romantic love tales, conveyed from generation to generation by word of mouth, and later transcribed both in prose and verse and translated in many provincial languages of India.

THE STORY

Mirza is a fatherless urchin, a spoilt child of a widowed mother, who has acquired proficiency in archery and tries his art everywhere in the small village, often to the great annoyance of the village folk. Tired and vexed by the boy's unruly behaviour and the villagers' many complaints against him, the mother agrees to the proposal of her brother to remove Mirza to his own village where he wants him to be schooled, educated and become a useful member of the family and society. Mirza, leaving his little sister and mother accompanies his uncle to the latter's village and is being sent to the village primary school.

Here he makes friends with Sahiban, his uncle's daughter and his classmate. The two children soon develop finer feelings for each other which, as they mature into youths, culminates in love.

While Mirza's uncle and Sahiban's father would very much like the alliance between the two cousins, his wife and son are opposed to it as Sahiban's mother has already planned to have her married to Fumman, her own sister's son who is a veritable idiot and a coward. He is sensible enough to one thing, however,—the growing fondness between Mirza and Sahiban,—and is watchful of all their movements which he reports to Sahiban's mother and brother—Shamir. A stage ultimately comes when Mirza's uncle is compelled to drive him out of his house.

Mirza leaves the uncle's house but is not prepared to leave the village and makes his abode in a secluded place in a nearby jungle where Sahiban comes secretly, night after night, and the two lovers meet under moonlight and starlight and sublimate their love like Sohini and Mahiwal and the other pairs of lovers in many

Quaint! Isn't it? But that is how Shanta Apte prefers to dress Baby Nanda in Bhoomraddi Productions' forthcoming social, "Mandir", directed by the late Winayak.

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Advertisement for *Mirza Sahiban* in *filmindia*, 1948 Review for *Mirza Sahiban* in *filmindia*,1948.

The romantic songs from K. Amarnath's 1947 film, *Mirza Sahiban*, are filled with metaphors of longing, separation and foreboding. The Mirza-Sahiban romance is a legendary Punjabi folktale penned by the poet Pilu with a long lineage of retellings, narrativization and translations. Deriving from an oral format, the story was written and adapted in a variety of literary genres like the *var* and *qiṣṣa*.[73] From theatrical productions to silent films and later multiple sound versions, the tragic story of the romance between Mirza and Sahiban is part of popular culture in India.[74] For the 1947 version of Mirza-Sahiban, the song lyrics were penned by the Urdu poets Qamar Jalalabadi and Aziz Kashmiri. The film opens in a small village in Punjab where the young Mirza is shown causing mischief and mayhem. His antics are similar to those of Hindu mythology's Krishna: pranks on innocent villagers like bursting water pots of the village belles and stealing butter and food from a local *ḥalwā'ī* (maker of sweetmeat). Mirza is sent to his uncle's village for correction, education and grooming. Here, he meets Sahiban and, even at this young age, is immediately taken in by her charm. In a long cinematic leap, we see the childhood sweethearts now as adults, Mirza (Trilok Kapoor) and Sahiban (Noorjehan). Their romance blossoms in a secret rendezvous in the forest. While this is the

[73] Jeevan S. Deol, "To die at the hands of love: Conflicting ideals of love in the Punjabi Mirza-Sahiban cycle," In *Love in South Asia*, ed. Francesca Orsini (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 142-158.
[74] Versions include *Mirza Sahiban* (d. B.P Mishra, 1929), *Mirza Sahiban* (d. Nagendra Majumdar, 1933), *Mirza Sahiban* in Pashto (d. D.N. Madhok, 1939), *Mirza Sahiban* (d. Ravi Kapoor, 1957) and most recently a Punjabi *Mirza- The untold story* (d. Baljit Singh Deo, 2012) and the Hindi *Mirziya* (d. Rakesh Omprakash Mehra, 2016).

moment of confession and recognition of their affection for each other, the ghazal*, ‘Hāth sīne pe jo rakh do to qarār āa jāye’* (Your hand placed over my chest brings peace) is full of metaphors of impending separation.

Screenshot from *Mirza Sahiban*, 1947

Hāth sīne pe jo rakh do to qarār ājāye
dil ke ujṛe hue gulshan meṅ bahār ājāye

dil to kehta hai ki āṅkhoṅ meṅ ćhupā luṅ tujhko
ḍar yahī hai ke muqaddar ko na-kār ājāye
Hāth sīne pe jo rakh do to qarār ājāye (refrain)

dil ke zakhmoṅ pe mere pyār ka marham rakh do
be-qarārī to mujhe kuć to qarār ājāye
Hāth sīne pe jo rakh do to qarār ājāye

yuṅ khuda ke liye ćhīno na mere hosh-o-ḥavās
aisī naẕroṅ se na dekho ki khumār ājāye
Hāth sīne pe jo rakh do to qarār ājāye

ćhoṛ ke tum bhī ćalī jāogī qismat ki tarah
bād-azān to ajal hi ko nā pyār āa jāye[75]

[75] Place your hand on my chest, so it can be tranquil

The lover asks his beloved to ease his pain as his heart is like a barren garden. His heart wants to hide her in his eyes so that he can negate (*na-kār)* their fate (*muqaddar*). His wounded heart aches for the salve of her affection (*pyār ka marham*). Requesting her not to steal his senses (*hosh-o ḥavās*) through her intoxicated eyes, he laments that she will leave him as their destiny (*qismat*) is preordained. This beautifully crafted ghazal sequence is interrupted by the arrival of Shamir, Sahiban's brother, and Bhuman, who is her other suitor. The discovery of romance between Mirza and Sahiban threatens the family honour and Shamir is outraged. The lovers are separated from each other and Mirza is turned out of the village. We see him wandering in the forest in dirty torn clothes, images that reference other tragic romance heroes like Ranjha and Majnun, whose stories were based in Punjab but through translation had become part of the Urdu imaginaire. In another duet, Mirza and Sahiban sing about loss and separation.

tum āṅkhoṅ se dūr ho, huyi nīṅd āṅkhoṅ se dūr
mere sāthī gham ki ćoṭ se hua dil ka shīsha ćūr
sāthiyā, belīyā, sajnā ho
mujhe shikwā hai taqdīr se, nahiṅ tumse koi gilā
hai nahiṅ tumse koi gilā
mujhe lākar yuṅ pardes meṅ mera sab kućh ćhīn liya
mujhe rogī karke pyār ka, diya gham ka rog laga
mere jalte hue ćarāgh ko meri qismat gayī bujhā
hai meri qismat gayi bujhā
sāthiyā, belīyā, sajnā ho[76]

And the spring may return to the barren garden of my heart

My heart asks to hide you in my eyes
The fear is that destiny may negate

Apply the salve of affection on my aching heart
Oh restlessness, let there be quietness

For the sake of God, don't steal my senses like this
Don't look at me like that, I may be intoxicated

You will leave me as luck has already left me
After our separation the death will love me

[76] When you are out of sight, sleep departs from my eyes
Oh my dear, my heart is shattered by the pain
Companion, Friend, Lover

In these opening couplets of the *gīt,* the poet makes a poignant association between the lovers' broken hearts and shattered glass (*dil ka shīsha ćūr*); they suffer from loss of sleep (*huyi nīṅd āṅkhoṅ se dūr*) due to the anguish of separation. The complaint (*shikwā*) is squarely on fate (*taqdīr*) which is the cause of their agony. Love causes sickness and the grief is immense. Using the quintessential metaphor of the burning lamp (*jalte hue ćarāgh*), the lovers lament that the bright flame of fate (*qismat*) has been subdued. These songs aid in plugging the film into previous knowledge frameworks of the Urdu imaginaire. The audience already knows how the story will end; the emphasis is on language and how to mobilise the realms of romance embedded within the Urdu poetic tradition.

Similar strategies are used by Pandit Indra while writing the lyrics for *Chandralekha*. In the film, the romance between Vir Singh and Chandralekha (T.R. Rajakumari) is an important part of the narrative. The opening sequence of the film shows the accidental encounter between the lead pair as they instantly fall in love with each other. Vir Singh hides his identity as a royal and pretends to be an ordinary villager called Manu. Throughout the film, Chandralekha's clever bravery ensures that Manu remains out of harm's way. When he is trapped in the cave by Shashank, Chandralekha, who is hiding in the forest, witnesses the ordeal. She rescues Manu with the help of a circus troupe that is passing by. In a spectacular scene, the circus elephants remove the giant boulder that was obstructing the entrance to the cave. In gratitude, Chandralekha and Manu join the circus. This also provides an effective cover to Vir Singh, who needs time to recoup his health and army; Chandralekha becomes a trapeze artist, performing extraordinary stunts in the circus. Time and again in the film's narrative, she pre-empts the villains and is able to out-do them with her wit and intelligence, resembling Marjina's character from the *Ali Baba* fantasy.[77] The narrative borrows liberally

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I reproach my fate, no complaints to you
I have no grouse against you
You have brought me to this foreign land and stolen everything from me
You have inflicted me with love, diseased with sorrow
My burning lamp was extinguished by my destiny
Companion, Friend, Lover

[77] The famous drum sequence has many similarities with the oil-drum sequence from the Ali Baba story, but a crucial difference is that in Ali Baba narrative the thieves are killed before they can escape from the oil-drums. In *Chandralekha,* this sequence enables the defeat of Shashank similar to the defeat of the forty thieves. Chandralekha who has been kidnapped by Shashank pretends to be in love with him but puts forth the condition that the royal marriage can only take place if the auspicious *Nagada* dance (drum dance) is held in the palace compound. Huge drums are placed in front of the palace with exotic dancers on top (apparently over a hundred dancers were used for this sequence). Chandralekha joins the dancers in an exotic dance routine, and as Shashank

from tropes common to oriental fantasy films. The flourishing of the romance between Chandralekha and Manu is shown through the romantic Urdu ghazal, '*ćānd mere kyūn dūr khaṛa sharmāye, kyūn āṅkh milāke badlī meṅ ćhup jāye*'. In the sequence, the mise-en-scène is carefully crafted, with a beautiful full moon shining down on the lovers, its reflection visible in the pond in front, while the lyrics describe how a gentle cool breeze caresses (*mast fiẓāyeiṅ, sard hawāyeiṅ*) the idyllic trees all around. Drawing on tropes from conventional Urdu poetry, the lyrics entreat the moon to come closer and not be shy (*ćānd mere kyūn dūr khaṛa sharmāye, kyūn āṅkh milāke badlī meṅ ćhup jāye*). In another verse, the lovers remind each other that near the river the cuckoo calls, the bulbul in the garden sings (*nadī kināre papīhā pukāre, bāgh meṅ bulbul gāye*) in celebration of their blooming romance.

Song sequence: '*ćānd mere kyūn dūr khaṛa sharmāye, kyūn āṅkh milāke badlī meṅ ćhup jāye*'

In the column, "Woes and Echoes" in *filmindia*, A.P. Shukla (Asst. Director of Education) from Rewa, Madhya Pradesh, complained that the songs in Gemini's *Chandralekha* penned by Pandit Indra "smack of rank plagiary". He specifically insinuated that the song '*Sānjha kī bela, jiya akela*" bore close resemblance to the song '*Sānjha kī bela panćhhi akela*' in the Bombay Talkies' film *Jwar Bhata* (d. Amiya Chakravarty, 1944) and '*mann bhānwan sāwan aya re*' was exactly the same as *Bandhan* (d. N. R. Acharya, 1940).[78] While Shukla's criticism is plausible, as the first lines of the songs are similar, the songs in both films when compared are very different in fact. The resemblance between the songs of course is in the evocative imagery that draws poetic metaphors and coded allegories of the Urdu imaginaire. These vocabularies of romance from the Urdu imaginaire became a staple in the cinema

is distracted, Vir Singh's army that has been hiding inside the giant drums rush out to topple Shashank and his men. After a long sword duel between the brothers, Vir Singh overpowers Shashank and order is restored to the kingdom. Vir Singh and Chandralekha become the rightful rulers of the kingdom as the films ends.

[78] "Take it, Pandit Indra!" *filmindia*, July 1949, 70-71.

produced in Bombay, Calcutta, Lahore and even in Madras when produced for a north Indian market in the 1930s and 40s.

LOFTY THOUGHTS: ARTICULATING REFORM THROUGH URDU

Hai pasand-e ṯab'a-e 'ālī miṣra'-e sarv-e buland
jab sūṅ gulshan meṅ tirā qad dekh kar mauzūṅ hu'ā

The verse-line of the tall cypress has been pleasing to a *lofty mind*
Ever since, in the garden, it saw your stature and became *mauzūṅ*.[79]

Shamsuddin Vali Muhammad "Vali" Dakani

The 1930s public sphere was engaged in heated debate over discourses of reform. The Indian Cinematograph Committee Report, published in 1928, created a colonial precedent for the need for improvement of cinematic practice in India.[80] Many of those interviewed as part of the evidence envisaged the role of cinema as a medium for education and the social uplift of society. K.A. Abbas, in a now famous letter, urged Gandhi to reconsider his position on cinema as an "imported vice from the west" and to see the possibilities that cinema had to offer.[81] The reform paradigm operated as a multi-pronged process of industrial practice, visual and narrative strategies. Thus, investment in these reformist narratives became a crucial undertaking, necessary for the kind of legitimacy that the nascent film industry was seeking. It is not surprising then that cinema during the 1930s and 40s was so deeply impacted by these discourses. Taking on a discretionary role as the arbiter of 'good' cinema, many studios infused a variety of genres with the reform discourse and aesthetic. In order to imbue cinema with 'lofty thoughts', Urdu was seen by many as the perfect vehicle for the articulation of reform.

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[79] Vali, *Dīvān-e Valī*, ed. Maḥmud Khann Ashraf and Hasrat Mohani, (Lahore: Maktabah Meri Library, 1965), 65. The translation of Vali's couplet by Francis Pritchett, emphasis mine. See Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and its critics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft10000326/. According to Platts Urdu Dictionary, *mauzūṅ* is translated as 'balanced, well-adjusted', See John T. Platts, *A dictionary of Urdu, classical Hindi, and English* (London: W. H. Allen and Co., 1884).

[80] Priya Jaikumar, *Cinema at the End of Empire: A Politics of Transition in Britain and India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

[81] K.A. Abbas, "K. Ahmed Abbas Writes a Letter to Mahatma Gandhi". Originally published in *filmindia*, October 1939, cited in Samik Bandyopadhyay, *Indian Cinema: Contemporary Perceptions from the Thirties* (Jamshedpur: Celluloid Chapter, 1993).

The *a<u>kh</u>lāq* tradition in Urdu predates the period of European colonialism, although the contact with Victorian morality did produce a radical, entangled discourse on reform. As I show in chapters 2 and 3, this formidable body of writing on *a<u>kh</u>lāq* and *iṣlāḥ* was not merely a fundamental part of the Islamic ethical framework but permeated out into the larger public sphere through journals on ethics, morality and reform. Urdu literary culture had a rich tradition of printed material on reform in the form of novels, advice books, social commentaries and religious pamphlets (for example, in the 1930s, Arya Samaj pamphlets[82] in Urdu were widely circulated). The film journals in Urdu, as we have seen, deployed the framework of *a<u>kh</u>lāqī* cinema which could be accessed by both Hindus and Muslims and produced a series of overlaps between different conceptual frameworks of reform. In the 1930s, anti-colonial sentiment across India was on the rise, a series of multi-faceted processes of introspection were also at play in this period. Here reform was understood both at the level of an anti-colonial social project as well as in the sense of reforming individual behaviour in line with forms of traditional morality. This was not merely a contradiction but they functioned as corollaries of each other, whereby reform of the self was seen as necessary to counter colonial modernity; this reformist project was, in some sense, the effect of racism and internalisation of certain forms of colonial prejudice. So, for social reformers, the *a<u>kh</u>lāqī* project (on an individual level) was crucial in enabling the transformation of society into a force that was 'worthy'/ fit enough to fight colonial subjugation. The reformist agenda of the early talkies can be placed within the context of a variety of discourses emerging from the efforts of reformers in Bengal,[83] Maharashtra,[84]

[82] According to Supriya Gandhi, Alakhdhari published books in Urdu on Hindu thought and his works included translations of the *Yoga Vasishtha*, several *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Manusmriti*. His translations on the *Upashinads* were based on the *Sirr-I Akbar* (*The Greatest Secret)* a collection of roughly fifty Upanishads that the Mughal prince Dara Shikoh (d. 1659) compiled and translated into Persian, assisted by Brahmin scholars. Alakhdhari embraced Persian and Urdu despite his sectarian leanings. Gandhi shows how "through his reliance on Mughal translations, Alakhdhari engaged with more than just the translated source texts; his own writings fully absorb and repurposed a conceptual vocabulary fostered by Mughal cosmopolitanism…. Alakhdhari and countless others like him remind us of the entangled histories of modern Hinduism and the subcontinent's Mughal past. The ties that bind Persian and Urdu to Hindu scripturalization offer a means to historicize the transcendental mythologies of Hindu nationalism." See, Gandhi, "Secularism and Hindutva Histories," *The Immanent Fame: Secularism, religion and the public sphere*, December 1, 2017, https://tif.ssrc.org/2017/12/01/secularism-and-hindutva-histories/

[83] Bengal renaissance- Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Keshub Chandra Sen's Brahmo Samaj, Swami Vivekananda, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, writings of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Rabindranath Tagore, Bibhutibhushan Bandhopadhyay among others.

[84] Vinoba Bhave, Jyotirao Phule, Lokmanya Tilak, Ambedkar and others. For an account of reform activities in Maharashtra, see Richard Tucker, "Hindu Traditionalism and Nationalist Ideologies in Nineteenth-Century Maharashtra," *Modern Asian Studies* 10, no. 3 (1976), 321- 348.

Punjab,[85] Tamil Nadu[86] and other parts of India. Bhakti and Sufi traditions had played a crucial role in informing reform ideas within cinema: films on the lives of saints like Chandidas or Sant Dyaneshwar were seen to provide the necessary models for reform of the self and society. Urdu film journals praised Prabhat's *Chandidas* (1934) and the film was seen by them as part of the *a<u>kh</u>lāqī* framework.[87]

While the reformist discourses were available to Indians through diverse textual traditions and multiple linguistic registers, these ideas of reform borrowed approaches from different regions and were consolidated into a pan-Indian reformist tradition. I argue that Urdu being a transregional language was a rich carrier of these articulations on reform. I make a speculative argument about the role of the word '*riwāj*' (custom), etymologically derived from the Arabic word '*rawāj*' for 'being current', as part of the reformist vocabulary that called for the transformation of regressive practices in society. I analyse how the word is used in *Pukar* and *Amrit Manthan* to address the issue of reform, even though both films are thematically different and represent two putatively opposed worldviews (the Mughal empire and Hindu imperium).

Jahangir's notion of justice and the ensuing crisis in the narrative discussed above are the main focus of *Pukar*. However, the film makes a brief reference to *riwāj*/custom and the need for reform through its sub-plot of the romance between Mangal Singh and Kunwar. Mangal and his love Kunwar belong to two feuding Rajput families; the customs referred to in *Pukar* are those that stand in the way of the two lovers. In a scene near the beginning of the film, Mangal has come to meet Kunwar secretly in her garden. The sequence opens with a slightly shaky tracking shot that allows the viewers access to the garden where Kunwar, sitting on a marble bench, is singing amidst flowers and doves. At the end of her song "*gīt suno saiyya"* (Hear my song, my beloved), Mangal surprises her and they banter about their secret rendezvous. The conversation turns serious when they discuss their future and the impossibility of their union because of the prevalent *riwāj*. The conversation is interrupted when Kunwar's brother Ranjit barges in and catches the two lovers. It is this moment that carries the action

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[85]Kanhaiyalal Alakhdhari was a prominent social reformer and activist who sought to arouse a Hindu consciousness in the Punjab. He was instrumental in establishing the Arya Samaj in the region. See, Supriya Gandhi, "Secularism and Hindutva Histories," *The Immanent Fame: Secularism, religion and the public sphere,* December 1, 2017, https://tif.ssrc.org/2017/12/01/secularism-and-hindutva-histories/

[86] E.V. R. Periyar's Self- Respect movement and the Vaikom Satyagraha (1924-25).

[87] Nasiruddin Hashmi, *Film Numa: Film ke muta'alliq iṣlāḥī aur tanqīdī maẓāmīn ka majmū'a* (Hyderabad: Shams-al Mataba Machine Press, 1940).

forward and allows the narrative to introduce another dimension into the debate on justice. While the reform agenda was not the main focus of the film, the film does address the issue of individual choice in love and marriage, something that the contemporary audience would have been able to relate to quite easily.[88] Modi believed that through *Pukar*, and specifically the historical genre, audiences were able to model their lives based on the ethical character of the protagonists.[89] A few decades earlier *a<u>kh</u>lāq* literature had been attempting the same and, as we saw in chapters 2 and 3, the Urdu film journals were trying to promote an *a<u>kh</u>lāqī* framework within film. *Pukar* was meant to fulfil that role, and inspire people to be honest, just, fair, magnanimous and forward thinking.[90]

Sequence from *Pukar*: Mangal and Kunwar meet in secrecy

[88] On the theme of ideal marriage as imagined for the new middle class, see Margrit Pernau, *Ashraf into Middle Classes: Muslims in Nineteenth-Century Delhi* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013), 376–378. Also, Christina Oesterfeld's work on the concept of love and passion in Urdu novels in "Changing Landscapes of Love and Passion in the Urdu Novel," *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 11, no. 1 (2016): 58–80.
[89] Interview in the biographical film *Sohrab Modi* (d. Yash Chaudhary, 1989) produced by Films Division of India.
[90] Nasiruddin Hashmi's review of *Pukar* in *Film Numa: Film ke muta'alliq iṣlāḥī aur tanqīdī maẓāmīn ka majmū'a* (Hyderabad: Shams-al Mataba Machine Press, 1940).

What brings together *Pukar* and *Amrit Manthan* is the shared manner in which the view of reform is articulated. *Amrit Manthan* was celebrated for its zealous reformist agenda, enacted through the tussle between the Rajguru and King Krantivarma. Priya Jaikumar has pointed to the "uneven coexistence of the mythic/allegorical and narrative/realist sequences" in *Amrit Manthan* which expose the film's link to two distinct kinds of "cultural manifestations of mass-produced, mass-mediated, and mass-consumed modernity."[91] This play with temporality is significant in the way that its use of language adds layers and dimensions of meaning to critique of social mores. The film is able to achieve this not merely through visualisation, but along with the cinematic vocabulary, the dialogues create an economy of meaning that, with their peppered use of Urdu, bring them close to contemporary speech and modes of comprehension. In an important sequence in the film, Krantivarma is advised by the courtiers against his radical intervention of altering old rituals (*purāne riwāj*).

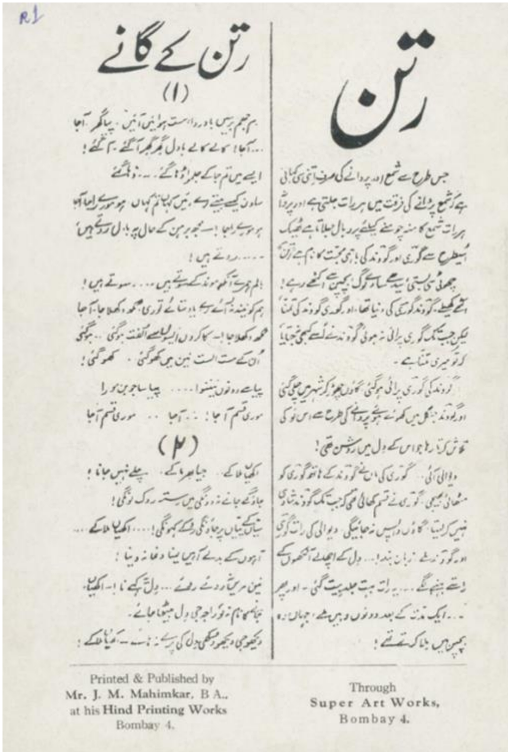
> Krantivarma: *Ye kaisa riwāj? dharm ko badnām karne wale riwājoṅ ko khatam karna hi humara nishćay hai aur hum uspe aṭal heṅ...prajā ko saddharma ki shikshā dene ke liye hum ko apni jān ki bhi parwa nahiṅ*.

> Krantivarma: What sort of custom (*riwāj*)? I have taken a decision to put an end to customs that malign religion and I am determined…I do not care if I have to give up my life in order to teach people the righteous *dharma*.

The word *riwāj* is used repeatedly in the film and can be located as part of the semantic net of reform of the Urdu imaginaire of the 1930s and 40s. The discourse of *iṣlāḥ* permeated the Urdu public sphere's printed texts, such as novels, short stories, pamphlets, plays and other materials, which were often didactic in their tone, and invariably these texts were an attack on old-fashioned customs (*riwāj)*. Urdu journals like *Tahzib-ul Akhlāq* regularly published articles on *rasm-o riwāj* (customs and traditions) that encouraged discussion on tradition and its reform. *Amrit Manthan*'s use of the Urdu word *riwāj* harks back to these printed materials in the Urdu public sphere. These meanings were perhaps understood by contemporary audiences as an acknowledgement of fundamental realignments and reconfigurations which were not

[91] Further she also writes that the "Mythic sequences counteract fears of cinema as a purely Western technology by mobilizing populism, and immortalizing a transient commercial medium by ascending to the level of eternal time and truths; narrative sequences endow the medium with a secular and bourgeois respectability." See, Priya Jaikumar, *Cinema at the End of Empire: A Politics of Transition in Britain and India* (Durham: Duke University Press, Durham, 2006), 225.

uncontested. While the undeniably syncretic Hindi/Hindustani speech is used for the film's dialogues, the Urdu words added the much-needed punch to create a cogent attack on anachronistic customs. The weight of the dialogue comes from its repetition of words such as *riwāj* and this carries the conversation forward, creating an impact on the listener. These strategies adopted by the dialogue writer gesture to a kind of theatricality – specifically one can see the influence of the Urdu Parsi stage in the construction and enunciation of the dialogue.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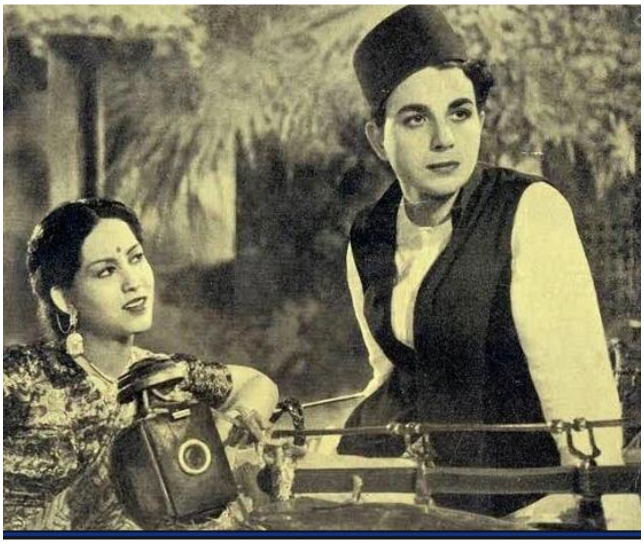
Rattan film synopsis and songs from the Urdu section of the film booklet

The discourse of reform in M. Sadiq's *Rattan* can be specifically linked to the genre of the 'social' and its realist aesthetic, unlike *Pukar* and *Amrit Manthan* which, by virtue of their genres, had a more theatrical performative approach. *Rattan*, released in 1944, was a highly successful social based on a story by R.S. Choudhury, with screenplay, dialogues and lyrics written by Madhok. The film ran for over two years and Baburao Patel's review credited the success of the film to the story. He was highly critical of the technically "low production value" of the film. The film was labelled by the reviewer as a Hindustani language film. Further, Patel wrote, "the song composition of Madhok is, as usual silly, senseless and wrong at many places. It is lucky for Madhok that our masses, who see our motion pictures mainly, are illiterate and uneducated. Madhok's compositions would not be tolerated for a minute before educated audiences. At some spots Madhok has given pretty smart dialogues but otherwise they are common."[92] This attribution of the success of the film to the taste of the 'illiterate and uneducated masses' was a classic way of dismissing a film. The review, however, made a discerning observation which placed *Rattan* within the genre of the "ancient love triangle with the usual Laila-Majnu intensity of Romance… It ends in the traditional fashion of our Lailas and Shirins."[93]

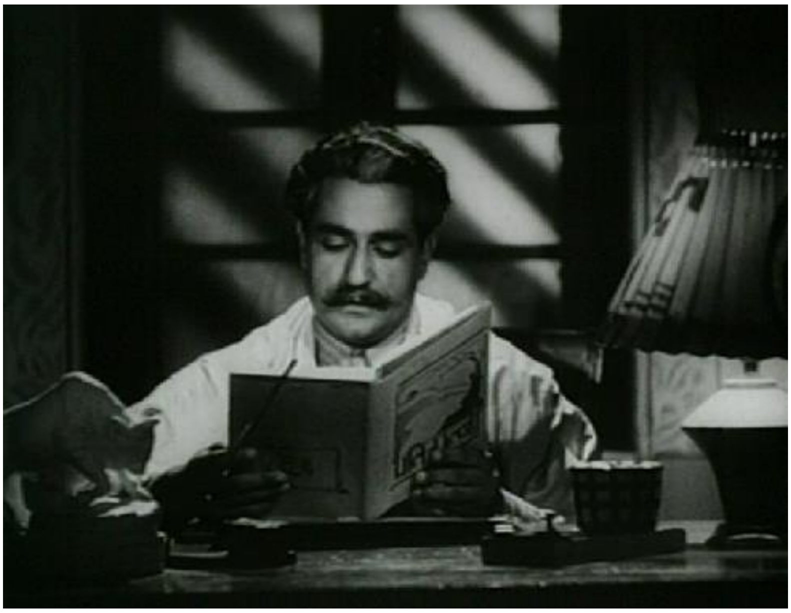


Swarnlata as Gauri and Karan Dewan as Govind in a film still from *Rattan* in *filmindia*, 1944

Rattan is in fact a modern take on the tragic love story genre with reform at the core of its narrative universe. Gauri (Swarnalata) and Govind (Karan Dewan) are childhood sweethearts but belong to different castes and thus there is opposition to their union.[94] Gauri is forcibly married to an older man Rattan (Wasti) who is a father and widower. Rattan works as an editor of an Urdu/Hindi journal (*risāla*) in the big city. His house is furnished with modern furniture; his sister Manju we are told is a 'college girl'. As an educated, broad-minded man, Rattan is unable to accept this relationship and squarely blames his sister-in law and Gauri's mother for arranging this marriage which he sees as unfair and unjust.[95] Immediately after the wedding, he receives a manuscript titled *'Pati-Patni'* (Husband-Wife) which is about the experience of a 16-year-old girl married to a 55-year-old man. The author requests him to publish it in his journal as the voice of the oppressed. As Rattan opens the book and turns the

[92] *filmindia,* March 1946, 45.
[93] Ibid., 45.
[94] The film's plot has resonances with Bombay Talkies *Acchut Kanya* (d. Franz Osten, 1936) and Prabhat's *Kunku* (d. V. Shantaram, 1937).
[95] Unlike *Kunku,* in *Rattan* it is the man who resists and refuses to consummate the marriage. He shares the burden of this arrangement. Shanta Apte's character Nirmala in *Kunku* is a firebrand and she refused to accept her situation. Gauri is far more subdued and accepts her situation with resignation and silent acquiescence.

first page over, the camera zooms in to a close-up shot of the page to reveal a sketch of a bride and groom with the words *pati* (husband) and *patni* (wife) printed under each in *nasta'līq*. We clearly see that the bride is a young beautiful girl and the groom an older man. Time and again in the film, Rattan reads out aloud long Urdu passages from the book which moves the narrative forward. In the following scene, Gauri and Govind meet again at Diwali and this leads to their second painful separation.



Screenshot from *Rattan:* Wasti as Rattan reading the book *'Pati-Patni'* (Husband-Wife)

Rattan reads out the following passage:

"*Pat jhaṛ ki rut ayi, darakhtoṅ ne patte jhāṛ diye, na khain phūl na phal, aisa ma'lūm hota tha jaise qudrat bhi sog mana rahi hai, phir sāwan bhado ke bādal aye aur meri taqdīr par āṅsū bahā kar ćale gaye, bahār ke phūloṅ ne samāj par haṅsna shuru kiya, lekin samāj ko sharam na ayi, sardi ka mausam aya, phir se ćār bādaloṅ ne ikkhatta ho kar ghanghor ghata ki ṣūrat meṅ meri taqdīr ka naqsha khīṅcha aur garaj garaj ke mere armānoṅ ko sulā diya.*"

The season of autumn came and the trees lost their leaves. There were no flowers nor fruits. It seemed that nature was also lamenting. Then the monsoon clouds came along and wept over my fate. Spring flowers mocked society, but

> society was not ashamed of its actions. Again, four clouds got together to burst over my destiny and their thundering put my desires to sleep.

This passage from the book is full of literary metaphors that gesture to the deep trauma of separation and loss of love, a key element of the ghazal and consequently of the Urdu imaginaire.[96] These passages read out by Rattan become articulations of what Gauri feels and fails to express. Gauri goes back to the village one last time to meet Govind and tries to convince him to move on. But Govind is lost, wandering in the forest, distraught like Majnu/Ranjha/Mirza. Govind dies in her arms. Rattan in the meantime discovers their romance and in a remorseful long dialogue blames society (*samāj*) and its customs (*riwāj*) for their plight. He laments that Govind and Gauri are caught in the fake shackles of *dharma* and decides to take a radical stand to bring the two lovers together by offering to perform the *kanyadān* (ritual giving away of daughter/bride in marriage) ceremony. But it is too late - and quite an improbable scenario for a film narrative from the 1940s. As the carriage brings Gauri back to her husband's home, Rattan finds her lifeless body. Despite the tragic end, Rattan, as the editor of a *risāla*, is portrayed as an ethical and virtuous man. This links Rattan to actual editors of journals and periodicals who were seen as purveyors of reformist literary culture within the Urdu public sphere.[97]

Many of the narratives of reform that appear in the films of the 1930s and 40s are narratives of ethical self-fashioning. In keeping with the reform texts circulating in the Urdu public sphere, notably the *ak͟hlāqī* texts, films like *Amrit Manthan, Pukar* and *Rattan* present model characters for emulation. Here we see the pre-modern past not as inert history but as a series of potentials for the present and the future. The notion of reform in India can be placed within a range of modalities and ideological encounters. While one strand of the need for *ak͟hlāq* and *iṣlāḥ* derived its charge from religious reformism, another stressed the transformation of social customs (*riwāj*). It is clear that region-specific ideologies are mediated through the use of Urdu and bring a variety of sensibilities into the discourse of pan-Indian reform.

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[96] Autumn or *k͟hizāṅ* is not just a season, it is an important theme in Urdu poetry. As a symbol it represents a state of being defined by suffering and loss. *K͟hizāṅ* is a season of separation from a lover or loved one but also a metaphor used by poets and writers to reflect on larger suffering and traumas in life. Here, it becomes a source of reflection for the protagonist on the abysmal conditions that society has forced Gauri into.

[97] I discuss the role of editors in fashioning, mediating and disciplining film culture through film journals in Chapter 2.

CONCLUSION

This chapter demonstrates the way in which the films from the 1930s and 40s convey the *realms of romance*, *sweet speech*, and *loft thoughts* of the Urdu imaginaire through specific examples of dialogues, song lyrics and narrative interventions. While the films are significantly different from each other in their theme and genre classification, what links the films together are aesthetic choices that integrate elements of the Urdu imaginaire. This clearly points to the important place of the Urdu imaginaire in film production, even when films were produced in regions as diverse as Bombay, Poona, Madras and Calcutta. As I demonstrate, the films mobilise an eclectic register of speech from the Urdu-Hindi-Hindustani triad, challenging the very rigid language debates in the public sphere. This careful and deliberate use of the tropes of the Urdu imaginaire expand the contours of the film genres and the reach of studios as in the case of the success of the Hindustani *Chandralekha* over its Tamil version.

The *sweet speech* inherent in the use of Urdu vocabulary is widely seen in the dialogues of the films from the 1930s and 40s. In *Pukar* and *Shahjehan*, the use of Persianized-Urdu resonates with Urdu Parsi theatre's style of narrativization and performative enunciation. Urdu vocabulary used in these films taps into erstwhile associations with authority, power and nobility allowing historical and oriental-fantasy films to address audiences in an everyday speech register yet maintain the semblance of 'past-ness'. As I show in *Amrit Manthan* and *Chandralekha*, when the fictional kingdoms are thrown into a state of upheaval, this is captured through the nuanced use of Urdu in the dialogues of the film that assist in heightening the crisis and moving the action forward.

Drawing on the extensive repertoire of *ishq* (love) in Urdu poetry, lyricists convey *realms of romance* in the films from the 1930s and 40s. The song lyrics of the films *Amrit Manthan*, *Mirza Sahiban*, *Shahjehan*, *Pukar* and *Chandralekha* make effective use of metaphors of romance that are strongly related to the Urdu imaginaire. The ghazal tradition and its literary idioms of separated lovers, unrequited love, and misunderstood affections have been used by lyricists in all the films. These songs were crucial to the elaboration of the Urdu imaginaire in the public sphere. Majrooh Sultanpuri's song *Jab dil hī ṭūṭ gaya* (When my heart is broken) from *Shahjehan* became the anthem of broken hearts around the country. It was such a huge success that apparently Saigal wanted it to be played at his funeral. What is also crucial to reiterate is that the mise-en-scène of the picturization of most of the romantic ghazals and *gīt* discussed in all six films is the idyllic utopian space of the forest or garden of love.

The third powerful force within the Urdu imaginaire is the articulation of *lofty thoughts*. The discourses of *a<u>kh</u>lāq* and *iṣlāḥ* were important to the reconfiguration of cinema as an aesthetic and legitimate form. Films from the 1930s and 40s were deeply impacted by these discourses as demonstrated in this chapter. Not only films classified as ‘socials’ but historicals and costume dramas too were seen as important vehicles to carry forward the ideas of reform. *Amrit Manthan*, *Pukar* and *Rattan*, amongst many others, critiqued social customs of inequality, out-dated rituals and forced marriages. The semantic net of reform was diverse but unified in the films through the effective mobilization of the Urdu imaginaire.

CHAPTER 5

URDU IS NOT A MONOLITH: THE URDU IMAGINAIRE WITHIN A VARIEGATED FILM LANGUAGE AND AESTHETIC

The storylines of early films in India borrowed from texts which were time-tested artefacts that had been in circulation in the public sphere in different mediums – oral, visual and literary. As I describe in Chapter 1, at the turn of the century, when these texts were adapted using the technological apparatus and techniques of Euro-American cinema, the popular visual aesthetics of calendar art, and performative repertoires of forms such as the Parsi theatre, the texts acquired a new affective language for the articulation of the experiences of modernity. Film scholars – and, historically, many in the film industry – have argued that most Indian films can be traced back to two classical epics – the *Mahabharata* or the *Ramayana* as source texts.[1] To challenge this essentialist position, scholars Rosie Thomas and Philip Lutgendorf have described how the Perso-Arabic *dastāns* and *qiṣṣas* also influenced the narrative structures of films.[2] Further, they warned us that the desire to pin down Indian cinema and trace its genealogies to a single originary myth is a highly limiting process. It negates the varied and disparate modes of film aesthetic that early filmmakers experimented with to develop "an Indian way of filmmaking".[3] This process of filmmaking in India and its narrative structures have been variously described by film scholars as "baroque", "disaggregated" and "context-sensitive designs".[4] Filmmakers borrowed and developed a staple vocabulary of tropes, motifs

[1] The *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* are classical epic texts in Sanskrit. For arguments that link Indian films to the two epics, see Saibal Chatterjee, "Hindi Cinema through the Decades," In *Encyclopaedia of Hindi Cinema*, ed. Govind Nihalani and Saibal Chatterjee (New Delhi: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2003); Vijay Mishra, *Bollywood Cinema: Temples of Desire* (London: Routledge, 2002); and Philip Lutgendorf, "Is There an Indian Way of Filmmaking?" *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 10, no. 3 (2006): 227- 256. For filmmakers who regularly asserted this, see Rosie Thomas, "Indian Cinema: Pleasure and Popularity," *Screen* 26, no. 3-4 (1985): 116-131.

[2] Rosie Thomas has speculatively argued that perhaps Hira Lal Sen's *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* should be considered as the 'first' Indian film instead of Phalke's *Raja Harishchandra* (1913), which would radically alter our understanding of the origins of Indian cinema located within Hindu mythology. Following Lutgendorf and Thomas, a recent book showed how all Indian films can be in fact traced back to Perso-Arabic *dastāns* and *qiṣṣas*. Anjali Gera Roy, *Cinema of Enchantment: Perso-Arabic Genealogies of the Hindi Masala Film* (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2015). Rosie Thomas, *Bombay Before Bollywood: Film City Fantasies* (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2014).

[3] Philip Lutgendorf, "Is There an Indian Way of Filmmaking?" *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 10, no. 3 (2006): 227- 256.

[4] For use of the term "baroque" see Rosie Thomas, "Indian Cinema: Pleasure and Popularity," *Screen* 26, no. 3-4 (1985): 116-131; "disaggregated" as used by Ravi Vasudevan, *The Melodramatic Public: Film Form and Spectatorship in Indian Cinema* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2010) and for "context-sensitive design" see Philip Lutgendorf, "Is There an Indian Way of Filmmaking?" *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 10, no. 3 (2006): 227- 256.

and images from diverse literary cultures which recurrently appeared in the cinema of the 1930s and 40s.

This chapter is an evaluation of the challenges encountered in attempting to theorize the impact of fluid literary and popular traditions, which are enriched and inundated with references to multiple languages, on the cinema of the 1930s and 40s. I am specifically writing about strategies to locate traces of the Urdu imaginaire within cinematic texts. As I describe in the Introduction, the Urdu imaginaire stems from Urdu language and literature, however, many other literatures of India shaped this literary imaginary. My initial hypothesis was that the Urdu imaginaire, as part of the economies of affect, not only contributed to film narratives, plots and stories, but also provided the frameworks for behaviour, propriety and gender norms that we see represented in the films of the 1930s and 40s. But cinema in India has such a diverse history that finding a clear fixed sign or marker of this affective register would lead to the first obvious roadblock. The Urdu imaginaire was not a monolith, like a palimpsest it accrued layers upon layers of oral, textual and visual metaphors, making it difficult to formally differentiate and identify from other social imaginaries in India. In this speculative chapter my attempt is to explore how the Urdu imaginaire can be mapped onto the cinema produced from 1930 to 1950. How do we assess the impact of Urdu literary culture on cinema and what are the possible frames of reference for seeking this? What are the difficulties and limitations of such an exercise?

The first limitation was the scarcity of films that survive from the early period of cinema in India. This was compounded by the fact that the official archive had very little to offer in terms of film ephemera, studio records and details of productions. Thus, instead of a comprehensive sample of films from the period, I was working with a small selection of films and the possibilities of assessing all films remained a distant fantasy. Many of the films that survived from the dominant studios of the time like Bombay Talkies (Bombay), Prabhat (Poona), or New Theatres (Calcutta) when examined, pushed me to recognize that these cinematic texts were complex, eclectic and multi-layered. The early films in India were created through a series of negotiations between competing cultural practices that aimed to address diverse audiences, in turn contributing to a variegated film aesthetic. Thus, considering the heterogenous linguistic and cultural traditions in India, how far can we say the cinematic vernacular developed and borrowed from the Urdu imaginaire?

In the previous chapter, I explored the use of the Urdu language in the dialogues and lyrics of the cinema of the 1930s and 40s. It is quite clear that the expressive qualities of the Urdu language provided a sensorium for romance and reform in the films. In this chapter, I offer four possible ways of furthering the attempts to map the influence of the Urdu imaginaire on the cinema. In the first section, I explore the trajectory of personnel who traversed the worlds of Urdu literary culture and cinema: the writers, lyricists, directors and actors. Jahanara Kajjan, Jaddan Bai, Kamal Amrohi, Qamar Jalalabadi, Ismat Chugtai, and Shakeel Badayuni are among the many who straddled the domains of both literature and film. Can we then claim that these people who represent the world of Urdu culture brought its aesthetic frameworks to the cinema? Is it possible to locate the films they worked in as part of the consortium of images and sounds from the Urdu imaginaire? In the second section, I assess whether the influence of the Urdu imaginaire can be charted through an analysis of the genres of Indian cinema. Film genres like the social melodrama and its sub-genre the Muslim social, as well as the historical and the oriental fantasy film, became important carriers of Urdu literary cultures. In the third section, I explore the category of the film adaptation, which has been seen as an in/direct acknowledgement of the transfer between literature and film. Can we think beyond the arguments around textual fidelity and focus on the affect generated within film adaptations as a possible way to acknowledge the presence of familiar narratives of the Urdu imaginaire?[5] In the final section, I examine whether certain themes within cinematic texts can be attributed to any specific literary imagination? Specifically, I look at the discourses of *sharāfat*/respectability as represented in cinematic texts, as ethical moral conduct (*a<u>kh</u>lāq*) was central to the discipling drive of the Urdu public sphere.

THE PEOPLE WHO MADE THE CINEMA: URDU IMAGINAIRE AND FILM PERSONNEL

By the 1930s, the consolidation of film business into an industrial mode of production with prominent studios set up in Bombay, Calcutta, Poona, Lahore and Madras was well on its way.[6] This expansion of the networks of film production drew diverse kinds of people to the film enterprise. During the silent period, Urdu *munshīs* from the Parsi stage had been hired to

[5] Here I am drawing from the work on literature and film, see, *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation*, eds. Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).
[6] Brian Shoesmith, "From Monopoly to Commodity: The Bombay Studios in the 1930s," In *History on/and/in Film*, eds. T. O'Regan and B. Shoesmith (Perth: History and Film Association of Australia, 1987), 68-75.

write film scripts and adapt its plays for the screen.[7] Apart from Agha Hashr Kashmiri and Narayan Prasad Betab, many of these *munshīs* remain anonymous and unnamed within the history of cinema in India but their contribution to shaping early cinema remains visible in the films.[8] The Urdu *munshīs* brought the performative, aesthetic and literary sensibilities of the theatre to the cinema. Can we consider them as the first carriers of the Urdu imaginaire to the cinema? Films like *Gul-e-Bakavali* (d. Kanjibhai Rathod 1923), *Toorkey Hoor* (d. J.J Madan 1924), *Indrasabha aka Sabzapari* (d. Manilal Joshi, 1925), *Bulbul-e- Paristan* (d. Fatma Begum 1926), *Shirin Farhad* (d. Homi Master 1926), *Alibaba Chalis Chor* (d. B.P. Mishra, 1927), *Jane Alam Anjuman Ara* (p. Krishna Film Co. 1927), and historicals like *Nurjehan* (d. J.J. Madan, 1923), *Razia Begum* (d. Nanubhai Desai/ B.P. Mishra, 1924), *Shahjahan* (d. Naval Gandhi/ Ardeshir Irani, 1924) and *Mumtaz Mahal* (d. Homi Master, 1926) point to the strong presence of the Urdu imaginaire in early silent cinema: the film titles themselves indicate that early film texts borrowed scripts from Urdu *qiṣṣas* and *dastāns* that had in some form or shape been part of the repertoire of the Urdu Parsi stage. However, establishing historical continuities between performative and early filmic traditions can be challenging. As most of the films remain lost, film historians have had to rely on the few surviving film excerpts, scripts, lobby cards, film advertisements and other film paraphernalia to assemble the partial landscape of early film culture in India. Rosie Thomas has shown that early cinematic vocabulary was infused with an eclecticism that blended orientalist imagery that had been in circulation in Europe and America with Indo-Islamic visual traditions.[9] Thus despite borrowing from Urdu Parsi theatre texts, the films clearly mobilised an expanded visual vocabulary.

Cinema attracted a substantial number of itinerant communities of performers and artists from different regions to the main centres of film production. Film communities that sprang up around film businesses in Bombay, Calcutta, Poona and Lahore were culturally and

[7] Munshi were professional scribes, writers, or teachers of languages in the colonial period. Kathryn Hansen has shown how Parsi theatre companies in Bombay sought out Urdu writers and poets, often offering handsome salaries to ensure their relocation to Bombay. She also speculatively suggests that post-1857 the princely states suffered immensely and as royal patronage for Urdu writers and poets was becoming limited, many Urdu writers were keen to find jobs with travelling theatre companies. This trend continued into early cinema. See Kathryn Hansen, "Languages on Stage: Linguistic Pluralism and Community Formation in the Nineteenth-Century Parsi Theatre," *Modern Asian Studies* 37, no. 2 (2003): 399. Also see Eric Barnouw and S. Krishnaswamy, *Indian Film,* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1980).

[8] Kathryn Hansen, "Mapping Melodrama: Global Theatrical Circuits, Parsi Theatre and the Rise of the Social," *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 7, no. 1 (2016): 26.

[9] Rosie Thomas on *Ali Baba* films. See, Thomas, "Alibaba's Open Sesame: Unravelling the Islamicate in Oriental Fantasy Films," In *Bombay's Islamicate Cinemas: Idioms, Cultures, Histories*, ed. Richard Allen and Ira Bhaskar (London and Delhi: Intellect Books and Orient Blackswan, forthcoming).

linguistically diverse, adding to the cosmopolitanism of these urban metropolises. These peripatetic professionals had been part of traditional entertainment groups (*ṭawā'ifs* and *gānewalīs*/courtesans and singing women) and castes (*bedia*, *kanjar* and *mirasi*), as well as from other performative industries like theatre and gramophone. They brought to the cinema their own performance cultures and specificities which added depth and layers to the cinematic vernacular. An important group of professionals were the *ṭawā'ifs* (courtesans) from north India. The *ṭawā'ifs* had been an influential cultural elite before they were beleaguered and pushed to the margins of society in the late colonial period under the impact of social reform movements.[10] In an anecdote about the famous Urdu poet Daagh Dehlvi, the Urdu humourist Mushtaq Ahmad Yusufi wrote,

> It was Daagh Dehlvi's custom that the moment the ghazal was fresh, before the ink had dried, he would entrust the ghazal to the *ṭawā'if*. Then that ghazal, travelling from Hyderabad Deccan, from one city to another, climbing the staircases of the *kothās*, to the hearts of the beauties, would reach the streets and by-lanes of Delhi. This work (making a ghazal viral) was done by *ṭawā'ifs* then and now it is done through electronic media.[11]

This quote highlights the important place of the *ṭawā'ifs* in the Urdu public sphere in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. It is commonly believed that young nawabs and Indian elites were sent by their families to *kothās* (courtesan quarters) of famous *ṭawā'ifs* to be initiated into the world of literature, culture, etiquette and polite manners.[12] The *ṭawā'ifs* made innovative contributions to Hindustani music, Urdu poetics and dance forms like Kathak

[10] Veena Oldenburg has described the "lifestyle" of courtesans as a form of resistance and states, "Their way of life is not complicitous with male authority; on the contrary, in their own self-perceptions, definitions, and descriptions they are engaged in ceaseless and chiefly non-confrontational resistance to the new regulations and the resultant loss of prestige they have suffered since colonial rule began." See, Oldenburg, "Lifestyle as Resistance: The Case of the Courtesans of Lucknow, India," *Feminist Studies* 16, no. 2 (1990): 261-263.

[11] Urdu original: "*Daagh Dehlvi sahab ka dastūr tha jaise hi tāza ghazal hotī, roshnā'ī khushk hone se pehle use ṭawā'if ke supurd kar dete. Phir wo ghazal, Hyderabad Deccan se shehar shehar kothoṅ ćaṛtī, zīna ba zīna, sīna ba sīna, ḥasīna ba ḥasīna, Dilli ke galī kūnćoṅ meṅ pahuṅć jātī. Ye kām jo pehle ṭawā'if karti thīṅ ab ye kām electronic media kartī hai*." See, Mushtaq Ahmad Yusufi, *Shām-e- Shĕ'r-e Yār'ān* (Lahore: Jahangir Books, 2014). I am grateful to Prof. Mohammad Talib for sharing this quote with me.

[12] See my discussion in Chapter 3, where Gauhar Ramnagri expresses similar views on the *ṭawā'ifs* in *Filmī Pariyaṅ,* (Delhi: Bisvi Sadi, 1949). Also, see Veena Oldenburg, "Lifestyle as Resistance: The Case of the Courtesans of Lucknow, India," *Feminist Studies* 16, no. 2 (1990): 261-263.

owing to their expertise in the aesthetics of the arts.[13] But colonial modernity and Victorian morality complicated the narratives of the place of *ṭawā'ifs* in literary and performative culture.

Jahanara Kajjan in *Filmland,* Art Supplement

During the early sound period, the demand for film actresses who could 'talk, sing and dance' was met by the public woman in her various avatars; the *ṭawā'if* and the *gānewalī* became paramount to the star order. Is it possible to argue that the *ṭawā'ifs* who emerge from the domain of Urdu culture infused cinema with the literary/performative aesthetics of the Urdu imaginaire? Did their presence in the cinema define artistic practice and performance through the framework of the Urdu imaginaire? Or did their presence complicate the narratives of

[13] Yatindra Mishra, "The Bai and the Dawn of Hindi Film Music (1925- 1945)," *The Book Review* 33, no. 2 (2009): 46- 47.

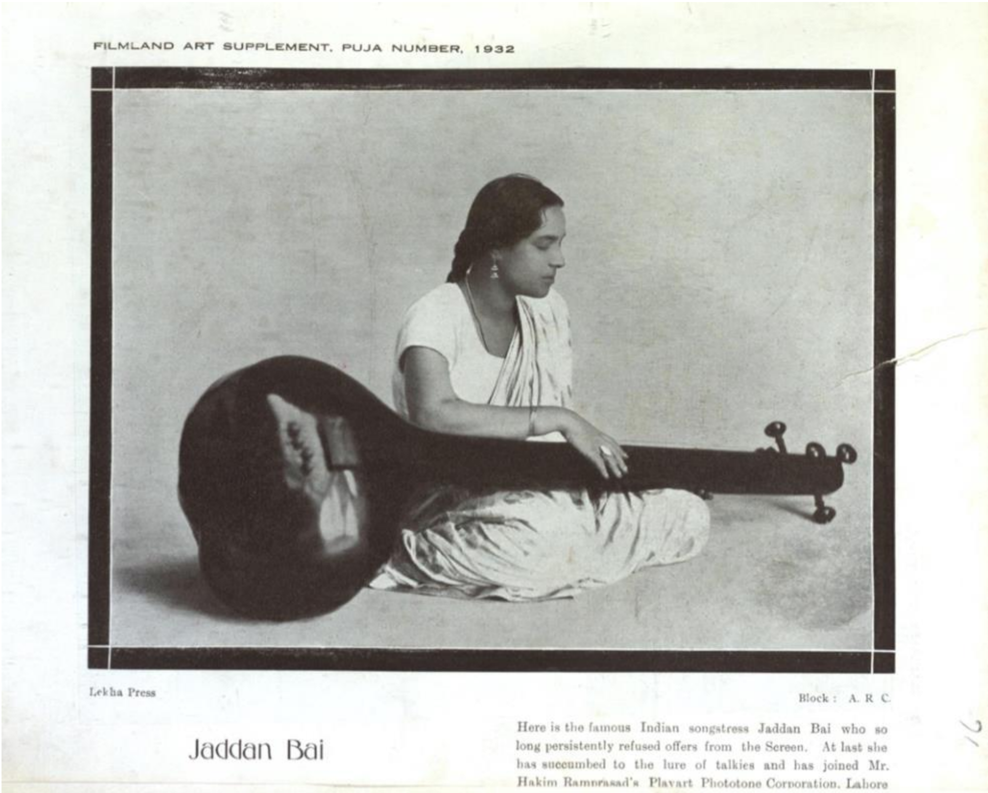
respectability and good *a<u>kh</u>lāq*? To explore these questions, I will be using the example of two prominent film personnel – Jahanara Kajjan and Jaddan Bai – who came from the *ṯawā'if* tradition. Kajjan was the daughter of a well-known dancing girl Suggan, who was the mistress of Nawab Chammi Saheb of Bhagalpur. Born in Patna, Kajjan migrated at an early age to Calcutta in search of opportunities. She joined the silent film magnate Jamshedji Framji Madan's Madan Theatres and became part of their diverse entertainment enterprises. She was a versatile performer who acted in films and simultaneously performed on the stage. Kajjan's knife dances on stage during the cinema interval were known to keep audiences spellbound.[14] According to a studio news column in 1933, two stage plays *Dil ki Pyas* (Agha Hashr Kashmiri) and *Dard-i Jigar* (Master Rahmat Ali) were being remade as talkies by Madan Theatres, Kajjan had performed in both the productions on the Corinthian stage in Calcutta.[15] The interaction between the various forms of entertainment was fluid; Kajjan glided from one medium to another with aplomb. She received numerous offers from chiefs and nawabs of various princely states to perform and settle as a court performer which she apparently declined. There were also constant rumours of her move to the state of Rampur, where the nawab − a connoisseur of Urdu culture − was known to possess a large repertoire of musicians, singers and artists for his entertainment at court. In an interview with B.R. Oberoi, Kajjan had dismissed these reports as false allegations made by entrant editors at the behest of rival production houses. She said, "I have refused them all because I love to act in films."[16] Her pairing with actor Master Nissar became a sensational hit and the duo was famous for their romantic Urdu ghazals.[17] In the thirty-one odd films she did between 1930 and 1940, her melodious voice and beautiful Urdu diction were cited as the main reasons for her tremendous success.[18] What is significant is that both Kajjan and, as we will see, Jaddan Bai were celebrated for their mastery over languages; specifically their chaste Urdu diction and singing prowess was repeatedly appreciated. Kajjan was educated in the *ṯawā'if* tradition at home: Urdu was her primary language of education though she was also familiar with English.[19] Some accounts described her as "India's first actress who was fond of poetry and literature and possessed special interest in poets and writers.

[14] Mrinal Pande, "'Moving beyond Themselves' Women in Hindustani Parsi Theatre and Early Hindi Films," *Economic and Political Weekly*, April 29, 2006, 1650.
[15] *Filmland*, July 15, 1933, 23.
[16] Kajjan in an interview with B.R. Oberoi, *The Cinema*, 1933.
[17] Kajjan and Nissar's box office hits were *Shirin Farhad* (1931), *Laila Majnu* (1931) with 24 songs, *Indrasabha* (1932) had 69 songs, *Bilwamangal* and *Chatra Bakavali* (1932) with 49 songs.
[18] S. Ramamurthy, "Our Screen Heroines: Miss Kajjan," *Varieties Weekly*, February 23, 1934, 12.
[19] Pran Neville, "A gem called Jahanara Kajjan," *The Hindu*, December 24, 2015, https://www.thehindu.com/features/friday-review/peep-into-jahanara-kajjan-a-forgotten-actor-and-a-singing-star-of-the-1930s/article8025934.ece

Sometimes she (Kajjan) would compose verses (*khud bhī shĕʻr kaha karti thīṅ*) and often she wrote articles" which appeared under the pseudonym of Ada in Urdu periodicals and magazines.[20] These assertions about her educated background and interest in literature can be seen as part of the efforts by film journalists, writers and the film studios' public image-making machinery that were all working overtime to establish the new film actress as a 'charismatic' yet 'respectable/ *sharīf*' professional woman.[21] As I discussed in Chapter 3, within the *akhlāqī* pedagogy for cinema, these biographical nuggets were crucial, as these fed into the narratives of contemporary stardom and highlighted the ideal acceptable behaviour expected from film actresses who were subject to maximum social interest and perennial public scrutiny in the 1930s.[22] Thus, in some sense, an Urdu imaginaire, with its emphasis on *akhlāq* (ethical morality) and *sharafat* (respectability), contributed to shaping discourses about female stars, impacting both their on-screen and off-screen presence within the cinematic public sphere.

Jahanara Kajjan in *Devil's Dice* (*Nairang-i Khayāl*, 1936)

[20] Urdu original: "*ye hindustān ki pehlī adakārah thi jise shĕʻr-o adab se lagāo thā aur shāʻr aur adīboṅ se khās dilchaspī thi. Kabhī kabhī ye khud bhī shĕʻr kaha karti thīṅ, mazāmīn bhi aksar likha kartī thīṅ…"* in Adil Rasheed, *Filmī Mohre* (Allahabad, 1957), 202.
[21] Richard Dyer's work on how star images are produced and consumed as part of a social phenomenon is seminal, specifically his discussion on 'charisma' of stars highlights the role of ideology within the social configuration of stardom where morality and sexuality were constantly at play in the image-making process. See Dyer, *Stars* (London: BFI, 1998), 30-31. Also, see *Stardom: Industry of Desire*, ed. Christine Gledhill (London: Routledge, 1991).
[22] Refer to my discussion on the biographical *tazkiras* of actresses in Chapter 3. For a ground-breaking discussion on stardom in India in the 1930s, see, Neepa Majumdar, *Wanted Cultured Ladies! Female Stardom and Cinema in India, 1930s-1950s* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009). For a good overview of the debates in Star Studies and a comparison between Hollywood and Bollywood/ Indian film stars, refer to Martin Shingler's *Star Studies: A Critical Guide* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012). Also, see *Stardom in Hindi Cinema: Celebrity and Fame in Globalized Times*, ed. Ayesha Iqbal Viswamohan and Clare Wilkinson (Singapore: Springer, 2020) and *Indian Film Stars: New Critical Perspectives,* ed. Michael Lawrence (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).



Jaddan Bai in *Filmland,* Art Supplement, 1932

In a similar vein, journalist Amjad Hussain's description of Jaddan Bai highlighted that she was "not only well educated in Urdu, Arabic and Persian, but can also converse in Hindi and Bengali. Socially, therefore she is quite cultured. Her hobby is the study of classical poetry, writing verses and composing her own Gazals (sic)."[23] While these claims to multilingualism were part of the project to highlight an actor's diversity and appeal to different film formats and regions, it can be argued that, like many contemporary *ṭawā'ifs*, Kajjan and Jaddan Bai's contribution in projecting the essence of the Urdu imaginaire was within the domain of the aural. The speech and vocabularies of the Urdu imaginaire had a specific politeness and cultural inflection that had been developed by expunging colloquial informality. Thus, a part of the Urdu imaginaire was brought to the screen in the form of sonic representation, through the chaste Urdu with 'correct' diction (*talaffuẓ*), spoken and sung on the screen by Jaddan Bai and Kajjan. This sweet speech of Urdu remained a quality admired by critics and audiences and lamented for its absence in films with Anglo-Indian actresses for

[23] Amjad Hussain, "A Brief Biographical Sketch: Jaddan Bai," *The Cinema*, September and October, 1932, 10.

instance.[24] Also, through their Urdu writings for the screen and film magazines, both Kajjan and Jaddan Bai contributed to the literary poetic tradition. This again highlights the overlapping networks of Urdu literary culture and cinematic public sphere that both the women interacted and negotiated with.

Jaddan Bai had shown great potential as a singer and performer from an early age. Her mother Dilipa, who was also a *gānewalī,* realised that a rigorous training in music would reap rich dividends. She therefore entrusted Jaddan's musical education to the legendary doyen of Benares *gharānā,* Ustad Moijuddin Khan. Jaddan was also taught music by Ustad Barkat Ali Khan of the Patiala *gharānā.* These instructions by her mentors shaped Jaddan's musical expression and the various inflections in her singing. According to Kishwar Desai, she made her public debut in Benaras as a teenager.[25] She became a popular songstress and invitations to *maḥfils* and performances began pouring in from wealthy patrons and connoisseurs of art. During the 1930s, Jaddan Bai sensed that a career in cinema would bring possibilities of reinvention devoid of the social opprobrium that the *kothā* had come to represent in that period. She was an astute woman and understood that opportunities lay ahead in this new medium not only in terms of achieving financial security at a time when her resources were drying up, but also that cinema held the promise of social recognition. Prior to her tryst with cinema, as a professional singer and performer, she had tried her hand at recording discs for gramophone companies when many others were hesitant about embracing new technology. In 1932 she received a rousing welcome from the film industry when she decided to join Playart Phototone in Lahore.[26] Hussain wrote "the film industry is to be congratulated on enlisting the services of such an eminent songstress of India as the famous Jaddan Bai."[27] Her fame as a *ṯawā'if* preceded and supplemented her cinematic stardom. Jaddan Bai was often invited to functions

[24] For discussion on Urdu and the creolized tongue of the Anglo-Indian actress, See, Sarah Rahman Niazi, "Sabita's journey from Calcutta to Bombay: Gender and Modernity in the circuits of cinemas in India," In *Industrial Networks and Cinemas of India: Shooting Stars, Shifting Geographies and Multiplying Media*, ed. Monika Mehta and Madhuja Mukherjee, (London: Routledge, 2021).

[25] Her date of birth is highly contentious, while Desai writes that she was born sometime in 1897, there are accounts that specify her birth date as 1900. See Kishwar Desai, *Darlingjee: The True Story of Nargis and Sunil Dutt* (New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2007), 18, and T. J. S. George, *The Life and Times of Nargis* (Chennai: East West Books, 2007).

[26] Playart Phototone was launched in 1928 by Abdul Rashid Kardar as United Players Corporation which then became Playart Phototone. The release of their inaugural *Husna ka Daku* (1929) starring Sitara Devi is believed to be a historic moment for the Punjab film industry. Kaushik Bhaumik, "The Emergence of the Bombay Film Industry, 1913-1936" (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2002), 117. Also, on the Punjab film community in the Bombay film industry, see Saadat Hasan Manto, *Stars from Another Sky*, tr. Khalid Hasan, (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1998).

[27] Amjad Hussain, "A Brief Biographical Sketch: Jaddan Bai," *The Cinema*, September and October 1932, 10.

and gatherings to promote cultural enterprises in Punjab. On January 13, 1933 she performed at one such gathering for the Cinema Art Society to felicitate Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan, a prominent member of the local elite and a politician, at the YMCA hall.[28] Her presence at the public meeting was reported as a momentous occasion, something that was perceivably within the 'natural' order of celebration. Jaddan Bai's performance at such a social event is indicative of how deeply the elites were entrenched in the vestiges of court entertainment and how these performances were rationalised and deemed acceptable despite the anxieties about the respectability of the *ṯawā'ifs* in this period. Thus, there was an interesting dialectic between these transformed contexts of publicness and performance which paved the way for *ṯawā'ifs* to enter other entertainment formats such as theatre and cinema.

After a brief stint at film studios in Calcutta, Jaddan Bai set up her own production company Sangit Movietone in 1936 in Bombay and directed, produced, scripted and composed music, along with acting in the films.[29] Some of the anecdotal accounts of Jaddan Bai's struggles to keep the company running are fascinating and show how proficiently she managed to accumulate her resources and connections from the Urdu public sphere. A letter she wrote to Adil Rasheed after delayed payments for film advertisements to the Urdu journal *Shahid* reveals her negotiating skills. She wrote, "I am a labouring woman (*mazdūr 'aurat*) and not a businessman (*sarmāyadār*). Do not think of Sangit Film Company as one with elephants and horses, it is a poor organization which is struggling to find its feet on the ground."[30] Jaddan Bai alludes to wealthier companies such as New Theatres (emblem was elephant), Ranjit Movietone (emblem was horse) and also perhaps to Wadia Movietone and Bombay Talkies, who were known to possess a zoo and menagerie of animals as part of their companies. Even though she was a thorough businesswoman, this performative modesty and acquiescence kept her in good stead with industry professionals and ensured that the press remained on her side. According to many biographical accounts, Jaddan Bai was very well placed within the film industry and had built a network for whom Chateau Marine (her home) became the centre for

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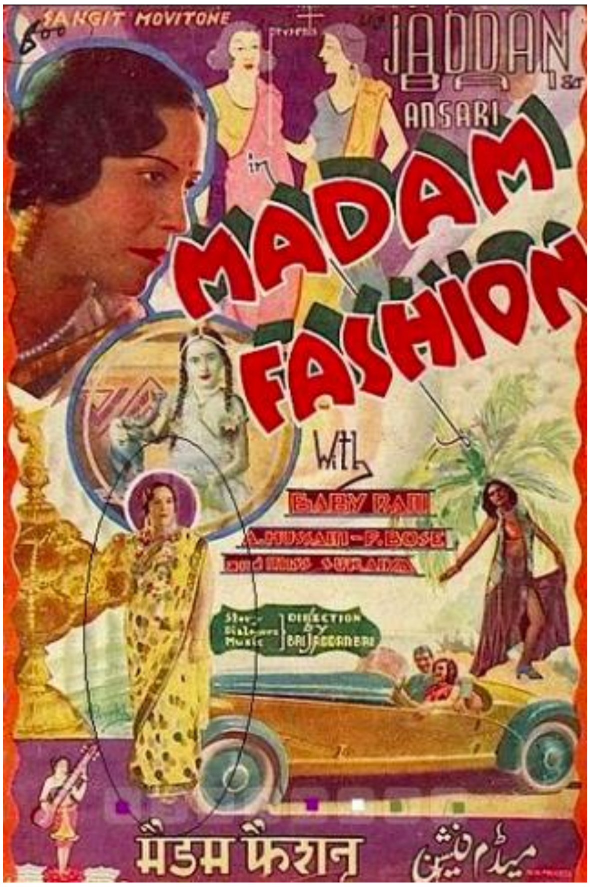
[28] *Varieties Weekly*, January 28, 1933, 20.

[29] Sangit Movietone, Sangit Film Company, See Debashree Mukherjee on the different names of the same company. In "Screenwriting and Feminist Rewriting: The lost films of Jaddan Bai (1892- 1949)," In *Women screenwriters: An international guide*, eds. Jill Nelmes & Jule Selbo (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 70–81.

[30] Urdu original: "*meṅ ik mazdūr qism ki aurat hūṅ aur sarmayadar nahin hūṅ. Sangit Film Company ko āp hāthi, ghodhe wāli company na samjheiṅ ye bada gharīb idara hai jo apne pairoṅ par khaṛe hone ki jaddo-jehad kar raha hai*." In Adil Rasheed, *Filmi Mohre* (Allahabad, 1957), 140.

many film deals and out of court settlement of disputes between film personnel.[31] Jaddan Bai was also known to host *mushā'aras* at her home and invited distinguished poets and writers to such *maḥfils*. On one such occasion, contemporary Urdu stalwarts like Josh Malihabadi, Hafeez Jalandhari, Akhtar Sheerani, Ehsan Danish, Jigar Moradabadi and Dewan Sharar were present and, apart from the poetry, Jaddan Bai also enthralled her guests with renditions at her harmonium.[32] Did these interactions surface and translate onto the screen?



Poster for *Madam Fashion*, 1936

Though Sangit Movietone films did not do particularly well at the box office, the films produced were significant texts that have been described by Kishwar Desai as "morality tales for women".[33] The central theme in Jaddan Bai's films, which include *Nachwali/Dancer* (1934), *Talash-e-Haq/Search for Truth* (d. Chimanlal Lahore, 1935), *Hriday Manthan/Call of the Soul* (1936) and *Madame Fashion* (1936), was the travails of the modern woman in her

[31] Saadat Hasan Manto, *Stars from Another Sky*, tr. Khalid Hasan (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1998) and Saleem Kidwai, "The singing ladies find a voice," *Seminar*, no. 540 (August 2004), https://www.india-seminar.com/2004/540.htm
[32] Adil Rasheed, *Filmi Mohre* (Allahabad, 1957), 143.
[33] Kishwar Desai, *Darlingjee: The True Story of Nargis and Sunil Dutt* (New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2007).

various avatars as a *ṭawā'if* /prostitute/wife. In this imaginative universe, the modern woman inhabited the ambiguous space of desire and sexual agency. As described earlier, the Urdu public sphere had been preoccupied with the 'woman's question' and reformist texts abound that were tales of caution and morality. Within this corpus of writings, the *ṭawā'if* had repeatedly featured in Urdu novels since the early nineteenth century. From Munshi Mohammad Sajjad Hussain Kakorvi's *Shāhid-e Rānā* (1897) to Mirza Hadi Ruswa's *Umrao Jān* (1899), and from Sajjad Hussain Anjum Kasmandvi's *Nashtar* to Premchand's *Bāzār-e ḥusn/Seva Sadan* and Chaman Lal's *ṭawā'if ka roznamcha* (Diary of a Courtesan), *ṭawā'ifs* were central characters and these novels shaped imaginaries about *ṭawā'ifs* in popular culture. Considering Jaddan Bai's familiarity with the canons of Urdu literature, it is not far-fetched to imagine her film scripts as interventions within the corpus of writings on *ṭawā'ifs*. But in the absence of the film texts, relying only on the publicity materials, her films have also been read within the context of the "transnational appropriation of the fallen women melodrama" that had been in circulation in the 1930s.[34] In the publicity material, the poster and advertisements for *Madame Fashion* show the film's costumes, hairstyles, sets and decor which appear to be inspired by western films; however, the film was a commentary on western modernity, echoing the critiques produced within *a<u>kh</u>lāqī* literature.[35]

Many of Kajjan's early films for Madan Theatres were reproductions of Urdu-Parsi theatre plays, for example, *Shirin Farhad* (d. J.J. Madan, 1931), *Indrasabha* (d. J.J. Madan, 1933), and *Chatra Bakavali* (d. J.J. Madan, 1932). Some were written by the legendary Urdu playwright Agha Hashr Kashmiri, notably *Bilwamangal* (d. J. F. Madan, 1932), *Ankh ka Nasha* and its sequel *Prem ka Nasha* (d. J.J. Madan, 1933), and *Rasheeda/ Turkey Hoor* (d. Ezra Mir, 1935), which were all adapted to film. Thus, both Jaddan Bai and Kajjan may have remained imbued with performative styles from within *ṭawā'if* culture as performers and used the craft

[34] Debashree Mukherjee, "Screenwriting and Feminist Rewriting: The lost films of Jaddan Bai (1892- 1949)," In *Women screenwriters: An international guide*, eds. Jill Nelmes and Jule Selbo (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 70–81. Also see Kathryn Hansen's work on the translation of Victorian melodramas into Gujarati and Urdu by Parsi Theatre practitioners, "Mapping Melodrama: Global Theatrical Circuits, Parsi Theatre and the Rise of the Social," *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 7, no. 1 (2016): 1-30.

[35] An advertisement for the film at Imperial cinema asked "Modern India! Where is its place? Know the truth from the painted lips of *Madam Fashion*". See, *filmindia*, May 1936, 49. In *Madame Fashion*, Jaddan Bai played the role of Sheeladevi, the wife of the wealthy Seth Amarnath. After her world travels with her husband, Sheeladevi became a slave to fashion. Even though her husband had helped her become a "respectable society lady", he was unable to withstand her demands. She befriended the villainous Mister Jagdish and left her home but not her fixation with fashion and drinking alcohol. After many twists and turns she came to the sad realisation of her plight and asked for her husband's forgiveness.

learnt from it to strengthen their place in the film industry.[36] Their films were collaborative projects that employed a kaleidoscope of visual vocabulary from disparate literary, theatrical and cinematic traditions to remain accessible to diverse audiences. And thus, as none of their films are available to assess, from the evidence in film advertisements and memorabilia like film booklets, we find inconclusive traces of the Urdu imaginaire.

I want to return to the discussion about the networks of film personnel who maintained crucial links with the Urdu public sphere and were in fact hired through these very connections. With the coming of sound technology, there was a growing demand for dialogue writers and lyricists. Studios like New Theatres in Calcutta, Bombay Talkies in Bombay or Prabhat in Poona were known for their bent towards literature and the literati. When Urdu writer and journalist Adil Rasheed moved to Bombay to work for the journal *Shahid*, Rai Bahadur offered him the position to work as a writer in the story department at Bombay Talkies for 400 rupees per month for three years. According to Rasheed's account, even though it was an attractive offer, he declined the job as he did not want to be bound by Bombay Talkies "strict" work schedule (9.30am to 6pm). Narrating his encounter with Devika Rani at the studio, Rasheed writes that Devika supposedly said, "I would be very pleased (if you accept the offer)…we have a great appreciation for writers/ *mujhe baṛī khushī hogi…hum adīboṅ ki baṛī qadar karte haiṅ*" and Rasheed responded that the mere job offer was "an illuminating example of your knowledge and patronage of literature/*ye āp logoṅ ki adab nawazī aur adab shanāsī ki roshan miṣāl hai*."[37] This shift in the film studio as a site for patronage and a livelihood for writers and poets points to the existence of intricate links between literary and film cultures where networks of entertainment overlapped and benefited from mutual exchanges, polite negotiations and reciprocal flattery in this case.

According to the biodata in his *dīwān* (compilation of poetry) *Rashk-e Qamar* (*Envy of the Moon*), Qamar Jalalabadi was invited to Ludhiana by Sahir Ludhianvi (a college student at the time) to participate in a *mushā'arā*.[38] At the *mushā'arā*, the Urdu dramatist Imtiaz Ali Taj

[36] I have argued that Jaddan Bai mobilised her stardom as a *ṭawā'if* and unlike many other women from *ṭawā'if* backgrounds who used pseudonyms and appellations like Miss to garner respectability, Jaddan Bai was proud of her lineage. See, Sarah R. Niazi, "Cinema and the Reinvention of the Self: Women Performers in the Bombay Film industry (1925- 47)" (M.Phil diss, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2011), 66- 75.
[37] Adil Rasheed, *Filmi Mohre* (Allahabad, 1957), 24.
[38] Om Prakash Bhandari was born on February 29, 1916 in Jalalabad, district Amritsar, Punjab. His father was the President of the Jalalabad Congress and participated in the struggle for Independence. This points to his early training and familiarity with politics and the national struggle against colonialism (evident in his poetry, he preferred to call himself the *inquilābī shā'ir*/ revolutionary poet). Bhandari adopted Qamar Jalalabadi (Moon of

was present and, impressed by Jalalabadi's poetic recitation, recommended him to Pancholi Pictures in Lahore where he was hired as a lyricist.[39] For Pancholi Pictures, he wrote the lyrics for the film *Zamindar* (d. Moti B. Gidwani, 1942). In 1943, he moved to Poona to join Prabhat Film Company as a dialogue writer and lyricist. Thus the poetic soirees became a ground for scouting and recruiting talent more widely. In his memoir *Meri Zindagi* (*My Life*), Urdu poet Shakeel Badayuni narrated how he was hired for the job of a lyricist at Kardar studios in Bombay. Badayuni had been invited to attend a *mushā'arā* in Byculla, "on the second and the third day of the event, Fazli saheb (of Fazli Studios) filmed a mushaira (sic) sequence for his under-production film *Mehndi*, the lead of which were Altaf and Para. Fazli saheb called upon me, Majrooh Sultanpuri, Behzaad Lakhnavi, Jigar Moradabadi, Josh Malihabadi and Mahir- ul Qadri to partake in the filming. The shooting went on throughout the night at Kardar Studio. I got 700 rupees for it – it was the first time that I had received so much money at one fell swoop, and I was thrilled to bits."[40] Film jobs were better paid (than jobs in the print industry or even for that matter government jobs) and were exciting for young poets and writers who struggled to make a living in the competitive and precarious publishing industry. In any case, many Urdu poets and writers had multiple jobs, some worked in government offices or as teachers in schools and colleges. After the encounter at the film studio, Shakeel Badayuni quit his government job and was hired by A.R. Kardar for a monthly salary of 400 rupees and accommodation in a building where Naushad and other film personnel who worked for Kardar resided.

As a contrast to Badayuni's triumphant account of his encounter with cinema via the *mushā'arā* in *Mehndi*, a review of the film had very different feelings about the sequence by Fazli. Baburao Patel, editor of *filmindia*, was far from impressed by it and, revealing his growing bigotry, he wrote,

> In this particular picture we see the poets of Allah. They are called "Shayars" who write verses and keep saluting in gratitude when others around cough out their almost too-ready appreciation. The way Muslims like almost every word

Jalalabad) as his poetic pseudonym. In 1933, he joined the Urdu daily *Pratap* as a poet. Throughout the 1930s, he worked in Lahore as a writer, poet and film journalist. He was the editor of the film magazine *Star* and General Secretary of the Punjab Film Journalists' Association.

[39] Qamar Jalalabadi, *Rashk-e-Qamar* (New Delhi: Modern Publishing House, 1984), 16-17.

[40] As translated by Yasir Abbasi in *Yeh Un Dinoñ ki baat hai: Urdu Memoirs of Cinema Legends* (New Delhi: Bloomsbury, 2018), 219.

> of Urdu and every word of Urdu and every line of any verse written by every and all Urdu poets, it seems that all Muslim poets, without a single exception, are indeed great composers whom Allah has specially sent down to entertain the faithful…S. Fazli has introduced a "mushaira", a mutual admiration rabble, in the picture. Making this an excuse, he shows us some poets of India in a separate reel and completely destroys the glamour nursed by us through intimate association with their poems. Except Josh Mallihabadi (sic), not one Urdu poet introduced by Fazli looks a poet.[41]

This convoluted verbose outburst is revealing of many facets of the relationship between Urdu poets, their perceived Muslimness and the growing suspicion towards their supposed inclination for Islamic separatism.[42] The presence of contemporary Urdu poets and writers in films was not a mere coincidence: many film studios in Bombay, Poona and Calcutta had become spaces that patronized *Urduwalahs*. Towards the end of the 1940s, a large number of Urdu progressive writers moved to Bombay, strengthening links with the film industry.[43] The writings of the Progressives aimed to rescue Urdu from the world of melancholic romanticism, escapism and fantasy and propel it towards realism, hope and optimism. Through their writings, the Progressives brought to the fore the sharp despair of the common people, and created an impetus against the discrimination and injustices of society. Kishen Chander, Saghar Nizami, Akhtar- ul Iman, Majaz Lucknawi, Majrooh Sultanpuri, Kamal Amrohi and Sahir Ludhianvi joined Sardar Jafri, Kaifi Azmi, Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, Saadat Hasan Manto and Ismat Chughtai who were already part of the Bombay film circuit. While the Urdu language was disenfranchised by the state after the independence of India, the Urdu cultural ethos persisted in the public imagination and everyday use. Through their dialogues and lyrics, writers and poets played a more direct role in shaping the language used in the films, as I showed in Chapter 4. But Patel's vitriol complicates the assertions by the film industry that it was a space of secular credentials with a place for *Urduwalahs* in it. Even though the Urdu

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41 ""Mehndi" Gives A Bad Headache! Muslim social fails to entertain," *filmindia*, March 1948, 47.

42 Salma Siddique's work has shown how Baburao Patel was particularly vicious to the Fazli brothers and other filmmakers who had migrated to Pakistan. See, Siddique, "Between Bombay and Lahore: A Partition History of cinema in South Asia (1940-1960)" (PhD diss., University of Westminster, 2015). Also, see Ravi Vasudevan, "Film Genres, the Muslim Social, and Discourses of Identity c. 1935- 1945," *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 6, no. 1 (2015): 27- 43.

43 The Progressive Writers' movement in India began to take shape in the thirties. In 1935, a group of Indian students in London thought of organizing a movement of writers with 'progressivism' as their defining principle. Sajjad Zaheer, *The Light: A History of Movement for Progressive Literature in the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent,* tr. Amina Azfar (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2006).

public sphere used different strategies to influence the cinema, cinematic language and its visual aesthetics were shaped by diverse influences and filmmaking practices.

GENRES OF FILM, FILM STYLE, SOCIAL MELODRAMA AND THE URDU IMAGINAIRE

Literary cultures played an integral part in the development and elaboration of film aesthetics, specifically the genres that emerged. From Sanskrit epics to Persian fairy tales, early cinematic texts derived from and incorporated literary imaginaries to create fluid continuities between the aesthetic and generic conventions of both. These interactions between literature and cinema aided in the formation of film form, styles and genres in India. Some scholars have shown how film genres are predetermined by conventions, codes and formulae.[44] But others have also argued that there are no fixed, pure genres; often genres overlap, cross-breed and diverge from established canons that inform our understanding of genre formation and development.[45] Steve Neale writes,

> genre is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, a phenomenon that encompasses systems of expectation, categories, labels and names, discourses, texts and groups or corpuses of texts, and the conventions that govern them all. Another [argument] is that genre is ubiquitous, a phenomenon common to all instances of discourse: there is a generic aspect to all texts; all texts 'participate', to use Derrida's term, 'in one or several genres' (1992:230).[46]

Neale's definition of genres is a useful guide in attempting to theorise and understand genres and their possible relationship to the Urdu imaginaire. Did Urdu literary culture play a role in shaping Indian film genres? Can we establish continuities between Urdu literary genres and genres of film?. To investigate this one has to find patterns and formulae that, through repetition and variation of themes, have become part of the aesthetic frameworks of film genres in India. While there are continuities between literary genres and those of film, I will suggest that exploring these through genre theory will not help my argument, not least because in Indian cinema scholarship the only uncontested use of genre is to describe industry categories. Thus

[44] David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, Kirstin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (London: Routledge, 1985).
[45] Steve Neale, *Genre and Hollywood* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).
[46] Ibid., 2.

the earliest genres of film were the mythological, stunt/action, and oriental fantasy film, the historical and the social.[47] Much has been written about the penchant of early cinema-goers for film genres such as the mythological and the oriental fantasy film which borrowed from an existing corpus of popular oral *qiṣṣas* and seminal literary texts.[48] While many of these early genres of film find overlaps with literary genres in Urdu (*qiṣṣa*, *masnavi*, *kahānī*, *tarīkh*, *drāma*) there is little evidence to suggest a direct correlation between the two because other literary traditions (Marathi, Bengali, Hindi, English etc.) during the same period had similar genres which had a profound impact on film. It is also crucial to remember that literary cultures were not mutually exclusive and the Urdu imaginaire was a cosmopolitan and vibrant ethos that developed through syncretism and mutual exchange. Thus, all kinds of films borrowed certain aspects from it: for example, the Urdu ghazal became part of the romantic repertoire in films irrespective of a specific genre (as I showed in the previous chapter).

Instead, can we argue for a genre of 'Urdu films' or 'Urdu imaginaire films' in India?[49] I will argue that this is not viable, but let us unpack this. Firstly, it is important to recognize that these did not exist as industry categories. 'Urdu films' was sometimes used in the 1940s in film magazine reviews or advertisements (like *filmindia*) to designate films that made predominant use of Urdu language in dialogues and lyrics; it was not a genre distinction per se, but used to establish linguistic difference from other films that were labelled as 'Hindustani', 'Hindi', 'Tamil', 'Bengali' etc.[50] Secondly, the cumbersome term 'Urdu imaginaire films', as a speculative category, would perhaps need to consider films based on a specific cultural milieu. In genre theory, specificities around settings, locale and cultural milieu are important considerations for genre formation and identification.[51] In the case of the Urdu imaginaire, it becomes difficult to assign a particular spatio-temporal domain as the range of texts produced by Urdu literary culture was not confined by geographical frontiers. Also, trying to bundle films into this category based on a specific cultural context and themes proved to be

[47] Rosie Thomas, "India: Mythologies and Modern India," In *World Cinema Since 1945*, ed. William Luhr (New York: Ungar, 1987), 301-29.
[48] Manishita Dass, "Conjuring Tricks: Mythologicals and the Invention of an "Indian" Public," In *Outside the Lettered city: Cinema, Modernity and the public sphere in late colonial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 39-71.
[49] This was something I was asked at many conferences and seminars after presentations. As rudimentary as this question sounds, it was always a difficult one to address as I never had a straightforward answer to this question.
[50] See Chapter 1 on Literature review for debate on nomenclature where I show how contested and political the use of Urdu-Hindustani-Hindi had become in the 1940s.
[51] Shatz on gangster films or the Western. As quoted by Neale, *Genre and Hollywood* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 198.

a challenge, as, for 'Urdu imaginaire film' to work as a full-fledged genre of film, it not only must 'exist as an institution', but also 'function as "horizons of expectation" for readers and as "models of writing" for authors'/ filmmakers.[52] Many of the films produced in the early decades of Indian cinema did not necessarily fall neatly into one single literary tradition or cultural milieu. In such a scenario, how can we locate the traces of the Urdu imaginaire amongst the myriad strands of genre possibilities in existence in the cinema in north India?

Genre theory might prove to be futile; can we instead locate the Urdu imaginaire within film style rather than genre? I think this might be a more useful approach. The elements of mise-en-scène – framing of shots, lighting, décor, props, costumes, performance, dialogues, lyrics, camera movement and perspective – all contribute to the language of a film. The interplay of these elements determines film style; often the style of a film is individualised and shaped by auteur filmmakers or in some cases it can be understood within the context of film movements as a grouping.[53] So, while the Urdu imaginaire cannot be seen as a dominant movement, as there aren't enough films that explicitly reference this style or within which this style appears predominantly, can we think of film directors who might have developed a film style subconsciously borrowed or inspired by an Urdu imaginaire? Filmmaker Sohrab Modi's films like *Said-e Havas* (1936),[54] *Jailor* (1937) or *Pukar* (discussed in the previous chapter) can plausibly be seen to borrow elements from an Urdu imaginaire. However, probably a more useful way of looking at this would be to recognize that, rather than looking at entire films, we see instead that across a large body of films, many sequences, like the *filmī* ghazal, were inspired by aspects deriving from an Urdu imaginaire specific to the 1930s and 40s. Other stylistic elements within the films that were inspired by the Urdu imaginaire were those related to the representation of authority, power and legality (for example, medieval or modern court room sequences). Here speech, dialogue delivery and performance of actors was inspired by the Urdu Parsi stage (a good example would be Modi's *Pukar* or *Sikandar*, 1941).[55]

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[52] Todorov as quoted in Neale, ibid., 38.
[53] John Gibbs, *Mise-en-scène: Film Style and Interpretation*, Columbia University Press, 2002.
[54] The film was based on Agha Hashr Kashmiri's Urdu drama *Said-e Havas* (*Prey to Desire*, 1908), which was an adaptation of Shakespeare's *King John*. Unfortunately, there are no copies of the film available in the archive. However, there are printed versions of Kashmiri's play still in circulation, and recently in 2014 the play was performed on stage by students at the University of Hyderabad. For a detailed study on Shakespearean adaptations refer to *India's Shakespeare: Translation, Interpretation and Performance*, ed. Poonam Trivedi and Dennis Bartholomeusz (New Delhi: Pearson, 2005).
[55] The film was based on the historical figure Alexander the Great (Sikandar), played by Prithviraj Kapoor and Sohrab Modi played the Indian king Puru or Porus. Though a historical film, it had nationalist undercurrents and was briefly banned by the colonial government as it feared the rise of patriotic fervour.

Another possibility would be to narrow down the search to films set within the context of contemporary social and cultural milieux in the early sound period, perhaps best exemplified in the genre of the social film. This also might make our job easier considering that, during the 1930s, the social films with their reformist agenda were popular. I have no intention of reinventing the wheel when a productive genre category such as the 'social film' already exists in industrial and academic circulation and use. But is the 'social film' the same as or similar to the 'Urdu imaginaire film'? Of course, it is not the same, but can we try to locate a film style specific to an Urdu imaginaire that was produced in the 1930s and 40s within a popular genre like the social melodrama? I already start with a caveat that this is in the realm of the speculative and in no way am I attempting to collapse the social film genre with a putative genre/ film style drawing on the Urdu cultural milieu.

The 'social' film has been defined by the industry, critics and film scholars to suggest a varied and diverse range of films on contemporary social life, literary-inspired reformist texts that grappled with colonial modernity, or simply as a catch-all genre set within a melodramatic universe. The history of the social film and how it was constituted is crucial. For any genre to potentially assume a position of social significance, it needs the support of institutions that will eventually propel it into mainstream use. The social as a genre was produced within an institutionalized discourse and the nomenclature developed with some inconsistency in its usage, through industrial affirmation and assistance. The popularity of the social was due to its ability to incorporate many trends – literary and visual strategies fundamental to the institutionalization and legitimization of cinema at that time. While the social film had a particular emphasis and charge within the cinematic public sphere, the genre had significant precursors in literature, theatre and other popular entertainment forms. These histories of the social as a genre are captivating tales of genre mixing, adaptations and cross-pollination. In theatre, the social melodramas produced by theatrical companies at the turn of the twentieth century set the stage for the success of filmic reproductions. Kathryn Hansen maps how the Victorian melodramas travelled to India via transnational circuits of entertainment (from England to Australia via India) and became a staple through fascinating networks and collaborations between playwrights.[56] These itinerant theatre groups played a crucial role in

[56] Kathryn Hansen, "Mapping Melodrama: Global Theatrical Circuits, Parsi Theatre and the Rise of the Social" in *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 7, no. 1 (2016), 1-30.

localising the "melodramatic imagination".[57] The social melodramas developed by Parsi theatre practitioners in Gujarati and Urdu and subsequently in Hindi were adapted into early silent and sound films as a vital element within the repertoire of early filmmakers.

The compelling universal appeal of melodrama for Indian filmmakers and audiences can be attributed to the very plasticity of melodrama as a mode. The moral universe of melodrama is governed by the binary split between good and bad, with stock characters as types who are emblematic of values, virtues and vice. The conflict is often generational, between tradition and modernity for instance, and there is use of hyperbolic dialogues to heighten emotions, with an intense climax and a resolution which upholds the moral values of the age that the melodrama is situated within. Anupama Kapse astutely observes that, unlike western melodrama, in India the incorporation of melodrama within early film genres such as the mythological or stunt film points to the reformulation of the sacred.[58] In this manifestation of melodrama in Indian cinema, the use of mythic iconographies and frontality, tableaux, song and dance, added to the melodramatic mode, serve as evocative tools to propel the narratives forward.[59] In the context of western melodrama, Brooks has argued that "things cease to be merely themselves, gestures cease to be merely tokens of social intercourse whose meaning is assigned by a social code; they become the vehicles of metaphors whose tenor suggests another kind of reality."[60] In the 1930s, Indian film genres were informed by discourses emerging from interactions with colonial modernity and the challenges of negotiating with new ways of being and habituation; the melodramatic mode was affectively used to address and manoeuvre the reception of this tumultuous period of precarity. Did the Urdu imaginaire play a role in the reformulation of melodrama into the social genre in literature and film? There is little to suggest that. However, the Urdu public sphere did lend acceptability to the genre through endorsements and recommendations in the form of favourable reviews and public opinion. In terms of

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[57] Peter Brooks has argued that "the melodramatic mode in large measure exists to locate and to articulate the moral occult." See Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), 5.
[58] Anupama Kapse, "Melodrama as Method," *Framework* 54, no. 2 (2013): 146-151.
[59] Rosie Thomas, "Indian Cinema: Pleasure and Popularity," *Screen* 26, no. 3-4 (1985): 116-131; Ira Bhaskar, "Emotion, Subjectivity and the Limits of Desire: Melodrama and Modernity in Bombay cinema 1940s- 50s," In *Gender Meets Genre in Post War Cinemas*, ed. Christine Gledhill (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 161- 176; and Madhava Prasad, *Ideology of the Hindi Film: A Historical Construction* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008).
[60] Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), 9.

practice on stage, Hansen in her work on Urdu-Parsi theatre has shown how the Urdu language successfully accentuated the melodramatic inflections of high emotionalism in the dramas.[61]

The social film gained immense popularity in this period and gradually was accepted as a dominant 'respectable' genre but not without scrutiny, modification and adaptation of its form.[62] The genre incorporated the melodramatic aesthetic in such a fashion that, despite the opprobrium or disdain for melodramas, elite bourgeois critics endorsed the social and were as much responsible for its domestication as audiences who considered the social as appropriate entertainment with pedagogical potential.[63] This approbation of the social rested on its precise focus and emphasis on contemporary themes that allowed cinema to interrogate the social and material transformations that were taking place. The social film inherited the vocabulary of reform and as a genre adopted an "omnibus form which included a rationalist discourse as part of its 'attractions'".[64] The reform narratives were an aspect of the zeitgeist that had affected literary and film cultures; literary genres such as the *mu'āshratī/ samājik* (social) novel in Urdu, Hindi, Bengali and Marathi had been in vogue in the early twentieth century and impacted the social film genre. In the previous chapter, I showed how the discourse of reform was articulated through the use of Urdu in dialogues to perpetuate lofty thoughts that derived their charge from the Urdu public sphere. Through the dialogues and lyrics, most film genres were imbued with elements from the Urdu imaginaire; the social film specifically was a classic vehicle where a variety of contemporary concerns could find expression, although the narratives themselves were sourced from diverse languages such as Bengali or Marathi and then adapted using Urdu dialogues.

An important development in the trajectory of the social film and its relation to the Urdu imaginaire was the emergence of the sub-genre, the 'Muslim social', in the 1940s, with its focus on representation of Muslim life. According to Ira Bhaskar and Richard Allen, the Muslim social was one of the Islamicate genres of Bombay cinema, along with the Historical and the Muslim-Courtesan film.[65] Ravi Vasudevan has argued that "ironically, once the Muslim social emerged into view, the previous history of the social film appears to be defined

[61] Kathryn Hansen, "Passionate refrains: The theatricality of Urdu on the Parsi stage," *South Asian History and Culture* 7, no. 1 (2016), 221- 238.
[62] Eric Barnouw and S. Krishnaswamy, *Indian Film* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1980.
[63] K.A. Abbas along with others highly praised the social genre.
[64] Ravi Vasudevan, *The Melodramatic Public: Film form and Spectatorship in Indian Cinema* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2010), 104.
[65] Ira Bhaskar and Richard Allen, *The Islamicate Cultures of Bombay cinema* (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2009).

not by a transcendental locus of meaning, but by a largely self-referential Hindu social world."[66] In the 1940s, with the polarised Hindi-Urdu language debates, a politics of identity and religious separatist movements, the syncretic impulse of the Urdu imaginaire was distilled into the Muslim social, which was marketed as a representative articulation of Muslimness, and attempts were made to attribute the Urdu cultural ethos solely to one community. In doing so, the Muslim socials of the 1940s consciously used references and tropes from Urdu literary culture. What was fascinating was the fact that Muslim socials used the Urdu imaginaire in a very specific articulation, namely in its use of *ashrāf* texts like Iqbal's poetry or the reformist novels of Nazir Ahmad.[67] In setting the narratives within specific locales of Muslim culture, such as their use of *nawabī* culture from Lucknow, and of mosques, Sufi shrines and suchlike, the Muslim social stripped the Urdu imaginaire of its diversity. This reconfiguration and selective appropriation of the narrative and cultural tropes of the Urdu imaginaire can be attributed to the growing communalisation of the Urdu language and its attribution to Muslims. In that case, does the Urdu imaginaire get confined to the Muslim social from the 1940s onwards, thereby complicating the cosmopolitan history of the Urdu language? The hybridity and expanse of the Urdu imaginaire, however, can be assessed when we map what contemporary Urdu writers were writing and the diversity of the Urdu literary sphere during this time; it is staggering how cosmopolitan and diverse it was.[68] Also, as I showed in Chapter 2, through the film journals the Urdu public sphere was advocating and setting up a 'horizon of expectations' for the *akhlāqī* film, which was not a genre of film, but an assorted compendium of genres of reform.[69] Through the *akhlāqī* film, the Urdu public sphere attempted to eschew the politics of communalism and instead promoted an Urdu imaginaire that was built by hybridity and was invested in a porous and amorphous relationship with other literary cultures. Cinema made possible new ways to tell old familiar stories by employing a visual vocabulary and style that resonated with contemporary publics. The iconographies mobilized by the cinema were eclectically fashioned and informed by modern print cultures and early photography that had emerged at the turn of the century.[70] By the 1930s and 40s, the range of experimentation and play with genres had reached a new dimension in comparison with the

[66] Ravi Vasudevan, "Film Genres, the Muslim Social and Discourses of Identity c.1935-1945," *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 6, no. 1 (2015), 41.
[67] Salma Siddique has shown how the Fazli Brothers' films borrowed narrative tropes from Nazir Ahmad's novels and the poetry of Allama Iqbal. See, Siddique, "Between Bombay and Lahore: A Partition History of cinema in South Asia (1940-1960)" (PhD diss., University of Westminster, 2015).
[68] Refer to Chapter 1 on Literature review.
[69] I will return to the *ak͟hlāqī* film in the final section of this chapter.
[70] Christopher Pinney, *Camera Indica: The social life of Indian photographs* (London: Reaktion, 1997).

silent era; filmmakers were trying to incorporate sound and extend the reach of their cinema that now seemed to be contained spatially and geographically because of the issue with language. In the sound period, film language evolved through a series of negotiations between contesting literary and visual cultures but also crucially went back to older familiar narrative tropes with regional specificities. Here, the Urdu language and the imaginaire linked to it proved to be a vital force in expanding the reach of cinematic texts to diverse public spheres.

FILM ADAPTATIONS AND URDU LITERARY CULTURE

An important connection between literary cultures and the cinematic public spheres in India has been sustained through the practice of adaptions of literature on film. In the early years of cinema, literary texts were crucial to attempts at narrativization and the legitimization of film form. Narrative cinema developed in close affiliation with literature and through literary adaptations. Tom Gunning has shown how, in the context of early cinema in America, silent films quoted moments of literary significance on screen. These citations were premised on the possible familiarity and intelligibility that such "peak moments" produced among audiences.[71] These literary references added a particular kind of value to what Gunning called "the cinema of attractions", which was in the process of transition. While the development of the cinema and its integration of other modes of entertainment followed a slightly different trajectory in India, a similar practice of literary citation was prevalent in early films such as Phalke's *Kaliya Mardan* or *Raja Harishchandra*, which were full-length films based on single episodes from the Sanskrit epics. In the same period, many Persian-Urdu *qiṣṣas* and *dastāns* were adapted into films but, since few of these films or their scripts have survived, it is difficult to assess them. In the sound period of the early 1930s, studios continued these practices of adaptation; New Theatres was known for their penchant for adapting Bengali novels by Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay (*Devdas*) and stories by Rabindranath Tagore, while Prabhat was admired for their adaptions of Marathi classics such as Baburao Painter's *Sinhagad* based on Hari Narayan Apte's Marathi novel. Did texts produced within Urdu literary culture get adapted into films of the early sound period of the 1930s and 40s? We find many films that contain references to texts from the Urdu literary canon over the course of these two decades but few full adaptations. Some of these texts are straightforwardly acknowledged, others are tangentially cited in the

[71] Tom Gunning, "The Intertextuality of Early Cinema," In *A Companion to Literature and Film*, eds. Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 128.

form of literary moments within a film. What kinds of Urdu literary texts did early cinema seek out amongst the melange of literary pleasures on offer, and which citations to the literary became recurrent tropes within the cinema in the early period? I ask these questions within a broader intertext of a proliferating and variegated spectrum of texts and media generated within the Urdu public sphere. For example, many Persian and Punjabi *qiṣṣas* became part of the Urdu literary tradition and were then adapted as part of the oriental fantasy film genre; popular *qiṣṣa-kahānī* like *Raja Bhoj* (Madan Theatres, 1922),[72] *Indrasabha aka Sabzapari* (d. Manilal Joshi, 1925),[73] *Laila Majnu* (d. Manilal Joshi, 1927), and *Anarkali* (1928),[74] among others, as well as the 'Arabian Nights films', became staple adaptations. Many of these stories appeared in multiple versions in the sound period, in different languages as well. This complicates a linear understanding of movement between the Urdu imaginaire and the cinematic adaptations, as it is difficult to ascertain the direct transfer of literary tropes and affects, especially considering that these stories had been widely disseminated in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. These intertextual and often intermedial encounters circulated not only in the form of paintings, illustrations and cartoons in print, but also as oral *qiṣṣas* or even as theatrical productions on the stage.

In the chapter on film journalism, we saw that the Urdu public sphere was invested in debates around the need to discipline cinema and promote film culture that had *a<u>kh</u>lāqī* values. How did the Urdu public sphere perceive film adaptations and their roles in the legitimation of cinema in India? In an article, published in 1931, "*Adabī shahkār aur mutaḥarrik taṣwīr*/ Great literary works and moving images", Aziz Ahmad wrote of the role of cinema in expanding the literary model of life. He argued that "[i]n literature, you cannot fully peruse (*muṭāla'a nahī*

[72] The film starring Patience Cooper was possibly adapted from the popular *qiṣṣa Sinhasan Battisi*. In 1926, Royal Art Studio made another version called *Raja Bhoj/ Kismet ka Khel* with Zubeida, Madanrai Vakil and Jilloo. The film was directed by Dinshah J. Jhaveri. According to Pritchett, though the *Sinhasan Battisi qiṣṣa* evolved from older Sanskrit sources, the Fort William College commissioned Kazim Ali Javan and Lalluji Lal to work on its Hindi and Urdu editions. It was first published in Calcutta, reprinted half a dozen times during the first half of the nineteenth century and as mass printing developed it became a rage in North India by the second half of the nineteenth century. For details on the evolution, development and variations of the story and plot of *Sinhasan Battisi*, see Frances Pritchett, *Marvelous Encounters: Folk Romance in Urdu and Hindi* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1985).

[73] This Kohinoor Film Co. Zubeida starrer is based on the popular Urdu stage play by Agha Hasan Amanat. A later sound adaption was directed by J.J. Madan in 1932.

[74] The year 1928 saw the release of two versions of *Anarkali*, one directed by R.S. Chaudhuri for the Imperial Film Co. starring the top star Sulochana and the other starring Seeta Devi, directed by Charu Roy for Great Eastern Film Corporation, Delhi. According to *Light of Asia*, the second version of *Anarkali* was adapted from Ali Taj's play by the same name. See, Suresh Chabria, *Light of Asia: Indian Silent Cinema 1912-1934* (New Delhi: Niyogi Books, 2013), 211.

kar sakte) the images of life until you see them embodied (*mujassam*)…"[75] He argued that literary texts, despite their potential, needed an added boost from the cinematic apparatus to augment the simulation of reality. Like many of his contemporaries, Ahmad called on the educated Urdu elite to do the needful in transforming both literature and cinema, through careful collaboration and amalgamation of the two. He considered the current state of the Indian motion pictures as backward (*pāsmanda halat*) and the actors as lacking in foundation (*aṣl*), high standards and good taste (*mazāq -e salīm*).[76] In such a scenario, literature must aid cinema, not only in improving the content and context of cinematic material but also in enabling the fulfilment of the desires of the educated elite (*talīm yāfta ṯabqa*). This, Ahmad stressed, is the reason why, "it is necessary to present literary greats on the silver screen (*parda-e sīmī*)." But Ahmad warned that there were some responsibilities when adapting (*tamsīl karnā*) great literary works into moving images. For example, he advised that great care must be taken with regard to setting the period of the story (*qiṣṣa*), and the community life (*ijtemā'ī zindagī*), cultural conditions (*tamaddunī halat*) and etiquette (*tahẕīb*) must be given special attention.[77]

It is fascinating that, despite writing for an Urdu literary journal, Ahmad's essay was devoid of any references to film adaptations from Urdu literature. His position was highly Eurocentric and this is apparent in the examples of literary works and their film adaptations that he admiringly wrote about. He discussed the film adaptations of writers such as Shakespeare (*Hamlet* starring John Barrymore and Mary Pickford), Goethe's *Faust* with Emil Jannings (d. F.W. Murnau, 1926), Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan* (d. Ernst Lubitsch, 1925) etc. Other literary giants mentioned are Tolstoy, Pushkin, Victor Hugo and Thomas Hardy (whom he considered impossible to adapt to cinema). Some of the adaptations are discussed vis-a-vis the stars that performed certain seminal characters in the adaptations and those that left an impression on his mind, for example, Lon Cheney in Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* adaptation, Pola Negri in William Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, Lillian Gish in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and in George Elliot's *Romola*, and Douglas Fairbanks in Alexander Dumas' *Man with an Iron Mask*. While he discussed directors like Murnau and Lubitsch, the analysis is mostly star-centred. In discussing western canons, with their European and American film adaptations, Ahmad completely forgoes any discussion of Indian writers, making only a cursory remark about Tagore and the adaptation of his story *Qurbani/ Balidan*/

[75] *Nairang-i-Khayal*, Film Number, July 1931, 21- 22.
[76] Ibid., 21
[77] Ibid., 22.

Sacrifice (d. Naval Gandhi, 1927).[78] This lack of focus on Urdu literary texts and their film adaptations exposes Ahmad's bias against contemporary films that borrowed from the "popular" genres of the *qiṣṣa* and *dastān*; these oriental fantasy films with their diverse range of repertoires were hardly considered to be descendants of Urdu "classics". He concluded his essay with advice for the educated Urdu elite: "motion pictures are serving the cause of literature. One must not neglect them (films) as a mere source of entertainment (*zariya-e tafrī*). Instead they must be used with purpose because you can find the exegesis of the bookish life in them."[79] In the early years, the idea that Indian cinema could be potentially repurposed as a tool for pedagogy and literary pursuits was carefully constructed by critics and film journal writers by highlighting associations between the literary and the cinematic.[80]

Patras Bokhari, in an address at Lahore's Minerva Club in 1927, discussed the cinematic form and its mode of articulation.[81] In his presentation on the cinematic apparatus and the role of film personnel, he examined the importance of the director and the film editor in putting together disparate 'shots' to make meaning. He offered a comparison between the director and literary author, suggesting that the filmmaking process was similar to the work of great authors who strung words together to produce artworks. The conception of the film director in an authorial role was prevalent and actively promoted by contemporary critics to bridge the gap between literature and film.[82] However, filmmakers had a different conception of their roles and duties, for example, as Sudhir Mahadevan has suggested, "Phalke did not seem to consider himself an author in the literary sense."[83] In the early period of cinema, the multiple understandings of filmmakers as authors were bound to the very nature of the

[78] Ahmad mentions the name of the film as *Qurbani* which was the Urdu name of the film. The film interestingly finds endorsement by the Indian Cinematograph Committee, 1927-28, as an Indian film that can match up to the western films. The film was produced by Oriental Pictures Corporation and had contemporary stars such as Master Vithal, Sulochana and Zubeida. See, Ashish Rajadhyaksha and Paul Willemen, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Cinema* (London: BFI and Oxford University Press, 1999), 250.

[79] Urdu original: "*mutaḥarrik taṣwīr adbiyāt ki girā qadar khidmat anjām de rahi hai. Unko sirf ik zariya-e tafri samajh kar naẕar andāz na kar dena ćāhiye balke un se fayeda uthāna ćāhiye. Un meṅ kitābi zindagī ki tafsireiṅ mil sakti heṅ*." *Nairang-i-Khayal*, Film Number, July 1931, 23.

[80] This idea of literature and film being similar was later dismantled when film sought to be recognized as an autonomous art form.

[81] Syed Ahmad Shah Bokhari known by his pen name, Patras Bokhari was an Urdu writer, humourist, broadcaster and diplomat. He was the Director General of All India Radio and post partition, he was appointed as Pakistan's first envoy to the United Nations in New York city and eventually worked as the Under Secretary General of the United Nations for Information until 1958. The speech was delivered in 1927 and reproduced as "*Film ka Wasīl-e Izhār*" in *Nairang-i-Khayal*, Film Number, July 1931, 13.

[82] An example is K.A. Abbas comparing Barua, Shantaram and Nitin Bose to Shakespeare, Dickens and Bernard Shaw. See, Abbas, "The Only Three Great Directors of India!" *filmindia*, June 1940, 52-56.

[83] Sudhir Mahadevan, *A Very Old Machine: The Many Origins of the Cinema in India, 1840-1930* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015), 89.

industrial production of print and cinema as mass cultural forms. While these remained distinct businesses, the overlapping and shared networks of the literary and cinematic public spheres necessitated a broader overview of their roles and responsibilities. This fluidity posed a peculiar problem when it came to the process of adaptation of literary texts into films. Writers considered to be commercially successful or with literary merit, such as Tagore, Apte or Premchand, were credited in the films as this ensured a badge of respectability, as were Urdu Progressive writers such as Chughtai and Manto in the 1940s. But many exchanges between literary and cinematic texts remain in the realm of the speculative in the absence of direct acknowledgement of the source text.

Robert Stam in his critique of academic scholarship on film adaptation has shown how much of the debate has revolved around authenticity of texts and textual fidelity.[84] These discussions have invariably been preoccupied with comparative analysis between literary texts and their film versions. The binaries between "popular" versus the "classical" are invoked, where films are viewed as "popular" "inferior" interpretations of literary "classics".[85] More recently, such pedantic views have made way for "a strategy for conceiving of adaptation not as an intermedial translation of a literary source's narrative content from page to screen, but as a flow of affective forces between texts, a generative drift of intensities between mediums..."[86] My discussion of film adaptation is inspired by Hodgkins persuasive arguments about shifting the focus from fidelity to attempts at locating how affect is generated through medium specificities. I argue that film adaptations as products of mass culture in India needs to be located at the overlapping intersections of literary and cinematic cultures. These film adaptations aid in mapping the connection between cinema and the Urdu public sphere. I discuss the case of *Ziddi* to assess how the Urdu imaginaire is transposed between mediums affectively. The film was directed by Shahid Latif and was produced by Bombay Talkies in 1949. Urdu writer Ismat Chugtai adapted the screenplay from her novella which was published in 1941. Chughtai's writings in the 1940s were a powerful voice to reckon with. Her narratives were focussed on the interiority of women's experience and desires, externalising internal conflicts, and brought new gendered themes to the Urdu *afsāna* (short story). Chughtai had

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[84] Robert Stam, "Introduction," In *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation*, ed. Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004). Also see, Stam, *Francois Truffaut and Friends: Modernism, Sexuality and Film Adaptation* (Piscataway: Rutgers University Press, 2006).

[85] Steve Neale, *Screening the stage: Case studies of film adaptations of stage plays and musicals in the classical Hollywood era, 1914- 1956,* John Libbey and Co, London, 2017.

[86] John Hodgkins, *The Drift: Affect, Adaptation and New Perspectives on Fidelity* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 12.

strong roots in the Urdu literary sphere, her brother Azim Beg Chughtai was also a renowned Urdu writer. *Ziddi* – both the novella and the film – have a lot of similarities in the storyline but Chughtai added a few melodramatic digressions in the film.

Poster for *Ziddi*, 1948

Ziddi is a story of the romance between Puran and Asha, played by Dev Anand and Kamini Kaushal in the film adaptation. Puran belongs to an aristocratic family and Asha is their domestic help. This class divide is the cause for moral crisis and contemplation on contemporary social norms in the texts. The novella has a more conservative plot in that the two lovers are separated from each other through family intrigue; in the film, scandalously for its time, Puran and Asha elope. But while escaping the feudal home, Asha and Puran's horse carriage meets with an accident and Asha falls into the river. Distraught and heartbroken Puran believes that Asha is dead. In the novella, Puran is told she has died due to the plague that affected her village. These alterations to the plot are perhaps consciously conceived by Chughtai and director Shahid Latif, as they allow for visually spectacular sequences, fast-paced chases and melodramatic exaggeration. Interestingly, the novella has many references to cinema and film-viewing, where cinematic representation of life is interpreted as hyperbolic and chimerical. This informs the way in which the novella gets adapted into film. In the novella, Puran's elder brother blames cinema for Puran's infatuation with Asha. He says, "...she is our servant-girl. It appears that you have fostered this misconception (love for Asha) because of watching films. But you should know that life is not a film. This is the reality."[87] The notion of cinema as dangerous and as a "bad influence" echoes the concerns of social reformists and advocates of *a<u>kh</u>lāqī* values in the Urdu public sphere. Puran is overcome by loss and is haunted by apparitions of Asha which cause him great distress. The potentiality of the two mediums is cleverly orchestrated in this sequence; in the novella, through passages of Puran's interiority, his depressive state is expressed, and in the film through a series of flashbacks and the spectres of Kamini Kaushal, Chughtai exploits the potential of the two mediums and allows for emotive affect to achieve efficacy.

Despite the trauma of losing a beloved and his depressed state of mind, the family insists that Puran agrees to an arranged partner from a suitable family and soon he is married off to Shanta. This forced marriage is the cause of further trauma for Puran, who is unable to accept his new relationship. Shanta is modelled as a dutiful wife and endures his ill-mannered rages and temperament. She mirrors the patient obedient wife of the reform novel and accepts her condition as her fate. In an unexpected twist in the plot, Puran discovers that Asha has survived. He wants to reunite with Asha, but Asha reminds him of his duties to his wife and marriage. Conveniently, Chughtai adds a foible and Shanta transgresses, allowing Chughtai to play with the plasticity of story rendered in both media. In the film, in an effort to end his marriage, Puran pushes Shanta into an extra-marital affair with Mahesh (Pran). This is orchestrated differently in the novella, where, in the absence of love from Puran, Shanta is seduced by Mahesh. In the film, Shanta and Mahesh elope and this makes for another dramatic sequence and an eventual car crash. The novella has a bleaker end, with Puran dying in his depressive state, Shanta committing suicide due to her transgression and Asha performing "sati".[88] In the film, the car accident, however, ensures that with Shanta out of the way, Puran and Asha can be reunited and married to each other.

Film adaptations are important markers of the intermedial connections between cinema and literature. They highlight how a film moulds the literary and, in Aziz's arguments, allows the "bookish life" to be visualised. In turn, literary texts also shape film sensibilities and provide stories to work with, offering worldviews and social commentaries. As I show, in

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[87] Urdu original: "*…wo humārī naukrānī hai. Puran ye tum film dekh dekh kar shāyad is wāhiyāt ghalat-fahmī meṅ mubtalā ho gaye ho. Magar tumhe ye maʻlūm hona ćāhiye ke zindagī ik film nahi. ye ḥaqīqat hai*." Ismat Chughtai, *Ziddi* (Allahabad: Taj Offset Press, reprint 1982), 59.

[88] Sati was a practice, mostly among Hindus in South Asia, in which the widow sacrifices her life on the death of her husband's pyre.

Ziddi, both the novella and the film script were altered to ensure that the affect was intensified through melodramatic strategies. Chughtai adapts her novella, consciously inserting moments in the film that have greater impact visually (like the car crash) and allows the visual medium to reformulate the literary affect. Thus, the Urdu imaginaire was transposed through mediated approaches which were moulded by an awareness to medium specificities. But does the case study of *Ziddi* as film adaptation provide justification to argue that the Urdu public sphere's influence on the cinema was successful? While *Ziddi* was successfully adapted to film, it hardly spurred on a proliferation of film adaptions, as critics from the Urdu public sphere hoped. Also, the advice from the Urdu film journalists and writers that filmmakers should adapt literary texts into cinema was hardly novel, as there were many similar critical voices like the Bengali *bhadralok*'s calls to filmmakers in Calcutta to adapt Bengali literature, or Madras studios to use Tamil literature as source texts. In any case, only a small proportion of Indian films were direct adaptions in the 1930 and 40s, and many of these literary source texts were in other languages and literatures than Urdu. A more common scenario was the unacknowledged borrowings and citation of literary texts in Indian films. This may also be because screenwriting as a separate job category was emerging in this period, and writers were experimenting with specialised writing for the screen,[89] thereby complicating the channels through which literary texts might become film scripts.

DISCOURSE OF *SHARĀFAT* AND THE *AKHLĀQĪ FILM*

The discourse of *akhlāq* was important to the Urdu public sphere in trying to regulate cinema and the excess of pleasures on offer. Through the Urdu film journals and other writings, as I showed in Chapter 2 and 3, there was an attempt to espouse a cinema that was within the framework of *akhlāq* and to promote what was considered as good ethical behaviour to be represented on - and emulated off - the screen. Films that were considered to be *akhlāqī* were of disparate genres, but such films were believed to encourage good *akhlāq* and instil within the individual qualities that might challenge colonial modernity. Many of the films classified as *akhlāqī* were from genres such as the devotional or saint films and historicals, but also social films with reformist themes and agendas. Through the *akhlāqī* film, key voices within the Urdu

[89] Rakesh Sengupta, "Writing from the Margins of Media: Screenwriting Practice and Discourse During the First Indian Talkies," *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 9, no. 2 (2018): 117–136.

public sphere hoped that cinema would become 'respectable' and suitable for consumption by not only the educated *sharīf*/respectable elite but also the "masses" who were in need of enlightenment and reform. For cinema to 'become respectable' what kind of impulses must it leave behind? Advocates of the disciplining of the cinematic excess argued for the restrained display of romance and sexuality, complete avoidance of crime and violence on screen, and most importantly representation of the virtuous lives of exemplary individuals. In this section, I explore whether the category of *a<u>kh</u>lāqī* films can be seen as a possible marker of the Urdu imaginaire. Did the Urdu public sphere influence filmmakers to produce films that could be called *a<u>kh</u>lāqī*? Did the *a<u>kh</u>lāqī* framework and its emphasis on *sharāfat*/respectability find a place in film texts from the 1930s and 40s?

The term *sharīf* (respectable) was bandied about in common parlance to connote class, honour and respectability. Urdu novelists encountered changing conceptions of *sharāfat*/ respectability in late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century India.[90] Definitions of *sharāfat* were transformed and became more flexible in the second half of the nineteenth century when the new *sharīf* (respectable) people distinguished themselves from the social and cultural practices of both the old elites and the lower classes. The comportment and manners of the nobility were reframed as decadent and debauched, whereas the new *sharīf* 'shifted the emphasis to the middle-class virtue of achievement.'[91] How did cinema reflect and represent these evolving notions of *sharāfat* and mirror a society grappling with attempts to fall within the frameworks of *a<u>kh</u>lāq*? This desire for respectability was further complicated by the presence of women in the film industry, especially as actresses and performers were subject to immense scrutiny. The discourse of respectability was tied crucially to female performers and characters within cinema in this period. In the Urdu public sphere, a great amount of emphasis was laid on women who came from new *sharīf* families with values of gentility, temperance, thrift and a solemn work ethic. In addition, restraint and control of emotions were important

[90] Jennifer Dubrow has shown how in the early sections of the Urdu novel, *Fasana-e Azad*, author Sarshar satirized various groups and social classes in an era of changing definitions of *sharāfat*. She suggests that *Fasana-e Azad* pointed to how the codes of *sharāfat* were being undone and rewritten through the protagonist Azad and his misadventures. See, Dubrow, "Sharafat and Bhal Mansi: a new perspective on respectability in Fasana-e Azad," *South Asian History and Culture* 9, no. 2 (2018): 181-193.
[91] Margrit Pernau on *sharif* culture, see, *Ashraf into Middle Classes: Muslims in Nineteenth- Century Delhi* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013). David Lelyveld has noted, the definition of *sharāfat* in South Asia during the same period also became more flexible, denoting "genteel respectability that referred at least as much to comportment and literary education as to descent and frequently applied to non-Muslims as well as Muslims." In Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996).

topics for *a**kh**lāqī* literature and religious and social reformers in the colonial period. As traced by Pernau, the late nineteenth century witnessed 'a profound emotionalization of private as well as public life.' Late-nineteenth-century *a**kh**lāqī* texts in Urdu produced by "both Muslims and Hindus, writing from a multitude of small towns," stressed the importance of controlling the *nafs* (carnal or lower soul) and disciplining the body by means of one's *aql* (rationality).[92] These discourses of ethical morality and decorum promised stability in a modern world that was in flux, and provided possible solutions to consuming literature, drama, cinema and other forms of popular culture in an 'appropriate' fashion and thus inculcating a hierarchy of tastes.

Renuka Devi in *Bhabhi*, 1936

In the Bombay Talkies film *Bhabhi* (d. Franz Osten, 1936), for example, the notion of respectability is debated through the evolving relationship between the characters. The film was based on a Bengali short story "Bisher Dhoan" by Sharandindu Bandyopadhyay, but J.C. Casshyap's carefully crafted dialogues in Urdu bring the semantic nuances of the Urdu imaginaire into the film. In the film, Kishore (Jairaj) promises his dying friend that he will look

[92] Margrit Pernau, "From Morality to Psychology: Emotion Concepts in Urdu, 1870-1920," *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 11, no. 1 (2016): 38–57.

after his widow Bimala (Maya Devi). Kishore brings her home and they develop a close relationship. While their affection for each other is platonic, it is considered inappropriate and frowned upon by the neighbours. Soon this news travels to Kishore's family, and his father, disapproving of this arrangement, threatens to disinherit Kishore because no '*sharīf/* respectable' man would allow his son to live with a widow. Kishore is torn between his promise to his friend and obedience to his father, but Bimala's helpless situation compels him to house her. This was definitely a progressive position for its time, and Bombay Talkies films were known to push the limits of acceptable social mores.[93]

Renu sings a bhajan to entertain her guests

Kishore interrupts the music

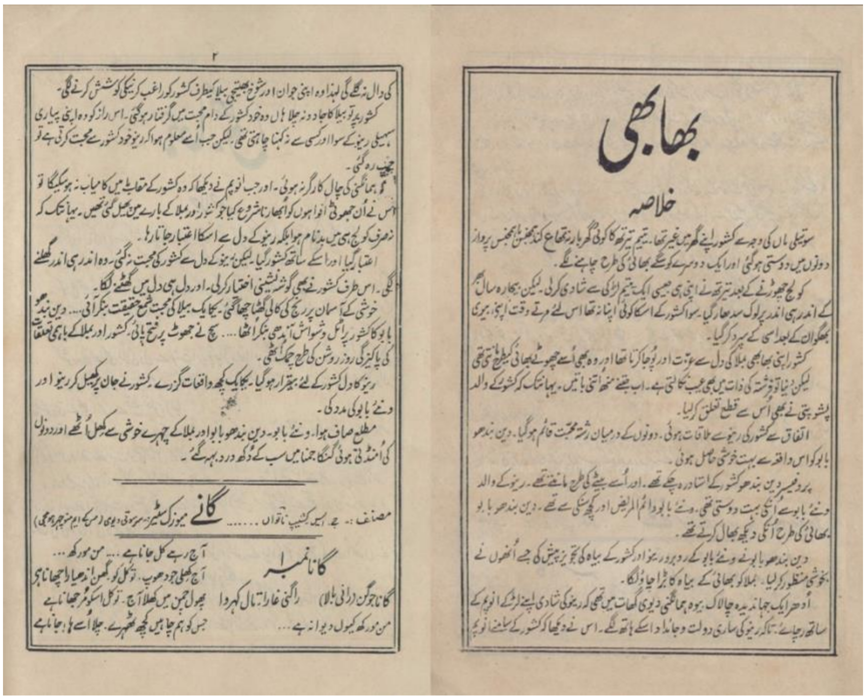
Vinay Babu thinks Kishore looked '*sharīf*'

Kishore assures Bimla that they're '*sharīf*'

When Kishore first meets his neighbour Renu (Renuka Devi), the discourse of *sharāfat* in invoked again. Kishore goes over to Renu's house to politely request them to turn off the loud music as Bimla has an insufferable headache. Renu, who is singing a *bhajan* for the family

[93] For example, *Achhut Kanya* is the romance between an untouchable woman and an upper-caste man.

on her birthday, stops when asked by Kishore. Anupam (Ram Shukla), who we later discover is a young waster and Renu's suitor, is upset. He threatens Kishore for his impertinence, but the matter is quickly resolved by Renu's father Vinay Babu (V. H. Desai) who apologizes for the noisy party. Once Kishore leaves, Anupam reprimands Vinay Babu for amicably resolving the situation. He says, "How can you behave respectably with such people? / *Bhala aise logoṅ se sharāfat barti jatī hai*!" Anupam's mother insinuates, "what else, no hat, no shoes, half naked…/…*aur kya na sar pe topī na per meṅ jūta, nang dhadhaṅg*." But Vinay Babu maintains that "By looking at him, he seemed like a respectable man / *dekhne meṅ to sharīf m'alūm hota tha*." To this Anupam retorts, "Respectable! He's a goon/ *Sharīf!! Gunda tha gunda*!" Renu refuses to believe that Kishore was a *gunda*, and, in carry-over scene, we see a similar discussion about *sharāfat* between Bimla and Kishore. He explains to Bimla, "Goon! No, sister-in law, they are respectable people/ *Gunde! Nahī Bhabhi sharīf log haiṅ bechāre.*" She asks, "Do respectable people make a ruckus at such an hour in the night? /*sharīf log itni rāt rāt aisa shor maćāte haiṅ*?" This exchange about *sharāfat* and what comprised *sharīf* behaviour in the context of changing social conditions reflects how social films were attempting to engage with discourses from the public sphere. The confusion is resolved by Renu's uncle Dinanath, who confirms that Kishore was his student, is college educated and now a professor. While this settles the debate in the narrative, it allows for new versions of *sharāfat* (college-educated, westernized) to appear on the screen while still exhibiting the etiquettes and virtues (politeness and due deference) of the of the old *sharīf* from the Urdu public sphere.


بھابھی
خلاصہ
گانے

Urdu Film booklet: Film synopsis and songs of *Bhabhi*, 1936

Kishore falls in love with Renu, who is shown as the quintessential *sharīf* woman. She is recurrently referred to in the film as a woman from a *sharīf* family. She is educated, charming and virtuous. Her *sharāfat* lies in her good nature, sensibility, modesty and moral conduct. Renu is also shown to be wise and rational, and regularly gives advice to her nervous father who is always anxious and unable to make decisions. In a review of the film, Baburao Patel, editor of *filmindia,* called Renuka Devi a "remarkable discovery" and congratulated Bombay Talkies for finding "another Devika (Rani)". The review was appreciative of her "distinctive grace and poise which can only be associated with a lady of culture and education". Patel further wrote that Renuka Devi "doesn't merely act, but lives her part to perfection."[94] Renuka Devi's real name was Begum Khurshid Mirza and she belonged to an elite Muslim family.[95] Her parents Shaikh Abdullah and Waheed Jahan Begum were pioneers in promoting education for Muslim women. They were the founders of the Aligarh Women's College. Even though there was an outcry in the Urdu public sphere (specifically in Aligarh) against the participation of a Muslim woman from a *sharīf* family in films, for the film industry the presence of a *sharīf* woman within cinema was celebrated and publicised, as this brought legitimacy to their efforts of reform. The desire for the '*sharīf*' woman was extended beyond the cinematic screen. As Neepa Majumdar describes, in the 1930s, contemporary film journals delineated the need for new personnel - both educated and skilled. The industry sought out "respectable" and "cultured" women in a bid for prestige and legitimization within the framework of nationalism and reform.[96] This demand for hiring film personnel from specific class and caste coexisted with the increase in participation within the filmmaking project by diverse groups, as cinema became a means for reinvention and reform. Thus, there was always a tension in the field between contesting desires for *sharāfat/* respectability and the modes of its representation on screen. These contradictions also merge with the tensions emerging from within the Urdu imaginaire of the 1930s and 40s, where discourses on *akhlāq* were turned to, in search for solutions to address 'new' 'modern' contemporary discussions on morality and respectability.

[94] "Round the Town" in *filmindia*, January 1939, 47-48.
[95] Khurshid Mirza, *A Woman of Substance: The Memoirs of Begum Khurshid Mirza 1918-1989,* ed. Lubna Kazim (New Delhi: Zubaan, 2005).
[96] Neepa Majumdar, *Wanted Cultured Ladies! Female Stardom and Cinema in India, 1930s-1950s* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009).

Poster for *Muqabala*, 1942

Another example where the *akhlāqī* framework was incorporated into the cinema was in the unlikely hybrid (social + stunt) film *Muqabala* (d. Nanabhai Bhatt and Babubhai Mistri, 1942). The film was produced at Wadia Movietone in Bombay and was conceived as a social by Wadia to garner respectability as a producer.[97] For the Urdu film journalists and critics, the stunt genre was outside of the *akhlāqī* framework; known for its excessive display of the visceral and vicarious pleasures of modernity, the stunt film was considered to be a corrupting influence on the public. Specifically, the Fearless Nadia films, as Thomas has argued, produced an alternative prototype of femininity in the 1930s, as Nadia's image was created within the dual vision of an essentialised Indian cultural tradition while simultaneously recognising the fluidity as a "post-modern hybrid wonderwoman" and "an ebullient *virangana* in a modern

[97] Rosie Thomas, "Not Quite (Pearl) White: Fearless Nadia, Queen of the Stunts," In *Bollyworld: Popular Indian Cinema through a Transnational Lens,* ed. Raminder Kaur and Ajay J. Sinha (New Delhi: Sage, 2005), 35-69.

world".[98] The Nadia films were charged with the thrills of physicality and bodily excess dangerous to the very idea of the 'ideal' femininity promoted by *a<u>kh</u>lāqī* literature and other mythological characters such as Sati-Savitri in Sanskrit epics.[99] Thus, *Muqabala* was unlike other Wadia Movietone productions in trying to accommodate *a<u>kh</u>lāqī* frameworks and archetypes of the morally 'good woman'. In terms of commercial success, the film was a complete flop at the box office. However, the film is interesting in the way it tries to negotiate with prevailing discourses on *sharāfat* within a hybrid genre to produce a complex articulation on *a<u>kh</u>lāqī* behaviour.

In *Muqabala,* Nadia is cast in a double role as the good Madhuri and the bad girl Rani. At birth the twin sisters Madhuri and Rita get separated and are raised differently. The film is claimed to be the earliest example in Bombay cinema of the twin sisters motif, which *Mirat-ul-Arus* had made popular within the Urdu literary tradition.[100] Madhuri grows up in the wealthy home of Rai Bahadur with his daughter Veena. The other twin Rita is kidnapped by the villain and becomes his moll Rani, who performs as a nightclub performer. The contrast between the two sisters is set up through their demeanour and body language. The film also plays with the costumes that both characters wear; Madhuri is dressed conservatively while Rani as a gangster's moll wears seductive outfits. In one sequence, we see Rai Bahadur advise the girls Madhuri and Veena to learn "womanly arts" like crochet, sewing and cooking instead of pursuing strenuous physical activities. This advice on the prescribed codes of behaviour comes straight from the manuals and journals for women from the Urdu public sphere. However, interestingly, the Nadia films complicate this discourse of propriety and ethical conduct by reinscribing Nadia's stardom and projecting her characters as morally righteous. Madhuri and Veena pay no heed to their father and, in the next sequence, they are shown

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[98] Ibid., 52.

[99] The characters Sati in the *Bhagvata Purana* and Savitri from the *Mahabharata* are seen as emblematic of virtuous women who sacrificed their own lives in defending the honour and life of their husbands. According to Devdutt Pattnaik, both Sati and Savitri could be seen as challenging patriarchal values, but the myths over the years through many retellings were stripped of their radical potential and became stories of female obedience, sacrifice and piety. See, Yamini Pustake Bhalerao, "When Devdutt Pattnaik Broke the Sati-Savitri Myth," *Shethepeople*, December 21, 2018, https://www.shethepeople.tv/blog/devdutt-pattanaik-stories-cool-sati-savitri/

[100] C.M. Naim has pointed how the two sisters' motif, one good sister and the other bad sister, was used by many contemporary writers and reformists of didactic texts to educate women on correct behaviour and disposition. See, C.M. Naim, "Prize-winning *Adab*: A Study of Five Urdu Books Written in Response to the Allahabad Government Gazette Notification," In *Moral Conduct and Authority: The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam*, ed. Barbara Daly Metcalf (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 290. Salma Siddique has shown how the Fazli films use the two sisters' motif, albeit in a modified fashion with two women of contrasting dispositions. The Fazli films were inspired by Nazir Ahmad's novel *Mirat-ul Arus* and similar reformists texts produced in the Urdu public sphere. See Siddique, "Between Bombay and Lahore: A Partition History of cinema in South Asia (1940-1960)" (PhD diss., University of Westminster, 2015), 127- 131.

jogging in the park with their pet dog Gangu. This sequence ends when a cyclist crashes into Veena and they tumble upon each other, putting an end to the exercising. The cyclist turns out to be Veena's childhood lover and they sing a romantic duet.

Veena and Madhuri have tea with Rai Bahadur

They prefer jogging with pet dog Gangu to crochet

Madhuri is distracted

Veena teases Madhuri

In the film, Veena is shown as gentle, light- spirited and a romantic at heart. In another sequence, Veena misreads Madhuri's distractedness as a state of love. She teases Madhuri, "why are you sighing? The way that Papiha (cuckoo) is to water, the moth to flame and Chakor to the moon…I am sure there is a sweetheart."[101] These metaphors, borrowed from Urdu poetry (discussed in the previous chapter), underline the enduring presence of the Urdu imaginaire

[101] Original dialogue: "*ye thandi thandi sāṅseiṅ kyun li ja rahīṅ haiṅ? Papīha ko pani, parwāne ko sha'mā, ćakor ko ćānd hi sujhta hai…zaroor in ānkhoṅ meṅ sājan base haiṅ*." The myth is that the Papiha (cuckoo) keeps a fast for water and only drinks water during the rainfall when the constellations Swati aligns (according to Hindu astrology Swati Nakshatra). That is the only water that can quench the bird's thirst.

within references to romance in cinema. Madhuri, annoyed with her teasing, responds, "Look Veena, girls shouldn't think of love all the time. The part that men and women have to play in the field of action (*maidān-e amal)* in life is equal. Apart from love there is much other work for them."[102] In a crucial scene in the film, the hero Niranjan follows Madhuri who is planning to sabotage the villain's gambling den. Niranjan has no idea of Madhuri's plans and unknowingly reaches the site. He loses track of Madhuri, who has by now gone undercover and transformed her appearance by changing into a man's costume and is unrecognizable to him. In this scene, Wadia plays with the idea of mistaken identities arising from the confusion between the twins. Niranjan first encounters Rani and is confused by her appearance and behaviour, as he assumes that it is Madhuri. The atmosphere in the gambling house is loud and smoky, with drunken banter. Rani is introduced in a modern Western attire; she does a tap dance and at the end of the song tries to seduce Niranjan. Niranjan is shocked by this display of overt sexuality. He angrily retorts, "Shut up, Shameless! In the guise of an Angel face, you are the Queen of Evil who sells her beauty in this market. I didn't know that your carnal and moral flaws (*nafsaniyāt aur a<u>kh</u>lāqī kamzoriyāṅ*) will drag you to this hellish den of immorality."[103] Rani's behaviour has violated the codes of respectable behaviour within the *a<u>kh</u>lāqī* framework. In the Urdu novels, the 'ideal' woman possessed qualities that highlighted her delicate nature, soft spoken manners and need for male guardianship; the Nadia films contradicted these representations as her character was meant to fight (physically) against the villains and ensure that justice was carried out. Yet at the same time, in *Muqabala*, Rai Bahadur and Niranjan expect Nadia's character as Madhuri to be pious and show signs of due deference that is reminiscent of the heroines from the Urdu public sphere. These radically reconfigure the charge of the 'modern' woman with appropriate doses of *a<u>kh</u>lāqī* behaviour.

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[102] Original dialogue: "*Dekho Veena, laṛkīyoṅ ko har waqt prem ki bāteiṅ nahi sochni ćahiyeiṅ. Zindagī ke maidan-e- amal meṅ mardoṅ aur 'aurtoṅ ka ḥiṣṣa barābar hai, prem ke 'alawā unke liye aur bhi bahut se kām haiṅ*."

[103] Original dialogue: "*<u>Kh</u>āmosh, Be-ḥayā! Farishte ki shakal meṅ Shaitāniyat ka bazār garam karne wali husn ki mallika…mujhe m'alūm na tha ke teri nafsaniyāt aur a<u>kh</u>lāqī kamzoriyāṅ tujhe is baćhalni kī dozakhi ghār meṅ khīṅć layeiṅgi*."

When Niranjan meets sari clad Madhuri

Niranjan’s encounter with Rani

Muqabala remains a peculiar film in its contradictory attempts to mould Nadia’s image through prevailing idealised visions of femininity. In presenting a specific vision of contemporary social life, both *Muqabala* and *Bhabhi* engaged with the discourse of who is a ‘*sharīf*’ and both show how, in the context of the 1930s and 40s, the definitions and parameters of *sharāfat* had evolved since the late nineteenth-century discourses of *a<u>kh</u>lāq*. In the cinematic reformulation, college education, singing and dancing, and (modern western) dress were incorporated into the new *sharīf* identity. Even though there is little to suggest that the *a<u>kh</u>lāqī* framework was directly influencing the filmmakers at Bombay, Calcutta, Poona or Lahore, we do find interesting references from the *a<u>kh</u>lāqī* framework which resonate in the films themselves, as the two examples suggest. However, these discourses of respectability were hardly restricted to the Urdu public sphere; similar calls for improvement and reform were emanating from different literary public spheres - Hindi, Bengali, Marathi and Tamil, all feeding into the Urdu imaginaire and vice versa.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I explored whether the Urdu imaginaire can be mapped on to the cinema produced in the studios of north India in the 1930s and 40s. I use four possible speculative trajectories to do so: first, through film personnel (poets and *ṭawā’ifs*) who belonged to the world of Urdu culture and worked at the film studios. Figures like Jaddan Bai, Jahanara Kajjan, Qamar Jalalabadi were an integral part of the cinematic public sphere and their presence brought a significant aural flair to the cinema through their speech, songs and lyrics. The interconnected networks of literary artists and film personnel who navigate between the two domains becomes discernible through the *mushā'ara* soirees where poets and *ṯawā'ifs* reigned. Second, through a look at film genres and styles, specifically the social melodrama and its sub-genre the 'Muslim social', I explored whether genres or film style can help us trace the Urdu imaginaire in the cinema. I argued that although a small body of films make a direct reference to the Urdu imaginaire, certain films do individually possess elements of the Urdu imaginaire within the mise-en scène, as a wider range of films during the 1930s and 40s show ubiquitous mobilization of the *filmī* ghazal and its tropes. Genre as a category may not be a useful parameter to assess the Urdu imaginaire, but the social melodrama and its sub-genre the Muslim social as clearly defined industry terms aid in assessing the elements of the Urdu imaginaire such as the presence of a fairly common debate on *a<u>kh</u>lāq* and *sharāfat*. During the 1940s, the Urdu imaginaire becomes distilled into a particularly restrictive form within the Muslim social genre, which divests it of its cosmopolitanism. Third, through the case study of Ismat Chughtai's *Ziddi*, and a comparison between her novella and its film adaptation, I highlighted how Chughtai effectively mobilises the two mediums to generate affect which is specific to the melodramatic imagination allowing the Urdu imaginaire to transpose from one medium to another. Lastly, through the case of the *a<u>kh</u>lāqī* framework and the perpetuating discourse of *sharāfat* in two films, *Bhabhi* and *Muqabala*, I suggested how both films explore codes of decorum and propriety that are borrowed from the Urdu imaginaire. In each exploration, the conclusions that I arrive at demonstrate that the production of a film aesthetic is complex and layered, but despite that, reading the film texts and making meaning gestures to the fact that histories of film cannot privilege a single literary tradition and need to recognize the multiple allusions and influences that have shaped the cinema in India.

The Urdu imaginaire of the 1930s and 40s was not a monolith, it was constantly evolving, absorbing and transforming. The challenge of locating and fixing the Urdu imaginaire within cinema in a coherent manner emerges from the fact that the Urdu language has been influenced by various literary traditions, including Persian, Arabic, Turkish, Bengali, Hindi, Marathi, English and others. The Urdu imaginaire was characterised by a range of affective registers that were developed through a series of complex negotiations. Many different individuals, working within distinct aesthetic frameworks, fed into the cultural paradigm of the Urdu culture that developed in the north and reached different parts of India, including the south. The strength of the Urdu imaginaire lies in the very expansive range of possibilities of meanings and affective registers that it evokes which are articulated through the medium of the Urdu language. But this also makes articulating its parameters a massive challenge.

By the late 1940s, a deeply fraught historical moment, the nationalist struggle for independence and the growing call for separatism, along with the marginalisation of the Urdu language within the literary public sphere, reorganized allegiances to Urdu literary culture. The attempts to affix the Urdu language solely to a Muslim identity seriously damaged and stereotyped the language and the culture that had long been celebrated for its *ganga-jamūnī tahzīb*, a syncretic tradition of India. Congress' proposal for the adoption of Hindustani added to the complexities of language politics in this period. Cinema could not remain untouched by the social and political transformations that were taking place. The citations from Urdu literary culture became most visible in the Muslim social in the highly communalised atmosphere of the 1940s. While it has been generally acknowledged that the Urdu language continued to be used in the dialogues and lyrics of most genres well into the 2000s, the broader contours of the Urdu imaginaire - seen as a series of complex patterns of *akhlaqī* pedagogy within the film narratives and the adoption of the semantic vocabularies of reform and romance borrowed from Urdu poetic tradition of the ghazal - also remained important, with remnants of it lurking in the cinema of north India and making its appearance here and there.

CONCLUSION

THE EFFLORESCENCE OF AN URDU IMAGINAIRE IN FILM CULTURE

A study of the interconnections between the cinema of north India and the Urdu public sphere has been long overdue. In this regard, the dissertation has made an original contribution to the understanding of cinema and its histories in South Asia between 1930 and 1950. This conclusion is an appraisal of what has been achieved and briefly I also gesture towards future research that can carry forward the aims and objectives of the thesis. In bringing to light some of the vast corpus of writings from the Urdu public sphere on cinema, a largely overlooked nexus of literary culture and film becomes visible. Through my research, I suggest the importance of the literary in the formation of the cinematic public sphere in north India. The entangled networks of literary cultures that shaped a film aesthetic and film form become visible and undeniable. I proposed the term Urdu imaginaire to describe an affective literary imaginary that provided a cache of narratives, myths and metaphors to popular cultural forms such as theatre and early cinema. The contours of the Urdu imaginaire were built by materials and texts from a literary culture that was shaped by an Urdu public sphere in north India. The Urdu imaginaire evolved and changed over time in relation to its material and social contexts. The Urdu imaginaire that I am discussing here was specific to the socio-cultural and material context of the 1930s and 40s, thus it could not remain untouched by the growing nationalist struggle for independence from colonial rule. These impulses for political change and reform were competing with western modernity, and with this an emerging new consumer culture made more exciting by new entertainment practices such as the gramophone, radio, theatre and cinema. The Urdu imaginaire during this period, I argue, was impacted by the discourses of reform, ethical and moral conduct; specifically the *ak͟hlāqī* framework became a recurrent thematic reference and motif within the narratives. However, the tensions between proposed morality and its representations within popular cultural forms such as theatre and cinema were palpable. These arose from the hierarchization between literary culture and popular entertainment forms such as cinema which were considered to be ‘mass-mediated’ practices in need of refinement and disciplining.

An important question that plagued the research recurrently was whether the Urdu imaginaire was a productive category; what purpose did it solve in the discussion of the cinema in north India? I argue that it is productive, as the Urdu imaginaire has a broad scope and yet a very specific focus. As an 'imaginaire' that is embedded in the social and historical milieu of Urdu culture of the 1930s and 40s, the Urdu imaginaire in my expanded definition includes forms of etiquette, behaviour, dress code and rituals, which I believe are products of social and cultural imaginaries and find reflection in popular culture. Within the narratives, an extreme emphasis on polite manners, decorum, modest dressing and everyday rituals like those related to an imagined *Lucknowi* lifestyle defined the culture that was shaped by an Urdu imaginaire in north India. These models of ideal behaviour and respectability, when represented on screen, disseminated and perpetuated the values of the Urdu public sphere. However, it is crucial to stress that the debates in the Urdu public sphere were sutured together by a series of complexities and anxieties around the social stratification of society along the lines of class, caste, gender and race; here competing notions of tradition and modernity coexisted and overlapped. This was specifically apparent in the popular genres like the oriental fantasy film or the detective novels which were known for their eclectic cosmopolitan imaginary. Thus, the Urdu imaginaire proves to be a useful category which allows for a discussion of the entangled networks of literary culture with the cinematic public sphere. It makes it possible to recognize how an Urdu public sphere potentially inflected a wide range of film practice and texts through its values of *a<u>kh</u>lāq* (ethics/ morality) and *iṣlāḥ* (reform).

A key task of my thesis was to explore the networks between cinema and literary culture and ask to what extent the vast and varied complex of twentieth-century cultural practices in north India were deriving their repertoire of images, fantasies and imaginaries from an Urdu imaginaire. My focus was on the film industry as a crucial site where cultural texts are produced, which are borrowed from diverse imaginaries that are interconnected yet very much linked to the Urdu language. While there is ample proof in the thesis that the Urdu imaginaire was not the only literary imaginaire that has shaped the cinema in India, it was nonetheless a significant one. There is still more research that needs to be done on mapping the connections between Urdu, Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Tamil and Marathi imaginaires and what these add to the cinematic public sphere and to the Indian film aesthetic. I argue that as a stylistic element within films from the period under study, the Urdu imaginaire was pervasively present in a variety of film genres, from fantasy and stunt films to the social melodrama, specifically in sequences where romance and reform were articulated and performed. Borrowing from

Hansen, I discuss how the films from the period represented "idealized *realms of romance*, *sweet speech*, and *lofty thought*" that was associated with Urdu culture.[1]

A pivotal feature of the Urdu imaginaire is that it is linked to the *ganga jamunī tahẕīb* - a confluence of cultures - which shaped the affective and intellectual ethos of the Urdu public sphere. This grounding within a syncretic social fabric eschews a straightforward association of Urdu with merely 'Muslimness' or Muslim pasts and thus does not suffer the pitfalls of the term Islamicate. Through this conceptualisation, the thesis goes beyond the work of film scholars who have described the place of the Urdu language within an Islamicate film genre and aesthetic.[2] The Urdu imaginaire was shaped by a complex history of the Urdu language that was the result of contemporary social and political realities of the twentieth-century. I argue that language debates in the public sphere, specifically on the Hindi-Urdu linguistic divide, found new actors and avenues in the cinematic public sphere, such as film journalism. The coming of sound to early cinema made language debates in the 1930s fraught with tenacious attempts to identify film as the new domain where linguistic purism needed to be preserved. The *Hindiwalahs* advocated for Hindi, the *Urduwalahs* too sharpened their pens to point out the enduring relationship between their language and the performative cultural traditions of India. In exploring the significance of language in the early talkies, I discovered that these debates in the Urdu and Hindi film journals mirrored the discourses in the literary public spheres. In the dissertation, I draw out the nuanced articulations on language and argue that the discourses in the cinematic public sphere complicate the dominant assumptions about the film industry, especially in the 1940s, as the linguistic divide was linked to politics of identity, community and religion. Even though the Urdu imaginaire was cosmopolitan and eclectic, I show how it was stripped out and dislodged into film genres such as the Muslim social in the 1940s when politics around language and identity were under the shadow of an impending partition and eventual independence in 1947.

The coming of sound technology in 1931 was a transformative shift and this period in Indian cinema was marked by an exciting range of experimentation with language and literary

[1] Kathryn Hansen, "Passionate refrains: the theatricality of Urdu on the Parsi stage," *South Asian History and Culture* 7, no. 3 (2016): 222.
[2] Mukul Kesavan, "Urdu, Awadh and the Tawaif: The Islamicate Roots of Hindi Cinema," In *Forging Identities: Gender, Communities and the State in India,* ed. Zoya Hasan (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 244-57. Also see, Ira Bhaskar and Richard Allen, *Islamicate Cultures of Bombay Cinema* (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2009).

forms. The collaboration between diverse literary, visual and performative sensibilities resulted in the production of a variegated cinema aesthetic. In the thesis, I have interrogated the ways in which the Urdu imaginaire can be mapped onto the cinema produced between 1930 and 1950. As I demonstrate, dominant studios in Bombay, Poona, Calcutta and Madras incorporated the Urdu language into their films across an assorted spectrum of genres, from the oriental fantasy film, to the historical and the social. By the late 1930s, films had begun to use different linguistic registers from within the Urdu-Hindustani-Hindi triad, despite attempts to assign religious identities to characters and communities. In historical films such as Sohrab Modi's *Pukar* and A.R. Kardar's *Shahjehan*, the dialogues were carefully written in a Persianate Urdu to represent the Mughal sensorium, its debates on justice and reform. I argue that both films set the precedent for historical films about the Mughals through the specific mobilization of language in the film dialogues. The success of the films' dialogues was attributed to writers Kamal Amrohi and A.R. Kardar who were part of an Urdu cultural milieu. In Prabhat's *Amrit Manthan* and Gemini Studio's *Chandralekha*, the speech registers in the mythic kingdoms vary from Sanskritised Hindi to Hindustani to Persianate Urdu. In many of the films discussed in the thesis, Urdu words were specifically used in conversations highlighting power, authority, justice and reform. The success of *Chandralekha*'s Hindustani version in comparison to its original Tamil language iteration can be attributed to the larger network of distribution and expansive publicity but also to the use of an *Arabian Nights* style plot and narrative structure which was accentuated by appropriate doses of Urdu language in the dialogues and lyrics. This points to the many kinds of Urdu – spoken, written and performed – that constituted the Urdu imaginaire of the 1930s and 40s. While on the one hand, literary Urdu was celebrated for its refinement and used to add poetic lyricism, theatrical Urdu ensured a flair for performative melodrama; on the other hand, colloquial articulations of Urdu were necessary for adding hints of 'realism'. In the thesis, while I cite examples from a range of films, genres such as the Devotional film and its sub-genre the Sufi Devotional are not discussed due to the paucity of space; subsequent projects might benefit from probing the question of how the Urdu imaginaire found expression in these genres.

The introduction of sound technology to early cinema in India meant that, while older literary and visual traditions continued to hold sway, new aesthetic choices like song sequences were introduced as diegetic elements within a film's narrative logic. The ghazal, borrowed from the literary genre of Urdu poetry, became important for romantic expression in the films and was therefore incorporated as part of the repertoire of film lyricists and composers. I show

how the song sequences in early sound films were constructed using tropes from the Urdu imaginaire, with a mise-en-scène inspired by nature: the full moon in a forest, idyllic gardens and lakes, while the lyrics of the ghazal are full of evocative metaphors of love and longing. In films such as *Mirza Sahiban*, the familiar, folktale story was reimagined through novel play with metaphors of the ghazal. The romantic film ghazal, even though it is derived from the literary genre of the Urdu ghazal, has its own special character. Often in the films, the ghazals of famous Urdu poets were adapted by lyricists or composers, introducing innovations such as the re-arrangement of couplets or the addition of a chorus or refrain, much to the chagrin of the literary elites. However, these modifications were necessitated by technological and aesthetic interventions specific to the filmic form, which differed from the ways in which a ghazal was performed in a *mushā'arā*. The duration of a song (often 3 minutes) and the style in which the ghazal was to be performed and filmed were considerable factors in the new adjustments made. However, the crux of the ghazal remained closely tied to the romantic vocabularies of the Urdu imaginaire that circulated between literary and cinematic cultures in the 1930s and 40s.

In the dissertation, my focus has been on the sound period and how the coming of sound technology benefitted from the aural landscape of the Urdu imaginaire. In a future project, it might be useful to study the Urdu imaginaire and its presence in the silent period. Even though, currently, the inaccessibility of silent films poses a huge challenge to such research, nonetheless examining the small sample that is available will help us to understand a variety of formulaic continuities and transgressions in narrative choices that may exist between early silent and sound cinema in India. For example, one might ask, what happened to the Urdu imaginaire before cinematic aurality and the transition to sound technology? Which narratives from the Urdu imaginaire were most sought after by early filmmakers? In the absence of sound, how was the Urdu imaginaire constructed? What are the differences between a silent *Gul-e Bakavali* and its talkie versions?[3] Such a comparative framework might push us to think more deeply about the visual vocabularies of the Urdu imaginaire and highlight the tensions, omissions and elisions within.

The Urdu imaginaire is shaped by a cosmopolitan and eclectic Urdu public sphere. In the dissertation, I use a speculative field of inquiry to assess whether the Urdu imaginaire can

[3] Kaushik Bhaumik, "The Script of Gul-e Bakavali (Kohinoor, 1924)," *Bioscope: South Asian Screen Studies* 3, no. 2 (2012): 175- 207.

be mapped through the work of film personnel who were rooted in Urdu cultural and performative traditions. Specifically, using memoirs and anecdotes from biographies of poets and *ṯawā'ifs,* I disentangle the overlapping networks of cinema and the Urdu public sphere. In an attempt to keep the research focussed and contained within the two decades under study, the sample case studies, though small, have been used only for illustrative purposes and should not be seen as an exhaustive list of individuals who were part of this social circuit. The focus has been on two important film personnel from the *ṯawā'if* background – Jahanara Kajjan and Jaddan Bai – along with poet-lyricist Shakeel Badayuni and Qamar Jalalabadi. There are innumerable other examples like Rattan Bai[4] or the legendary singer Begum Akhtar who acted in films under the name of Akhtaribai Faizabadi[5] and of course much more remains to be said about the contribution of the Urdu Progressive writers to cinema in India. Urdu stalwarts such as Saadat Hasan Manto, Kishen Chander, Akhtar-ul Iman, Sahir Ludhianvi - the list is endless - were important writers who worked in the film industry from the late 1940s and 50s onwards. How different was their film work from their literary writings and did writings for cinema contribute to their published works? Unpacking this would provide interesting facets to the relationship between cinema and the Urdu imaginaire. In an interview in *Mahfil*, Ismat Chughtai was asked, "Do you think there is any adverse effect on writers who get involved in film writing? Do you think there is any problem in producing something for a large mass audience?" Chughtai's candid response was that "they're writing for bread! Naturally, they can't do much else in terms of better writing. How can I put this…their living is their bread and how can I say anything against films because it's through films that we've been fed!"[6] Like many, film writing was considered as a livelihood, while other literary pursuits were seen as part of 'artistic practice', which created binary distinctions between literary and popular culture. Despite such hierarchies, the presence of Urdu writers, poets and *ṯawā'ifs* only confirms that the Urdu imaginaire had an enduring presence through its narratives and metaphors, even if the film aesthetic remained heterogenous.

[4] Her real name was Imam Bandi. She was born in 1912 in Patna. She joined films in 1932 and made her screen debut with *Subeh ka Sitara* (New Theatres, 1932). Her mother brought her to Calcutta at the age of five and from the age of twelve, she began her musical *talīm* and was trained as a dancer. She was well versed in Urdu, Hindi, Arabic and English. See, "Contemporary Stars," *Varieties Weekly*, February 4, 1933, 13.

[5] Saleem Kidwai, "Zikr Us Parivash Ka': Begum Akhtar in Lucknow," In *Shaam-e Awadh: Writings on Lucknow*, ed. Veena Talwar Oldenburg (New Delhi: Penguin, New Delhi, 2007), 149.
S. Kalidas, *Begum Akhtar: Love's Own Voice* (New Delhi: Roli and Jansen BV, 2009).

[6] "Mahfil Interviews Ismat Chughtai" in *Mahfil* 8, no. 2/3 (Michigan State University, 1972): 174-175.

A crucial outcome of the collaborative interface between literature and film was the significance attached to film adaptations within the Urdu public sphere. I argue that film adaptations of literary texts can plausibly aid in assessing the impact of Urdu literary culture on cinema. The transmediation of literary texts, specifically through film adaptation, ensured that literary texts were strategically promoted and almost renewed as cultural artefacts. In this regard, my comparative reading of Ismat Chughtai's novella and film *Ziddi*, demonstrates how the Urdu imaginaire is reconfigured and its affective registers drift from one medium to another. This, however, further begs the question of how film adaptations of other literatures, for instance Tagore's Bengali writings, fare on screen, and did their Hindustani versions bring tropes of the Urdu imaginaire into the diegesis of the film?[7] The narratives of many films during the 1930s and 40s were impacted by contemporary reform movements. These films, produced within a range of diverse generic considerations, invariably incorporated a reformist agenda and discourses demanding the transformation of archaic customs (*riwāj*). I show how the Urdu language added a cognitive unity to the nuances of reform within these films, even when the debates were varied and often regionally specific. Thus, through the use of Urdu by the dialogue writers of *Rattan*, *Pukar* and *Amrit Manthan*, the semantic field of reform is constructed and made coherent to create persistence and continuity in reformist ideas in the mind of the viewers.

The zeitgeist of reform movements impacted the discourses within the Urdu public sphere which further affected the writings of film journalists who emphasised the need for the *iṣlāḥ* (reform) of cinema and its publics. The Urdu film journalists advocated the framework of *akhlāq* as the key lens through which film could aid in the transformation of the *qaum* (nation) which had been struggling under colonial modernity. This rhetoric of reform deployed the vocabularies of the Urdu imaginaire to effectively represent good ethical conduct on screen. These renditions of the discourses of *akhlāq* and *sharāfat* were a hallmark of the Urdu imaginaire with its emphasis on polite manners, etiquette and a comportment of ethics. Through specific examples from two films, Bombay Talkies' *Bhabhi* and Wadia Movietone's *Muqabala*, I show how the notions of respectability were transformed and significantly expanded within cinematic representations. This analysis could be extended to include far more films from this period as the film texts recommended by Urdu film journalists as part of the

[7] Here I am thinking of Tagore's film *Balidan/ Qurbani/Sacrifice* (d. Naval Gandhi, 1927). In the previous chapter I discuss how Aziz Ahmad refers to the film as a successful adaptation in his article for Urdu journal *Nairang-i khayāl.* See, *Nairang-i-Khayal*, Film No., July 1931, 22.

akhlāqī project were myriad. Films like *Chandidas* and *Pukar*, in presenting the stories of saints and emperors, were seen as offering characterizations of ideal codes of behaviour that were worthy of emulation and audiences could reform their lives from viewing such films. The Urdu public sphere urged filmmakers to participate in the *akhlāqī* enterprise and expand the role of cinema from mere diversion (*tafrī*) to entertainment that had pedagogical potential.

> The function of film is to instil within the common people (*awām*) the capacity to discern (*shu'ūr*), to improve their taste (*mazāq sudhārnā*), guide them to the right path and not to lead them astray onto the path of evil. Today, it is intensely necessary that film institutions turn their attention to moral values (*akhlāqīyat*) and gradually transform the spirit of film and inculcate within the nation the atmosphere of *akhlāq*. If they are able to achieve this, then understand that you have saved the country (*mulk*) and if not, then there is nothing in the end.[8]
>
> Tamkin Kazmi, Hyderabad

Even in the late 1950s, the Urdu public sphere was invested in the *akhlāqī* project for cinema as indicated in this citation from Tamkin Kazmi[9] that appeared in Latif Ahmad Alvi's *Filmī Ishāre* (1957), ensuring a continuation of *akhlāqī* pedagogy. Through the thesis, I argue that these lofty ideas promoting *akhlāq* in films were transformed in the cinematic public sphere, both at the level of filmic diegesis and in the film magazines. For example, in *Muqabala*, Nadia's presence as the stunt queen complicates the traditional roles expected of women. In a similar fashion, in the film magazines, editorials demanding the *iṣlāḥ* of films sat alongside columns that laced salacious gossip with literary flourishes or through the publication of romantic letters professing love to actresses, and in the process tantalizing the *ashiqān-i film* (lovers of film). These previously forgotten and neglected Urdu film journals and books on cinema that I discuss in the thesis highlight the vibrant and eclectic discourses that existed in Urdu on cinema.

[8] Urdu original: "*Film ka kām awām meṅ shu'ūr paida karna, awām ka mazāq sudhārnā, 'awām ko sīdhe raste par ćalānā hai na ke unheiṅ gum-rah karna aur bad-rahī sikhānā. Āj shadīd ẓarūrat is ki hai ke filmī idāre akhlāqīyat ki taraf tawajjŏh kareiṅ aur āhista āhista filmī rūḥ ko badleiṅ aur mulk meṅ akhlāqī fazā paida karein. Agar unhoṅ ne ye kar liya to samajh lijiye ke apne mulk ko bacha liya aur agar na kar sake to phir kuć na kar sake faqaṭ.*" See, Latif Ahmad Alvi, *Filmī Ishāre*, (Hyderabad: National Fine Printing Press, 1957), 7.

[9] Tamkin Kazmi was the author of *Gunća-e Tabassum* (Hyderabad, 1931). He also translated Oscar Wilde's play *The Importance of Being Earnest* into Urdu called *Jamīl*, published in Lahore, 1957.

The crumbling Urdu archives are sites of grave indifference and dereliction. These archives demand an urgency and commitment from researchers, collectors and film aficionados. The thesis has made an attempt to locate material on cinema in Urdu from a wide-ranging array of archives and libraries. The Urdu film journals like *Sham'ā*, *Nigārkhanā, Stār*, *Film* among others were part of the diverse and competitive landscape of film journalism. The Urdu film journals incorporated literary (*adab*) formats and stylistic conventions to present film-related material alongside Urdu poetry, short stories and dramas by contemporary writers, who also found space and recognition. The literary became an effective means through which the cinema could be legitimized, domesticated and made palatable in the light of emerging anxieties about the purported harmful effects of westernization and paradigmatic technological shifts. The editors of these film journals emerge as celebrities in their own right; *Sham'ā*'s Yusuf Dehlvi and *Stār*'s Qamar Jalalabadi enjoyed a fan following similar to that of film stars. These associations were fuelled by the regular appearance of their photographs with film celebrities in the journals, as well as columns such as 'letters to the editor' that were meant to engage readers through witty repartee, but also promoted the cult of the editor's personality. Within the *akhlāqī* project promoted by the Urdu film journals, the film journalist was the purveyor of good *akhlāq* and an arbiter of taste. In the thesis, I ask who were these *ashiqān-i film* that the Urdu public sphere needed to discipline? In tracing the imagined readers of Urdu film journals, I turn to the journals' advertisements for possible clues about the consumers of film materials as well as of the Urdu imaginaire. Reading the publicity *ishtihār* for films, notices for recruitment of film personnel, marketing of luxury goods for consumption along with innumerable adverts for medicines and potions for improvement of sexual health, the reading public/consumers addressed in the film magazine emerge as a heterogenous assorted ensemble – belonging to different genders, age groups, class and communities. These advertisements produce a series of tensions within the *akhlāqī* framework espoused by the Urdu film journalists; the 'civilizing' efforts of the editorial columns were not extended to the objects on sale. The Urdu film journals were full of inherent complexities and the contradictions of the Urdu imaginaire were addressed and worked on in a constant attempt to solve the unsolvable.[10] These debates show that histories of taste and aesthetics that appear in the film journals were

[10] Laura Mulvey has described the power of melodrama as "the amount of dust the story raises along the road, a cloud of overdetermined irreconcilables which put up a resistance to being neatly settled in the last five minutes." Mulvey, cited in Rosie Thomas, "Sanctity and Scandal: The Mythologisation of Mother India" in *Bombay Before Bollywood: Film City Fantasies* (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2014), 253.

entangled with discourses on morality, for which *akhlāq* repeatedly appeared as a shorthand and was used by film journals as a matter of belief and convenience.

The books on cinema produced in the Urdu language fed into the growing appetite for and curiosity about the ontology of the moving images and their mechanical reproduction of life. The texts in Urdu that I discuss in the dissertation are from a broad spectrum of themes: from translations of Russian film theorist Pudovkin to passionate debates and reviews of American, British and European films, as well as manuals on film acting and texts aiming to cont

ribute to cinematic literacy. There is still more research to be done to unravel the networks through which some of these theoretical texts on film reached Delhi, Lahore, Hyderabad, Calcutta and Bombay, and why authors of these texts, like Balam Firdausi, chose to become, as 'interpretive-translators', conveyors of Russian film theories in Urdu. Also unclear are the details of the channels of printing, production, dispersal and reception of these texts. It is apparent that a crucial purpose of these texts, apart from their instructional dimension, was to circulate transnational global ideas that were coming into vogue in the early decades of the new century. Through my readings, a fascinating process of historicization of the cinema emerges, in which these Urdu texts participate. The vernacularisation of the rehearsed histories of the birth of the cinema – Muybridge's photographic studies of motion, Edison's Kinetoscope, Eisenstein's montage theories, Kuleshov's soup experiment – indicates how the enduring myths of cinema proliferated and were disseminated in Urdu. Another important collection of texts aimed to memorialize film stardom in Urdu through the genre of the *taẕkira*. The *taẕkiras* of actresses were sold as souvenirs for keepsake but also functioned as catalogues of performers and manuals for codes of appropriate behaviour and ethical values for aspirants. These biographical compendiums present an idealised narrative of the lives of actresses, and in some cases actors, which were promoted as part of the *akhlāqī* framework. Whether it was the result of limited financial resources for printing visuals or an aesthetic choice, these *taẕkiras* privileged the literary, where the poetic *sarāpa* was the source of pleasure. The frank and playful manner in which the bodies of the actresses were described codified the star bodies, enabling praise through acceptable vocabularies and metaphors of the Urdu imaginaire.

The early sound period in the history of cinema was noticeable for the efflorescence of the Urdu imaginaire. A complex and rich tapestry of aesthetic and affective film texts were produced with the advent of sound technology. In mapping the aural domain of films from the 1930s and 40s for their use of the Urdu language, the thesis recognizes the shifting codes and vocabularies of north Indian film culture. The worlds that the Urdu imaginaire produced and often reproduced were embedded in an intermedial landscape with a recognizable influence of the literary on theatre and cinema. Thus, the histories of the literary and the cinematic public spheres can be seen, through a heuristic approach, to have been conditioned by and symptomatic of each other. The Urdu imaginaire of the 1930s and 40s was not a monolith but a palimpsest of accrued cultural and social practices, which became part of the cinematic repertoire through a series of interventions and negotiations. I emphasise that these processes were not taking place in isolation but in dialogue with other literary imaginaires, thereby allowing the Urdu imaginaire itself to metamorphose and evolve. The Urdu imaginaire can be seen as enabling realms of possibilities and inter-textualities, and in this way, it can expand our understanding of the role of the Urdu cultural milieu within the cinematic public sphere.

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