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The Shape of Life: Reading Space in Sai Paranjpye's Cinema (1980-2009)

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The Shape of Life: Reading Space in Sai Paranjpye's Cinema (1980-2009)

Swati Bakshi

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of Westminster for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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Abstract

This thesis is an interdisciplinary spatial exploration of the films of Indian director Sai Paranjpye. The thesis examines the aesthetic and narrative strategies of spatial representation in seven of Paranjpye's films – *Sparsh* (1980), *Chashme Baddor* (1981), *Katha* (1982), *Disha* (1990), *Papeeha* (1993), *Choodiyan* (1993) and *Suee* (2009). Employing a mixed methodology drawn from the disciplines of human geography, urban studies, sociology, feminist theory and gender studies in reading spaces, I suggest that Paranjpye depicts fragmented Indian life at the intersection of the spatial and the social in this body of films. This encounter of spatial and social is crucial in structuring the ideas of identity, inter-personal relationships and the experience of modernity. Through a textual analysis of each film, the thesis argues that it is essentially the lived space and architectural form that structures life and manifests lived experience in this selected body of films. The thesis identifies five major themes – border crossing, perceptions of home, marginality, private/public divisions and the potential of *Mazaa* (fun) – that bind together these lived filmic geographies and determine the texture of life.

The thesis contextualises Paranjpye's body of work in relation to the medial environment of the 1970s-80s. It also traces the influence of the cinematic forms of middle cinema and India's new wave film movement on Paranjpye's cinema to discover continuities, discontinuities and the subversive potential of these films. In this regard, I argue that Paranjpye's cinema disrupts the genre orthodoxies that regard middle cinema as middle 'class' cinema. This exploration reveals that these films are in constant dialogue with various visual forms that evolved during the 1970s-80s and that they revel in aesthetic fluidity, challenging the strict generic borders.

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Author's Declaration

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

Introduction

Sai Paranjpye, along with being a radio and TV producer and a playwright, is one of the few women directors who worked in Indian cinema during the 1980s. She is considered to be a pioneering figure, who shaped the cinematic landscape of Hindi cinema, and although underexplored within academia, Paranjpye is a much-loved and popularly recognised media personality in India, whose films have been thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated since she transitioned to cinema via other media.

When she kindly agreed to an interview with me in the summer of 2022, we met in a crowded café on the famous Fergusson College Road in Pune city. Among other things, I asked her about her continuous interest in marginalised people in her films. She replied: “All my life I have been marginalised…my mother married a Russian, that was sensation number one; she divorced him, that was sensation number two;

and sensation number three was that she returned to India with a brat, a firangi (foreigner)-looking funny child which was me. On the road in Pune, people would stop me and ask why did your mother leave your father...? In school I wouldn't get roles in plays and all…so I think I have been marginalised since I was a child".

With her twinkling grey eyes, Paranjpye laughed as if trying to ward off the unpleasant memory of a privileged yet alienated childhood. She wondered whether perhaps it was these formative years that made her feel closer to marginalised people and their stories. It was a revealing moment for this thesis too in many ways. It became apparent that 'margin' might be the most operative category in Paranjpye's personal life as well as in her cinematic constructions. She has mastered the art of translating human follies into fun - the most noticed aspect of her filmmaking and one that has earned her popular recognition but 'serious' neglect. The larger academic silence on her tremendously adventurous filmmaking efforts and her baffling absence from the recently opened galleries and walls of India's National Film Museum in Mumbai glaringly stamp her peripheral position as the "historical other" (Gledhill & Knight, 2015, p23) of Indian film history.

The current literature on her work is limited to a few articles, brief mentions in books and encyclopaedic entries.[1] The documented history of Hindi films is in line with the global lack of attention toward women's work, especially those behind the camera.

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[1] There are very few academic articles that discuss Paranjpye's work in-depth. Two articles that have been very useful for this project are "Media Meddlers: Feminism, Television and Gendered Media Work in India" (2019) by Sangita Gopal and "Apotheosis or Apparition? Bombay and the Village in 1990s Women 's Cinema" (2007) by Rashmi Sawhney. In a recent article, "Recontextualising the Cinematic Code: The Female Gaze of Sai Paranjpye in Sparsh, Chashme Buddoor and Katha" (2022), Shipra Tholia and Amar Singh discuss Paranjpye's gaze and how she subverts generic tropes, which in some ways speaks to my work, although not published until my thesis was nearing completion.

Shifting the historiographic focus from the male-dominated master narrative of Hindi cinema to the work of one of the most popular Indian women directors of all time - Sai Paranjpye - is the key thrust of this thesis.

The thesis is primarily concerned with the modalities of space and spatial representations in the seven films of Sai Paranjpye examined here. [2]In what follows, I will explore and analyse the representations/reproductions of space and associated ideas of social relations, cultural contexts and lived practices within the narrative space of these specific films. My reading of her films as eclectic spatial texts of Indian life aims to bring her genre films into the realm of critical scholarly exploration in order to engage with the socio-cultural tensions that space reveals. I utilise space as an experiential category intertwined with the cultural specificities of everyday life to argue that Sai Paranjpye's cinema is an encounter of the spatial and the social.[3]

A close textual inquiry into this encounter investigates the constellation of spaces and everyday practices that not only produce social meanings but also define the ways of being: intangibility, uncertainty, hopes, confusions, moments of betrayal and

---

[2] Sai Paranjpye's filmography includes Hindi feature films, children's films, documentaries and short films. The thesis examines seven of her films: five features and two non-features to establish the ways in which space has been negotiated on-screen. This corpus has been created with an intention of selecting films that engage with the distinctive agency of space and spatial representations in Paranjpye's cinema. The cinematic space in these films deals with a wide range of lived spaces and architectural forms. The lived space reveals the shape of life as their narratives touch upon vital socio-cultural attitudes, beliefs and power structures. The focus of this selection is on fictional narratives because the fictional form allows the director to intervene and reconstruct narratives for critical intervention, which in turn opens the represented space for further interrogation. This is the reason that along with five feature films, the thesis also brings case studies of one non-feature and one short film that engage with social connotations of spatiality employing re-enactment of real-life stories. These films exhibit eclectic aesthetic configurations in devising strategies of spatial representations crossing conventional medial borders. This allows the thesis to evaluate and underline Paranjpye's cinematic contribution to wider film history.

[3] I discuss the concept of space and theoretical discussions that have shaped the project in the next chapter.

liminality signify the texture of life in these films. To this end, I examine how space anchors Paranjpye's plots and narrative style and how it makes contradictions visible. The question of what kind of negotiations are taking place in lived spaces and in what ways these negotiations are etched within the larger socio-political and cultural contexts is what binds the chapters that follow. The thesis is driven less by geographical realism and more by the social qualities of spatial organisation and the imagination of lived geographies that shape actions and social relationships. I am looking at space to unpack the representations of the city and the village; the construction and experience of private/public spaces; mainstream and marginality; and gendered and cultural mappings in these films.

In what follows I will investigate the construction and/or reproduction of space and spatiality in five features: *Sparsh (Touch*/1980), *Katha* (*Tale*/1981), *Chashme Baddoor* (*Far Be the Evil Eye*/1983), *Disha* (*Direction*/1990), *Papeeha* (*Forest Lovebird*/1993) and two non-features- *Choodiyan* (*Bangles*/1983) and Suee (*The Needle*/2009). From performing the role of a social network to the geographies of disabled marginal lives, from displacement to addiction, examination of space in these films reveals a great deal about the social text of Indian life. The thesis also demonstrates that many of these films engage with the generic conventions of mainstream Hindi films, the Indian new wave cinema (realist art cinema), and the 'middle path cinema' in a dialogical manner and can best be read as an intersecting zone of aesthetic and narrative formulations.[4]

[4] Hindi mainstream film is characterised by its often repeated tropes for box-office success which is marked as an oppositional aesthetic startegy to the new wave of neo-realist cinema that emerged in the 1970s and is marked by its experimental zeal. The middle path cinema is an off-shoot of realist films, an umbrella term referring to films that carved a middle space by mixing entertainment devoid of commercial cinema's gloss and violence. I discuss these varied cinematic forms and styles in chapters one and two.

Sai Paranjpye: The enigmatic chronicler of fragmented Indian life

The only child of an Indian mother and Russian father, Sai Paranjpye's initial influences were transnational and multicultural. She was born in the northern Indian princely city of Lucknow and lived a few formative years in Australia along with her grandfather who was the first Indian Wrangler at the University of Cambridge, UK. Her mother Shakuntala Paranjpye, an actress during the 1930s-40s and later a social worker, moved back to the western Indian city of Pune in Maharashtra after divorcing her painter husband when Sai was two years old. Under her mother's influence, Sai Paranjpye's creative journey started early in life by writing stories as her mother encouraged Paranjpye to find her voice.[5] Paranjpye's professional career commenced much before she turned to filmmaking; cinema came to her gradually in the course of her media career. She worked at All India Radio, Pune and became engaged in developing children's programmes, eventually starting to write radio plays for the children's shows. Paranjpye then launched a company for children's theatre in Pune before moving on to a significant stint as a television producer for the state-run broadcasting organisation, *Doordarshan*, in the national capital city of Delhi. These were the early days of programming on Indian national TV and, during her stint, Paranjpye wrote and directed many TV series, documentaries and teleplays. She also served as the chairperson of the Children's Film Society of India where she first made children's films for TV. When her first feature film *Sparsh*, which she wrote and directed, was released in 1980, she had already had a long career in the media.

[5] In her autobiography *The Patchwork Quilt* (2020), Sai Paranjpye details how her mother played a crucial role in shaping her creativity and encouraging her to find her voice.

Paranjpye describes herself as a ‘Jane of all trades’ (Rangayan and Gupta, 2013, no page) summarising her “patchwork” career spread across various media. This patchwork effect makes her cinematic career a crucial site of exploration because by unpacking her “film work as informed by experience in the aesthetic and production protocols of multiple media and their affordances, we can begin to assess its historiographic significance and its critical agency” (Gopal, 2018). Her films emerge from a complex interplay between mediums and concerns, which I discuss in chapter two as various kinds of border crossings shaping the aesthetic and narratives of her films. Her films are in constant dialogue with the creative cultural texts of her time, building on them as well as, at times, subverting them. This dialogic nature, and blurring of borders, is an essential quality of these films textured by intermedial and intertextual elements that she acquired from the ever-evolving media ecology as a multimedia creator. Her heterogenous filmography is tied together through some major underlying themes and the recurring element of border-crossings has a particular significance for the film form and generic affiliations.[6] Paranjpye’s cinema is neither mainstream Hindi film nor does it fall into the canon of experimental/avant-garde cinema. Her work has been generally discussed through the category that Madhava Prasad (1998) designates as ‘middle-class cinema’, a generic understanding of a group of films focused on the city-based middle-class family life and its concerns. One of my efforts in this thesis is to argue that for any productive engagement with aesthetics and narrative constructions of Paranjpye’s cinema, we need to reassess the traditional discussion of middle cinema/middle of the road cinema, seeing it now as an exciting aesthetic site of diverse cultural constructions

[6] The recurring themes will be discussed in detail in Chapter two.

that opens up the deconstructive possibilities instead of foreclosing them through rigid class affiliations. I am specifically suggesting that the cultural layers of Paranjpye's films can be creatively deconstructed with spatial critique committed to unpacking the intertwined socio-economic and political contexts of ordinary life. To this end, it is more productive to think about the films examined here as a converging ground of multiple subjectivities, experiences, power dynamics and creative practices entangled with each other. Paranjpye never confined herself to any particular generic aesthetics nor did she offer a unified mode of addressing a 'national' middle class and its concerns. Rather, her films reveal the generic tensions of the class-based conceptualisation of middle cinema. Paranjpye's cinema exemplifies the mongrel character and plural local histories of Indian life. Its creative imaginations rest on the fragmented spatio-social experience, a mixed bag of everyday pleasures and miseries, hope and hopelessness. In this thesis, a critical inquiry into these films employing an array of interdisciplinary concepts examines the cultural politics of space in relation to lived experience at the intersection of identities. Paranjpye's playfulness with film form, as I show throughout the thesis, bears traces of cinematic forms developed during the 1970s-80s as well as the medial tendencies of other mediums within which Paranjpye continued to work after becoming a filmmaker.

Why space in Sai Paranjpye's films?

Space is the essential vocabulary of Paranjpye's cinema. In each of the films examined, space and spatial relations provide the structuring element of the narratives. As an abstract and contested material reality of human life, the analytical category of space offers the immense potential of opening out various aspects of

these narratives to further discussion and interrogation rather than tying them down to certain generic concepts.

In a very insightful recent spatial historiography of cinema *Where Histories reside*: *India as filmed space* (2019), Priya Jaikumar explores a number of films shot on location in India starting from the British colonial period in the 1920s.[7] She makes a strong case for investigating the aesthetics and politics - the geopolitics of the ‘filmed space’ - the real space or pro-filmic world which is conceptually different from filmic space. Her book is an important intervention in spatial thinking on cinema from which this thesis learns but also diverges in its exploratory quest. Jaikumar mentions that the formal distinction of filmic space was crucial for the early theorisation of cinematic language, although she suggests that it diverted attention from engaging with profilmic dimensions of preproduction histories and social relationships of spaces and places. This is where my thesis takes a different approach and explores the possibilities that Sai Paranjpye’s filmic space offers in engaging with the profilmic world. I believe the construction of filmic space as an arrangement of space, time and movement doesn’t divert from profilmic realities, rather it is deeply rooted in them. The constructedness of filmic space brings the profilmic world into the realm of interpretation. The space within the shot is a representational space that activates the off-screen discourses through characterisation and situations unfolding across the narrative space. The case studies in this thesis apply an interpretive strategy of deconstructing those discourses through reading the filmic space. If a film is a body, then filmic space is the heart, the vital organ that pumps life into the body. It is the

[7] I will discuss the book in the next chapter where I review relevant literature that has helped in shaping the project.

filmic space that cues the viewer into the lived environment of the character through the materialities of mise-en-scene weaving time and memories into the frame. In Sai Paranjpye's films (and in many others outside the scope of this thesis), filmic space mediates profilmic life, it is contaminated by social processes, relationships, memories and images bearing imprints of the time where it takes shape and, in turn, shapes the cinematic perception of time and life. Paranjpye's camera and other formal techniques allow filmic space to be transformed into a subject of inquiry, opening it up not only for exploration and interpretation but also for speculation and imagination of profimic realities.

The majority of Paranjpye's feature films are discursive fragments of Indian life refashioning and transiting through the pre-liberalisation India of the 1980s or the early phase of the 1990s before the unprecedented phase of a globalised visual regime that emerged in the form of Bollywood.[8] The films examined here capture the spatio-temporal nuances of ordinary life not only in the big cities but also in the village and remote spaces of indigenous people in forests. These are the spaces, places and people who became invisible after the triumph of what I would call the cinema of grand interiors - Bollywood.[9]

In her autobiography, Paranjpye writes, “All the films I had made to date had germinated and bloomed in their own special soil” (2020, p396), underlining the centrality of space in her cinema. Through diverse themes and forms of aesthetic treatment, Paranjpye constructs a particular spatial experience that remains an

[8] The Indian government implemented liberal economic reforms in 1991 that brought unprecedented changes in the social, cultural and economic life of the country.
[9] Ranjani Mazumdar discusses the grandeur of interiors and their function in her book Bombay cinema- *The archive of a city* (2007).

unmined reservoir of Indian socio-cultural history. Her narratives are steered by the central characters but the story world is structured around the spaces they inhabit. How these spaces shape her characters' lives is not tangential to the stories Paranjype tells. If the specificities of built architectural forms in big metropolitan cities of Bombay and Delhi find delightful representations in her films, the plight of the village or the marginalised tribal life under pressure in a country driven by the mirage of economic development is also put into question.

It is for this reason that, in interpreting the space and spatiality of her cinematic world, the notion of experience finds a recurring presence in this thesis. Human geographer Yu Fu Tuan (1977) situates experience in the realm of thinking and attachment, an active sensory engagement that constructs knowledge. Space constructs experience and experience is constitutive of an idea of space: sensations and feelings that form memories and trigger thoughts. Experience as used here connotes a connection between the material and the psychological that structures the lived world of the narratives and influences the imaginations of space, self and identity. It is the lived experience that allows humans to attach meaning to spaces and architectural forms - comfortable, confusing, discriminating or isolating - and filmic space reconstructs that experience for the viewer. In Paranjpye's films, the various lived realities such as migration, displacement or disability entail specific spatial experiences as they intersect with social categories of class, gender and the cultural discourse of the normative body. Paranjpye blends spatiality with the life of her characters in such a way that it becomes impossible to think about people without the space they inhabit and vice versa. Such a depiction of spatial experience

shapes as well as reveals the form of interpersonal relationships and realities of the profilmic world.

Contribution to knowledge

With Paranjpye's films at the centre of this inquiry, this dissertation aims to contribute to the history of Hindi cinema, women's cinema as well as the discourse on space and lived experience. The study will be significant in building a case study of Paranjpye's neglected filmography which can suggest new sites of research on her cinema. The project aims to contribute to the discourse of space and the cinematic city, especially the postcolonial space in the global south. The focus on spatial organisation in interaction with human actions opens up an innovative field of inquiry away from the conventional categories of nation, national or ideological subjecthood, although a complete departure from these preoccupations cannot be claimed. The exploration of tangible and intangible connections, networks, feelings and concepts of home, memory, migration and displacement make this study a crucial contribution to furthering social and cultural inquiry of cinematic space in Hindi cinema. The importance of this study lies in the fact that it questions established orthodoxies within the masculine discourse of Hindi film history while upholding the primacy of space and spatial relations.

Research Questions

Shifting the focus from the masculine discourse of film historiography to women directors whose cinema historically contributed to the journey of Indian cinema provided the main thrust for this thesis. However, the early phases of this thesis wrestled with how to frame the project in a manner that would allow in-depth inquiry

and open up new approaches to exploring and analysing women's cinema, as well as revisiting the theoretical configurations of historical analytical categories in which women have been neglected. Sai Paranjpye's heterogeneous fictional narratives and their contradictory cinematic worlds depicting pre-liberalisation Indian life offered that opportunity. The exciting new directions in the academic studies of Indian cinema in the past two decades or so, particularly on cinematic space and the city, interrogating notions of experience, cultural contexts and power dynamics proved instrumental in arriving at the main questions that animate this thesis. In this exploration, the two key questions underpin and structure the thesis:

1) How does Sai Paranjpye construct or reproduce space and how do these depictions engage with power structures and social dynamics of power relations?
2) What can these constructions/reproductions in the filmic space tell us about the experience of heterogenous lived spaces, spatial practices and identities in these films?

Apart from these main questions, some sub-questions have also been addressed to contextualise Paranjpye's cinema in the larger context of Hindi film history: to what extent is it possible to investigate Paranjpye's films in relation to the category of middle cinema? What are the strategies of subversion that she employs to construct a narrative space distinct from the conventions of middle cinema?

Methodology and Chapters

The questions that this thesis seeks to answer are less ontological (what space means) and more interested in the methodological inquiry of how space has been

constructed/represented and what these cinematic representations allow us to read. The films are subjected to critical textual analysis in deciphering themes, aesthetics and mise en scene that encode meanings and spatial characteristics. As an analytical strategy, I frequently resort to sequence analysis while reading and unpacking the films as texts. Accordingly, the thesis approaches films as textual case studies, structured thematically, and deconstructs the social rubrics of body and identity in interaction with space and spatial experience. This approach has been developed by employing ideas and knowledge derived from multitudes of disciplines that engage with the human body along with spatial and social relations. As an interdisciplinary inquiry, this project is receptive to various kinds of cinematic spaces in Paranjpye's films through the broader concepts and theoretical deliberations across the social, political, cultural, anthropological, sociological and philosophical traditions. Despite the plurality and multiplicity of spaces in these seven films, the project has identified unifying themes originating from the narratives and engages with them throughout the chapters of this thesis. To engage with the diversity, playfulness, subversive strategies and varied human stories of spatial relations, a range of concepts have been used to grasp Paranjpye's style, form and themes. Although the project is situated within film and moving image studies, the conceptual base is built on cultural studies, human geography, urban studies, disability studies, feminist theory and sociology.

Since the project is concerned with the representation of space and spatial cultures in interaction with social life, critical approaches such as cultural studies and feminist theories have provided the necessary tools for investigating social relations, power distribution and social hierarchies expressed through the strategies of filmic representation. Along with theoretical methods, this inquiry has been helped by

archival research of popular Indian film magazines of the 1970s-80s held by the National Film Archive of India. This was particularly useful in surveying the popular discussions around cinema and how Sai Paranjpye was perceived as a filmmaker. This has allowed the thesis to situate Paranjpye as a key cultural figure whose popular status has grown over the years but, in spite of which, one for whom academic engagement is significantly scant. This is also where I situate my thesis as it fills the gap by bringing together two of the most under-explored areas in Hindi film history - space and women filmmakers.

In what follows, I develop a specific spatial reading through case studies of different films. An explanatory overview of specific conceptual tools has been provided where necessary in the chapters. The effort in each chapter is not only to understand the agency of lived geographies within the narratives but also to engage with the discourse relevant to various films such as ability/disability, development, addiction and social identity.

Chapter one sets the stage through a discussion on the conceptual grounding of the notion of space and how the thesis approaches space and spatial imagination. Since the socio-cultural context is significant in exploring space and spatiality, the chapter provides the historical context of the 1970s-80s when Sai Paranjpye made her debut and created most of these films. The chapter gives an overview of relevant literature to situate the thesis within the domains of Hindi cinema and women's cinema. The chapter engages with the relevant categories of the middle-class and middle cinema; it also clarifies the choices made with respect to the keywords such as Bollywood and Bombay.

Chapter Two discusses the major themes and elements that establish unity across the diversity of themes and styles in the films examined. These overlapping themes run across all the films and have been categorised here as border-crossings, perceptions of home, blurred private/public divisions, marginalisation and *mazaa* (fun). I am arguing that these categories define the embodied spatial experience in these films and have played a crucial role in the aesthetic choices that accentuate Paranjpye's socio-spatial dialectic.

The following four chapters in the thesis build on the case studies of seven films made between 1980 and 2009. In chapter three, I am exploring the spatial experience of disability in *Sparsh* (Touch, 1980) which revolves around a blind protagonist. I argue that *Sparsh* establishes disability as a social construct by revealing the texture of disabling geographies. The chapter demonstrates that spaces and spatial codes not only define the scope of access and visibility but are also very much involved in influencing the psychological process of self-imagination and interpersonal relationships.

Chapter Four builds on the idea of interpersonal relations and community by focusing on Paranjpye's use of architecture in her films, particularly the shared and communal aspects of unique architectural forms of a Bombay *chawl* in *Katha* (*Story*, 1980) and *barsati* in Delhi in *Chashme Baddoor* (*Far Be the Evil Eye*, 1981). These built forms are peculiar topographical features deeply connected to the social life of the migrant populations of Bombay and Delhi. The chapter shows that these films imagine a private space as a shared arena of interpersonal relationships where privacy is innovatively negotiated. This chapter demonstrates that Paranjpye's

intertextual constructions create a reflexive space of dialogue with the popular tropes of mainstream Hindi cinema, particularly in *Chashme Baddoor*.

Chapter Five engages with the concepts of home and displacement to underline the effects of city-centric plans of national economic development, entangled with diverse lived spaces in *Disha* (*Direction*, 1990) and *Papeeha* (*Forest Love-Bird*, 1993). *Disha* focuses on urban migration and the plight of workers that questions the logic of city-centric development. *Papeeha* brings forth that demonic side of urbanisation and crony capitalism that destroys the lives of tribal people whose very survival depends upon natural resources. The chapter explores diverse geographies of the dystopic city, the transforming village and the disenfranchised tribal forest home in these films to discuss how varied spatial experiences entail specific ideas of self and community relationships. I argue that Paranjpye moves away from the traditional city/village binaries in articulating the gradual transformation affecting life across lived geographies in India.

The final chapter examines two of Sai Paranjpye's non-feature films, to interrogate the stigmatised geographies of addiction in *Choodiyan* (*Bangles*, 1993) and *Suee* (*The Needle*, 2009). The chapter deciphers how these films conceptualise addiction and the addict, a state of being that alters spatial relationships. I engage with Paranjpye's hybrid aesthetics of re-enactment and evaluate its political intentions. I argue that Paranjpye constructs addiction as a sociospatial condition exacerbated by the practices of stigma and labeling where spatiality becomes a part of the stigmatised identity.

Chapter One

Conceptual deliberations

In a message to the “Doing Women’s Film History Conference” in 2011, British film director Sally Potter said that those who were at the conference were there because

of their interest in the “transformation of the invisible into the visible, the silent into the heard” (Potter, 2015, pxi). The two keywords ‘invisibility’ and ‘silence’ intriguingly underline the status of women in the master narratives of film historiography in most cinematic cultures but they are also useful in characterising the sporadic academic engagement with space in Hindi cinema.

Comprehensive and systematic academic research into Hindi cinema is a comparatively recent phenomenon. Although there is encouraging growth in nuanced studies with diverse approaches, much of it has gradually been transformed into the study of ‘Bollywood’ as an overarching reference to filmmaking in the Hindi language.[10] Within this scholarship, there is limited theoretical engagement with women directors, both in terms of wider scholarly attention and close examination of their body of work.[11] Taking the films of Sai Paranjpye as the key site of inquiry, this project aims primarily to explore two of the most overlooked areas of research in Hindi films – the analytical category of space, and genre filmmaking by a woman director. The study focuses on selected films of Paranjpye to explore their representation of lived spatiality and spatial organisation in the context of the wider social, political and evolving creative environment. These films are a crucial site of spatially organised narratives depicting specificities of Indian life. Paranjpye uses and constructs space and depicts spatial processes and practices of social relationships, identity, and experience. As such, space is not just a mere backdrop or

[10] ‘Bollywood’ is often used as a generic term for films made in India. The ambiguities and objections related to the usage of this term are discussed later in this chapter where I am also explaining the reasons for using the term Hindi cinema for this project instead of Bollywood.
[11] With the exception of a very few books exploring the work of women directors such as *The films of Zoya Akhtar* (2022) by Aakshi Magazine or *Parama and Other Outsiders*: *The cinema of Aparna Sen* (2002) by Shoma A. Chatterjee, women filmmakers and their cinema remains acutely under-studied.

physical setting in Paranjpye's films; it is an ontology of spatial culture that reveals the experiential aspects of ordinary Indian life.

Paranjpye's seven films *Sparsh* (*Touch*, 1980), *Chashme Baddoor* (*Far Be The Evil Eye*, 1981), *Katha* (*Tale*, 1982), *Disha* (*Direction*, 1990), *Papeeha* (Forest *Love Bird*, 1993), *Choodiyan* (*Bangles*, 1993) and *Suee* (*Needle*, 2009) are subjected to close textual analysis and are contextualised with the help of interdisciplinary social scientific methods. I read space in interaction with a range of complex social categories, notably private/public, gender and sexuality, to underline the films' spatial perspectives on social life. My investigation rests on many paradigmatic spaces of lived experience commonly perceived through the binaries of the private/ public divide: the home, streets, parks, workplace and restaurants. I explore the agency of these spaces in shaping and representing identity, desire, and embodied power dynamics. My project recognises gender as an analytical category through which to underline subjective negotiations with spaces in the films that are examined in this study. However, I am not proposing the feminist canonisation of Sai Paranjpye; rather, I aim to engage with and characterise the experiential economy of space she constructs, while deconstructing the form of her films. Hence, part of this thesis is also concerned with the utilisation and subversion of dominant generic conventions in Paranjpye's films. As specified earlier in the introduction, Paranjpye is mostly seen as a director who made light-hearted humorous films and her work is commonly placed within the category of middle cinema (I discuss this categorisation later in this chapter).[12] I demonstrate that Paranjpye's cinema, though partly founded on the

[12] In Indian film history, middle cinema emerged during the 1970s and 80s. The term primarily refers to films made on a limited budget with non-mainstream actors, which navigated a middle path between the commercial glitz of the mainstream and the realist aesthetics of art film. They told stories primarily based on the lives of the aspiring Indian middle class, and life in the cities. It is not a genre in

familiar iconographic material of the middle cinema, is productively engaged with the fragmented and unique socio-spatial experience of Indian life. I begin by taking a passage through a conceptual discussion on the category of space and spatial imagination by bringing together some key ideas. This helps in clarifying how I am approaching space in the films examined for the purpose of this thesis. I will then move on to a brief overview of some major academic works on Hindi cinema to situate my interdisciplinary thesis and demonstrate how it contributes to advancing the explorations of Hindi cinema.

Rethinking space, reading cinema

The concept of space attracted unprecedented attention in the late 20th century, disrupting the privileging of time over space as an analytical tool. The understanding of space as a blank canvas or mute setting underwent a considerable transformation in multidisciplinary scholarly debates during the 1970s. The reconceptualisation of space as an analytical category in the field of geography paved the way for the 'spatial turn' (Soja, 2009, p12) in social and cultural studies.[13] The spatial turn signifies a gradual paradigm shift through the late 1980s in ways of approaching space and its significance in the social life of human beings. As Soja insists, the spatial turn should be considered "an attempt to develop a more creative and critically effective balancing of the spatial/geographical and the

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the strict sense of the term. However, there are identifiable common elements that allow categorising them as a group of films with familiar iconography.

[13] For a detailed discussion and debates related to the spatial turn see *Key Thinkers on Space and Place* edited by Phil Hubbard and Rob Kitchin (2011).

temporal/historical imaginations" (2009, p12). Many key figures, such as Michel Foucault, Henry Lefebvre, Frederic Jameson, David Harvey, Edward Soja and Doreen Massey, have made critical interventions in foregrounding space as an active participant in shaping human actions and social relationships. Foucault and Lefebvre's deliberations challenged the 'givenness' of space in the social life of human beings and established that space is a construct of social, economic, and ideological forces. Lefebvre (1991) points out that social space is not a natural inheritance; rather it is a product of the intertwined constituents of geography, the built environment, and social ways of being. The perspective of production underscores space as an evolving and transforming entity contingent on socio-political and economic forces with significant bearing on spatial practices.

As part of his famous spatial triad - "conceived, perceived and lived space" (1991, pp68-167) - Lefebvre discusses representational space as the directly lived space of art, constructed through a coherent system of signs and symbols as in the realm of cinema. Lefebvre's ideas have majorly affected the spatial turn in film studies and have been crucial in shaping the approach toward understanding lived space and the sociospatial practices in cinema. One of the most significant shifts that have happened with the spatial turn is the focus on the construction of the social, which is particularly useful in denaturalising and deconstructing space as an active agent in social life. For Doreen Massey (1994), who draws from Henry Lefebvre's conceptualisation, space is produced socially, including the representational space of images and symbols. Massey insists on "thinking of space, not as some absolute independent dimension, but as constructed out of social relations: that what is at issue is not social phenomena in space but both social phenomena and space as

constituted out of social relations" (1994, p2). It is this interaction between the social and the spatial that is the central concern of this project. An adjacent area of spatial theorisation, that is contentious yet productive in thinking about the social construction of space, is the space/place dichotomy across various disciplines. Space/place are still used interchangeably but they have also been constantly put to use in distinguishing place as the authentic material and meaningful geography of everyday life while space is conceptualised as abstract and devoid of meaning. For Edward Casey (1993, 2013) place is the basis of everything in human life, of human existence itself and not space. Similarly, Yi-Fu Tuan notes that space is more "abstract" and "undifferentiated" (2001, p6) than place and it finds meaning when it is endowed with value. In the same way, Tim Creswell (2015) argues that "when humans invest meaning in a portion of space and then become attached to it in some way (naming is one such way) it becomes a place" (p31). What one can discern from these spatial thoughts about place is a sense of concreteness and familiarity while space is seen more in terms of freedom, untamed and unknown possibilities.

There is no doubt that space/place are interrelated, space is the basic building block of place. The place is activated experiential space which is why "they require each other for definition" (Tuan, 2001, p6). In Marxist spatial thinking, greater attention is directed toward the social qualities of space. David Harvey, for instance, argues that place has no power outside the social (1993, p14) and Michel De Certeau differentiated place as a fixed and stable materiality while space was an "intersection of mobile elements" (1984, p117) that creates the experience of navigating everyday life. What Certeau stresses is that though the place is definable, its meanings are not

determined by mere existence or formal conceptualisations; rather, social practices and the nature of lived spatial experience attach meanings to the place. Analysing space through social practices and lived experience reveals power equations and social relations embedded in “spatiality”, a term coined by Edward Soja (1989) to emphasise the significance of material conditions of space that influence life experiences. It is this relational position that comes closer to how space is approached in this project concerning the spatial manifestations of lived experience. Because cinema does not always reproduce the pre-existing conceptualisations of places; instead, it constructs an idea of an experiential space contingent on various external factors. Space will refer to the concrete materiality in dialogue with social forces in these films, which opens up the possibilities of experiences, of occupying spaces, of movements and threats constantly evolving at the intersections of social-economic-political dynamics.

The spatial turn in geographic traditions has illuminated numerous interdisciplinary readings on spatiality as a lived social phenomenon. In the past four decades, this new spatial language has provided a significant theoretical instrument of inquiry in social sciences and humanities including film studies. Interdisciplinary spatial thinking led to new sites of engagement with film as a cultural text shaped by the experiences of space, particularly the European city. The city space and the urban experience have been represented in cinema right from the birth of the medium. In fact, there is no exaggeration in stating that the city is the quintessential geography of the representational space. It was the shock-like experience of the city as a site of modernity that inspired Benjamin (1969) to conceptualise a radical change in human consciousness as a defense mechanism of everyday modern existence. His work

remains one of the most influential texts in shaping debates on the cinematic city along with Harvey's and De Certeau's among other influential thinkers. The gradual development of spatial theories influenced cinematic studies and opened up new directions of exploring the spatial organisation, identity, subjectivity, multiplicity and fragmentation, spatialities of migration and displacement in Anglophone film studies.

The evolution of spatial readings in cinema, albeit with less focus on films from the global south, has provided a rich engagement with modalities of space to deconstruct the formal spatial structure of the film and the cultural exigencies of spatial organisation. Moving images, among their many characteristics, are also pieces of social histories, social processes, and the phenomenological aspects of existence. Mark Shiel (2001) notes that cinema is a "peculiarly spatial form of culture" (p5) because films are a spatial organisation both in terms of the space of representation as well as the space where the film originates as cultural production. These connections between space, its agency, and its relationship with human experience provide a useful framework for accessing Paranjpye's films. This thesis offers a critical exercise in reading their aesthetic configurations in relation to the creative ecology of that point in time as it helps in unpacking the texts.

One of the recent works that investigate and historicise the interrelations of space, power relations and cinema and has inspired the texture of spatial critique in this project is Priya Jaikumar's book *Where Histories Reside*: *India as filmed space* (2019). Jaikumar brings a robust interdisciplinary reading of 'filmed' representations of India ranging from British colonial pedagogical films to Bollywood. These case studies covering a period of hundred years focus on the history and politics of

constructing an idea of India through films shot on location in various cities, towns, or the built structures that serve as ruins of a nostalgic past destroyed by the colonial rulers. In doing so, Jaikumar does not restrict herself to the filmic space, the space within the frame, but develops the idea of 'filmed space' as a "captured artifact of an encounter between a camera and its environment" (2019, p3) to explore the interrelations between film, space and interconnected histories. As discussed in the introduction, in making the case for filmed space Jaikumar states that early film theory's attention to filmic space averted attention from sociospatial relationships between the filmic and profilmic spaces and places. Thus, for Jaikumar, it is between the two notions of filmed and space that the hidden profilmic world of social, material and institutional histories of visual production reside which is above and beyond what filmic space structures for consumption. This thesis gains critical insights from this sociospatial historiography sharply focused on the out-of-focus profilmic relations suppressed in the production of filmed space. Intending to explore Paranjpye's cinema as a congruence of space, social relationships and lived experience, this project is in close agreement with Jaikumar's suggestion that "space demands an awareness of the principles underlying its organisation and a sensitivity to the systems and people participating in the perpetuation or breakdown of that organisation" (2019, p6). It is through an inquiry into the spatial organisation, systems and people's engagement that patterns and codes of sociospatial life can be explored, and a method that this project adopts in the textual analysis of these varied narratives.

However, as I demonstrate in my reading of the selected film texts, instead of foreclosing the possibilities of deconstructing the realm of social relations, the filmic

space can engage with and interrogate sociospatial contexts and relations. That is to say, space and spatial qualities structure the narrative and activate subjective interpretations as this thesis establishes. As my focus is not on institutional and production histories but on the material and emotional qualities of spaces and spatial organisations that shape life and regulate social relations, my reading of the films foregrounds the space in the cinematic frame as it relates to lived experiences outside of the filmic space. The thesis learns from Jaikumar's spatial critique but charts its own path by focusing on the filmic space in Paranjpye's cinema because the space in the cinematic frame relates to reality and demands reading. Aitkin and Zonn (1994) elaborate on the possibilities of reading the cinematic space:

> (…) the space created by the frame within which a subject is located and twenty-four of these frames pass before our eyes every. This space enables the subject of the film to unfold in a variety of ways that may be controlled by the filmmaker. More than neutral space, however, these shots demand to be read as real places with their own sense of geography and history" (pp15-16).

This "sense of history and geography", in my view is embedded in the way cinematic space is constructed/represented containing a social commentary, presenting imaginations of social relations and contributing to the debates on social reality. Keeping such possibilities in mind, I excavate the filmic space and develop a multidimensional spatial analysis of her films where the spatial turn provides the conceptual seed in investigating these films through overlapping lenses of cultural practices, belief systems, law, economic history, social transformations and so on.

Interaction with the specificity of space is visible in all of Paranjpye's films and such interaction makes it a potent subject of analysis from the perspective of space as an inter-relational living entity (Massey 1994, 2005). A crucial thread in Massey's idea, which is particularly helpful in thinking about Paranjpye's engagement with discriminatory spatial codes and practices such as the gendered aspect of spatial organisations. Massey challenges any generalised idea about gender relations by arguing that the construction of gender can very well be tied to local geographical notions of masculinity and femininity and that the notions of public and private can ultimately be thought of in terms of spatial arrangements where gender identities are negotiated (1994). Massey's argument provides a valuable lens for reading the nature of spatiality and what it means for gender relations in Paranjpye's films. For example, the depiction of mobility in the city or the accessibility of spaces in these films makes visible the naturalisation of gendered spatial practices in ordinary daily life. As I will discuss in chapter four, examining these codes of spatial relations provides an opportunity to highlight the ways in which Paranjpye negotiates gender in a specific spatial context(s). In each of her films, lived space affects and shapes life in a specific manner as it also unravels the socio-economic power dynamics.

A few scholars have paid particular attention to filmic space in a manner that is closer to how this thesis intends to deconstruct spatial interrelations. Ratheesh Radhakrishnan suggests:

> The multilocal layering of spatialities in cinema allows for imagining space in cinemas as a dynamic, but not a hermetically closed, system. On the one hand, space is an experience; on the other, it is an aesthetic practice; and more often than not, it is indeed both, simultaneously. These multiple, contending, and overlapping modes of imagining space

> in cinema also provide us with ways of conceptualizing the modern subject as constituted in the interstices of these negotiations (2017, p4).

Space, both as an experience and as an aesthetic practice in Paranjpye's cinema is what this thesis explores to unpack life at the intersections of spatial and the social. It is through these intersections and negotiations that Rashmi Sawhney (2007) discusses Paranjpye's *Disha*. Sawhney notes that in the film, migration from the rural space to urban territory appears to be "a trajectory of 'performance' of change" (p4), both economically and sexually when the newlywed male protagonist Vasant moves to Bombay in search of employment, leaving his vulnerable wife Phoolwantibai in the village. She begins to work at a *Beedi* factory (a cigarette-like indigenous product to smoke tobacco) and is wooed by the factory manager. When Vasant returns from the city, an affair between his wife and the manager is revealed, making Vasant leave the village. Paranjpye weaves the subjective experience of migration as a multi-layered, two-way process in *Disha* where gender shapes the specifics of marginal experience and interaction with the space. The transformation brought by the real experience of migration alters the familiar notions of space, and spatial organisations such as home, into a space of loss and humiliation.

For the displaced self, spatiality manifests a new and unpleasant regime of imperceptible "structures of feelings" (Williams, 1998, p53) pulling life in unimagined directions. Structures of feelings and the negotiations with the city space inspired Ranjani Mazumdar's (2007) interdisciplinary book *Bombay Cinema*: *The Archive of a City*, which deals with spaces and urban structures as influential contexts in shaping the motivations and actions of the characters in the narrative economy of a film. Designating Bombay Cinema as an archive of the city, Mazumdar maps the lived

human experience in interaction with socio-political and economic forces as factors affecting the structures of feeling. Mazumdar traces commercial Hindi cinema from the 1970s to 2000 through certain iconic characters - such as the angry young man of the 1970s and the unique figure of *Bambaiyya tapori*[14] of the 1990s - that emerged out of the cinematic space of Bombay in every decade, and she unpacks the cultural text embedded in each iconic figure. Through the element of dance in post-independence films, Mazumdar examines the dancing female body (from the vamp to the lead actress), space (from the nightclub to the streets), sexuality, and interiorised aesthetics of post-liberalisation Bollywood. The book presents a complex web of body, memory, desire, space and globalisation in interaction with the city space in a specific cultural context. Mazumdar's study, organised at the intersection of cinematic space and urban India, engages with the Indian experience of modernity, a term that makes a recurring presence in this thesis as well. Some Indian film scholars have made recent interventions and engaged with cinema's relationship with divergent Indian experiences of modernity, including Deabshree Mukherjee and Manishita Dass. In her book *Bombay Hustle* (2020), Debashree Mukherjee looks at the local practices of film production in colonial Bombay (1920-40) as the blood-life of the cinematic productions of modernity in a young city. Mukherjee intends to present a contested vision of 'cinematic modern' from the Global South against the dominant Eurocentric understandings of modernity. In this search and research for Indian modernity, Manishita Dass (2016) engages with cinema's role in constituting an Indian public sphere away from the elite and

[14] The male figure of tapori is a Mumbai specific character, a rebel who uses a unique mix of language which is neither Hindi nor Marathi. It somewhat symbolises the intercultural and hybrid space of Mumbai.

inaccessible literary circuits and shaping the experience of modernity in late colonial India. Dass's use of the term modernity as "an intersection of the material changes brought about by modernisation and the subjective experiences of such changes" (p17) illuminates how this thesis approaches modernity in relation to the cultural experience of material and social transformations that marked the 1980s, the decade when the majority of Paranjpye's films were produced. As I discuss in chapter two, the 1980s was a period of great economic changes in India that brought about major material changes, creating new socio-cultural borders of class and identity intertwined with space and spatial forms.

Discussing the cultural specificity of spatial experience, Stephen Teo (2013) makes an interesting intervention by exploring space in classic Hindi melodramas and Chinese cinematic cultures. Through the analysis of sequences in Guru Dutt's *Saheb, Biwi or Ghulam*/*The Master, the Wife and the Slave* (1962) and songs of films such as *Aag*/*Fire* (1948) and *Pyasa*/*Thirsty* (1957), Teo elaborates on the specific use of space and location employed by Hindi directors, along with other elements of mise en scene, to establish psychic connections and disconnections between the characters. Following Henry Lefebvre, Teo insists on the materiality of space and argues that if space is a consumable product then there exists a culture-specific way of consuming space, both physically and emotionally. This consideration of space as a cultural product with psychological and emotional dimensions has been influential in my approach to unpacking Paranjpye's use of various public and private spaces and the agency of space in shaping human social life. The focus on social relations, power dynamics and experience in this project aims to broaden the investigative ground of Hindi film scholarship.

Hindi cinema: Looking back, looking forward

Much of the early Indian film scholarship tended to focus on nation, nationalism, and cinema's ideological alignment with the nation-state though one sees the emergence of a wider range of approaches to studying Indian cinema today. The nationalist fervor of motion pictures created by DG Phalke (usually credited as the first Indian filmmaker) is very well documented in early works on Indian cinema such as Barnouw and Krishnaswamy's landmark book *Indian Film* (1980). This narrative account of the Indian film journey captures the landmark moments of cinema's arrival in India, describing the development and proliferation of Indian exhibition space from tents to theatre chains. The book throws light on the pre-and post-independence production centers in Calcutta, Bombay, Lahore, Hyderabad, and Madras, the evolution of the mythological and social genres,[15] and the later journey into the experiments of new-wave cinema. However, Barnouw and Krishnaswamy primarily focus on what is described as the 'social film' or the 'meaningful' cinema with ideological underpinnings, while popular genres and mass entertainers such as stunt and action films find scant mention and do not generate much of a debate (Thomas, 2015).

The discussion on India's tryst with cinematic art and its negotiations with the idea of nation, nationalism, and nationhood was pioneered by Sumita Chakravarty (1993) in her book *National Identity in Popular Cinema*. Chakravarty utilises the metaphor of impersonation as the analytical strategy through which to deconstruct Hindi cinema's play with identity and cultural life although Madhava Prasad (1998) has been critical

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[15] This genre developed during the early years of Indian cinema and it refers to the films that deal with social issues. For more on this genre see *Encyclopaedia of Indian cinema* (1994) edited by Ashish Rajadhyaksha and Paul Willemen.

of Chakravarty's framework as "an inadequate signifier" (p17) unable to provide an overarching analytical device to investigate Hindi films. Prasad (1998) in his important early book *Ideology of the Hindi Film - A Historical Construction* underlines the ideological functions of the popular Hindi film and establishes Indian cinema as a site of the "(re)production of the state form" (p9). This nuanced ideological reading interrogates the historical and material traditions of Hindi cinema. However, it tends to ignore the crucial building blocks of Hindi film form such as song and dance as instruments of narrative progression, or space, architecture, and other elements of the mise en scene, which can offer important insights about cinematic sources, references, and modes of engagement. Acknowledging the immense significance of this work is crucial as the nationalist and ideological readings have given much food for thought in terms of thinking through various threads of the relationship between the state, ideology, modernity and cultural responses. However, it is also important to note that ideologically driven readings close off the possibility of a broader and more inclusive field of experiential inquiry that allows reading films as playful cultural texts of lived spaces, human relationships, and the specificities of spaces in the socio-economic contexts. In Prasad's book, this kind of discussion occurs regarding the middle cinema where private space, domesticity, and conjugal relationships form the focal point of contemplations. However, there is no engagement either with Sai Paranjpye or with the intricacies of space and its powerful effects in shaping human identity and social relationships which can enable fresh modes of analysis. This gap is apparent in other noted theoretical discussions as well.

In an attempt to facilitate new speculations and debates on the history of Indian cinema, Ashish Rajadhyaksha (2009) constructs what he describes as a "new

theoretical account" (p5) of India's cinematic journey during the time of celluloid technology before the onset of digital innovations. He earmarks the time period between 1895 and the early 1990s as the celluloid career of Indian cinema and tracks the journey back in time by identifying five key moments in Indian film history: the early 2000s as the era of increased global connections and the emergence of Bollywood industry; the mid-1990s that witnessed the rise of right-wing Hindutva politics; the emergency and the arrival of new cinema during mid-1970s; the destruction of studios and the rise of independent exhibitors in the 1940s; and the 1920s period during the British empire. Although the last two are not discussed in this book, this significant work, or re-work as Rajadhayksha himself calls it, serves as a comprehensive biographical and theoretical account of Indian cinema and gathers economic evidence to argue as to why Indian cinema has existed at all. It pays attention to celluloid's relationship with textuality, modes of public engagement, the act of looking and its linkages with the technological apparatus and state ideology. It also focuses on the issue of the Bollywoodisation of Indian cinema, an argument that he developed in an earlier essay in the aftermath of economic liberalisation and the constitution of a new overseas audience. [16]However, the book does not take into account some of the other significant developments that started taking place during the 2000s, such as the rise of the new independent cinema.[17] This new cinematic form is closely linked to the emergence of multiplex spaces as elite sites of pleasure[18] for the new Indian middle class.

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[16] Ashish Rajadhyaksha explores the cultural economy of Bollywood in his article "Bollywoodization of Indian cinema" (2003).

[17] The new independent cinema is understood in terms of localised micro narratives with a focus on marginal identities infused with hybrid forms of storytelling. For a detailed discussion on this film form see *India's New Independent Cinema: The Rise of the Hybrid* (2016) by Ashvin Immanuel Devasundaram.

[18] The independent films are also described as multiplex films in India. For more on the role of multiplex, social structures and the film economy see *The Multiplex in India: A Cultural Economy of Urban Leisure* (2009) by Adrian Athique and Douglas Hill.

Rajadhyaksha discusses the role of the erstwhile Film Finance Corporation (now National Film Development Corporation) in supporting the new Indian cinema of the 1970s, which is generally described as the Indian new wave (Bhaskar, 2013), and maintains that it was the last phase of active state intervention in cinematic arts. He states that by the mid-1970s, the cinema's presence was fading away as "India would abandon the new cinema in favour of telecommunications" (2009, p237). What is missing in this otherwise brilliant account is the fact that it was in this moment of the rise of telecommunication technology, with the arrival of video format and the proliferation of TV, that the careers of women all over the world, who struggled to find their way directly into the male-dominated world of cinematic arts, were advanced. Like many other women directors across the world, it was in this period that Sai Paranjpye began her career in radio and gradually made her way into the Hindi film industry via theatre and TV. Her film career progressed during the 1980s, a period that witnessed a sort of TV revolution in India, which Rajdhyaksha marks as the beginning of the end of the celluloid era in India.

Thus, Paranjpye's films provide an exciting opportunity to engage with that moment of various transitions in Indian film history, which influenced and nurtured the hybrid nature of her practice, along with her films' close encounters with space both in cities and rural centres of India, especially the western state of Maharashtra. The cultural specificity of spatial arrangements and practices form the canvas on which Paranjpye's narratives unfold to underline the nature of social life in the Indian

space. Her characters, to borrow the term from Michel De Certeau (1994) are “the ordinary practitioners” (p158) of a specific spatial context where they reside, work, socialise and negotiate relationships. Thus, in Paranjpye’s films, the lived spaces are the representational space of the socially and economically transitional moment of the 1980s in India.

The context of the 1980s

One of the most crucial factors that can be seen as a watershed moment in Indian film history is the arrival of a few women directors who brought their distinctive voices and stories during the 1980s. Aruna Raje, Vijaya Mehta, Aparna Sen and Sai Paranjpye truly broke the glass ceiling with their diverse styles and concerns. Together they constructed a discursive cinematic world of identities, dilemmas, pleasure and play in a society about to undergo a colossal cultural transformation.

In India’s postcolonial biography, the 1980s is a period marked as the starting point of peculiar and massive economic changes that altered the texture of cultural life.[19] The much-discussed liberalisation reforms of 1991 were grounded in the financial changes set in motion in the previous decade. [20] If the decade of the 1960s showcased the departure from the state-led Nehruvian developmental vision that dominated the 1950s cinematic iconography, and the 1970s presented a paradoxical time of urban chaos and resistance, the 1980s was a transitional time of media

[19] In his article “The lull that shaped the storm” (2019), RN Bhaskar argues that 1980s was the decade when Indian economy took a dramatic turn leading to the inevitable reforms during the 1990s. The full article is avialble at https://www.forbesindia.com/article/independence-special-2019/india-in-the-1980s-the-lull-that-shaped-the-storm/54779/1

[20] For more on india’s economic transformation see *India since 1980* (2011) by Sumit Ganguly and Rahul Mukherjee.

convergence, aesthetic fusion and new beginnings. The same period also witnessed the resurgence of - and refocusing on - what is often referred to as the woman's question, women's rights, and their place in society.[21] The politically turbulent time of the 1970s had also been a crucial moment from the perspective of social justice and gender. Sangita Gopal (2019) demonstrates that the 1970s provided an unprecedented moment of the mediatisation of the feminist movement. This was manifested through the establishment of feminist publications and feminists adopting new communication technologies to disseminate their agenda. Gopal states that "this time around, the women's movement gained momentum from an intensification of communicative networks and a vastly expanded media infrastructure that included not only print but also television and, to some extent, video" (2019, p42). This is one of the key writings that has been invaluable for this project in contextualising Paranjpye's directorial work in the wider media ecology of the 1970-s-80s, which I discuss as playful border-crossings in chapter two. Gopal mentions that Paranjpye's films are an important site of exploration through the category of a 'woman filmmaker' not only because she is a woman but also because of her distinct generic filmmaking style and the intermedial influences, particularly from radio and national TV where Paranjpye worked during 1970-80. Gopal's discussion is important in framing Paranjpye's cinema as a converging ground of cinematic tendencies of the 1970s and the emerging media regime of the 1980s.

As Joshi and Dudrah (2014) note, the 1970s was a time of political tumult, economic crisis and civic unrest, yet it was a creatively productive phase in Indian cinema. The

[21] For a comprehensive discussion on the status and role of women in Indian society see "Emergence of Women's Question and Role of Women's Studies by Vina Mazumdar" (1985).

national institutions – Film Finance Corporation and Film and Television Institute of India - set up a decade before are credited with having created a financial and human resource that initiated what is regarded as India's realist new wave films helmed by the "high priests of an avant-garde experimental cinema" (Bhaskar, 2013, p19), Kumar Shahani and Mani Kaul. Generally referred to as parallel cinema or art cinema, the new wave of films showed an enthusiastic exploration of aesthetics, a commitment to dealing with social ills and exposing contradictions in Indian social structures (Bhaskar, 2013, p19). However, the moment is known for a tremendous diversity of aesthetic approaches among its various filmmakers, albeit with shared values of experimentation and a commitment to depicting the reality of life. One group of films that appropriated the realist zeal, alongside an eclectic mix of long cherished mainstream flavours of entertainment, was 'middle cinema' or 'middle of the road' cinema. Although Paranjpye's films have been generally situated within this category and I do underline the commonalities as it is an aesthetic influence on Sai Paranjpye's films among many other elements originating from the media ecology of the 1970s-80s where middle cinema carved a space somewhere between extravagant mainstream and political realist films. I, however, do not contextualise these films exclusively as 'middle-class cinema', a particular usage suggested by Madhava Prasad (1998).

The middle cinema and Sai Paranjpye

The term middle cinema is not in circulation anymore for any of the contemporary film forms in India. Rather, Bollywood, independent film, or multiplex film are used to describe distinct forms of Hindi film. Middle cinema is a conceptual category that refers to a set of films that emerged from the new wave in Hindi cinema in the 1970s.

Gayatri Gopinath (2000) refers to middle cinema as “the spate of ‘socially conscious’ films made in the 1970s and early 1980s that attempted to chart a middle course between ‘‘art’’ films and the song-and-dance formulae of popular Hindi film” (p285). Satish Poduval notes that the roots of the middle cinema are traced to the young directors who trained under filmmaker Bimal Roy during the classic era of the 1950s. The formal credit for inaugurating the middle-path cinema is given to Hrishikesh Mukherjee who strived for new aesthetics of representation, somewhere between the mainstream tropes and realist verisimilitude while engaging with the Indian urban middle-class life during the 1970s and 80s. What this means is that middle cinema films are visibly distinct from the populist cinematic elements in their thematic concerns and aesthetic choices. Instead of relying on spectacles of action and dance sequences, they exhibit a toned-down visual world of identifiable socio-cultural ethos associated with the city-based Indian middle class of the 1970s-80s.

An exceptionally nuanced discussion on the ‘middle cinema’ is by Madhava Prasad (1998) in his seminal book *The Ideology of Hindi Cinema*. Prasad calls it ‘middle-class cinema’ to stress the class affiliations (thematic and spectatorial) of this aesthetic project, although in common parlance it has been referred to as ‘middle path’ or ‘middle cinema’. Its origin is traced back to the late 1960s after the Film Finance Corporation (FFC) came into existence in 1960. The FFC aimed at a “reform within the industry” (Vasudev, 1986, p32) by infusing realist tendencies in cinema by sanctioning loans to films deemed fit for the FFC’s realist agenda: “the characters with whom the audience can identify”(Vasudev, 1986, p32). Thus, FFC initiated an alternative aesthetic programme supported by the film bureaucracy in direct competition with commercial cinema, which was considered to have lost its way in

pursuit of spectacle and box-office triumphs. It is this aesthetic agenda that yielded way to the emergence of the ‘middle path’ or ‘middle cinema’, a low-budget neo-realist aesthetic focusing on urban middle-class narratives, and marked for its realist settings and deglamorised actors. Middle cinema was where “there is protest but there is also an implicit acceptance of the governing norms” (Vasudev, 1986, p35), which Prasad (1998) describes as a secured outlet against the tensions of more deeply political cinema.

Prasad identifies divergent tendencies that emerged out of the realist project, based on thematic concerns and spectatorial positioning. He states that one form of realism was political as it was addressed to the citizens which “included the perspective of the nation-state” (1998, p162) while the other was exclusively invested in the urban middle-class subject and her/his existential conditions, dreams, desires and aspirations. Prasad further outlines three sub-types of middle-class cinema. The first category of films includes those dealing with external threats to middle-class identity; in many films, this threat is likely to surface when ‘innocent’ women show a willingness to trespass outside the safe boundaries of the middle-class order. The second category includes films focused on the crisis arising out of the pressures felt in matrimonial relationships where individual ambitions and aspirations collide. The final sub-type refers to films where congested urban space and the quest for privacy seem to challenge the status quo of an otherwise peaceful and happy domestic life. The last sub-category seems to offer a domain where one can begin exploring Paranjpye’s narratives, as her films are so deeply rooted in the local space and practices. However, Prasad does not include Paranjpye anywhere in this entire discussion, which predominantly rests on Hrishikesh Mukherjee and Basu

Chatterjee’s films, along with a few other male directors such as Gulzar and Rajinder Singh Bedi. The reason for her invisibility in Prasad’s theoretical account could be that her films do not fit into these categories and pose a challenge to the broader generalisation of the middle cinema that Prasad enunciates through certain broad characteristics. On the one hand, Paranjpye made light comedies such as *Chashme Baddoor* (1981) and *Katha* (1983), on the other, she captured the plight of migrant rural laborers in *Disha* (1990), which Rashmi Sawhney (2007) describes as a film that “belongs to the genre of realist sociological” (p4). Paranjpye’s practice poses a challenge to drawing conclusions based on pre-existing orthodoxies and requires a nuanced investigation to establish patterns in her film texts. This further necessitates the need to apply innovative analytical categories such as space and spatial experience to unpack the creative layers of her films.

For instance, Prasad notes that “the middle-class cinema is marked by an overwhelming dependence on Bengali culture for its narrative and iconographic material” (ibid, p164), which applies to the set of films discussed in his work but he missed out on the subjectivity that Paranjpye’s cinema would have brought to this critical inquiry. She prominently draws on Marathi middle-class life and culture and not from the dominant Bengali culture of Hrishikesh Mukherjee and Basu Chatterjee's films. Although Maharashtra and Marathi culture is Paranjpye’s home ground, her films capture a diverse and varied image of Indian urban spaces, as she locates her narratives in Delhi (*Sparsh, Chashme Baddoor*), Bombay (*Katha, Disha, Saaz*) and rural Maharashtra *(Disha, Papeeha*), and they deal with the issues arising out of a particular space. One of the features of middle cinema has been identified as its dependence on upper-caste narratives. It would not be difficult to establish this

about Paranjpye's films as well, but one can also argue that she is not constructing this out of pure imagination. For example, if we do not see any Muslim character in *Katha*'s chawl,[22] it is more connected to the reproduction of the caste character of that kind of housing system which is unique to Bombay, and less about Paranjpye's deliberate narrative manipulations. Once again, it becomes requisite to follow the space like an archaeologist and dig deeper to establish the specific nature of spatial interactions before making cultural interpretations.

In a similar approach to Prasad, Satish Poduval (2012) argues that in the 1970s, the middle cinema's contribution was the construction of a distinct site of engagement against the rage-filled violent angry young man of the commercial cinema. He also turns to Hrishikesh Mukherjee and Basu Chatterjee's films to argue that this kind of cinema absorbed anger and outrage through the construction of middle-class virtues of civility, affability and psychological reforms, which is again not very useful in explaining Paranjpye's aspirational middle-class characters. Poduval does make a significant intervention by pointing at the re-assembling of masculine agency in middle cinema through the construction of civility and affability as desirable constructive masculine virtues, in contrast to the destructive ire of the angry young man. For Poduval civility emerges as a cultural and representational tool, a counterpoint to the fuming, reactionary and violent angry young man of the 1970s. I consider this to be an extremely potent intervention as his ideas align with Moinak Biswas (2007) who deliberates on the cultural politics of middle cinema. Since this argument is made without considering or discussing Paranjpye's cinema, in chapter four, I explore whether affability emerges as an organising strategy in Paranjpye's

[22] *Chawl* is a particular housing type which is specifically connected to the history of Mumbai. A chawl is usually a multistoried building with a number of one or two room set up. The rooms are connected through a shared corridor and common toilets.

cinema or if it has been used only as an intertextual device for her creative play with bourgeois values in changing times.

As mentioned above, Prasad sees the middle cinema's focus on domesticity and class identity as a safety valve, a fortification against political cinema. However, one cannot ignore the cultural commentary that lies beneath the surface of a light, humorous, and seemingly 'safe cinema'. Biswas (2007) argues that Hrishikesh Mukherjee's films brought charming domesticity to the fore, but it also means that these films had their cultural politics in place. Biswas writes that "to tell his family story the director had to forget the historical irony of middle-class life, the uncomfortable reality that lies just beyond the circle of that existence" (p2). Biswas situates Paranjpye in what he calls the 'Hrishikesh Mukherjee School' of cinema but I argue that in all her films she is neither invested in classist notions of domesticity like Mukherjee and Chatterjee nor does she deal with issues of romantic love and conjugality with middle-class anxieties of protecting patriarchal boundaries to forget the uncomfortable realities. As I argue in this thesis, Paranjpye employs the productive force of the middle cinema, and she constructs discursive texts out of the specific spatial contexts, cultural tensions, and social construction of self and identity. While the films of Hrishikesh Mukherjee and Basu Chatterjee are marked by their strong desire to establish the middle class as an endogamous unit (Prasad, 1998) and family as a structuring principle, Paranjpye's films like *Katha* (1983) subvert this by foregrounding the fragmentary experience of the Indian middle class, showing issues of ethics, morality and principles as negotiated through individual characters and their motivations. Her debut film *Sparsh* (1980), while dealing with the abilities of a disabled body, makes no connection between individual existential

crises and middle-class family structures. The family is not the core coupling through which the material and the phenomenological realm of lived space are accessed. The structural Marxist framework of reading middle cinema as narratives of class ideology doesn't enable a critical framework that allows reading cinematic space as an assertion of human experience. The reassertion of space in this project intends to develop a critical reading of her films with an awareness of everyday experience and cultural contexts that are essential in the way cinema makes meaning. To unmask how Paranjpye's cinema makes meaning is to engage with the specific intersections of narrative and aesthetic negotiations where the social text of life is represented.

The middle class in India

As my discussion of Sai Paranjpye's films refers to the term Indian middle class and how Paranjpye's visual and narrative strategies reconfigure the dominant narrative of the middle (class) cinema, it is imperative to ponder the socio-cultural category of the middle class (es) in India briefly. There is a general tendency to use the term as if it is self-explanatory and easily intelligible, but its definitional ambiguity is widely debated (Fernandes 2006; Fernandes and Heller 2011; Jafferlot & Der Veer 2008; Mazzarella, 2011). Indian middle-class formation has been a long historic process and there is no concrete social group with fixed economic markers to be defined as the 'middle class'. It has generally referred to the intermediate social groups between the elite and the working-class population, but it defies any neat boundaries whatsoever. Leela Fernandes (2006) notes that the middle class itself is a three-tier stratum of the upper, middle, and lower middle class in India. Sanjay Joshi (2017) suggests that the middle class "is a cultural construct and therefore a contingent one that varies over time and context" (p2), thus its nature, role, and social relations can

best be viewed through the lens of space and time. The development and transformation of the Indian middle classes occurred in phases, starting from the colonial period with the British establishment of industrial economic activities, administrative structures, and the introduction of educational institutions. Jodhka & Prakash (2011) note three moments in the historical evolution of the Indian middle classes: the colonial era of an English-educated, financially comfortable class of employees; the post-independence period, from 1947 until the 70s, which saw the development of a professional and managerial class; and the third moment from 1980s onwards when the neoliberal reforms began to set in. There is of course the fourth moment, the ‘new middle class’ triggered by the liberalisation policy of 1991 but its seeds were sown during the shift of the 1970s -80s, and the ‘new-ness’ is gauged not so much in terms of its composition but in consumption patterns which are a crucial indicator of socio-economic transformation. Fernandes (2006) writes that the British rule stunted the possibility of robust industrialisation in India, and the colonial political economy shaped the pre-independence Indian middle class where “most members belonged to the service and literary classes” (p4). The institutionalisation of English education and the spatial patterns of British rule cultivated the historical conditions for the rise of an urban social class that distinguished itself through education and access to colonial modernity. Fernandes (2006) notes that English education was of particular significance in allowing this class to segregate itself from other social groups. The caste hierarchies and religion intertwined with the creation of the colonial middle class in different regions of India.

The post-independence period ushered in an era of further expansion of the bureaucratic-managerial-administrative professional middle class under the

Nehruvian model of state-led economic development. William Mazzarella (2005) describes this postcolonial class as “a Nehruvian civil service-oriented salariat, short on money but long on institutional perks” (p1) which refers to the systems of patronage and interdependence that developed between the state and the middle class during this era.[23] However, the political and economic climate of the 1970s-80s presented a major transitional moment in the social life of India. The decline of Nehruvian developmental politics, with city-based social movements, growing economic distress, and the declaration of the Emergency (1975) provided the chaotic preconditions for the economic shift towards liberal reforms that gradually followed in the 1980s and was structurally implemented through the 1990s. The ‘new’ middle-class identity that emerged afterward is a curious mix of historical continuities and newer tendencies in the wake of increased global interactions in every walk of Indian social life especially marked for its unconventional consumption practices.

Since the Indian middle class is a sociological category formed through both the colonial context and the native socio-cultural hierarchies, there is no definite indicator to identify the diverse middle class (es) in India except for some historic markers such as education, employment and anxiety to dissociate themselves from the poor working classes. Joshi (2017) describes how the term ‘middle class’ can connote different meanings in different social contexts. “In the United States, it is often used as a synonym for “ordinary folk.” In the United Kingdom, it references an elite with economic and social privileges. In India, “the middle class” acquired its valence through a history that encompasses colonialism, nationalism, and desire for upward

[23] For a detailed discussion on middle class see *Middle Class-Democratic politics in an era of Economic Reform* (2006) by Leela Fernandes.

social mobility" (Joshi, 2017, p1). Despite the difficulty in ascribing concrete characteristics to the middle class, at least two important aspects of the process of middle-class identity construction have been noted by scholars (Deshpandey 1997; Varma 2007). First, the professional standing and income parameters are not the sole constitutive elements of the Indian middle-class identity. The middle class is marked by its consciousness of itself and the cultural values attached to its identity as a bearer of modern yet traditional ways of being. It is the cumulative cultural capital built through modern education, professional status, and self-assertion of an identity that allowed the middle class to carve its cultural politics. Second, the middle class is a composite of ambiguities, contradictory ideas, and belief structures. In the Indian context, the middle class has a trans-regional character which means that any monolithic understanding of this social group may or may not help in explaining the specifics of regional lived spaces. Thus, both cohesion and contradiction are vital characteristics of the middle-class identity.

In the space of this thesis, I demonstrate how this complex and diverse category of the professional Indian middle class (es) figures in Paranjpye's spatial narratives. I will be discussing how Paranjpye's representation of the aspirational youth relates to the middle-class identity though it also differs from the earlier narratives of middle (class) cinema moulded after a particular regional Indian identity. A playful subversion of the ideological positioning of the middle-class identity in middle cinema texts is a distinct feature of the creative constructions that Paranjpye's films depict. It is significant because it endows a dialogical nature to these films, the characters may seem familiar and ordinary but their relativity is a tool for situating them in a conversation with contemporary time and film texts to question, ridicule, empathies

and have fun. Her filmic texts are an eclectic and unconventional site of woman's cinema steeped in a language of realism that speaks to the discourse of social histories and local ways of being.

Women's cinema: Diverse site of engagement

In discussing women directors' work, American and British scholarly intervention has charted new directions in the recent past, though with a little focus on transnational Indian cinema. One of the most significant developments has been the growing exploration of generic filmmaking by women directors and a recent anthology from India, *Refocus: The films of Zoya Akhtar* (2022), is a welcome edition that looks into the art, craft and industrial context of a contemporary woman director. However, it has taken a long time to come to this point of engagement as far as investigating genre cinema is concerned. Christine Gledhill (1987, 2012) argues that early feminist criticism focused on gender representations, and women's cinema was positioned as counter-cinema to carve out a space for women's voices in the patriarchal site of cinema. Hollywood genres, which have been notorious for negative stereotyping of women and reproducing conventions for audience loyalty, appeared to be the enemies of the feminist agenda. Hence, gender and genre were never placed in a critical dialogical relationship until the late twentieth century. New readings of melodrama (Gledhill, 1987; Vasudevan, 2010) provided a fresh site of investigation and created a further opportunity for how the gender and genre "relationship may be refigured" (Gledhill, 2012, p2). While discussing genre and authorship, Jane Gaines (2012) suggests that "rather than commending the genius of the artist, we praise the ingenuity of the narrative and iconographic structure, a structure itself incorporating the director and her audience" (p17). These discussions suggest we should look

beyond the conventional category of authorship and explore the directorial agency in making narrative and aesthetic choices that might be more useful in situating gendered experiences. My approach to reading and unpacking spaces is shaped by feminist film theory and its emphasis on the need to engage with forms of gendered experience in genre films, as expressed by many feminist film scholars.

Christine Gledhill (2012) argues that a critical investigation of gender and genre should be done by refocusing on genres as creative cinematic processes. According to Gledhill, construing genre by abandoning ideologically guarded positions would allow greater aesthetic access to understanding the complexity of the gender and genre relationship. Following Gledhill's suggestion, Thornham's (2019) *Spaces of Women's Cinema* explores the specific relationship between space, place, and genre, primarily in European and American women's cinema. She discusses the specificity of space in women filmmakers' work through a generic lens. Thornham traces how women directors make use of or re-imagine those spaces which are identified with particular genres such as the 'masculine space' of wilderness in the American Western, or enclosed private spaces as 'women's space'. Despite being set in a different cultural context than Hindi cinema, my project comes closer to Thornham's work for I am also contextualising and deconstructing the lived space and spatial language to interrogate various organising categories of human life. Thornham's work offers a spatial re-imagination of the gender and genre relationship and provides useful insights into reading the gendered articulations of filmic spaces in Paranjpye's films.
Like Thornham's particular focus on women's work, Patricia White (2015) also discusses women directors' work in *Women's Cinema, World Cinema* though she

takes a polycentric approach to broaden the scope of engagement. If we keep aside the contentions about the term World Cinema,[24] then what emerges is that White opens up a space for discussion about women directors' work post-2000 which she describes as a "millennial landscape" (p11), a playful terrain that is different from the anti-pleasure logic of 1970s cinematic feminism.[25] This new context of women filmmakers is punctuated by new realities, global connections, and technological advancements such as digital media. White suggests that ritual categories such as authorship and aesthetics need to be supplemented by newer modes of analysis to include production, distribution, and exhibition practices. White's approach helps attempt to address Paranjpye's creative strategies. Although her institutional and technological context differed from the developments that have taken place since 2000, Paranjpye's films present a playful site of transforming social realities, fused with intermedial dialectics and humour.

Since romance and humour are major elements in Paranjpye's narratives, Deborah Jermyn's work (2009, 2017) on romantic comedies in general - and Nancy Meyers's films in particular - offers an interesting intervention. Jermyn's critical method in evaluating Meyers' films through theoretical as well as media-generated narratives, allows for a multifaceted interrogation of how a woman director's image is constructed and received in popular cultural commentaries. Jermyn's approach makes the field an exciting playground to engage with the multiplicity of women's

[24] For a detailed discussion on the term 'world cinema' see "Towards a positive definition of world cinema" (2006) by Lucia Nagib.

[25]Discussing early feminist texts such as Claire Johnston's landmark essay *Women's cinema as Counter Cinema*, (1973) and Laura Mulvey's seminal piece *Visual Pleasures in Narrative Cinema*, (1975), White notes that the "current climate is much less suspicious of pleasure than was the cultural feminism of the early 1970s"(2015, p9).

narratives. Although Meyers has many things in common with Sai Paranjpye, such as that both their careers spanned various media and, as generic filmmakers, their work has been underappreciated, Meyers has been the subject of scholarly discussions, while there is a dearth of scholarly work on Paranjpye that deconstructs and critically contextualises her filmmaking. It is this gap that my project aims to narrow down through a nuanced engagement with Paranjpye's films by foregrounding space and spatiality while probing the films' creative tensions and negotiations, particularly with the conventions of the middle cinema and hybrid aesthetics.

Hybrid aesthetics and medial dialogues

As indicated before, Paranjpye's career is a distinctive case study of a woman director whose films have neither been subjected to feminist scholarly readings nor examined in relation to the middle cinema leaving a lack of a critical framework to read her work. Paranjpye's work presents a complex intermixing of material and influences drawn from her own experience as a creator in various audio-visual media, including the wider media ecology of theatre, radio, video art and national television. Instead of categorising these films as intermedial texts, I suggest that her cinema displays a hybrid aesthetic where intermedial moments and intertextuality have been employed to perform specific functions that I discuss throughout this dissertation. The hybrid cinematic form that her films display, took shape in the emerging media environment of the 1970s-80s while simultaneously infusing the cinematic culture with eclectic style and experimentation. In her hybrid aesthetics, intermedial infusions and intertextuality are two crucial aspects that also help in locating the difficulty in the neat labelling of her cinema. I am using the term

intermediality not as an ontological condition of Paranjpye's work but as a critical category for analysing the constitutive elements of her narrative configuration.[26] Intermediality in her work is similar to what Christopher Balme (2004) and Jens Schroter (2011) have discussed about intermedial relations. Balme identifies three kinds of intermedial relations and one of them designates intermedialty as "the attempt to realize in one medium the aesthetic conventions and habits of seeing and hearing in another medium" (p7). In this particular aspect, Balme narrows down the understanding of intermediality to the exchange between the media that occurs both on the level of content as well as conventions and perceptions of one medium into the other. This is how Paranjpye constructs her film by drawing and remixing narrative tropes and aesthetic conventions from theatre, TV and dominant print cultures in the 1970s-80s. I contextualise the significance of these medial dialogues for the films as well as the larger context of Hindi film history in the next chapter.

As stated earlier, Paranjpye utilises generic material from middle cinema, although her narrative economy has deeper connections with the growing mediatisation of the 1980s and a career that crosses radio, theatre, TV, and film. Gopal (2018) states that Paranjpye's intermedial career, particularly as a TV producer for the Indian National Broadcaster, was instrumental in shaping her narrative preferences and aesthetic sensibilities. I see these elements in these films as an underlying tendency of border-crossing in her films which is discussed in detail in chapter two. It will suffice here to point out that the evolving electronic media landscape, programming formats and historic social changes during the 1980s allowed Paranjpye to

[26] For a detailed theoretical discussion on cinematic intermediality and questions related to multiple media relations see *Cinema and Intermediality: The Passion for the In-Between* (2020) by Agnes Petho.

acknowledge, as well as play with, multiple kinds of borders including media technology. For example, Paranjpye's two feature films (*Sparsh* (1980) and *Chashme Baddoor* (1981)) emerged from TV-specific formats that were adapted into screenplays, while *Katha* (1982) is a cinematic retelling of a folktale loosely remixed with a Marathi play written by S. G. Sathe. Paranjpye's screen appropriations open up a creative universe of "medial transposition" (Rajewsky, 2005, p47), making it difficult to identify a single narrative or aesthetic source to categorise her film form. Paranjpye's association with TV as a writer, director and producer shaped her films in various ways including the source materials they drew from, mise en scene and the phenomenology of the local lived experience. For instance, Paranjpye worked for the national TV station *Doordarshan* at a time when it was deemed necessary that TV programming should have social relevance and educational value.[27] This experience with socially concerned national programming remains operative in the majority of Paranjpye's films, right from her debut with *Sparsh* evolved out of a short teleplay about a school for blind children with a resolute principal who trained the students to be self-sufficient. If television provided the narrative source for *Sparsh*, the sonic detailing as a spatial cue can be credited to her skills of audio production honed during her radio days. This particular aspect of sound is discussed in chapter three on *Sparsh* where sound serves as a means of spatial knowledge for blind characters including the protagonist.

Clearly, in Paranjpye's films, intermediality performs a larger function than a mere thematic or aesthetic transportation of material from one medium to another or

[27] For more details on such deliberations regarding the national TV programming in India see *An Indian Personality for Television- report on the working group on software for Doordarshan* (1985) by P.C. Joshi.

experimental mixing of media for effect; rather it becomes a socially and culturally charged imaginative space informed by dynamic interrelations between narrative, aesthetic concerns, audience reception, and the socio-cultural context.

In the same context, Paranjpye's *Chashme Baddoor* is a unique film where intertextuality is used as a device in constructing the comedic texture of the film. Paranjpye transforms the cinematic spaces of *Chashme Baddoor* into reflexive spaces of intertextual dialogue between the commercial film form and the middle cinema (chapter four). Intertextuality has been intrinsic to the debates on intermediality. However, since the 1990s, there has been a growing tendency to discuss intertextuality in narrowed-down terms, as a distinct dialogical relationship in a specific text. This thesis, and in particular the discussion on *Chashme Baddoor* in chapter four, takes that narrowed-down strategic approach of deconstructing the intertextual relations and their role in Paranjpye's film form. Paranjpye's Intermedial and intertextual strategies defy any rigid interpretation based on specific iconography or thematic concerns offered by class-based analysis of the middle cinema.

Sai Paranjpye's films: Not Bollywood

A recent interview-based anthology on women screenwriters by Anubha Yadav, titled *Scripting Bollywood* (2021), includes an insightful conversation with Sai Paranjpye about her experiences and thoughts on her writing process. Since Paranjpye is a Hindi filmmaker and she has worked with generic form, it may appear appropriate to refer to her films as 'Bollywood'. However, this thesis will not be using the term Bollywood, even though it has often been retrospectively accepted as a synonym for Hindi films. This reductive usage pretty much represents the crux of the misplaced

understanding of Bollywood outside of India, as the fixed postcode for the ‘Indian’ film Industry. The elusive ‘Indian’ identity is punctuated with immense multiplicity and cultural diversity, just as is the case with cinema(s) in India. Outside India, Bollywood is often understood to refer to any film that has some sort of connection with India. Stereotypically speaking, it stands for an exotic Indian film form with an essential concoction of emotional drama, song, and dance sequences. It is seen as an industry that challenges the hegemonic presence of Hollywood while adapting its style and formulas. As Shakuntala Rao (2010) notes, the term is used both “pejoratively and with pride as shorthand for a film industry located in Mumbai, previously named Bombay, the term Bollywood has come to refer to the roughly 150 Hindi films that roll out each year from the city’s studios” (p2). The term Bollywood emerged with the post-1990 liberal economic regime in India and provides only a partial view of the Hindi film industry or Hindi cinema, though the academic engagement with the term Bollywood has been far wider. Numerous studies engage with various aspects of ‘Bollywood’ such as song and dance (Gopal, 2008); visual culture (Dwyer and Patel, 2002); postmodern aesthetics (Wright, 2015), Bollywood and its relationship with new media terrain, geography and national identity (Kavoori and Punathambekar, 2008), the digital technology’s role in shaping the narrative and aesthetics of Bollywood films in the twenty-first century (Gehlawat, 2015).

Despite the global acceptance of the term as a synonym for Indian cinema, Ashish Rajadhyaksha (2003) separates Indian cinema from Bollywood and maintains that Bollywood refers to the totality of the culture industry within which cinema occupies only a part of that marketable and export-worthy cultural ecology, including production and distribution of videos, music and other multimedia forms and platforms participating in this enterprise. In the absence of a concrete and stable

elemental value, Bollywood appears to be more intuitive than a definitive reference used to understand the spectacular film form with song and dance as the main reference points.

In a similar kind of argument, Ashvin Punathambekar (2013) states that Bollywood is primarily a transnational cultural industry sustained through television and digital media networks, and cinema is just one element in the whole story of Bollywood. Madhava Prasad (2008) wonders at the huge global currency of the term Bollywood. Although he stresses that this kind of cinema has emerged as a genre of its own and is a symptom of consumer capitalism, Prasad argues that this cinema has rearranged the nationalist ideology of tradition and modernity in the light of a new economic reality where national identity is asserted and brought back home through the figure of Non-Resident Indian (NRI) as the repository of cultural values.

The purpose of mentioning the discontent with the term Bollywood is to highlight my position in this thesis. I will be using the term 'Hindi cinema' to refer to Paranjpye's films. The seven films that form the case studies for this project were produced and exhibited during the period from 1980 to 2009. It means that a few of them correspond with the time when Bollywood began to flex its muscles and went on to become the most accessible Indian cultural institution in the globalised world. But Bollywood has its own production, distribution and marketing structures that all the films cannot make use of and Paranjpye's films are an example of such filmmaking taking place outside of the dominant circuits of mainstream Bollywood.[28] My usage of

[28] In her book *Producing Bollywood* (2012) Tejaswini Ganti provides a comprehensive account of the social and industrial context of how Bollywood evolved and what constitutes its dominant production practices.

‘Hindi cinema’ signifies that my project is invested in the pre-Bollywood phase as well as the non-Bollywood form of Hindi film. Similarly, with regard to the space of Mumbai/Bombay, I contend that both names have their own political baggage whether colonial or regional and this study is not concerned with that part of spatio-cultural politics. Hence, I will be using the commonly used name Bombay instead of Mumbai (official name since 1995) for uniformity while investigating Paranjpye’s spatial narratives spread across three decades.

As illustrated in this chapter, Sai Paranjpye’s cinema is a complex polyphonic world deeply entangled with the history of built environments as well as the contemporary socio-economic changes that took place in India in the 1980s and 90s. Nonetheless, despite the variety of genres in her filmography, these disparate lived geographies exhibit intriguing continuity in the way she explores and questions larger political issues through multiple micro-narratives of ordinary and marginalised people. The following chapter explores the recurring themes to highlight the common threads that unify Paranjpye’s multilocal, fragmented and diverse story world before moving on to case studies in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter Two

Unity of themes in Paranjpye’s cinema

Sai Paranjpye’s eclectic and heterogeneous filmography offers an exciting opportunity to the researcher as well as the challenge of drawing out patterns and discerning connections. In the films examined in this project, each story unfolds in a different space (city, village and forest) and its form bears the stamp of the creative environment of its time. Moving smoothly between media and drawing on varied aesthetic elements in weaving her cinematic narratives is one of the most distinguishing features of Paranjpye’s biography and creative imagination. She

admits that the diverse and varied nature of her creative practice is the underlying reason for the title of her autobiography *A Patchwork Quilt: A Collage of My Creative life* (2020). Yet, despite her versatile style, the common narrative in popular accounts of her work is astonishingly limiting. A sense of ambiguity surrounds her oeuvre and a lack of complexity has been assigned to her 'entertaining' and enjoyable films in popular readings. For instance, reviewing her autobiography, Rita Kothari writes that Paranjpye "captured the middle class and its foibles and graces in a fable-like form. This quality stems from the very sunny and comic vision of the life she brought to the world of arts" (Kothari, 2021). Similarly, in many popular accounts, she is referred to as a comedy filmmaker or the "queen of humour" (Rangayan & Gupta, 2013, no page).

These brief comments point toward a broader tendency of reading her films as tales of humour, wit, middle-class life and its idiosyncrasies narrated with a touch of warmth. In sum, such readings of her films that celebrate the aesthetics and narratives of romance and comedy seem to foreclose other possible 'serious' discussions that these films generate. This is not to suggest that humorous and comic elements are not important, but rather to point out that this vocabulary that firmly relies only on 'comic vision' and 'warmth' somewhat explains the reason for the need to go beyond the obvious and excavate other critical dimensions in addition to humour and middle-class experiences in Paranjpye's cinema. The films that my project focuses on deal with lived space, spatial organisations and the corporeal experience of inhabiting those spaces. As mentioned earlier, these films have been selected because their eclectic relationship with everyday spaces contributes to the sociospatial discourse of cinematic space in Indian cinema. These narratives

position the viewer in a way that creates opportunities for critical reflection on the questions of self, spatial experience and interpersonal relationships. A closer look into these intricate narrative threads reveals certain thematic elements and concerns that appear to create recurring patterns. In this chapter, I discuss some of those tendencies and themes that characterise Paranjpye's spatial narratives and open up fresh sites of discussion on her unruly creative enterprise in these films. I discuss some themes that create a sense of unity and continuity across her films through five conceptual categories -1) Border Crossing; 2) Perceptions of Home; 3) private/public divisions; 4) paradigms of social and spatial marginalities; 5) acts of *mazaa*/fun.

I argue that this underlying unity of Paranjpye's narratives is a unique elemental quality that is foundational to her narrative constructions, the creative essence of the 'Paranjpye style' that makes visible the threads of everyday life. Guiliana Bruno (2008) states that film as an "art form is deeply involved in the fabric of things and the design of the self. Film is a very material object that makes visible something that is invisible, including our imaginary and mental space: atmospheres and moods. Through forms of light, it basically creates and is able to transmit everything that belongs to the fashioning of everyday life" (pp147-148). I think these overlapping themes and interwoven elements that I discuss ahead are the threads that stitch the fabric of Paranjpye's films and reveal the design of life. Together, these themes characterise the phenomenological conditions of existence in her filmic world and are connected with the logic of everyday practices which is not common to the directors of middle cinema.

These themes and elements are not mutually exclusive categories; they feed into each other forming overlapping and layered scaffolding for socio-spatial experiences across the narratives. For example, the blurring of private/public divisions can be discussed under border crossings or in relation to home as a liminal space that holds myriad possibilities of crossing socially conditioned borders such as those of gender and patriarchy. Yet, they have been categorised as distinct themes because the notions of border-crossing or the perceptions of home are more abstract ideas, a realm of imagination that may or not be tied to the concrete physical spatial cues that essentially underlie the idea of private/public divisions. Deliberating on them as separate yet overlapping categories is intended to focus on unique narrative and formal aspects of the films. On the one hand, the recurring element of border-crossing, the way I am using it here allows understanding of the multiple forms of subjective, narrative and medial crossings in the films and implicates the audience in textual readings. The interpretation of private/public divisions, on the other hand, is more focused on gauging the potential role or functions of spatial organisations in maintaining/disrupting the social order of everyday life and the codes of self. I am deliberating on how all these elements work towards constructing the specific manifestations of spatial relations in the films.

This conceptual unity across the themes is not a forced idea but was part of the evolutionary journey of this project as the themes only became visible while deconstructing the films. I read them in interaction with each other, punctuating life as it happens at the intersection of these experiential categories. The themes coalesce in shaping the interrelations of space and embodied experience. For instance, border-crossing in these films does not simply refer to the territorial act of moving from one geographical location to another, mainly understood as migration

from the village to the city. Here, the meaning extends to the metaphorical realm of transcending social, cultural and experiential borders such as class, gender and the historic time of economic restructuring since the 1980s in India. The notion of border connotes a system of categorisation or organisation and border-crossing opens up a liminal zone of negotiations, risk, aspirations and possibilities. These films depict intricate zones of negotiation with social, cultural and national questions as well as emancipating desires. One of the other ways in which the metaphor of border-crossing becomes relevant in Paranjpye's cinema is the intermedial and intertextual tendencies. Paranjpye's cinema is in constant dialogue with the dominant visual cultures of her time and also with traditional and emerging media practices. These media crossings broaden the aesthetic possibilities of engaging with the subject matter and complicate the perceived worldview of the audience. Paranjpye's aesthetic experiments and narratives encompass multiple kinds of border crossings, necessitating a deliberation on what these border crossings entail for the films in question and the larger history of Hindi cinema.

Inevitably tied to the theme of border-crossing are the spatial codes and perceptions of home depicted in the films. In these films, home is not just a physical setting where plots unfold, it is an emotional and volatile geography with an influential agency in determining the shape of life. These films conceptualise home as a material and affective realm of belonging. But they are also alert to the fact that home is a complex cultural space of fears, anxieties and power relations. Home is relational but it is a space that needs constant emotional labour and engagement to sustain the familial network. The issues of privacy, private/public dichotomies and the socio-temporal context also govern the home environment. The films' affective

agency indicates the porousness of the domestic spaces. As the discussion below will illustrate, private/public divisions are particularly challenged in these films in more than one way. The private and the public borders lose meaning not only in the co-living domestic spaces where privacy is not possible but also in the way private and the public are connected through one's self-fashioning, behaviour, social bonds and pressures. The capitalist binaries do not define the lived cultural world in these films.[29] The blurred private/public borders are starker in the shared living arrangements of marginal subjectivities that these films engage with. Paranjpye's protagonists come from non-elite backgrounds and are either striving to make their way through the emerging economic structures or living peripheral lives in a country where the city emerged as a postcolonial fetish. Here, a multi-layered conceptualisation of marginalisation has been mapped across the films, not only economic but also social and emotional. I will look at various kinds of marginal positions, a recurring theme that I discuss later in this chapter. Lastly, the underlying element that is perhaps also the basis of the frequently used adjective 'Paranjpye style' is the art and practices of fun that her characters display. I will read this aspect of her narratives through the Hindustani term *mazaa*, an expression used to describe a sensory experience in activities that one enjoys either alone or collectively. If we think spatially, the acts that allow a person to indulge in *mazaa* signify an abstract space of liberation from the dynamics of the concrete lived world, a liminal zone that

[29] Sociologist Dipankar Gupta (2003) mentions that the use of private/public distinction is in use for almost five centuries. Drawing from Richard Sennet's classic work *The Fall of Public Man*, Gupta mentions that the term was first used in England circa 1470 where private denoted the privileges enjoyed by the government officials in upper ranks while public referred to common good. This was different in France where the term gained currency during the 17th and 18th century. The French usage of the term public referred mainly to the audience of plays meaning the arena outside of the domestic realm. It is this distinction which forms the basis of how we use and understand private/public in general. However, as Gupta notes, these borders do not act as sufficient conditions that organise or explain cultural life in modern societies.

facilitates transcending borders that limit human lives. Hence, before discussing the films in chapters three to six, examining the way these recurring themes and elements establish unity across narratives is essential.

Border-crossings

In *Aviation, Tourism and Dreaming in 1960s Hindi cinema* Ranjani Mazumdar (2011) touches upon a specific and literal act of border crossing where the colourful economy of tourism, aviation and visual culture takes centre stage. Discussing select Hindi films that showcase global travels, she argues that these films configured a new imagination of space while dealing with technological advances and urgent economic currents of the 1960s. In other scholarly accounts, the notions of journey and border-crossing have been mostly utilised in mapping the global travels of Bollywood films and the cross-border currency of song and dance (Dudrah, 2012; Gopal, 2008). In these readings of Hindi cinema, the concept and context of borders tie back to the geographical boundaries of the nation-state. However, the conceptualisation of border-crossing I am referring to here as a tendency in Paranjpye's cinema is not only about physical borders but also, and even more so, a figurative imagination of embodied borders. The psychological, social and cultural borders that necessitate a complex process of negotiation that Hamid Naficy (2001) refers to as the "journeys of identity" (p237) in the context of exilic and diasporic cinema. As Naficy notes, intangible borders entail multiple negotiations and serial journeys of transformation. It is more a metaphorical extension of concrete geographical borders through which socio-economic processes of inclusion/exclusion, transformations and practices of navigation can be mapped. These metaphorical crossings are visible at two levels in Paranjpye's films: a) the

intangible socio-economic borders (class, gender, etc.) that her characters cross or at least wish to transgress while navigating changing modern times; b) the medial border crossings, i.e., the hybridised aesthetic that result in a fuzzy and playful form of these films. Most of the films examined here were made during the 1980s, the high noon of structural changes in India's economy and an emerging media landscape of new technologies which is deeply tied to women's greater participation as creators. As such, "the long 1980s" (Menon and Nigam, 2007, p5) can be conceptualised as a crucial socio-cultural border in Indian national life, the pre-neoliberal era gearing up to enter into the historic age of economic reforms and its unprecedented cultural impact. Paranjpye's films mediate that crucial temporal shift, the process of reimagining the self in the context of a 'new time' that inaugurated a new realm of material and psychological experiences of being.

The idea of the border and border crossing is a powerful framework to unpack sociocultural experiences, particularly in the context of the societal transformations that the films capture. The gradual evolution of multidisciplinary border studies since the 1990s has established that the presence and role of borders in human life stretch beyond the geographic and geopolitical conceptualisation of physical borders and border crossing.[30] The shift in the understanding of borders from fixed territorial lines to a broader landscape of belonging, affiliation, inclusion and exclusion (Newman, 2006) opens up possibilities of examining borders from sociocultural perspectives within a specific society. These new theoretical debates paved the way to think about borders as metaphors for constructed social identities, particularly in cultural

[30] Tuulikki Kurki outlines some of the discussions on territorial, social and cultural conceptualisations of borders in "Borders from the Cultural Point of View: An Introduction to Writing at Borders" (2014).

investigations. Hence, questions such as what sort of borders operate and regulate everyday life and how people navigate them in a given social context became important. To think about these questions is to focus on the social construction of identities such as gender, class, migrant or diasporic identities, and how these stratifications produce borders of lived experience and necessitate negotiations and contestations. The metaphor of border crossing becomes relevant in some of these films through the figure of migrant characters striving to build a life in the city. This is not new in Hindi cinema, however, internal migration has not been pronouncedly explored as a border-crossing experience. Since the 1950s, economic migration to big cities (mostly Bombay) has been a common theme in Hindi films. The dislocation and displacement from home is a form of border crossing that necessitates the act of negotiation, contestation and reimagination of self in specific space, time and socio-economic circumstances. In the specific context of exilic films, Naficy (2001) argues that the acts of constant negotiation make the exilic experience a "processual and endless" (p237) journey of desires and shifting identities. These journeys can be traced in many classic Hindi films, though not exilic films yet dealing with the disruptive and life-altering experience of rural-to-urban migration. In the act of leaving what was imagined to be a tranquil village and entering the chaotic city by protagonists in films such as *Shri 420* (*Mr. 420*, 1955) or encountering the merciless city by a thirsty villager in search of water in *Jagte Raho* (*Keep Awake*, 1956), the migrants have been portrayed as crossing both concrete and figurative borders of self-identity. The post-independence films also encoded allegorical accounts of displacement and loss as a strategy to deal with the socio-political turmoil of India's partition (*Waqt*/*Time,* 1965), a violent experience that entailed reimagining self and belonging in changed social realities.

Hindi cinema, over the years, has constantly produced narratives that deal with the broader socio-political contexts though it has mostly done so through allegorical tales of romance and melodrama. If the 1950s and 1960s cinema displayed hopes of nation-building driven by Nehruvian socialist visions of development, the 1970s and 1980s presented a moment of rupture with a past enthused with developmental hopes. The rising urban unrest, social movements and political discontent that led to India's dark phase of Emergency between 1975 and 1977 also triggered a new urgent role for the mass media and its massive proliferation during the post-Emergency era of the 1980s. This was the phase when national TV programming started taking shape as a new cultural site of subjectification and the emerging consumer economy. Rajagopal (2011) notes that in the post-Emergency era, where democratic consent was replaced by strategies of coercion, media emerged as a crucial site for mediating state-citizen relationships, giving birth to new forms of programming where the new middle-class subject was created and addressed through the intensifying consumerist culture.

This period marked the transition from Nehruvian developmentalism to the emergence of market liberalisation forces. The waning power of labour in the 1970s-80s after the historic industrial actions of the railways' strike (1974) and the textile mill workers' strike (1982-83) signalled the death of the developmental vision and the onset of market liberalisation (Rajagopal, 2011). This force field of structural transformations and emergent cultural forms in the 1980s formed the context of the lived environment in Paranjpye's cinema though her films do not always engage with the harsh realities of the period. It was during this transitional phase of diminishing developmentalism that triggered an economic environment where restructuring and

liberal reforms became inevitable during the following decade. The rising consumer cultures and media explosion became significant influencers of emerging self-identity in society going through immense changes during the 1980s. Some of Paranjpye's characters display a willingness to negotiate these symbolic borders in order to be able to live in the new 'now', adapting to the rapidly emerging consumerist regime while others are holding on to the older ways of being. What provides interiority to this critical evolutionary phase and allows us to decode the embodied temporal perspective of these transformations affecting daily life is Paranjpye's nuanced depiction of the intimate world of the characters beyond their positioning as national or ideological subjects. For instance, the villagers in *Disha* strive hard to find ways and means to navigate the sense of dislocation and displacement by becoming migrant labour in the city, facing the shifting economic environment and diminished labour power exemplified by the mill worker's strike and the destruction of the cotton-textile industry in Bombay.[31] The film, released at the cusp of India's giant leap into economic liberalisation, conceptualises migration to the distant geography of the city as a border-crossing experience that entails negotiating a new identity as the urban poor. This is a disenfranchised life, where being and belonging acquire new meanings, with a psyche divided between the city and the country. It is interesting to note that the film shows only males as city migrants revealing the gendered pattern of economic migration and exclusion of women from urban labour markets. Although women are left behind 'at home' in the village, their life and the private world do not remain unaffected by the tragic impact of migration. Paranjpye captures multiple frontiers across films that women negotiate both in private and public spaces and

[31] For a detailed social history of Bombay city with a specific focus on economic transfromations and the working class see *History, Culture and the Indian city* (2009) R. Chandavarkar.

this is particularly significant in the changing economic activities in acutely gendered social structures.

One of the key moments during the dark phase of the Emergency was the release of *Towards Equality* (1974) report on women's status in India. This politically charged report is widely regarded as the foundational text for the resurgence of the post-Emergency women's movement during the 1970s. Among many other issues, the report crucially highlighted the economic exclusion and marginalisation of rural women in the agricultural sector. This was also the period of rising legal debates on dowry, rape and citizenship, another crucial symptom of society at the border of deeply unsettling cultural transformations. In this context, Paranjpye's cinema can be read as being actively engaged in thinking about women's onscreen image.[32] There are significantly affirmative ways in which female subjectivities and agential capacity is teased out. The way female characters inhabit private and public spaces, and navigate the changing times or take control of their circumstances are symptoms of aspiring and desiring women, who find freedom in small acts of daily life that go unnoticed. For instance, in *Chashme Baddoor* Neha works part-time as a saleswoman for a detergent company. Her door-to-door job positions her as an active agent in the emerging consumerist economy, a wandering 'public' woman accessing middle-class homes in the city. The woman's presence in the public space has always been a symbol of moral threat as Elizabeth Wilson (1991) notes in her book *Sphinx in the City*. The sexual possibilities and ambiguities that surround the figure of a wandering saleswoman challenge the respectable borders of the

[32] She contributed write ups on women's social position in India as well women's cinematic portrayal in Hindi films such as this article "She and the silver screen" (2005) available at https://www.himalmag.com/she-and-the-silver-screen/ .

patriarchal order. Neha’s job allows her to step out of the boundaries of the domestic space and be a participant in shaping the socio-economic space, making her vulnerable and empowered at the same time - a hallmark of neo-liberal processes of self-fashioning.

In this sense, Paranjpye’s cinema exhibits the temporal pluralities of the 1980s, both in its narrative concerns and aesthetic configurations. If the late 1970s and early 1980s saw the expansion of TV in India, the role of the Film Finance Corporation (later NFDC) also remained crucial in shaping both the aesthetic texture of films and filmmakers’ careers during this period. NFDC was instrumental in driving India’s ‘parallel cinema’ or the realist new wave.[33] The Indian new wave created space for diverse cinematic experimentation, including the so-called middle cinema. This appropriated some of the new wave’s realist aesthetic (local settings, unglamorous lifestyles) but added ‘entertainment value’ for commercial success. Paranjpye’s films share a unique relationship with the Indian new wave: she employed the neo-realist aesthetics of location shooting, utilised non-mainstream actors and focused on social concerns, some of the most distinguishing features of realist films. But intermedial relations in her films go beyond the spirit of stylistic maneuvering and perform crucial narrative purposes. As mentioned earlier, this period witnessed a massive proliferation of media technologies and a new form of TV programming where the focus was on quotidian middle-class lives. Punathambekar and Sundar (2016) describe this phase as the “time of television” (p401), one which saw the emergence

[33] Indian new wave refers to the realist art-cinema movement in India that saw its golden period during the 1970s. It took shape under the statist desires and directions through National Film Finance Corporation. The organisation financed films deemed as ‘good cinema’ focusing on the realities of Indian life as opposed to the glitz and gloss of the mainstream Hindi film.

and immense popularity of new formats such as soap operas and sitcoms on Indian TV. The attraction and possibilities of the 'daily medium' encouraged many well-known filmmakers, such as Shyam Benegal and Saeed Akhtar Mirza, to begin their TV careers. Paranjpye's cinema took shape in this emerging convergent media ecology. Quite contrary to the trend of the male film directors who had been prominent figures of the realist Indian new wave and shifted to TV programmes in the 1980s, Paranjpye went on to become a filmmaker after a successful career in theatre, radio and TV. The point is that the period was specifically significant for various kinds of medial movements and influences that shaped Paranjpye's cinematic work as a "media woman" (Paranjpye, 2012, p108), a term that she uses to describe her unruly media career. In her book *Bombay Hustle* (2020), Debashree Mukherjee uses the term cine-ecology instead of media ecology to show that cinema is a practice that is collectively shaped by a plurality of "bodies, institutions, technologies, and environments collectively" (p2) highlighting the fact that media technologies form only one element among all the material and experiential elements that go into creating cinema. Without getting further entangled in the debate on terminologies, the key focus here is on the ecological elements constitutive of the films examined in this thesis and what this meant for the larger context of cine practices and forms. As Mukherjee notes "cine- ecologies emerge out of the energetic entanglement of practices, symbols, infrastructures, ideologies, actors, and climates that swirl around the film image in locations where filmmaking and film consumption are prominent aspects of everyday life" (ibid, p2-3). Paranjpye's case is an apt example of how her career spread across media, integrated within the cine-ecologies of the 1970s and 1980s intensified and accelerated her cinematic vision. This meant that while her films took shape within the context of diverse aesthetic

practices, she also simultaneously participated in shaping the cine-ecology through her distinct style, visual language and creative labour. The iconography as well as the stylistic and medial fusion in her films reiterate the spatio-temporal context of her work. The playful act of medial border-crossings bears immense historic significance for Hindi cinema because Paranjpye was perhaps the only filmmaker shaping the generic cinematic form through hybrid creative strategies in the 1980s.

Situating Paranjpye's career in this mixed media economy, Sangita Gopal (2019) calls her a "media meddler", a creator who worked across media and who brought intermedial elements from the media of theatre, radio and TV in creating her cinematic texts. Gopal mentions how gender emerged as a safe category of engagement for state-run TV in the late 1970s and 80s, allowing it to perform social responsibility while injecting private money into the medium. One of the positive aspects of this 'gendered moment' on TV was that it provided opportunities for many women to start a career as TV producers and Paranjpye was one of them. Gopal argues that Paranjpye's focus on the everyday mundane life of ordinary people and her socially concerned narratives bear a clear stamp of her learnings as a producer of TV programmes in the 1970s thus showing how TV played an influential role in shaping her cinema. I think, along with TV, this meddling with various media (folklore, theatre) essentially means multiple kinds of medial border-crossings that have a significant bearing on the structure and meanings of her narratives. Through the use of varied medial elements, Paranjpye strategised the narrative intentions of playing with the imaginations of modern times, moral codes of social life and mundane everyday practices. The intersections of medial elements become interstitial spaces where self-imagination, social experience of discrimination and

resistance are tackled. The use of media transposition and media combination also serves to amplify marginal voices as well as to implicate the audience in the narrative space. Let me turn to one of Paranjpye's films, *Katha,* to illustrate these points. In the film, Paranjpye retells one of Aesop's folktales available in the public domain in multiple versions. The basic story is of a race between an overconfident hare and a slow but steady tortoise. The self-assured hare indulges in random activities during the race thinking that his speed can't be matched by a tortoise who on the other hand walks persistently. Eventually, the hare is unable to compete with the tortoise who slowly reaches the finish line and emerges victorious.

Drawing from the folklore, intermixing it with a Marathi play and her cinematic techniques, Paranjpye creates her own version of the story for the Hindi film audience. The folklore here not only migrates from traditional media to film, but it also performs various functions at the level of subject and structure of the film. The film opens with an animated version of the Hare and Tortoise tale, where in the animals' race, the Tortoise wins, staying true to the familiar story and confirming the moral message that the slow and steady one always succeeds. Paranjpye, however, subtly tweaks the ending to subvert the simple logic of winning. The Tortoise wins the race but the flowers that he receives, in the end, die down hinting at Paranjpye's narrative intentions of raising questions about the relationship between the traditional moral order and the real experience of the modern world where the film is located. The interpenetration of different media and texts is perceptible in the creation of the fictional urban world of *Katha*, with characters drawn from folklore and discernibly closer to the iconography of middle cinema. The film remediates the folktale through animation while transposing the main characteristic of oral media - the storyteller - as

the primary media in the cinematic reconstruction. *Katha* does not blur its medial connections with the traditional form of its source material; the primary nature of a folktale lies in being circulated or passed on through a storyteller. When the opening credits end, the film cuts straight to the close-up of the maternal character of *daadi* telling the tale to her grandson. She then breaks the fourth wall cueing the audience into the intimate visual and aural space of an age-old story taking a new shape in her chawl. The close-up of *daadi* has been conceived as the exact moment of medial transition where folklore enters the filmic construction and, arguably, with *daadi* as the surrogate for Paranjpye, the storyteller. This assimilation of folklore in *Katha* opens up the cinematic representational space to mediate the primary text as it constructs new meanings to be decoded through this play of interrelations between texts.

In Paranjpye's version, the race between the two male characters of *Katha* who dream to create a life of their choice in the contemporary socio-economic order is designed through their mundane life in various social and architectural spaces of the story world. The chawl, the restaurants and the workplace are all tied together as a race track where the narrative of love, desire and deception unfolds. By reproducing the age-old tale of the Hare and the Tortoise in the modern space and time of the film, Paranjpye allows the reception process to transcend borders between the folktale and the film. The film audience here inhabits an in-between space where they are enabled to make creative connections and draw meanings from the filmic story consumed through sounds and images constructed by *Katha* not as an independent text but in relationship with the meta-text shown in the beginning and which the audience is perhaps already familiar with. Thus, the film references the

original media as well as the text, and positions the two versions in relationship with each other, unsettling the moral universe of the original text. The unity of these texts lies in the cinema audience, which is receiving the two versions and is directed to actively recognise the reproduction of the realities of their lived world while navigating the referent moral text.

While *Katha* brings together oral tradition and cinema, Paranjpye's film *Suee* uses the techniques of theatre to structure the film through staged monologues by four actors who recount their life stories directly to the camera. The film begins with the main protagonist Eeshan addressing the audience directly, shot against a black backdrop. His story is then simultaneously reconstructed as a film within a film, capturing his traumatic journey through drug addiction and HIV infection. The rest of the film utilises similarly re-enacted testimonies narrating the experiences of stigma, labelling and social marginalisation throughout the film.[34] Paranjpye replaces the conventional talking heads in this fictional documentary with the actors directly addressing the audience while recounting how they managed to survive against all odds. The recurring eruption of fictional testimonies creates an illusion of live performance and serves two main functions. Firstly, it plays with the pedagogical understanding of fictional reconstruction by introducing the element commonly seen in documentaries but performed like a theatrical act on stage. This intermedial stylistic transposition here serves as a crucial narrative technique that Paranjpye uses to provide agency to the marginalised figures of drug addicts as authoritative narrative voices and not mere subjects of a victimising gaze. Second, along with

[34] I discuss the use and politics of re-enactment in these films in chapter six.

formal border-crossings, the thematic concern with addiction puts a focus on the multiple borders that are transgressed by injecting the substance. By invading the physical borders of one's own body and infecting it with HIV, the social borders of respectability and the acceptable self are crossed, subjecting the drug users to stigma, humiliation and a state of abandonment as highlighted in the stories.

This hybrid style of addressing the audience powerfully positions them in a space of uncomfortable intimacy with the marginalised characters while unpacking multiple layers of the stigmatised life of an addict. Paranjpye deliberately reverses the victimising gaze, asking the viewer to revisit their own thoughts and role in perpetuating addiction, therefore not allowing the audience to free themselves of any responsibility. Through the fictional re-enactments, interwoven with the simultaneous insertions of a reconstructed story, Paranjpye not only overrides the conventional demand for authentic evidence in a documentary, but she also innovatively constructs the film both as a frame that demands attention to the performative act and as a window through which the audience is asked to reflect on their own lived world.[35] The formal medial crossing serves the core intent of removing addiction from the exclusive realm of the personal and moving it to the social, unravelling the sociospatial construction of addiction.

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[35] In their discussion on the conceptualisation of film as a frame and window, Thomas Elsaesser and Malte Hagener (2009) argue that despite the perceived opposition between the metaphorical meanings of the two concepts, the two notions together offer interesting opportunities of reading cinematic texts. The frame, they argue, may be seen as a two dimensional space but it doesn't foreclose the possibilities that it bears in relation to the act of looking which may open up a three dimensional space beyond the screen.

The non-linearity introduced through the blending of staged and scripted actualities with a film nestled within the film creates a sense of entanglement of filmic and profilmic experience of addiction. This structuring strategy expects an active audience to connect the non-diegetic experiential space to the visual realm of diegetic action. The hybrid form introduces a dilemma of genre classification by breaking down stylistic frontiers and contaminating the film with the conventions of a different medial system of articulation. This is perhaps one of the most important and overlooked contributions that Paranjpye makes in her non-features. Instead of sticking to the traditional documentary aesthetics of non-fiction film form, she creatively constructs non-features by appropriating fictional narrative strategies in representing reality, thereby establishing a productive hybrid zone fused with realism. A continued tendency of formal blurring of borders in the cinematic constructions of texts also serves as an innovative way for audience identification that believes in an active and conscious audience.

As I have demonstrated, border crossings have multiple connotations in these films. While the borders metaphorically mean varied embodied intersections where social practices and hierarchies become visible, the cross-border entanglements with different media reveal historic links between TV, cinema, new media technologies and the intermedial possibilities of cinema as a hybrid form. The intermedial dialogue here also highlights an unease and dissent both with the creative cultural mainstream of Hindi films and the vanguard authority of realist cinema. These intermedial interludes are small acts of creative resistance to the hegemony of forms and genres, also indicating that Paranjpye's cinema is not at home in any one genre.

Perceptions of home

Paranjpye repeatedly visits the cultural geography of home and a sense of belonging in all the films examined here. These stories are vignettes from everyday life depicting home not only as a physical space of privacy but also as an intangible signifier of social and emotional connections. Home is a recurrent motif and a political site entangled with emotions, belonging, longing, notions of self and displacement. Conceptually, the notion of 'home' is a complex amalgamation of legal, spatial, social, psychological, and cultural dimensions. Interdisciplinary socio-cultural examinations of the notions of the home have established that the concept embodies much more than a physically occupied house. The discussions in the disciplines of architecture, psychology, sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, and human geography illuminate the relationship between the concrete physical structures of the house and home on the one hand, and the intangible values of belonging, bonds, and feelings on the other (Douglas, 1991; Rykwert 1991; Rapport and Dawson 2020;). Many authors such as Aviezer Tucker (1994) discuss home as an environment that enables a person to express their unique identity. Identity and selfhood are a lens through which home has been seen as a territory of self-realisation and negotiation with the wider social context.

Paranjpye's narratives draw attention to the geography of the home space and its organisation through the functions that it performs (materially and immaterially). The specific texture of shared life and unique sonic environment signals the ways of life of the inhabitants. Since her stories emanate from these lived spaces, practices of dwelling and embodied relationships with things convey the meanings of being at home in the world. The idea of home in her films is often characterised by a shared

relational space that dismantles any rigid idea of home as an enclosed private territory of a house. Rather it is conceptualised as a psychosocial space that is secure and fully enjoyable due to the availability of communal relationships. A recurring theme in these films is the imagination of home and its environment as a generative spatiality, providing a performative site of construction and reconstruction of the self and identity. As emotional geography, the home holds the promise of comfort and familiarity but it is also a volatile spatiality that is constantly under the threat of loss and destruction by external socio-economic forces. Looking at home as a lived affective space under attack or vulnerable to external forces was largely absent in Hindi cinema, which I discuss briefly as we go further in this chapter.

A relevant area of exploration rooted in cultural studies and anthropological studies on migrants has underlined the concept of home and its loss through the transformative potential of migration as a journey away from home (Tucker 1994; Ginsberg 1999). In the context of migration, home and identity, Sara Ahmed (2000) offer an intriguing analysis of what it means to be at home in the world. She suggests that being at home has been taken as if a home is a fixed, pure, and familiar territory where one is fully secured from estrangement, movements, and dislocations. Ahmed argues that home can very much be the space of encountering strangeness which is commonly associated with migration and journey. The home is perceived to be the secured realm of existence but it is also a vulnerable spatial system of relationships that is constantly affected by the prevalent socio-cultural structures of life as well as the processes of modernisation and economic development. This also makes home a vulnerable cultural formation that can transform into a space of trauma,

discrimination and alienation as I demonstrate through the discussion on *Papeeha* and *Disha* in chapter five.

The fictional home and its imaginations have had a particular trajectory in Hindi film narratives over the decades. Since the 1950s, the narrative of home in Hindi cinema has been unsurprisingly tied to the memory of the village, the moral economy that beholds the 'real' Indian self against the corrupt, heartless city. The city imagined as the driver of national growth and economic development in independent India is juxtaposed with the tender and static moral world of the rural home. The legacy of nationalist ambivalence towards the idea of a city resonated in these narratives of the post-independent Hindi film where the idyllic village is remembered as the static virtuous native place of the economic migrants.[36] The big city is "impressionistically rendered, with an atmosphere that is claustrophobic, evil and corrupt" (Chakravarty, 1999, p103). The village, even when not depicted physically, is conveyed through memory and other spatial tropes such as the footpath - the sidewalk where poor migrants collectively find refuge and make homely connections.[37] This spatial representation is replete with nostalgic remembrance of lost space and time, casting an emotional eye on the experience of a modern city that fails to become a space of belonging. This depiction aligns with what Svetlana Boym (2001) says about nostalgia that it is not a longing for a place but "it is a yearning for a different time-

[36] Two of the most influential nationalist leaders - Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru - had opposing views on city and its larger role in the Indian national life. Gandhi believed that India could attain complete freedom only through autonomous and economically self-dependent village communities. Nehru had a completely different view on the village and favoured the city to be the future driver of India's economic development. Hindi film narratives during the 1950s share this ambivalence where city is the rich 'other' of the village. The village is the real space of belonging while the city is the seat of capitalist modernity, exploitation and dehumanisation encountered through migration and dislocation.

[37] Ranjani Mazumdar discusses footpath as a site of negotiating homelesseness and the memory of the lost communal life in the village in her book *Bombay Cinema: Archive of a City* (2007).

the time of our childhood, the slower rhythms of our dreams" (pxv), the unreachable time that is only accessible in the space of memory. This kind of cinematic depiction highlighting the yearning for a lost place and time did not engage with the city as an embodied space of experience. As Ranjani Majumdar (2007) and Madhava Prasad (2009) note, this began to change in the 1970s as Hindi films started to engage with the city as lived space in its own right and not simply as the evil other of the village. This engagement takes varied forms in mainstream and off-mainstream cinematic renditions. If rage became the dominant emotion shaped by socio-economic injustices and childhood memories of homelessness in the city in Amitabh Bachchan-starring *masala* films featuring the angry young man, it is primarily the middle cinema that brought the existential spaces of the professional working class on screen and specifically dealt with the issues affecting the private realm of home and homemaking. As Madhava Prasad (1998), while discussing middle cinema, notes that "for middle (class) cinema as an institution, the thematics of female subjectivity and the problem of the domestic space form the basis of a new aesthetic"(1998, p186). This points to the fact that various forms of Hindi film displayed a deeper cinematic engagement with the city as an autonomous lived space both in mainstream and non-mainstream Hindi films. What is unique about Paranjpye's cinema is that the cultural geography of the home is neither limited to the city nor does it seek to resolve issues affecting the sanctity of middle-class urban domesticity. The imagination of home serves as a touchstone for mapping patterns of relationships, anxieties, desires and pleasures amid social transformations in urban as well as rural settings, and also in the remote lands of forests that were home to marginal tribal populations.

In these varied representations, the recurring spatial motif of the home in Paranjpye's films is entangled with the vivid histories of architectural developments and the shifting patterns of social, economic and emotional aspects of life. Since the metaphor of border-crossing runs through her films, the focus on home bears particular importance in delineating how perceptions of the home reflect and represent the fashioning of self-identity, the quest for belonging and community cultures. Inhabiting the home space encompasses participation in the act of dwelling, a process that implies an intimate exchange between people and their physical, social and psychological environment. The concept of dwelling, as originally discussed by Martin Heidegger (1951), connotes the "twisting and crisscrossing of interiority and exteriority from which both these horizons gain their sense" (Harrison, 2007, p628). The home and its dwelling environment are far more than a place of residence. It is a relational space that shapes the lived experience and is constantly produced in interaction with intersecting socio-cultural forces. This also means that though the home is imagined as a private sanctuary of retreat, its internal environment carries the stamp of contemporary cultural tensions and shapes the contours of self-imaginations. This spatiality of comfort, relationships and familiarity is constantly exposed to external forces and these films engage with such dangers in various ways. For instance, Paranjpye subverts the sacrosanct space of the village by destroying the nostalgic comfort zone of its migrant protagonist in *Disha*. The earlier representations of the 1950s where the remembered village home remains an eternal refuge from the cruel city life become unavailable in *Disha* due to the irreversible change in circumstances at home. In a somewhat similar manner, the flawed imaginations of national development and corrupt practices in the off-screen

capitalist city threaten the survival of the Adivasi home in *Papeeha* which is about to be destroyed in the absence of collective awakening of the community.

The imaginations of home in the films examined here, provide a glimpse of existential space as well as patterns of life in pre-liberalised India before the onslaught of global capital and heightened consumerist culture. The materiality of decor and objects along with the acoustic environment create a temporal sense of embodied homeness but home is subject to transitions. The domestic space, generally associated with women, is affected by economic and cultural changes and the films capture this through micro-actions of desires, aspirations and resistance. These actions are easy to ignore but are significant in offering a glimpse of the multiple tiny ways in which women negotiate the cultures of patriarchal dominance when it comes to making choices about their bodies and desires. For example, in *Katha*, the female protagonist Sandhya desires to marry a man she has just met, who has kindled her sexual imagination instantly. Living within the limits of the paternal home space, she negotiates with the moral discourse of marriage and sex by engaging in a pre-marital sexual encounter with the antagonist Basu. The sexual encounter is only codified in the gestural economy of the characters and not shown explicitly in order to escape the disciplining gaze of the censor board but signifies the act of transgressing patriarchal borders. The home then is a space replete with transformative promise.

In this context, the architectural type of *barsati* in *Chashme Baddoor*, which serves as the living pad for the three male friends, acquires a unique liminal character when

the female protagonist Neha - the salesgirl - enters into an all-male private space.[38] The male protagonist Siddharth is hesitant in initiating small talk but Neha is willing not only to finish her daily task as a door-to-door sales agent but also to leave the particulars of her whereabouts. She reveals later in the film that it was a deliberate act of detailing the weekly schedule of her music classes just in case Siddharth was interested in pursuing her. The enclosed *barsati* tucked at the corner of a rooftop in Delhi is imagined as a space that allows a desiring young woman to be playfully discreet with her feelings for a young man. The domestic realm is thus shown to be a spatiality of transcendental possibilities, a liminal space for reimagining and refashioning self and identity. The idea of home as an enclosed territory is subverted by constructing it as a dialectical space with enormous emotional promise and threat as it is in constant dialogue with the outside world.

Blurred Public/Private divisions

The conventional understanding of private and public is usually characterised by the threshold division between the interior and the exterior, the closed domestic realm of one's home and the open collective space outside available to everyone.[39] However, the discursive socio-spatial practices of dwelling and relationships problematise the capitalist spatial binaries of private and public life. This compartmentalisation proves insufficient in making sense of the specifics of spatial relations and how people

[38] *Barsati* is a single bedroom rooftop accommodation type unique to the city of Delhi. For more on this see chapter four.

[39] I acknowledge that the notion of public space as a freely available physical space of contact between people has undergone a considerable change in India in recent years, particularly with the emergence of privatised and regulated capitalist spaces such as shopping malls and entertainment parks. With the emergence of platform-based media networks, the social media spaces also serve as deterritorialised new public spaces of connection, discussion and activism but the basic sense of private/public is tied to the physical division of home and the outside world.

participate in the making and unmaking of their lived cultural world. The logic of private space as the intimate territory of those belonging to a single household and public space as the accessible other, open to all spatial organisation hardly function as mutually exclusive domains. In other words, private and public practically cross-pollinate the way life is spatially and socially organised. The domestic space is the realm of security, mental comfort, as well as anxiety but as mentioned, it is also the space where the first lessons of dissent and challenging the socio-cultural codes, something essentially associated with public spaces, are learned. The built structures, dwelling practices and mobility shown in these films are some of the features that influence the ways in which private/public dichotomies lose meaning. Paranjpye’s films show how the private and the public co-produce each other, creating a sense of fluidity of spatial experience. The interior spaces display collective life and community relations where intimate spaces acquire the qualities of public space and public spaces become extensions of private life. This is significant as it challenges the *raison d’etre* of private/public as the fundamental ordering of individual and collective life while representing the onset of neoliberal restructuring about to transform Indian cultural life in an unprecedented manner.

To some extent, the term “parochial realm” discussed by Lyn H. Lofland (1989, 1998) becomes relevant and significant in understanding these reproductions and constructions capturing the social life of spaces. Elaborating on urban life, Lofland states that there are three kinds of psychosocial realms available to people: private, public and parochial. The parochial realm is characterised by “a sense of commonality among acquaintances and neighbours who are involved in interpersonal networks that are located within communities” (Lofland, 1998, p10).

The concept of the parochial realm suggests intimacy, acquaintance and interpersonal relational space available to a community of people. As such, the parochial realm is an in-between space where the ideas of private (intimacy, relationships) and public (accessible to all in principle) overlap and produce a creative co-lived zone. This overlapping or malleability of private-public dichotomies is crucially related to the imagination of home and home environment in Paranjpye's films. The lived spatiality of the *chawl*, *barsati*, *gala* and the village in these films exhibit in-between spaces where interpersonal networks are essentially the way of life, available at all times to everyone seen as part of the community, thus creating perceptions of home. There is still an inside(r)-outside(r) dichotomy at play but not in the exact sense of private/public domains. Not only do the shared spaces make the 'public' contact with others unavoidable, but sometimes lived constricted spaces obliterate any possibility of the isolated 'private realm'. The shared space of the *gala* in *Disha*, for instance, is available as a private space to all the inhabitants who reside in it. The rural bonds of kinship extend to the urban space and facilitate border-crossing for new migrants by offering a concrete base for landing in an alien city. However, the collective nature of its usage leaves no scope for privacy for anyone. Its main characteristic is publicness which is available to those displaced migrant workers who share the intimate private world. It is a unique dwelling experience entangled with national dreams of development and historic disenfranchisement.

Another manifestation of private-public overlap in these films is visible through the social experience of gender, disability and addiction. When I say gendered spatial experience, I am not only referring to the ways in which women inhabit and negotiate patriarchal private spaces. My point is also about the socio-spatial practices that are

inextricably intertwined with accessibility based on gender. Women have traditionally been assigned to the 'nurturing' domestic realm of the home and men to the 'rational' public domain. The naturalisation of gender-based discrimination in societies is very much tied to this demarcation, leading to some patterns of spatial practices that determine how gender mutes the production of space and participation in public life. One of the crucial ways that illustrate the relationship between gender and space is the absence of women from certain public spaces, practically transforming them into 'male spaces'. Implicit in this general practice is the idea that the notion of public is predominantly male, making it natural for men to freely inhabit the outside world while women have to regulate where they go and at what time. A good example is the roadside *paan* shop that is frequented by three male friends in *Chashme Baddoor*. Paranjpye constructs this public space as a safe spot that allows the friends to share their intimate feelings with a paternal figure - the shop owner. This spatial conceptualisation blurs the strictly private and public logic of spatial imagination. The enclosed private *barsati* is not the only space where men experience comfort and camaraderie; a public spot laced with interpersonal relationships also acquires the 'private' qualities by allowing them to share their idiosyncratic and emotional selves. But the novelty and safety of this zone of kinship don't extend to any woman in the narrative space as it is only accessed by men. The film captures one of the nuanced gendered features of Indian urbanism that is practiced and accepted as the normal 'respectable' pattern of maintaining social order, connecting the patriarchal spatial practices of the gendered home and the outside world.

Such absences in Paranjpye's films highlight gender as a lived relation, as well as the power structures at work in everyday spaces. However, this does not mean that women are rendered powerless in shaping spaces. Feminist criticism has politicised the notion of home, portraying it as a microcosm of social relations, an institution that mirrors power equations. The social hierarchies regulate the home economy, relegating women to marginal positions. But as bell hooks vigorously advocated, the spaces of marginalisation are potentially replete with far-reaching possibilities (hooks, 1989). Domestic spaces are the primary sites where women's acts of resistance and negotiations first take shape. This is particularly evident in feminist documentaries capturing women's social movements since the 1980s. Deepa Dhanraj's *Molkarin* (*Maid Servant*, 1981), for example, depicts how women mobilised and formed the women's domestic workers union and struggled for their rights in the Indian city of Pune. While the figure of a working woman itself disrupts the public/private spatial dichotomies, the process and expression of women's collective action emanating from domestic spaces entails further malleability of private/public borders. Like the processes captured in Dhanraj's documentary, Paranjpye's non-feature *Choodiyan*, examined in this thesis, depicts how rural women's gradual mobilisation to set up a temperance movement transforms everyday spaces into activist spaces in a village. The political awareness of the issues affecting women's lives that begins in the domestic space eventually moves outside of the home, resulting in a full-blown violent action. Private and public spaces form a dialectical relationship in these films and it is at their intersection that the social life of spaces, power dynamics and social margins can be understood.

Paradigms of social and spatial marginalities

Marginality is a complex and ambiguous multidimensional experience. Generally, it refers to the process of disadvantageous economic positioning or the disenfranchisement of a group or community within the socio-economic structures of society. Implicit in the notion of marginality is the plurality of identities that experience marginalisation not only based on economic structures but also on social and cultural beliefs regulating life in general, such as caste, class, gender and so on. To occupy a marginal position is to inhabit the borders of social structures away from the mainstream of life. As bell hooks notes, the real sense of being on the margins essentially means “to be part of the whole but outside the main body” (1989, p20). This means that marginality is a relational condition that is constituted by the dominance of whatever forms the economic, social and cultural ‘main body’ in a given context, creating a marginal ‘other’ outside of it. The margins and marginalised identities also mean that there are embodied borders operational in everyday life defining the contours of one’s choices and possibilities. In its historic journey from the silent era till date, Hindi cinema has engaged with the complex marginal subjective experiences of ‘outsideness’ through the narratives of rich vs poor, the city-country divide, the questions of land rights, women’s place in society, the dispossessed angry young man, the ‘othering’ of the Muslim minority identity in Hindu majority India or the imaginations of small-town life in neo-liberal global India.

A peripheral positioning in screen narratives engenders an inquisitive lived experience through which the moral and the material ‘mainstream’ is accessed and interrogated. Not only cinema but Indian television has also engaged with marginal identities since it began telecasting daily shows during the 1980s. The very popular series *Nukkad* (1986), for instance, brought to the small screen an array of working-

class identities that lie at the bottom of urban professional hierarchies, such as an electrician, a cobbler, a drunkard, a vagabond, a beggar, a female teacher who is a widow, a jobless *shayar* (poet), a sweeper and so on. The word *nukkad* itself is a spatial marker that means the corner at the end of a road, a periphery serving as the meeting ground for these people to discuss everyday struggles of surviving in the city. In the context of the grand narratives of change and economic restructuring in the 1980s, these marginalised identities cast a light on the fragmented lived realities, the sentiments and emotions of those who are part of the whole and yet exist at the edge of it.

Paranjpye's narratives emanate both from traditional and newer forms of marginality in the era of neoliberal ascendancy of the postcolonial Indian nation-state in the 1980s. From a postcolonial perspective, it is particularly important to read not only what the film text states about space but also what it does in constructing lived space as constitutive as well as contested sites of social histories. A fragmented cinematic world of multiple lived geographies where choices are being made and micro-narratives of resistance unfold, where life is beset with struggles emerging from desires and transitions. The readings of these spaces are about ideas, imaginations and practices, about mapping contestations, claims and embedded inequalities in those spaces. What is intriguing is that while the focus on the marginal identities allows the narrative to shed the victim-subject position, the coloniser-colonised frame remains relevant in reading these films in various ways. For instance, in a film such as *Papeeha* (1993) that brings attention to disenfranchised *Adivasi* lives, the colonising gaze of the city-bred protagonists itself becomes a part of the problem evoking the colonial processes of knowledge production as well as memories of the

brutal destruction of tribal life. The colonial gaze in such representations has a metaphorical meaning of hierarchal relationship, a status of power that is no longer attached to the colonial ruler of the past but is present in the practices of marginalisation and oppression in contemporary society.

As developments and shifts in postcolonial perspectives have broadened the scope of approaching postcolonial visual cultures, the notion of coloniser also allows a critical reading of dominant socio-cultural norms and uneven economic development creating such power equations that always hark back to the experience of colonialism and subaltern status of the local ways of being and knowing.[40] These films are not just a product of diverse postcolonial medial aesthetics, rather they use various cultural and political registers to represent and interrogate fragmented modern experiences, the postcolonial paradox. A view of modernity unlocked from the perspectives of life unfolding in the spaces of what is referred to as the Global South, bearing the ever-present imprints of the colonial complex. What postcolonial discussions help in delineating here is the way historic power structures function. To borrow from Ponzanesi and Waller (2012), “it matters less what a film is thematically about and more about how it engages with history, subjectivity, epistemology, and the political ramifications of all of these” (p1). The hegemonic cultural norms that intend to rule local lives are manifestations of a colonial mindset and they are certainly not a thing of the past, rather they link past and present. Together these films create a contested space of liminality where intersectional social stratifications of class, gender and ability/disability reveal historic structures and manifestations of

[40] For a multiperspectival analysis of postcolonial cinema, see *Postcolonial Cinema Studies* (2012) edited by Sandra Ponzanesi and Marguerite Waller.

power hierarchies in contemporary everyday practices. These singular categories overlap in defining the social experience and forms of subjectivities and space is an important element in configuring these intersectional relations in everyday life, given that intersectionality has originally been a deeply spatial epistemology of painful experience based on racial injustice and gender discrimination. Spaces and spatial practices in the films are examined to reveal how social categories and hegemonic ideas about class, gender and physicality play a crucial role in creating a differential spatial experience. It is the enactment of intersecting social relations in lived spaces that allows an investigation of multiple power formations in these narratives. Thus it is the spatiality of intersectional experience that is crucial here in interrogating multiplicity and problematises any homogenisation in understanding postcolonial Indian life.

What is significant about these narratives is that marginalisation is conceptualised as an economic as well as an emotional crisis across the films. To be marginal comprises an assortment of existential experiences that could mean being in a precarious state of material well-being or to be "poised in a state of psychological uncertainty" (Stonequist, 1937, p8). Marginality entails a social threshold position between belonging and not belonging. The most visible convergence of social, cultural, economic and emotional marginality finds expression in lived spaces in these films. Spatial relations within the films reflect the social and psychological ecology of marginalised characters. Paranjpye's debut feature *Sparsh* is the most poignant narrative of spatial relations shown through the experience of its blind protagonist who is marginalised in the world of able-bodied people. His marginal experience is not contingent upon the absence of ocular abilities but because the

world around him is not built for bodies that differ in capacities. The status of disability is socially and collectively constructed by cultural beliefs and attitudes that define bodies against set notions of normalcy and able-bodiedness. The cultural narratives of ability and normalcy play an important role in complicating the lived experience of disability.

If *Sparsh* focuses on one form of marginality, *Disha* and *Papeeha* reveal and critique the historic experience of rural migrant workers and Adivasi populations as disenfranchised citizens impacted by the city-centric capitalist development. Seen from the perspective of the city deemed as the centre of industry-led development that attracts migrant workers, *Disha*'s village occupies marginal space and is suffering due to its own existential problems. The village faces drought that destroys livelihoods making the villagers leave for Bombay in search of work. The push and pull of migration lead villagers into accepting another marginalised status of urban mill workers. Urban marginalisation is mediated through the lived space as well as the factory where the workers toil. The rented and crowded accommodation – the *gala* shared by 40 workers sleeping in shifts – underlines the experience of the working-class poor striving to survive on the margins of the economically transitioning city of Bombay. Paranjpye deals with many forms of marginalisation unfolding across private and public spatial settings, where women's experience is distinct from men's. After the destruction of the agricultural economy, *Disha*'s women take steps to ward off economic impoverishment and enter the workforce, but the patriarchal workplace demands control not only over women's labour but over their bodies as well. Economic deprivation superimposed on patriarchal cultures of control

translates into double marginalisation for women workers as they have no recourse to save themselves from the situation.

In addition to the feature films, the non-feature films - *Choodiyan* and *Suee* - make visible a specific kind of marginalised experience triggered by addiction. These films deal with the social construction of addiction (alcohol- and drug-related) and the addicted individuals, who are relegated to the margins of the community and society. Again, it is through the spatial experience of those labelled as *sharabi* (alcoholic) or *gardulla* (drug addict) that these films establish that addiction cannot be simply designated as an individual medical problem but is actively constructed through the social narratives of shame and stigma. The status of being an addict affects the body-space relationship and alters the geographies of relationships: the sense of belonging is disrupted. Overall, the experience of social marginality in these films mediates and influences an individual's perceptions of self and others. However, marginality is not characterised merely by desperation, frustration and angst. Marginality also serves as a potential border to be crossed in search of self and identity which is a constant theme throughout these films. It is a space of creative possibilities for exploration and revelations which Paranjpye deals with through humour and fun.

***Mazaa*/Fun**

One of the key elements that underline the texture of life in Paranjpye's narratives is the Indian concept of *mazaa*, which roughly translates as fun. *Mazaa* may ambiguously encompass the feelings of pleasure, happiness and, many a time, pain

as well.[41] *Mazaa* then is an element that performs multiple roles in the films – both pleasurable and political. This is not only because of quick-witted characters or humorous situations but also because, in these films, *mazaa* has a specific relationship both with the narrative and the film form as well.

In common parlance, the word *mazaa* connotes an elusive sensory feeling of joy, pleasure or excitement that may result from a variety of enjoyable experiences. It could be the taste of a delectable dish, a mind-blowing film, or some other kind of leisure experience that may trigger a sensuous response of feeling *mazaa*. The elusive feeling of *mazaa* punctuates the sensuous realm of the otherwise regimented quotidian life and ways of being in the diverse and cluttered socio-cultural life in India. At the heart of *mazaa* lies an almost undefinable feeling of pleasure which may or may not translate into carefree laughter - one of the most common signifiers of pleasure. The expression that comes closest to *mazaa* is fun, which Asef Bayat describes as

> an array of ad hoc, non-routine, and joyful conducts—ranging from playing games, joking, dancing, and social drinking, to involvement in playful art, music, sex and sport, to particular ways of speaking, laughing, appearing, or carrying oneself—where individuals break free temporarily from the disciplined constraints of daily life, normative obligations, and organised power. Fun is a metaphor for the expression of individuality, spontaneity, and lightness, in which joy is the central element (2007, p434)

[41] In "The Deep Frivolity of Life: An Indian Aesthetic Phenomenology of Fun," Arindam Chakrabarty mentions that Indian author, poet and philosopher Rabindranath Tagore makes a clear distinction between pleasure and mirth. Stating that mirth or fun that results in laughter emerges not from happiness but from the pain and sadness that lies inside of us.

Bayat echoes Bakhtin's ideas on carnival and the carnivalesque discussed in his seminal work *Rabelais and His world* (1968) where carnival laughter or unofficial laughter has been conceived as a subversive act that plays with the official structures and inequalities of the lived world. The deeper meanings and politics of carnival laughter come closer to what Rabindranath Tagore writes: "Fun is not subject to normal everyday rules: it is occasional and intermittent and requires effort. The excitement generated by friction between the distress and the effort is the main ingredient of fun" (cited in Chakrabarty, 2020, p699). In other words, the material and immaterial manifestations of *mazaa* or fun can be at the same time pleasurable expressions of suffering and political acts of resistance. *Mazaa* can serve as a tool that situates people in their everyday realities and underpins how they connect to each other rather than simply reducing them to national ideological constructs. "Thinking with *mazaa* helps us write in new ways about how enjoyment is expressed, felt, imagined, spoken about and experimented with. *Mazaa* also allows us to highlight new worlds, social configurations and political possibilities that are emergent, whose outcomes we cannot yet know" (Anjaria & Anjaria, 2020, p234). To read *mazaa* in these films is to notice how fun is conceptualised by people living in a crowded space or toiling through the week; what are the practices of fun that women enjoy in the private realm, all through the day when their husbands are away? How does *mazaa*, a powerful sensuous creative experience, liberate people from their current selves? The practices of *mazaa* take many forms in these films ranging from random conversations in the non-spaces of galleries or through window cages, a warm moment over a cup of tea, cracking jokes, friends sharing a single cigarette while listening to their favourite *ghazal* (a form of poetry in the Urdu language) or the villagers resorting to alcohol in an all-male setting of a liquor shop. Having *mazaa*,

particularly through jokes and laughter, can be a potentially transgressive expression of ideas or desires that are kept to oneself in keeping with the demands of socially ordered behaviour.

The moments of *mazaa* in Paranjpye's films highlight the pleasurable embodied ways of inhabiting and generating an intimate world. Paranjpye structures her films from a deep local understanding of the cultural fabric of India. Through the visual details of spatial organisation and spatial practices of *mazaa*, she develops the unique internal universe of her characters, one that cannot be simply replicated or translocated to some other space. The everyday acts of having a conversation with a neighbour on the staircase or the corridors of the chawl in *Katha*, for instance, constitute fun of the highest order for the residents. A heart-to-heart conversation, which seems like a thing of the past, allows the protagonist Rajaram and his neighbours to steal a few carefree moments where they poke fun at each other, share jokes and enjoy a good laugh. This is an example of a spontaneous and organic form of leisure, of having fun in one's intimate world, one that gradually becomes institutionalised as the neo-liberal cultural economy takes over and fun emerges as timed and organised through malls, multiplexes and other curated forms of joyful activities such as fun parks and resorts.

Another common practice of collective *mazaa* that Paranjpye utilises as a significant narrative element (and which the Indian censor board now designates as injurious to health) is drinking and smoking. The act of drinking alcohol and using drugs, around which the narratives of *Choodiyan* and *Suee* are structured, is also linked to the idea of *mazaa* or fun. In *Choodiyan*, one of the characters who seek help to shun

alcoholism mentions *that din bhar kaam karne ke baad manoranjan ke liye kuch toh chahiye* (we need something for entertainment after a hard day of work). India has one of the cultural traditions of attaching pleasure to drinking, although abstinence gained moral currency in the nationalist discourse.[42] What the film contextualises is how drinking is related to the human desire to enjoy a different, adventurous self away from the usual, burdened selfhood. Like *Choodiyan*, the protagonist Ishaan in *Suee,* who progressively drifts into addiction, narrates that *shuru mein sirf fun ke liye karta tha lekin dheere dheere aadat pad gayi* (in the beginning, I did it only for fun but gradually it became a habit). Drinking or injecting drugs opens up possibilities of forgetting and transcending their current lives and escaping to an unfamiliar world filled with the possibilities of shedding one's tiredness and worries, and gaining momentary freedom from the shackles of a boxed-in life. The fun and frolic that comes with the idea of forgetting the real world is the sensory experience that is indeterminate yet real for those experiencing it.

Similarly, Paranjpye generously uses depiction of smoking a cigarette in *Chashme Baddoor* or a *bidi* in *Disha*. Right from the first shot of *Chashme Baddoor,* a cigarette is shown as the material manifestation of fun and bonding between the three male friends as if it is the fourth friend indeed. The close-up of Omi and Jomo holding the cigarette between their fingers, taking a deep puff and exhaling with their eyes closed. This is not just an act of smoking but a visual representation of the art of fun while smoking. The scene constructs a sense that plunges deeper into the *mazaa* that they are having in a shared moment. Paranjpye's visual language expresses the

[42] The long cultural history of alcohol and drinking in South Asia is discussed by James Mchugh in "Varieties of Drunk Experience in Early Medieval South Asia" (2020).

sensory and pleasurable experience that the friends are having in this act of collective smoking and listening to music on their rooftop private territory. The cigarette that serves somewhat like an agent of their fun also connects them to a significant public space - the *paan* shop and the shop owner.[43] As mentioned earlier, the *paan* shop functions as an extension of private space for friends, where they regularly go and can be as carefree as they are at home.

The act of smoking together creates memorable moments of bonding and sometimes serves as an early warning of a drastic change in circumstances ahead in the narrative. In a similar manner to smoking a cigarette, the newly-wed couple Vasant and Phoolwanti in *Disha* are seen smoking a *bidi*. Phoolwanti has never smoked before and this is shown as an intimate moment where Vasant offers a puff to her and she hesitantly tries it out. This is one of those few moments of shared pleasure that Vasant will never experience again in the narrative space. The moment of intimacy brought by shared *mazaa* in that brief puff is a powerful metaphor for trust, belonging and love. But it is also a crucial moment that becomes a memory of a destroyed relationship and displaced self, as that moment will never return in the couple's onward journey.

These depictions of practices of pleasure also make it possible to raise questions about the gendered nature of *mazaa* in the representational space of these films. Though women seem to be enjoying themselves, it is not exactly so much as men. For instance, the women in *Katha* inhabit the shared spaces just like the men: they

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[43] *Paan* is a chewable treat prepared from betel leaves wrapped around betel nuts, tobacco and dried fruits such as cherries and coconut. It is generally consumed as an after-dinner treat but people enjoy it all through the day.

are seen standing in the corridors, sharing a cup of tea and having a conversation, though not in as loud a manner as men. The female protagonist Sandhya is friends with Rajaram and she frequently visits him after he is back from work and they enjoy each other's company, just chatting about the usual stuff. Paranjpye uses a subtle way of showing Sandhya's sense of taking pleasure in the red flower that she tucks in her hair regularly. The act of using a bright red flower is a delicate depiction of the personal practice of experiencing *mazaa* in things as small as enjoying the beauty of flowers on oneself. However, the practices of *mazaa* available to Omi and Jomo in *Chashme Baddoor* raise feminist questions about who controls the streets and who can have fun uninterrupted. Omi and Jomo tease and follow women and frame their behaviour as young guys having fun. To understand these characters we need to expand our frame of reading *mazaa* in Paranjpye's films and see it through the strategies in which a director can also have fun in ways that may not seem agreeable – or rather may seem frivolous – to the serious readers of the text. As I discuss in chapter four, intertextuality in the form of exaggerated mannerisms and behaviours informs *Chashme Baddoo*r's structure that allows it to be categorised as pastiche. This intratextual construction is mediated through the carnivalesque elements that allow the film to appropriate mainstream tropes in order to subvert them.

Paranjpye's tendency to deal with marginalities, while allowing humour to inform the structure of her films, has a specific relationship to the question of agency and resistance from the margins of various kinds. Extending Mikhail Bakhtin's discussion of carnival and the carnivalesque to Paranjpyes' comic elements helps in understanding the function of the carnivalesque tendencies of her visual language.

As mentioned earlier, Bakhtin (1968) thought of carnival as a moment that offered people freedom from the social and artistic hierarchies of the real world, an extremely peculiar yet creative space of being and becoming, of reimagination and resistance. The spirit of carnival liberates ordinary lives while bringing existing orthodoxies into question. As such the carnivalesque situations are the entanglement of the old and the new, a threshold from which the imminent transformation can be sensed. I argue that films such as *Katha* and *Chasheme Baddoor* belong to this carnivalesque space. Paranjpye throws her heroes into the flux of historical change, existing structures and new modernities. While the middle cinema doyens Hrishikesh Mukherjee and Basu Chatterjee were concerned with the bourgeois middle-class elite and their class anxieties in their light-hearted films, Paranjpye's unspectacular heroes, in their marginal homely worlds, are grotesque characters that affirm the fragmented nature and inconsistencies of the emerging middle class in the early 1980s. Her characters live and act in a space characterised by contradictory forces; their characterisation defies absolutism while enjoying relativity.

For example, in *Chashme Baddoor*, the characters Omi and Jomo are depicted as young men who are extremely fascinated by the mainstream Hindi film hero figures and their popular antics. They try to follow what they think is fashionable: wearing trendy clothes and hairstyles, copying body language and even the tricks that they have seen in films. They take great pleasure in moulding themselves after the images of the dominant visual culture that surrounds them. These are not simple comic characters with idiosyncratic behaviour; rather this is a creative intratextual dialogue aiming to dismantle some of the most popular Hindi film tropes. Through these characters and their visibly peculiar behaviour, Paranjpye contextualises her

humour in relation to the dominant power of mainstream film and she intends to feel *mazaa* in destroying the form. The dialectical humour is generated through a creative play with and against the repetitive filmic tropes. As an independent woman filmmaker, making films outside of the production structures of mainstream Hindi film, Paranjpye worked on the margins of the film industry. *Chashme Baddoor* then is a carnival that allows Paranjpye to give voice to that marginality by treating the mainstream film as the hegemonic power whose traits and traditions are made fun of. The film is a playful ground where her comic characters dress like mainstream heroes, chase girls and are humiliated. The symbolic system of this film is a playful resistance to the dominant popular culture. The next chapter discusses the marginal experience of a blind character and how space manifests that experience in varied ways.

Chapter Three

The geographies of disability in *Sparsh* (*Touch*, 1980)

Films have constantly engaged with disability in myriad ways across cinematic cultures of the world albeit with various questions and problems around representation and stereotyping in framing disability. But it is significant in thinking about cinema's role in spotlighting disability as a specific social and spatial experience, in making visible the construction of the marginal other. Disability is one of the crucial social stratifications or segregations such as class, caste and gender through which films depict the extent and processes of marginalisation; discrimination and disempowerment. Whether resorting to what is generally categorised as a positive or negative characterisation, disability on film signals an identity of a difference adding criticality to artistic negotiations with disabled bodies.[44] Filmic representations help in contextualising the social text and the dominant cultural patterns in dealing with disability and spatial organisation plays a vital role in delineating these patterns. Space, and more specifically built space, is profoundly related to the body in terms of how it shapes access, usage and what kind of feelings it evokes. This in turn facilitates the social construction of a 'deviant' body that may use space differently or require assistance in using it at all. As a material condition of body and movement, spatial organisation affects how we can or cannot inhabit

[44]The influential early writings on visual representation of disability in British and American TV and media during the 1990s used the vocabulary of 'positive' or 'negative' portrayal that has become a traditional way of analysing disability in film and media. Generally, positive representation refers to the imagery where film and media depicts impairment only as a part of an individual's whole life and not as the cause of their dependent, miserable, dangerous or pitiable life conditions. The negative imagery takes a range of forms where characters are mocked for their impairments or they are shown as sinister evil, sexual perverts, and criminals etc.

spaces depending upon the body deemed as able or disabled. The pre-set socio-cultural codes of spatiality define the contours of both the general perception and the experience of disability. If disability overshadows every other aspect of a person's identity rendering them practically invisible, the spatialisation of disability reveals how the everyday process of invisibilisation functions. To read disability in cinema thus means deconstructing the complex web of space, social identity, and cultural codes of marginalisation that weave the context of everyday experiences. The interaction between physical disability and space identifies the collective attitude of society towards what constitutes the 'normal body' and what is seen as deviation and hence remains unseen, unwelcome and unsupported.

Building upon the themes and elements discussed in the previous chapters, this chapter particularly traces the interrelations of space and disability in Paranjpye's debut film *Sparsh* and identifies how sociocultural beliefs and spatial codes interact in producing conditions of disablement.[45] I situate the film in the wider spatial, architectural and attitudinal context of the body-space relationship in exploring how social, spatial and material practices intersect in constructing a marginal experience of disability and how Paranjpye engages with it. As discussed in chapter one, marginalisation is not necessarily economic but takes emotional and psychological manifestations affecting the notions of self and identity.

[45] I am using the term disability to refer to blindness in the film. The use of the term is influenced by the social model of disability developed during the 1990s that makes a distinction between impairment as a physical/ neurological/cognitive condition and disability as socio-cultural construct. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (2012) mentions that "the human variations we think of as disability are interruptions or departures from a standard script of human form, function, behaviour, or perception that in contemporary thought we call normal"(p342). I am aware that different kinds of physical and cognitive conditions entail specific experiences but disability as an overarching broader term has a political connotation that underlines the social context of cultural beliefs and practices that perpetuate ableism in everyday life.

With its analytical framework derived from socio-political thinking on space and disability studies/activism, I argue that the lived spaces of *Sparsh* are geographies of disability.[46] I am showing how the private/public spaces, entangled with blindness, are part of the larger cultural context of the problematic body. In other words, this is an exploration of how the filmic space of *Sparsh* attaches meanings to the physical and emotional experience of corporeal difference. Reading spaces of the story world as geographies of disability is an explicit attempt to unravel and interrogate the complexities of sociospatial specificities manifested by valued or devalued bodies. I aim to deconstruct the patterns of cultural politics and spatial conventions of disablement and marginalisation. *Sparsh* stands out in its unique approach to disability on many accounts as it shuns the colonising gaze that postulates blindness as a personal tragedy, which participates in the process of othering the disabled body. What sets *Sparsh* apart from most of the earlier Hindi films featuring various forms of disability is Paranjpye's treatment that detaches bodily impairment from disability suggesting that the two are interconnected but distinct lived conditions. The film moves away from the clichéd cinematic constructions of impairment as a spectacle of malaise, comic punch, or the sentimental site of pathology from where the 'problem' of difference and suffering emanates. Rather it locates disability in

[46] My usage of 'geographies of disability' here is adapted and influenced from scholarly works on the relationship between space, disability and the meanings of cinematic geography. Exploring space-disability nexus, geographer Brendan Gleeson explored the social and spatial processes that perpetuate disablement in his book titled *Geographies of Disbaility* (1998) from where this title is derived. However, underlying this short title is my overall approach to disability-cinematic space relationship in this chapter that takes account of the distinction between 'geography in film' and 'geography of film' discussed by Jeff Hopkins in "A Mapping of Cinematic spaces, Icons, Ideology and the Power of Mis(representation)"(1994). Hopkins mentions that a geography 'in' film merely represents the world, while a geography 'of' film constructs and constitutes meaning and "actively participate in the production and consumption of the larger cultural systems of which they are a part"(1994,p50). The notion of geographies of disability indicates this political role of cinema in constructing the meanings and experience of disability in *Sparsh* that I explore.

cultural attitudes, (mis)perceptions, alienation and apathy that transform physical differences into the “problem body” (Chivers and Markotic, 2010) or the “rejected body” (Wendell, 1996).

The disabled “problem body” has never been a subject of the ‘main body’ of middle cinema.[47] By placing corporeal differences at the centre of spatial relationships, *Sparsh* diverges from the dominant able-bodied male identity as the linear and idealised subjectivity available in middle cinema. *Sparsh*’s protagonist Anirudh is not the timid “affable young man” (Poduval, 2012, pp37-43) who emerged in the 1970s middle cinema and whose civility is a form of cultural politics. Rather, Paranjpye’s protagonist occupies a peculiar position within the cinematic spectacles of the angry young man and the affable young man. He displays anger at social and structural apathy towards disabled life yet imbibes the strategies of engagement as opposed to the uncontrolled rage of the angry young man. This is Paranjpye’s version of a not-so-affable middle cinema hero whose middle-class identifiers- education and job are destabilised by the social discourse of disability.

Interestingly, even the angry young man has never been disabled in any of its avatars. Although physical disability has been represented through a wide range of characters in Hindi cinema,[48] as I discuss ahead, Paranjpye’s treatment of the subject, her use of space in constructing a phenomenological experience, as well as the nuanced representation of characters, offers a critical perspective to explore

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[47] The canon of middle cinema primarily consists of Hrishikesh Mukherjee and Basu Chatterjee’s filmography and to some extent, the work of Basu Bhattacharya. All of the three directors have never depicted a disabled character in any of their films keeping a clear distance from dilemmas of disability and professional middle class life that their films generally dealt with. The narratives of death and disease in *Anand* (Joy, 1971) and *Mili* (1975) by Hrishikesh Mukherjee, serve a larger philosophical function and curative function than exploring the mundane everyday experience of an ailing body.

[48] Hindi cinema has represented various forms of physical disabilities in films such as *Jailor* (Sohrab Modi,1958), *Dosti* (*Friendship*, 1964), *Upkar* (*Kind Act*,1967), *Aadmi* (*Human*, 1968), *Anuraag* (*Affection*, 1972), *Qatl* (*Murder*, 1986)*, Sangeet* (*Music*, 1992)
Black, 2005, *Fanaa* (*Finished*, 2006), and *Kaabil* (*Capable*, 2017)

spatiality and disability in multiple ways. The film is distinctive on at least two fronts: one, it brings the institutional spatial context of disability to the fore, making it available for a greater degree of exploration and interrogation; second, by creating an educated, professional, and independent blind protagonist, the film breaks away from stereotypical imaginations about disability and moves into the intimate experiential space of the 'other'. As such *Sparsh* through its blind protagonist, questions the history of sociocultural assumptions about disability while the spatial experience is designed to reveal the struggle caused by those assumptions of a disabling society.

Sparsh depicts the invisible, fragmented, experiential geography – 'the special education school' - which is a rarely explored spatial context in Hindi cinema. The various interior/exterior spaces of the film, including the school, shape the phenomenological experience of blindness. These experiences make it possible to raise questions about and interrogate the social conditions that translate spatial organisations into the geographies of disability. As I will be discussing throughout this chapter, the institutional and domestic spaces of *Sparsh* make visible the oppressive geographies, as well as discourses on ableism and ableist practices. The chapter deliberates on how spatial organisation confine, empower, comfort, or limit the body that falls outside the imagination of a 'normal' body. I will demonstrate how the film symptomatically represents the segregated nature of built spaces such as the school for the blind where isolation emerges as a phenomenological condition of disabled life. I will also argue that *Sparsh* maps prevailing societal beliefs and (mis)perceptions that constantly transform everyday spaces into incapacitating surroundings based on physical limitations. Although the film does not adopt an

explicitly critical tone in unveiling layers of the social construction of disability, it does open up a significant site of engagement through visual construction, wit, and humour.

The film opens up a fresh site of engagement with space and body politics which is otherwise unavailable in the Hindi cinema of the 1970s-80s. It must be noted that most of the theoretical debates and discussions around society, disability, and space that help in contextualising the embodied spatial experience in *Sparsh*, took place in the decade after its making. From the perspective of representation it can today be argued that the film's use of a non-disabled actor in the lead role is part of the larger problem that plagues film industries of the world but this is beyond the scope and attention of this thesis. However, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the film was ahead of its time in shedding the 'disabled victim' mode of representation and focusing on the socio-spatial aspects that perpetuate disabling social conditions. In the following pages, I will first explain the theoretical background that I employ for textual reading of the film, followed by a brief overview of how Hindi cinema has represented disability over the decades. The chapter then engages with the inner and outer spaces of *Sparsh* to analyze how the film conceptualizes geographies of disability. In what follows, I briefly describe the theoretical context that has helped me in thinking about disability in *Sparsh*, and then move on to a detailed exploration of spaces and spatial relations in the film through constructions of interior/outdoor, the idea of care and dilemmas in inter-able romantic relations.

Theoretical Context

My reading of disability, space and spatial relations is *Sparsh* is mainly informed by methods of inquiry from disability studies and feminist theorisation on space and

body. The interdisciplinary field of disability studies has produced a huge body of work politicizing disability and creating newer theoretical grounds for inquiry. To investigate the lived sociospatial context of disability in *Sparsh*, my analytical frame brings the spatial turn in conjunction with the social turn in disability studies (Oliver, 1990, Campbell & Oliver 1996; Chouinard 1997) and the socio-spatial approaches to disability in human geography (Gleeson 1993 & 1999; Golledge 1991 & 1993; Park et al 1998; Butler & Parr 1999; Worth 2008) as well as feminist criticism of body as a cultural trope (Garland-Thomson 2002; Wendell 1989). This chapter draws methodological insights from the social model of disability that emerged in the United Kingdom during the 1970s. The social model emphasises the social construction of disability bringing attention to the exclusionary role of the lived environment as a barrier and the main source of disability in the medical model in disability studies.

Medical and Social Model of Disability

The medical model of disability keeps bodily impairment at the center of defining disability. With positivistic or naturalistic epistemology at its heart (Berger 2013) medical model locates disability in the body that needs to be medically fixed/cured or cared for hence pathologises the individual as defective or abnormal. The level of disability depends upon the individual attitude toward accepting the condition or being bitter about it (Pointon, 1997). Disability is, thus a personal tragedy as per this model which keeps society or social processes out of its purview. Quite contrary to that, the social model maintains that physical impairment becomes a disability because society has not created structures to assist bodies that do not conform to what is seen as a normal body (Oliver, 1990).

The social model is a social constructionist critique of individual pathologisation based on physical impairment. It provides a useful lens for exploring the encounter

between social relations and spatial codes through the experience of disability constructed in *Sparsh*. The social model of disability is rooted in structuralist and materialist theories. Developed and refined by British scholar and activist Michael Oliver(), the social model sees disability as a pattern of oppressive cultural practices manifested in various forms of exclusionary social process (Oliver and Barnes, 1998), a social construction leading to disenfranchisement. It states that society as a whole is responsible for creating conditions of disablement, exclusion, and marginalization. Hence, the onus is on social structures to remove barriers. The social model locates disability within the realm of everyday social practices and considers that disability is produced as an individual medical condition within broader economic structures (Butler and Parr 1999). Thus, the social model views disability within the context of exclusionary social practices and discrimination against people with impairments, maintaining that disability is not directly proportional to physical limitations. Michael Oliver (1990) discusses two important perspectives that substantiate the social model of disability - the social constructionist[49] and the social creationist view:

> [t]he essential difference between a social constructionist and a social creationist view of disability centres on where the 'problem' is actually located…The social constructionist view sees the problem as being located within the minds of able-bodied people, whether individually (prejudice) or collectively, through the manifestation of hostile social attitudes and the enactment of social policies based upon a tragic view of disability. The social creationist view, however, sees the problem as located within the institutionalised practices of society (p.82).

[49] Social constructionist perspective has been criticised for its anti-labelling stance with respect to disabled people. See Theorising Special Education edited by Catherine Clark, Alan Dyson, Alan Millward.

Thus, both the creationist and the constructionist perspectives denounce the individual notions of disability to focus on material, psychological and attitudinal environments as oppressive forces that disable people. [50] Given the constructed nature of the medium of cinema, the creationist and the constructionist notions have been utilized in reading the film text and its construction of disability in relation to spaces and people. The social model opens up the possibility of investing in the socio-spatial coding of the film. The ideas of construction and creation are particularly used in exploring the cultural context that shapes the specific experience of disability as constructed by Sai Paranjpye.

Along with the social dimensions in disability studies, feminist theorisation on body and gender (Grosz 1994, Butler), embodiment (McDowell 1999) and phenomenological perspective (Sobchack) aid significantly in deconstructing the narrative of bodily difference, sexuality and social practices. Feminist disability studies see disability as part of a systemic cultural way of marking corporeal differences and power hierarchies often reinforcing them. Garland-Thomson (2002) argues that the "disability/ ability system produces subjects by differentiating and marking bodies. Although this comparison of bodies is ideological rather than biological, it nevertheless penetrates into the formation of culture, legitimating an unequal distribution of resources, status, and power within a biased social and architectural environment" (p.5). This argument is similar to Susan Wendell's (1996)

[50] Despite offering a new perspective by contextualizing disability as a societal construct and not a personal insufficiency, the social model is said to have ignored the body itself. It has been criticized for being indifferent to bodily difference in various forms of impairments and disabilities, which can have a strong bearing upon the nature of social experience in different societies (Butler 1999). However, it is neither the purpose nor the scope of this chapter to present a critical review of the social model. It provides the frame that this chapter utilizes to read the relationship between lived space, social relations and disability.

formulations which maintain that it is not the physical disadvantage alone that creates disability; rather social and cultural forces (including wars and other forms of violence, built environment etc) interact with the biological difference in making a person disabled. Thus, just like the social model of disability, the feminist perspective also focuses on the interplay of biological differences, the social experience and the lack of a supportive material environment as constitutive conditions of disablement. Drawing out such parallels from feminist criticism (Garland-Thomson 2002; Casper 2016; Hall 2011; Wendell 1989, 1996) and integrating them with disability studies provides a critical framework for an in-depth textual inquiry of bodily difference, identity and power relations. This helps to deconstruct societal constructions of embodied ability as the norm, rendering any difference as deviation, hence a valid reason for discrimination and exclusion from the league of abled bodies.

In addition to feminist epistemology, the developments in geographical traditions since the 1990s help in understanding the role of 'ableist geographies' in sustaining and promoting disabling social processes. According to Chouinard (1997), "the ableist geographies refer to lived environments which incorporate and perpetuate physical and social barriers to the participation of disabled persons in everyday life" (p.380). Similarly, Gleeson (1999) argues that geography is a spatial discourse of power dynamics that disempowers the disabled by locking them out of discourse and by affecting social practices in the production of space. Butler (1999) also makes a case for distinct medical geographies of ill, impaired, and disabled bodies in understanding the relationship between space and disability. In light of these theoretical assertions and reflections, this chapter investigates the representational space of *Sparsh* to examine how Paranjpye constructs the specific embodied spatial experience of its main protagonist.

Disability and Hindi Cinema- A brief overview

Sparsh is a peculiar film in the sense that it belongs to the vast history of fictional depictions of disability in Hindi cinema but takes a divergent path in treating bodily differences and attaching socio-cultural meanings to such representations. Hindi films have presented a spectrum of representations primarily concerning physical disability, ranging from making fun of a disabled body to showing self-pity, disgust, sympathy or extreme courage.[51] These cinematic representations generally perpetuate disability as individual pathology by upholding the able body as the superior state of being. However, this representation is not specific to Hindi cinema. In his much-detailed book Cinema of Isolation, Norden (1994) mentions that Hollywood has always portrayed disability as otherness through "stories of courage and triumph, violence-prone beasts just asking to be destroyed, comic characters who inadvertently cause troubles for themselves or others, saintly sages who possess the gift of second sight" (p.3). Similarly, Paul Longmore writes that American film and TV imagery includes "hundreds of characters with all sorts of disabilities: handicapped horror "monsters"; "crippled" criminals; disabled war veterans" (p.131), stressing that there is no dearth of disabled characters on screen. Longmore (1985) investigates some of the common and recurring images of physical disability in criminal or villainous characters, which reinforce stigma and strengthen prejudices against disability as distorted self, evil, and filled with bitterness. In a similar manner to Longmore, Barnes (1992), in *Disabling Imagery and Media*, identifies twelve disability stereotypes disseminated by visual representations in the

[51] Joyojeet Pal has discussed various aspects of representating disability in "Physical disability in India cinema" (2013).

British media. He argues that disability has been commonly represented in eleven categories, including pathetic and pitiable, as an object of violence, sinister and evil. These themes and characteristics are frequently found in the way Hindi films have conceptualized disability. It is also interesting to note that one of the most prominent characteristics of cinematic representations in Hindi has been that in most of the films, disabled characters serve as a minor narrative device in the overall scheme of the plot. There are only a few films where disability provides the main thematic thrust and which deal with the social and psychological experiences of a disabled self.[52] The early depictions of disabled characters resorted to representing physical impairment as an individual pathological state, an illness, or a medical condition that automatically results in social discrimination (*Meri Surat Teri Aankhein*/ *My Face, Your Eyes*, 1963); *Dosti/ Friendship,* 1964). The characters deal with stigma, pain, and suffering, and either emerge as larger-than-life superheroes or die to reinstate the moral order. Thus, the various forms of physical disabilities were mostly seen as a loss and lack of ability to function as per the norms of able bodies, to the extent that in many of these films, death looks better than living a disabled life. In *Aadmi* (*Human*, 1968), for instance, Rajesh, played by Dilip Kumar, wishes to die when he wakes up after an accident that left him paralyzed and unable to walk.

Another common tendency of portraying disability in Hindi cinema is rooted in the Indian religious philosophy of *Karma*- the retributive power of one's actions in the moral sphere. In India where the "soundness of body and mind forms the primary

[52] From the early period to date, there are a huge number of films where disabled characters appear in the narrative, but their role is widely defined within the narrative through sacrifice, humour, heroism or dependence and misery. However, in the long history of Hindi cinema, the films that actually portray disabled characters in the lead role and deal with their life circumstances, dilemmas, emotions and fears are very few such as *Dosti, Koshish, Sparsh, Sangeet, Lafangey Parindey,* and *Margarita with a Straw*.

parameter for determining a person's acceptance or rejection, any deviation from this balance results in illness eventually leading to the strong belief that illness is instigated by bad karma" (Dawn,2019,p6), an often-used trope in Hindi cinema. One of the early films from Bombay Talkies, *Jeevan Naiyya* (*The Ship of Life*, 1936), depicts its male character losing his sight after abandoning his wife. In *Aadmi*, the evil-natured father-in-law is blinded as punishment in the end. Similarly, in *Jalte Badan* (*Burning Bodies*, 1973), the drug addict protagonist goes blind, and in *Dhanwan* (*The Rich*, 1981), an arrogant moneyed protagonist who believes that money can buy everything is unable to secure a pair of eyes after losing his sight despite all the money at his disposal.

A film that appears to be different from its contemporaries is Gulzar's *Koshish* (*Effort*, 1972). The film portrays a deaf and mute couple suffering every day on account of their impairments, but who are later helped to take care of their child by a kind blind man. Here, disability emerges as an exclusionary domain of people marginalized by the mainstream of the abled-bodied, supporting each other while living through stigma, poverty, and exploitation. However, the film also links disability with bad karma/sin, as the brother of the mute female protagonist, who steals money from her sister and causes the death of their first and only child, loses his leg in an accident. Disability as punishment is a repeated trope in Hindi cinema and according to Pal (2013) depicting disability as punishment, dependence, disequilibrium, and maladjustment are major cinematic tendencies. Disability has also been shown as deception or comic interlude, leading the narrative into a comedy of errors caused by deaf, mute, or blind characters. However, the overarching characteristic of the representation of disability has been the construction of the pathological 'other', a deviation from the normative abled body, which is the cause of suffering and

struggle. The ‘otherness’ serves as an abhorrence of the supremacy of the socially accepted hegemony of able bodies. [53]

It is this aspect of constructing disability on the screen where *Sparsh* differs from its contemporaries and predecessors. It focuses on the geography of disability and provides access to the lived experience of the ‘other’ that films have constructed over the years. *Sparsh*’s protagonist questions the patterns of othering, including societal apathy, infantilization, and ableist normativity. *Sparsh* problematizes the discourse of disability as dependence and the notion of care in inter-abled couples. The disabled protagonist’s approach toward receiving care from an able-bodied partner provides an opportunity to dwell upon the cultural narrative of care and its relationship with self and identity.

The site for the sightless: Navjeevan School

Situated in Delhi, Navjeevan School for the blind is the main geography of *Sparsh* and is where the story of its blind principal Anirudh Parmar unfolds.[54] Anirudh manages the school along with a few teachers who are also blind. The school is the unifying space that connects all the characters and their lives in the film. Anirudh’s life revolves around teaching and troubleshooting on campus to make learning easier for students. His life takes a turn when a sighted female, Kavita joins the school as a music and crafts teacher. Kavita is a widow and has been living a secluded life since her husband’s death. Working at the school away from the lonely space of her home allows Kavita to overcome her emotional struggle and find intimacy again as she develops romantic feelings for Anirudh. They fall in love and

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[53] Albert Memmi’s *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1967) is an influential postcolonial text that informs my thinking on the idea of other.

[54] Nav+jeevan is the Hindi term for ‘new life’; thus, the name implies a space that holds a promise for new, independent life for the children.

gradually get engaged. But Anirudh's dilemmas and apprehensions on account of his blindness and societal attitude towards his deviant body deter him from going ahead with marriage with an able-bodied Kavita. The desire for an independent identity and the fear of becoming dependent in an inter-abled relationship becomes a barrier for Anirudh though he eventually surpasses it and sets off to give a chance to love. What is salient about the story is the way in which Anirudh's dilemma has been delinked from his individual impairment and contextualised through the larger cultural context of disability and experiences with normates[55] surrounding him. He is not what David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder designate as "narrative prosthesis" (2000, p6) where disability is used as a device that presents an obstacle or a problem that leads to an agreeable final resolution which is often death in films indicating the incorrigibility of a problematic body. While the prosthetic treatment is visible in many Hindi films, in *Sparsh* the narrative provides generative possibilities for Anirudh to not get trapped or imprisoned in his own body. The narrative does not escape from the materiality of disability rather it has been designed to reveal various layers of physical and psychological experience, the discursive modes of being.

In the space-driven narrative, Navjeevan school premises and the private spaces of Anirudh and Kavita's small apartments constitute the main functional spaces of *Sparsh* with occasional detours to public places such as an auditorium, park, café, and friend's home. Various forms of interior spaces slowly emerge as similar kinds of disabling environments. For instance, the interior space of a friend's home or a

[55] In her book *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (1997), Rosemary Garland-Thomson used the term normate as an overarching term to describe "the constructed identity of those who, by way of the bodily configurations and cultural capital they assume, can step into a position of authority and wield the power it grants them"(p8). In other words, normate refers to what is conceived as normal hence generally acceptable cultural norm in a society.

public space such as the cafe creates similar kinds of experience, whereby Anirudh's physical impairment defines his identity as the lacking 'other'. His blindness is perceived to be a source of 'incompleteness' and inferiority, which is reflected in the behavior of people he is interacting with at various points. These experiences illustrate the power dynamics and discriminatory body politics faced by Anirudh in everyday life. Thus, various geographies are connected in creating the overall experience of blindness as a disability.

In this context, Navjeevan School particularly represents a spatiality of tactile experiences and aural communication. However, the school allows engagement with blindness both as a physical and phenomenological experience. First, the special school is constructed as an enabling geography that aims to foster an independent life for blind children, even though, as an exclusive space of and for disability, the school remains largely disconnected from the outer world. Second, the film focuses on the children learning and preparing to be able to live as blind human beings in a world designed for sighted people. This process of learning evokes greater involvement of senses other than eyesight, such as touch and sound, in negotiating with space. *Sparsh* provides a glimpse of that negotiation which forms an alternate form of communication. The aural and haptic skills design the body-space relationship and constitute the spatial grammar for navigation in the absence of sight. Third, through Anirudh's life inside the school and outside its premises, the film deals with the peripheral experience of blindness in adult life which entails complex emotional and romantic negotiations in a society dominated by the discipline of able-bodied mainstream. The school is the material reality of blindness, something closer to what Foucault, in his study of governmental prison and asylum called the

biopolitical disciplining architecture.[56] It is a regulated space that is more than a shelter, a political management ensuring an isolated world of a segmented population. Nonetheless, Paranjpye's camera depicts it as a generative space of hope dealing with exclusion and social apathy. The school is conceptualised as an enabling geography striving to offer means of survival to its students.

The specificity of the school as a spatiality of touch is established from the opening scene along with the overall approach towards blindness in the film. The static camera is gazing at a dimly lit corridor at midnight, with a silhouette of a small human body on the right side. The darkness in the frame and the static shot allow for a limited view of the still space. It is as if Paranjpye is deliberately inhibiting the vision of the audience to give a sense of how would it feel to not be able to see clearly. Exploring the gaze of blind female protagonists in Hollywood films, Johnson Cheu (2009) argues that the darkening of the screen or blurring of shots serves as "cinematic visual appropriations" (p484) or co-optation of blindness. But my reading of *Sparsh* suggests that the way darkness is shown in the opening shot intends to communicate a specific spatial meaning in relation to the geography where the film is set- the school. The darkness of the frame cannot be read in isolation with what follows in the next shot depicting the incomparable haptic ability of a blind boy, the cultivated skill of touch as navigational tool that renders the darkness meaningless. The film progressively establishes haptic experience and sound as the dominant language of communication in the filmic space of Navjeevan School and the opening

[56] For more details see "Architecture as a Practice of Biopolitical Disobedience" (2012) by Beatriz Preciado.

conveys that intention. The opening shots cement this narrative intention by capturing the close-up of a child's fingers sliding on the page, reading aloud a historical story written in braille. The moving fingers on a book written in braille set the basic premise of *Sparsh*'s narrative - the functional life of blind humans and the abilities of the disabled body which allow the film to move away from the victim mode of representation. From the dark background of the corridor enters Anirudh in a tight long shot following the sound of the child's voice. Navigating the space with the help of his stick, his blindness is established without resorting to voyeuristic objectification. He then smoothly turns his back towards the camera, leading the child into the dormitory where other students are sleeping. The camera stays at a distance, withholding additional information about the space as Anirudh walks the student towards the dormitory in the background moving away from the camera. Paranjpye uses the non-diegetic sound of a flute which they follow and which slowly becomes a diegetic sound as they approach the interior space of the dormitory. Paranjpye resorts to a pan shot to capture the interior space, giving a sense of a homogenous group of young boys sleeping in their beds (Fig.3.1). The absence of conventional close-up of faces or disfigured eyes to pathologise blindness as a miserable physical condition evoking pity or disgust conveys the intention of engaging with blindness on a different plane.

Fig.3.1: The camera captures the dormitory from a distance

The opening scene uses sound as a spatial cue and the haptic relationship with braille subtly and unspectacularly introduces an exclusive space for blind children. The scene sets blindness as the norm and not an absence of normalcy introduced through a voyeuristic, reductive able-bodied gaze. There is tenderness yet firmness in the way Anirudh brings the child back to his bed and asks the student playing a mouth organ, to go to sleep. The scene is also an indication of his status as an administrator who guides and runs the school with a set of rules. He is the commanding force in this spatial organisation that attests to his intellectual and administrative abilities as the mainstay of his identity and not his blindness which is also a part of who he is and where he is. The film's central concern is not projecting the helplessness of abject bodies of the other rather it invites the audience into the practical life experience of blindness and shows how its interaction with sociospatial structures translates it into disability.

The interior space of the school is revealed through a montage of daily activities as the credits start rolling (Fig.3.2). We see children learning to play musical instruments, gaining various kinds of knowledge through touching objects, and participating in sports. Anirudh is shown to be teaching English from a book in Braille. The images create the impression of a specialised space designed for training the students. It signals the connection between the name of the school and the specially designed activities that seems to prepare the students for a life outside the walls of this spatial organisation. However, the question is whether this institutional space is capable of providing such opportunities that will help the

students create their ‘new life’. The seemingly enabling spatiality of the school allows us to interrogate the complicated narrative of disabling conceptual space in the larger context of society, i.e. outside the school, which I discuss below. I argue that by focusing on the institutional spatial organisation as the principal functional space of its main protagonist and other blind characters*, Sparsh* opens it up for interpretation and further inquiry into the intricate nature of a specially designed space in the larger context of the cultural construction of disability.[57] This spatiality of Navjeevan School provides a protected space of development in the film, but it also shows the lived space of disability excluded by the world outside its premises.

Fig.3.2: The daily activities at Navjeevan captured in a montage**.**

Aligning with the realist traditions, *Sparsh* is shot in real locations including a real school for the blind. The built interiors do not seem to restrict movement and provide spatial equality to their users. However, the socio-spatial experience of children in the school makes visible the subtle and unspoken underlying discourse of exclusion. As Imrie (2015) points out “space is one of the major axioms of being and of life itself. It is where we are located, the places where we live and move around, and the

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[57] In questioning the geography of the school, I am following what Jeff Hopkins (1994) suggested in “A Mapping of Cinematic Places: Icons, Ideology and the Power of (Mis)representation”. Hopkins notes, “approaching film as a semiotic landscape, as a socially constructed cultural image or sign system that represents or structures an environment, provides a way of questioning the very representation and interpretation of cinematic space “(p51).

multiple relationships that take shape among them" (p170). The students remain inside the school day and night. They play, eat and attend classes while staying inside the campus. Thus, the only community available to them is the homogenous group of blind students. The film shows no connection with the world outside the school except for the letters that come from their homes. The children never move out of the school boundary for any activity or excursion, even the extra-curricular activities are organised inside the school. No one, including Anirudh, is ever shown to be taking public transport and he walks short distances using his cane. This might seem to be a very small and insignificant detail to ponder over but none of the children use a cane which, in the 1980s, would have been the main assistive tool for a sightless person for spatial interactivity, before the advanced assistive technologies of recent years. Perhaps (and I assume) this is because the children are never supposed to leave the segregated campus, which they are so attuned to that it does not pose any challenge anymore. The geography of the blind school is disconnected from the dynamic and transforming postcolonial space of the national capital that exists outside its designated 'special' domain. My point here is that the lack of mobility and real connections with the outside spaces reveals the embedded spatial sub-text of an excluded, segregated geography of the school which functions as an enabler in the lives of young children deemed as disabled. The represented geography of the blind school performs a dual function in making visible the surpassing of physical limitations within the school premises as well as revealing what Foucault referred to as "bio-power" and "bio-politics" (Tremain, 2005, pp3-4) as a disciplinary spatiality of exclusion and disablement. As Foucault noted, bio-power or bio-politics is different from juridical power. Bio-power "takes as its object life itself" (Tremain, 2005, p4) and its apparatus functions through regulated institutional

regimes that manage the population.[58] Keeping this conceptualisation of power in mind, the educational paradigm and the energetic engagement with physical and creative activities inside the school show the political mechanism of maintaining public hygiene through a segregated space of special training which shapes the life experience of blind teachers and students. Despite the school being a symptom of bio-power, the way *Sparsh* frames children learning skills and enjoying their time with each other, the spatiality of Navjeevan appears to be a liminal space, an in-between space laced with a sense of community and at-homeliness.

As mentioned before, one of the aspects of *Sparsh* is that it dismantles the discourse of dependence by not framing blindness as a corporeal problem in need of a solution. Rather, the focus is on the structural insufficiency that perpetuates disability. For instance, the interior space of the school enables smooth functioning for its inhabitants which is contradictory to what Anirudh experiences on the street. In the scene that follows the opening sequence, we see an early morning shot at the intersection of three roads. Captured in an extremely long shot, a man with a cane is visible trying to find his way, keeping the audience at a distance to speculate if it is Anirudh on the road and observe how is he going to navigate the geography outside of the school. Unable to ascertain which way to take, he stops a man riding a bicycle to ask for an address. The man points towards a house telling Anirudh to look straight ahead and we see him becoming visibly uncomfortable. The man then realises that Anirudh is blind and tells him to follow the sound of the song that they can hear. This whole sequence creates a contrasting image of Anirudh's relationship with the interior space of the school in the opening scene. In the first sequence, he

appears in the frame unassisted following the voice of the student. It is he who then assists the child to the dormitory. In the second sequence out in the public space, standing at the corner of the three-way intersection, he is lost and looking for someone to assist him. The extreme long shot dwarfs the earlier image of the opening scene where he could show directions to the child; we now see him lost in an unfamiliar and inaccessible geography, looking for a sighted person to guide him. The road which is supposedly the shared social property of all its users is premised on the 'normal' ability to see, thus disenfranchising those who are visually impaired. The societal emphasis on a particular sensory perception of built space enforces the dependence of people like Anirudh who navigate space without being dependent on sight. It is not the impaired body that makes mobility a challenge, rather it is the spatial construction that excludes and disables the body from using the space.

The discourse of exclusion and isolation is mediated through the film's visual construction of dissociation between the school and the outer city spaces and also between lives in general. Anirudh's anger and frustration as well as his witty dialogues underline the disconnection between the lives of the able-bodied and those excluded based on their physical difference. For instance, in the scene where Anirudh and Kavita meet at a friend's place after their first fleeting encounter, we see him in a medium close-up seated on the right side of the frame with a smiling face. He is sitting alone in the corner of a room filled with people when Kavita joins him. The moment he hears her voice, Anirudh immediately recognises Kavita. Kavita is utterly surprised and asks how did he know that it was her voice, as she had barely spoken the last time? Anirudh wittily poses a question back at her, asking whether she needs to see a person every day to recognise them. This short conversation

reveals the deep-rooted socio-cultural structures of bias and (mis)perceptions that aid the process of ‘othering’ of blind people. The visual construction of the scene, showing the disabled protagonist sitting away in a corner during a house party, and the conversation that follows, suggest the multifaceted reality of alienation of disabled people like Anirudh from the domain of social relationships. Kavita serves as a narrational device to display preconceived notions and myths about disability. Paranjpye aligns the audience with the able-bodied Kavita and poses critical questions pertaining to the exclusion and the apathetic attitude of the able-bodied mainstream.

In the same scene discussed above, Anirudh mentions that he strives to get able-bodied people to teach in his school, but no one ever comes and that Kavita is welcome to join the school. There is no vehement criticism of societal apathy towards disabled people who have been relegated to the margins. However, these scattered critical narrative points together form a critical comment on various forms and processes of disabling geographies. The disconnections and unavailability of a diverse and inclusive education and community life attest to Kitchin’s (1998) argument that “some spaces are designed to deliberately segregate and `protect’ the public from disabled people and vice versa (e.g. special schools, asylums)” (p347). The conditions of isolation and exclusion are not merely a matter of discrimination and lack of accessibility in built spaces that perpetuate ableism. Exclusion is materially practiced through the creation of special and exclusive spaces where disability is placed away from the lives of the able-bodied, implying that their existential needs should not hinder the ‘normal’ mainstream.

The implicit sense of this disconnection and isolation is hinted at in the ways the camera establishes the spatial relation of the school with the material world outside. We always see the camera moving from the outdoor space to the interiors of the school and never from inside to the outer world. It always first glances from outside the gate, as if preparing to enter into a different world and then traverses through the main spaces such as classrooms or Anirudh's room. This pattern of camera movement suggests one-way communication, depicting the lack of reciprocity. Even when Anirudh leaves the campus, the camera never follows him leaving the gate; rather his departure is usually shown in a long shot as if it is the POV of the static school space watching him leave. From this strategy of depiction, it can be construed that the visual disconnection articulates the spatial disconnection and exclusion from the realm of social processes and relationships with the spaces occupied by the able-bodied. The school here is a crucial indicator that the lack of mobility, and confinement within the school boundaries, translates into restrictions on spatial behaviour and the ability to form social relationships. Although Anirudh desires to connect the peripheral space to the mainstream, his efforts are mainly defeated by the apathy of policy administrators and even civil society which makes no effort to create opportunities for the disabled population. For instance, when Kavita complains that the children are making noise and wasting their free time instead of reading, Anirudh becomes upset as he explains that the students have no choice as no new book has been published in Braille apart from the textbooks. He once again questions Kavita (and through her the audience) about her lack of interest in learning Braille, despite spending so much time inside the school. Through Kavita, the film poses this question to society at large: why is it only the responsibility of blind people to learn and write in Braille? Why do sighted people fail to share the burden of

creating and publishing the learning material to ease the lived experience of disability? Through these uncomfortable questions, the film points to the harsh reality that the mainstream of the able-bodied has absolved themselves of any responsibility towards the possible removal of hurdles from disabled lives. The burden of finding ways to navigate a segregated life is imposed on the disabled themselves.

Navjeevan is also a site that is geared towards the idea of new life through ‘normalisation’ as a tool to enable inclusion in the wider society that exists outside its boundaries. The concept of normalisation is a widely debated area particularly concerning intellectual disabilities (Nirje, 1970, 1976, 1985; Bank-Mikkelson, 1980; Grunewald, 1986; Wolfensberger, 1972, 1980), and is the philosophy behind the special services paradigm. The principles and paradigm of normalisation have undergone a tremendous shift over the decades since the 1970s, particularly since the debate arrived in North America. Hence, there is no single model of how the normalisation agenda should be adopted or implemented in special services. However, the essential idea that underlines normalisation is the ability to achieve “normal conditions of life…to enable a person to participate better in his culture” (Nirje, 1985, p66). Normalisation for Wolfensberger (1972) meant “human management…that a (potentially) deviant person should be enabled to emit behaviours and an appearance appropriate (normative) within that culture for persons of similar characteristics, such as age and sex” (p28). Some of the perceived major achievements of normalisation include “the teaching of skills and competencies to those who may need them to grow and develop in essence to minimise their disability. Second, the gaining of respect, status and dignity for people

with disabilities through the acquisition of new competencies and behaviour and the adoption of socially valued roles" (Culham and Nind, 2003, p69). The normalisation principle gradually became a guiding light in the development of special education services in post-independent India. Kumar and Thressiakutty (2020) have noted that the services for disabled people, rehabilitation programmes, and special education initiatives in India were greatly influenced by the changes brought about by the normalisation principle in Europe and America. However, the problematic part is the underlying beliefs and ideas of normalisation and how these translate into practice. The normalisation principle not only upholds the able-bodied 'normalcy' as a superior physical state of being, but its ideals also rest on the unchallenged power dynamics between the able-bodied and those who are disabled. Its unreasonable belief is that all human beings should be able to live lives according to some normative cultural standards and fit into the moulds that society has already created.

As a peripheral space striving to act as an enabler, the school is structured by a quest for normalisation through the vocational skills that are thought of as essential for survival once the students have to leave and get back into the society with which they have had no contact daily. The medium close-up shots showing children playing instruments, learning to weave chairs, making candles and other craft materials, and learning English language skills are all mechanisms of what Nirje called an "instrument for integration, preventing the onset of rejection mechanisms that lead to segregation and alienation" (Nirje, 1985, p67). This is the problematic legacy of normalisation, which doesn't seek change in the spatial organisation of societal structures that do not respond to the needs of bodies with impairments; rather it aims at moulding them to become suitable to be accepted for a life within the larger

community of people from whom the school remains disconnected. In the film, children learn to make things that are then displayed within the school for sale, depending upon who takes an interest in visiting the school to buy their products. Anirudh is shown to be making arrangements for sending students to companies as industrial trainees as that is their only chance to have a place within the socio-economic structure outside of the school. Overall, every effort must be made by the school and the children themselves to ensure they have the possibility of leading a 'normal' life. The ideals of normalisation, hence, fail to challenge the socio-economic power dynamics both in terms of physical structures and attitudes towards disability. The spatiality of the school is embedded in the ironic idea of adding value to the marginalised, devalued bodies by inclusion in the socio-economic structures of the able-bodied which excluded and marginalised them in the first place. As I have mentioned before, *Sparsh* is not mapping the interior spatiality critically, although it provides an entry into the phenomenological space of disability which in turn makes it possible to contextualise various discourses that punctuate that spatiality. What this representation does is that it does not perpetuate the notion that blind people are doubly imprisoned by their bodies and by a sightless, hopeless world. Rather, they are shown as fellow human beings in quest of options to navigate an unequal material world.

Touch and sound as spatial grammar

If the school helps us to interrogate marginality as the existential reality of the spatial life of disability, the use of sound and touch as spatial language is another crucial aspect that calls for attention in *Sparsh*. It is a common misperception that blindness in human beings is compensated for by the enhanced ability of other senses that

help in constructing the ‘sense of space’. However, it is the training and cultivation of other senses, particularly auditory skills and touch that enables spatial knowledge and navigational abilities in blind human beings. *Sparsh* displays the non-visual and haptic approach used by blind children in negotiating the lived space. The film constructs an image of how the absence of sight can lead to honing the use of other senses for spatial processing in a manner that sighted people would never imagine in their regular lives. The perceptual world of blind children is built on sound and touch and the film shows the innovative ways in which the children train these sensory abilities for spatial performance such as sports.

The utmost importance of training the senses of blind people so that they can live independently has been underlined by blind scholars themselves. In *Five Lectures on Blindness* (1919) Kate M. Foley notes, “You may not have thought of it, but the blind child has no model, no pattern. It must acquire everything. It learns nothing by imitation” (p15). *Sparsh* shows how the impossibility of imitation is replaced by the possibility of scaling space through sound and touch. In one of the sequences, children are sitting in the playground and listening to the cricket commentary on the radio and the desire to play cricket is expressed by a student. After a brief moment of collective thinking, the students make a hoop out of crown caps strung together in a wire to be used as a cricket ball (Fig.3.3). This serves as a reminder of the historical beginnings of blind cricket in Australia where a tin full of rocks was used for auditory tracking.[59] In the absence of the real ball used for blind cricket, the children discover their version of a cricket ball and begin to play the crude form of the game happily.

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[59] For more on this see *Embodiment, Identity and Disability Sport: An Ethnography of Elite Visually Impaired Athletes* (2020) by Ben Powis.

Thus, auditory cues allow students to develop spatial skills by training themselves in locating sound and distance. Against the common interpretations of blindness as limitations, the conquering of obstacles establishes the possibilities of reorienting senses by displacing the dominance of vision as the necessary spatial sense.

Fig.3.3: The students improvise cricket with a tin sheet and a ball made up of crown caps.

This crucial role of sound as a directional sense is taken further by Paranjpye as she plays with diegetic and non-diegetic use of music, using sound as a spatial cue in the film. In a discussion on sound and its relationship with image and diegesis, Percheron and Butzel (1980) state that “It is the position of the sound source in its relation to the image which determines whether the sound is "on" or "off." Sound "on" is emitted from within the frame; sound "off" is emitted from outside the frame” (p16). The use and function of music in *Sparsh* alternates between “on” and “off” to interact with space and blindness, particularly in situations where music plays an auditory cue. It is transmitted through the blind character to the audience and not directly from the film to the audience. For instance, in the opening sequence where Anirudh is introduced and leads the student back to the dorm, we hear the low-tempo sound of a flute which gives an impression of non-diegetic music. But as the two characters

move from the foreground to the dorm in the background, the sound gradually becomes louder and clearer. The source of the flute sound is eventually established when we see a student playing the instrument, lying in his bed inside the dorm. This accuracy in the use of distancing effects creates a shifting spatial sense relayed through the character's movement.

A similar effect is created in the following sequence when Anirudh moves out of the school at the beginning of the film. It is in this sequence that the female protagonist Kavita meets Anirudh for the first time. Anirudh is looking for his doctor's home when he asks someone to direct him; he is advised to walk toward the direction of the music heard in the background. Here, the sound is a multifunctional narrative element as it plays an aural cue for Anirudh and expresses Kavita's mental status while commanding the audience's attention for an upcoming visual element. The sound of music, which is barely audible to the audience, slowly grows louder into a song in a female voice as Anirudh inches towards the apartment in the background, moving away from the camera. Once again, the song shifts from being non-diegetic to a diegetic element, revealing Anirudh's ability to use sound as spatial information. Thus, establishing the source of music/song is not so much about "aural fidelity" (Smith, 2009, p1) to produce a realistic effect in the narrative space. It rather serves the narrative function of focusing on the cultivated skills and abilities of blind human beings, signalling that impairment is not the real cause of disability and impoverishment. In both these scenes, the songs first appear as non-diegetic music. It is with the shift created in both scenes that the music becomes central, moving from a generic background element to something crucial for the characters' navigation of space. Paranjpye does not translate isolation as a narrative device for

victimisation. On the contrary, the display of sensory strategies for spatial interaction with blindness in *Sparsh* links to those phenomenological realities and experiences which were missing from the whole gamut of disability representation in general, blindness in particular.

How Paranjpye successfully avoids the spectacle of misery is down to the way her camera performs a very restrained role in not isolating impairment in bodies in the course of this film. Avoiding Cartesian mind-body dualism this representation imagines disability as embodiment. Paranjpye mentions that when she went to make the short film, she did not expect to see what she saw there inside the school. The children were playing, laughing and learning. The whole environment gave her a new perspective on disability which she intended to portray in *Sparsh*; a space of survival and not despair. This is the reason that the school, despite being hinted at as an isolated place, is consciously captured to not depict disability as a spectacle of misery but as lived social experience. The school is on the social margins of society, nonetheless, its everyday is filled with a spirit of survival and struggle.

The discourse of dependence and the threat of domestic space

If the school is the survival space of a marginalised community away from the social mainstream, the domestic space opens the window to emotional predicaments and dilemmas faced in individual lives. Maurice Merleau Ponty's ideas on the relationship between space and body are quite relevant here, as he mentions, "our body is not in space like things; it inhabits or haunts space (…). Through it, we have access to space" (1964, p64). From this perspective, the sensory experience of space majorly depends upon the body. As an interior sphere of socio-cultural formation, the

domestic space in *Sparsh* shows an intimate psychosocial experience in Anirudh's life influenced by the corporeal status of his body. This is mostly dealt with through the situations arising in Anirudh's personal life, particularly in his love life where the idea of domesticity and care clashes with his notion of self-identity. However, the focus on romantic love/attraction is crucial because as Barnes (1992) noted, disability has been mostly depicted as asexual, sexually abnormal, or sexually degenerate. But *Sparsh* goes into the uncharted territory of romantic love in Anirudh's life.[60] The narrative spatially conveys the crisis in his love life arising out of the social and cultural context of disabled life influencing Anirudh's choices and ideas of self-hood. The framing of the domestic space shows the complex interaction between the disabled self and society. The complexity of his self-conceptualisation as an independent blind person is particularly revealed through the romantic relationship with Kavita that blossoms and falls into crisis in the domestic space.

The key domestic spaces of *Sparsh* are the apartments of Anirudh and Kavita along with their friend's home. The space of the apartment as an urban domestic sphere is explored by Pamela Robertson Wojcik (2010) in the context of American cinema. She underlines the primacy of the apartments in numerous Hollywood narratives and proposes the idea of an "apartment plot" (Wojcik, 2010, p3). She argues that these plots where the apartment is central to the story, offer:

> a vision of home—centered on values of community, visibility, contact, density, friendship, mobility, impermanence, and porousness—in sharp contrast to more traditional views of

[60] As mentioned earlier, Shonali Bose's *Margarita with a Straw* (2014) is perhaps the only film of its kind that deals with disability and sexuality in a novel way where the wheelchair bound protagonist Laila is bi-sexual and is shown to be experimenting with her sexuality. This kind of representation of a disabled protagonist engaged in sexual encounters has hardly appeared in Hindi cinema.

> home as private, stable, and family-based. The apartment is key, of course, to the imaginary of single and queer life, but it also offers alternative visions of urban married life and child rearing. Along with sex and gender, representations of the apartment negotiate issues of class and race (p5).

The apartments in *Sparsh* are crucial dwelling spaces in this sense as Kavita and Anirudh live on their own and their apartments are spaces of contact in a manner quite distinct from traditional family homes in Hrishikesh Mukherjee's middle cinema such as *Guddi* (1971), *Chupke-Chupke* (1975), *Mili* (1975) where domestic space is dominated by patriarchal culture and values. The single life in the apartment offers the queer possibilities of the romantic relationship between a widow and a disabled man which is far from the 'normal' ways of coupling in Indian cultural life. However, the way the plot unfolds, the domestic space of the apartments appears to be an extension of the social text of disability as an anomaly, a physical border between ability/disability constructed by society.

As mentioned before, dependence and interdependence are established narrational devices in representing disability in Hindi films and the trend continues even after ten decades of filmmaking culture. Dependence has been portrayed as an essential condition of disability that is fixed or constant. The term 'dependence' in the context of disability representation has a specific aspect of intended disablement, otherwise, human beings are mutually dependent on each other to function in their day-to-day lives. Pradeep Sarkar's conventional imagination in *Lafangey Parindey* (*Free-spirited Birds*, 2010) comes to mind. The film focuses on a female character Pinky, who aspires to be a dancer but is blinded in an accident. Her dreams come crashing down until she is trained and 'empowered' by the same man who is responsible for the accident. This film, made thirty years after *Sparsh*, finds its narrative resolution

through Pinky's dependence on an able-bodied male to overcome her hurdles, instead of innovating conditions and possibilities for Pinky to reimagine herself with an altered physical reality and non-dependence on a male partner. Paranjpye's film overturns this representative trope of dependence with its main protagonist showing an immense resistance to the idea of being labelled as dependent or helpless due to physical constraints.

Sparsh's imagination of and resentment at the discourse of dependence takes the form of a complex psychological response expressed through Anirudh's anxious behavior and rejection of dominant social misperceptions. The first time when he is shown to be visibly uncomfortable and angry over the idea of dependence is in the scene when Kavita comes to the school to meet him. Anirudh is seen sitting alone in his room, behind a wooden desk, when Kavita arrives to talk about joining the school. Their conversation is framed in close-ups in shot-reverse-shot editing as they discuss Kavita's interest in teaching. During the conversation, Anirudh asks Kavita if she is going to teach songs to the children, to which Kavita replies that she can teach many art forms and that she wants to give as much as possible to the 'helpless' (*bechaare*) children. The use of the word helpless prompts Anirudh to counter the general misconceptions and stereotypical ideas about physically challenged bodies. The camera immediately removes Kavita from the shot and isolates Anirudh in a tight close-up where he objects and warns that she would be required to forget the word 'helpless' because children in his school might have a big disadvantage but that does not license somebody to keep reminding them of it on regular basis. Removing Kavita from the shot, the camera brings the audience face to face with Anirudh who destroys the labelling of bechaare used from the perceived

superior position of able-bodiedness. He identifies impairment as a disadvantage, but he is also aware of the ideology that positions disability as a medical abnormality rather than a social construct. Paranjpye asks the able-bodied audience members to examine their misperceptions and disinformation about disability. The tension is further exacerbated in the scene when the coffee arrives and Kavita tries to help pour it into the cup (perhaps acting as per gendered cultural norms of domesticity). Anirudh becomes angry again and sternly asks her to sit down while he serves the coffee. The camera blurs Kavita on the left corner and lingers on Anirudh to take a good look at his effort to regain composure in an over-the-shoulder shot. This is the beginning of a romantic relationship troubled by dilemmas of the disabled self as it unfolds in various domestic spaces.

This scene could also be evaluated in the context of the commonly recognised narrative strategy in Hindi revenge dramas where disabled characters are shown to be filled with bitterness and resentment against the injustices they suffer at the hands of able-bodied people.[61] In these films, the persistent memory of pain and anger drives them to plot revenge at any cost. Another source of bitterness in onscreen characters as suggested by Paul Longmore (1985) is the inability to come to terms with oneself as a physically challenged person, “the problem of emotional adjustment” (1985, p34) which leads to hatred for able-bodied people generally. However, Anirudh’s anger and frustration are not shown to be stemming from bitterness due to his inability to accept his impaired self. On the contrary, he makes it

[61] The most famous representation of such resentment is perhaps the character of Thakur from the film *Sholay* (*Embers*, 1975) who lives in a constant state of anger after his hands were chopped off by Gabbar Singh, the villain. Thakur leada a secluded life afterwards in the film, waiting to avenge his diabalement. A recent example is *Kaabil* (*Capable*, 2017) where the blind protagonist is full of rage and plots revenge.

clear that it is Kavita who has to change her perception that anybody is helpless in his school. His frustration is not because of “the problem of emotional adjustment” but is a reaction to the discriminatory societal attitudes of able-bodied perceiving disability as helplessness which enforces the concept of dependence.

Anirudh’s experiences in various everyday spaces in the city constantly challenge his resolve to maintain an independent self-identity. His colleague Mr. Dubey is another blind character in the film whose brief but significant role concretises Anirudh’s crisis. Dubey is married to a sighted woman who later dies of cancer and whom we never see physically in the diegetic space. Anirudh goes to console Dubey at the prayer meet and this whole sequence expresses how Anirudh is sinking deeper and deeper into the imagined loss of autonomous identity in an inter-abled relationship. In a medium-long shot, we see Dubey sitting on the floor in an open space with other men. As soon as Anirudh arrives and settles down, the camera isolates them in a close-up where Dubey is positioned on the right edge of the frame while Anirudh dominates the screen centrally emerging from the left, letting the audience see Dubey from Anirudh’s perspective. The shot then cuts to Dubey’s close-up as he remembers his wife and bemoans that she did not live a proper life because she was ‘imprisoned’ in a relationship with a blind man. A deeply disturbed Dubey states that he became so dependent on her, like a child, since they got married because she used to do everything for him. What Dubey refers to is an experience of dependence and powerlessness attached to disability which is commonly seen on-screen. Disability scholar Anita Ghai (2012) mentions that in Indian culture disability is often “conceived as eternal childhood, where survival is contingent upon constant care and protection by families. Here, the emphasis is on images of dependency, thereby

reinforcing the charity/pity model. Carrying a sense of shame, 'the disabled' find that their voices are silenced as they are always looked upon as the 'other'" (2012, p273). It is this fear of eternal childhood and silencing that haunts Anirudh. When the camera cuts to Anirudh's close-up towards the end of this scene, Anirudh is noticeably affected by Dubey's words (Fig.3.4). His eyes are downward and he seems to have gotten an indication of what the future might look like for him if he marries Kavita. The close-up performs the conventional role of capturing Anirudh's inner turmoil, the image of his psychological state of confusion and anxiety in accepting love without doubts about losing a self-supporting life.

Fig.3.4: Anirudh's dilemma deepens that leads him into ending his relationship with Kavita

Through Dubey's circumstances, Anirudh is put face to face with his fear of losing his established independent self in the process of accepting his feelings for Kavita. This is a pivotal scene, hinting at Anirudh's developing psychological crisis, which prompts him to end his engagement with Kavita later in the film. Dubey's words augment Anirudh's fear of the loss of his self-sufficiency as an independent disabled person. Through Dubey's despair over his lost ability for independent living, and Anirudh's constant anxiety about losing autonomy over his life by marrying a sighted

woman, the film opens up a new space of inquiry about marital relationships, love, and caring for a disabled partner. The conflicting perspectives emerge right from the moment when Anirudh confronts Kavita's perception of disabled children as bechaara in the scene discussed earlier. Kavita's words indicate that she thinks of disability as a medical impairment that hinders a 'normal' life like any able-bodied person generally judges impairment as helplessness against the 'power' of normalcy. In the social context of disability, Kavita represents the outlook and ignorance of able-bodied people, which again indicates the exclusion and marginalisation of disabled people through spaces such as special schools. Through institutional practices of segregation, society conveniently distances itself from those deemed unfit for the dominant socio-economic patterns of modern life, thereby cutting the basic threads of social relationships between able-bodied and disabled people. Thinking about disability in medical terms makes disabled people perceived as objects of pity, as Kavita shows in many narrative junctures.

However, when Kavita and Anirudh initiate a romantic relationship, the love and care that Kavita shows can be conceptualised through a different framework than the conventional rhetoric of the sacrifice of a non-disabled partner. Traditionally, the concept of care is built around the medical model of disability where the body is seen through its inabilities rather than the social context that makes the body dysfunctional through its unfavorable material conditions. Thus, the impaired and disabled body is deemed to be dependent on constant care for its survival, and those involved with caregiving are seen as brave or martyrs sacrificing their needs and desires, particularly if it is unpaid labour within the domestic space. This conventional attitude is mediated in the film through both the non-disabled and the disabled themselves.

Thus, socially constructed biases and prejudices penetrate domestic spaces blurring the borders of private/public experiences. In a scene where Anirudh and Kavita meet at her friend Manju's house after getting engaged, Manju's husband Suresh praises Kavita in a manner that rekindles Anirudh's fear of the looming danger of dependence and loss of self-identity. The scene, taking place in Manju's apartment where Kavita and Anirudh are visiting, begins with a top-angle shot capturing all of them and quickly isolates the two men in a medium-long shot, suggesting the intimate nature of the space and the importance of the specific conversation about to follow. As the women leave the frame, Anirudh and Suresh are in close-up while the focus is manipulated to display the emotional impact on Anirudh. Suresh remains in focus when he states that Kavita is a self-sacrificing goddess because she is marrying Anirudh. At this point, Anirudh is brought into focus and positioned centrally while countering this statement by suggesting to let Kavita remain a woman and not make a goddess out of her. As soon as his sentence ends, the camera goes back to the medium-long shot, now capturing Anirudh lost in deep thoughts and isolated in the right-hand corner among able-bodied people. In this scene, the film reveals a great deal about how familiar everyday spaces perpetuate exclusion and shape the lived experiences of disability. The homely space of a friend's house suddenly becomes the hostile geography of prejudice and disablement.

The ability/disability discourse is constantly constructed through the material environment of built structures as well as the psychological geographies nurtured by everyday realities. This is also significant from the perspective that Anirudh, who appears to be in complete control of his autonomous self when administering the school space, appears helpless in the 'friendly' domestic space when his prospective

non-disabled partner is referred to as a goddess of sacrifice. In her book, *Love, Sex and Disability: The Pleasures of Care* (2011), Sarah Smith Rainey states that “even if the disabled/nondisabled couple does not experience physical care as a burden, it is impossible to escape the prevailing beliefs about care burden and dependency” (p2). Anirudh’s desire to be self-dependent clashes with the social construction of his inter-abled relationship, where the disabled partner is always perceived as a burden on the able-bodied partner. He is unable to find tools to navigate this imposed disability. The thoughts expressed by Manju’s husband convey the general attitude about how society pathologises disability, care, and relationships. The (mis)perceptions of the able-bodied are as much socially constructed as the disability itself. These (mis)perceptions create further disablement in domestic space by essentially desexualising the disabled body and denying any possibility of intimacy and sexual satisfaction through care relationships in inter-abled couples.

The scene that follows this house visit has a similar impact on Anirudh’s already troubled self. Kavita and Anirudh are sitting in the garden, doing the mundane task of making wool yarn together. The camera captures them in a long shot avoiding any intrusion on their private moment. Anirudh asks Kavita about her music practice and Kavita states that she is unable to find time because she is busy with two hundred children at school and one at home. She says it laughingly in a casual manner without comprehending the impact on Anirudh’s mental state. Her words affect Anirudh in an obvious manner. He is again isolated from the beautiful surroundings in a close-up to capture the vanishing smile from his face as he recalls the words uttered by Manju’s husband, a memory of a hurtful experience. This reference to infantilisation resurfaces a few minutes later in the film when Anirudh visits Dubey

after his wife's death. The meanings implicit in being cared for 'like a child', injure Anirudh's desire for emancipation from being labeled as impaired, and hence dependent, and the autonomous power of self-determination. The intimate spaces slowly begin to lose the security of relationships throwing Anirudh into a state of gradual withdrawal. The way Kavita is shown to imagine herself caring for Anirudh inadvertently reduces an adult professional man to dependent status. Nothing is surprising in seeing Kavita care for him, as it appears to be an uncritical reinforcement of ordinary heterosexual conjugal relationships, where women conventionally tend to take the nurturing role and it has been culturally accepted in most societies.

The complexity of intermixing care and a romantic relationship poses serious questions, particularly regarding dependence and identity in disabled individuals, as the film portrays. This is where the "pleasure of care" (Rainey, 2017, p272) model becomes relevant. Rainey (2011; 2017) argues that in inter-abled relationships, care can have sexual and emotional dimensions, but it requires efficient reframing, and openly communicated and mutually negotiated ways of caring. The socially constructed view of receiving and providing care creates further disablement and exclusion from the realm of social relationships between the able-bodied and disabled. Much of the feminist work on care, particularly in the 1990s (Arber and Ginn, 1992; Graham 1983; Thomas, 1993; Ungerson 1990) insisted on the reconceptualisation of care relationships and the social, economic, and cultural contexts which shape the paradigm of care. Both Anirudh and Kavita are unable to reconceptualise their mutually agreed paradigm of care that can allow them to create a new and experimental domestic space away from the hegemonic ideas of

ability/disability. Both are emotionally stuck due to the socially constructed moulds which cannot offer unique solutions to individual situations and hence leave people disabled both physically and psychologically.

Given the fact that the film shows the female characters as caregivers and the disabled male characters mourning the loss of autonomous power over themselves, it is imperative to look at *Sparsh* from the intersection of gender and disability to see what it reveals regarding gender politics. Not only does the film naturalise care as feminine territory, but the narrative also has underlying meanings related to masculine identity. This becomes clearer through the history of blind female protagonists in Hindi films and the way they have been treated. In a few films dealing with blind women characters released before and after *Sparsh*, self and dependence rarely become a question. The blind female protagonists search for someone who will love and care for them hence the issue of dependence never becomes political.

This kind of treatment of blind female characters can be exemplified in *Anuraag* (*Love*, 1974). In this film, the female protagonist Shivani, played by Moushumi Chatterjee, has grown up in a residential blind school. She meets Rajesh, the sighted male who proposes to marry her. As usual, the film treats Shivani's blindness as personal pathology and Rajesh shows clear sentiments of being Shivani's eyes in this relationship. Shivani is visibly excited and the two erupt into singing a song that further expresses the desire to complete Shivani's 'incompleteness'. This is similar to what Kavita tells Anirudh in one of the scenes when he is feeling distressed and refuses to go to a classical dance event. In a private moment inside Anirudh's apartment, they sit next to each other when Anirudh tells her that she should have

gone to the event. He explains that a dance concert is not meant for him, but he does not want her to give up her interests just because of him. At this point, Kavita says that she wants him “to see things through her eyes”, but that moment fails to generate a comparable euphoric reaction to that of Shivani in *Anuraag*.

In another film, *Sangeet* (*Music*, 1992), released two decades later, the blind female protagonist Sangeeta feels elated to find a sighted male Setu, who falls in love with her. Sangeeta and Setu are folk artists and music has become a common thread that ties them together. The dominant cinematic context of blindness as a curable medical condition is there in the film, but it is interesting to note how the blind character negotiates her independent self. Sangeeta lives with her foster mother and is shown to be doing all the household work by herself. After she meets Setu and they move into a building under-construction, Sangeeta asks Setu to familiarise herself with the full area of the new house, like her mother would acquaint her with the four corners of the stage, each time she went on to perform. This conversation between the two characters is a crucial example in the context of Rainey’s statement (2011; 2017) mentioned earlier, that an inter-abled couple needs to work together and openly communicate to understand which model of care works best for them. However, the acute gendered dimensions and dilemmas of care can be discerned from these narratives of disabled lives. The blind female protagonists are shown as willing to receive care on account of their disability. Their willingness to see the world through men’s eyes is not depicted as evoking the feeling of losing control or independence which becomes critical for Anirudh’s self-identity.

My point here is that the female characters of *Anuraag* and *Sangeet* are not shown to be concerned about losing their sense of independence. In the social practice of gender, women have always occupied the subordinate role, the weaker sex in need of protection. Hence, the cultural texts of films reproduce and stereotype disabled women as naturally being happier in finding someone rather than worrying about being dependent because independence has traditionally been a virtue of masculinity in the gendered order of Indian society. However, the same idea of seeing the world through Kavita's eyes deepens the crisis of identity for Anirudh in *Sparsh*. Talking about the conflict between masculinity and disability, Asch and Fine (1988) have argued that "having a disability is seen as synonymous with being dependent, childlike and helpless—an image fundamentally challenging all that is embodied in the ideal male: virility, autonomy, and independence'' (p3). These three words - dependent, childlike and helpless - haunt Anirudh's experience in domestic spaces, making it an everyday struggle to avoid marginalisation even in his own home.

Sparsh's blind male protagonist does not worry about finding love like the blind female characters in *Anuraag* and *Sangeet*; he yearns for an independent self-identity in every relationship around him. I argue that the looming danger of lost independent self-identity in *Sparsh* foregrounds the dilemma of disabled masculinity. Anirudh, who is already excluded from the mainstream spaces of the able-bodied, is further threatened by marginalisation in the domestic space through socially constructed perceptions of the care receiver as a dependent, a reversal of the heteronormative trope, and hence powerless. In each scene captured inside his residential apartment with his assistant Jagdish, Anirudh makes it clear that this

personal space is controlled by him and he is not very appreciative of anyone trying to invade it. In one scene, Jagdish comes into the apartment and makes tea for them both. The conversation that follows makes it clear that Anirudh is unable to conceptualise caring as separate from being made dependent.

Anirudh: Why do you do so much work for me?
Jagdish: (Laughingly) Sir, I want to become indispensable to you.
Anirudh: (Smilingly) The day I feel that I can't do without you, that day you will be sacked.

The dialogue is rendered in a lighter vein but the sentiment is clearly expressed that Anirudh is trying to hold his ground against any attempt to care for or look after him unless he ascertains the intentions of such efforts. The masculine power relationship is further complicated by the professional hierarchical relationship between blind Anirudh and able-bodied assistant Jagdish. Discussing the complex social structure of gender practice, Connell (1998) talks about the internal relational patterns between multiple masculinities as hegemonic, subordinate, complicit, and marginalised masculinities. This kind of relational approach considers the fact that gendered power relationships do not only exist between men and women, and that masculinity in itself is a complex hierarchal social practice. Hegemonic masculinity is the dominant type considered to be the norm in a socio-cultural context (which is the heterosexual, able-bodied Hindu male in India), while subordinate and marginalised masculinities are negatively related to the hegemonic form due to their nonconformist nature.

With this relational approach to masculinity, Anirudh's struggle appears to be an effort against further marginalisation of his socially disabled masculine self. My point is that the intersection of masculinity as an identity formed around values of physical strength and independence, and the reality of being a disabled self, prompts Anirudh to reformulate his identity by rejecting any able-bodied person trying to show sympathy, which he interprets as subjugation. The film ends with a contradictory scene to the earlier one in the film when Anirudh navigates the road and arrives at Kavita's home by mistake. This was his first encounter with her and now, when he takes the same walk again, it entails the closure to the story that began with his arrival the first time. The circular narrative brings Anirudh back to the space where the journey began. The ending indicates the completion of the protagonist's journey as well as a new beginning. Anirudh is not constructed as a stereotypical character devaluing his life due to his blindness or reinforcing the social hierarchies privileging able-bodied people. But the spaces that he occupies shape his contradictory ideas about how to live in a society that is apathetic towards its people and mediates disability through exclusionary practices. This representation reverberates with suggestions and the implications of living with and experiencing disability spatially.

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Sparsh allows us to see how lived spaces transform and create a different phenomenological experience in interaction with disabled bodies. The film unravels a multitude of biases on the part of the able-bodied which shows the casual process of 'othering' and implicit exclusion of the disabled from the realm of social relationships with non-disabled people. I have demonstrated that the forms of social biases and

inconsiderate attitudes further complicate the interaction of space and physical limitations. Through the contrasting geographies of the special school training the blind students to live independently and the disabling public and private spaces that thwart all such efforts, Paranjpye constructs a complex narrative of objective spatial concepts and subjective realities with which disabled people negotiate in everyday life. It is perhaps the only film of its time to have dealt with a host of issues related to ability, disability, emotional crisis, the discourse of dependence, and the complexity underlying the concept of care told through a spatial narrative. This exploration of sociocultural texts interwoven with lived spaces continues in the next chapter where Paranjpye's use of comic elements and intertextuality provide new sites of spatial investigations.

Chapter Four

The architectural text of urban space in *Chashme Baddoor* (*Far be the evil eye*, 1981) and *Katha* (*Story,* 1983)

In the previous chapter, it is the disability-space relationship that takes precedence in exploring spatial relations and marginalised experience. In this chapter, the focus moves to the specific architectural forms in investigating spatial representations, social relationships and urban experience in films based in Indian metropolitan cities. The narrative and visual economy of Sai Paranjpye's *Chashme Baddoor* (*Far be the evil eye*, 1981) and *Katha* (*Story*, 1983) is located in the densely populated Indian

cities of Bombay and Delhi, respectively. Popularly remembered for their comic elements, these films chronicle Indian urban life in two of the biggest metropolitan cities during the 1980s. As mentioned in chapter one, the discourse on the city has significantly contributed to the understanding of the urban lived space. As Jonathan Raban (1974) notes, the art of living in the city is a complex dialogical process, the material and the social dimensions of city life set the stage for the “creative play of urban living” (p2) which is the concern of the films examined in this chapter. In Raban’s words, “the city as we imagine it, the soft city of illusion, myth, aspiration, nightmare, is as real, maybe more real, than the hard city one can locate on maps, in statistics, in monographs on urban sociology and demography and architecture” (ibid, p2). The idea of the soft city is crucial here because it refers to the regime of feelings, emotions, love and nightmares that the two films engage with though my focus is mainly on how the “soft city” is navigated through these architectural texts that construct a “spatial encounter with time”(Jaikumar, 2019, p186). The textual inquiry of this encounter is particularly significant given the decade of the 1980s has mostly been regarded as the lost decade in Bombay film history. In many accounts, the cinematic legacy of the 1980s is generally described through the vocabulary of loss, such as the fading away of the figure of the angry young man, the diminishing vigor of the realist new wave movement, and the shift of film talent to the new medium of TV. The tendency to neglect the cinematic trends of the 1980s has led to inattention toward films that capture the crucial transitional phase in Indian urban life and the phenomenological environment of lived spaces.

This chapter considers how the reciprocity between the architectural settings and lived experience articulates the agency of urban form in shaping life. The chapter

pays attention to spatial practices in relation to gendered identity and social relationships. Taking place in different cities, together they uncover various phenomenological aspects of the transforming urban space during the 1980s. Through the categories of private/public, class, gender and sexuality, this chapter demonstrates that Paranjpye constructs the physical and experiential geographies constantly (re)produced at the intersections of transforming social, economic, and cultural contexts. The construction and the use of private and public spaces in these films work as projections and negotiations of multiplicities both at the micro-level of domesticity and at the macro-level of class formations.

Exploring the underlying narratives in these films, I make a twofold argument that relates to space and spatiality on the one hand, and Paranjpye's formal aesthetic and thematic concerns on the other. First, I will argue that the lived space in *Chashme Baddoor* and *Katha* is an emotional spatiality of an interpersonal network of relations through which categories of class, gender and modernity can be interrogated. In this regard, I also contextualise the socio-historic significance of the urban architectural forms- *Barsati* and *chawl* to underline how space, spatial practices and social categories intersect in the narrative space of the films. Through a close textual reading of spatiality and spatial organisations in these films, I argue that the films depict fragmentation and the divergent lived experience of an aspiring urban population. The apparent unity and coexistence of the characters are predicated less on the economic basis of class identity and more on the connections forged by lived spatiality and the inconsistent nature of Indian modern life.

Second, and an associated argument throughout this chapter, despite bearing influences, these films cannot be simply read through middle-class concerns of middle cinema such as “class endogamy”(Prasad, 1998, p174) or “codification of citizenship”(Sinha, 2019, p99) in post-Emergency India. My argument is that Paranjpye playfully works with (or reworks) the generic elements of ‘middle cinema’ (and of commercial cinema in *Chashme Baddoor*) to configure her specific thematic concerns and spatial aesthetics in bringing attention to the fragmented experience of the middle class in India’s diverse cultural contexts, which is absent from the canon of the middle cinema and film scholarship around this cinematic form.

In terms of the films’ formal aesthetics, Paranjpye’s choice of on-location shooting, frequent utilisation of non-mainstream and non-professional actors, as well as her use of classical Indian music was very much rooted in the context of the divergent aesthetics of the Indian new wave and the middle cinema of the 1970s-80s. These domestic stories with a light-hearted tone bear influences of Basu Chatterjee and Hrishikesh Mukherjee’s films yet they spatialise the city in a manner that diverges or subverts genre conventions in multiple ways. Paranjpye utilises the familiar tropes of middle cinema in spatially mediated intertextual narratives to strategise her spatio-cultural politics. Moreover, the mainstream and realist cinematic context of the 1970s-80s is not the only form of influence on Paranjpye’s films. As discussed in the first chapter, her intermedial background in radio, TV, and theatre contaminates the form of her films including *Chashme Baddoor* and *Katha.*

In this context, Sangita Gopal (2019) argues that Paranjpye is a uniquely placed director whose cinematic work cannot be discussed in isolation from the entire media

ecology within which she worked during that time of growing mediatisation, the feminist movement, and the transforming space of television programming. I build on Gopal's insights in locating and deciphering what I call the intermedial moments, yet my focus is more on intertextual playfulness in the films. Playfulness here refers to both narrative and aesthetic features. I will be using playfulness as an interpretive tool that allows me to read Paranjpye's style as a curious mix of profound feelings and lightheartedness at the same time. My usage of the term is influenced by the work of historian Ruby Lal, who reads the figure of the girl child and woman in various spatial contexts through the concept of playfulness as the female agency, creativity, and transgression to denote a spontaneous active sphere of blurring boundaries and limitations.[62] Lal positions playfulness as "an art that combines the social and the sexual without needing to assert authority or discipline other forms of self-expression and social interaction" (2013, p55). I find Lal's proposition particularly useful in thinking about intertextual and intermedial playfulness, as well as the use of humour in Paranjpye's narratives. While *Chashme Baddoor* is in a close dialogical relationship with the commercial masala films of its time, *Katha* is particularly significant in locating Paranjpye's intermedial influences tied to her experience with the mediums of sound (radio), stage (theatre), and the evolving cultural realm of national TV.

The use of humour in these films is not purely an element exploited for comic relief, rather it is a form of carnivalesque play (or display) that subverts or unsettles the dominance of a particular idea/identity or cinematic form. Humour in Paranjpye's

[62] For a discussion on female agency, home spaces and transgressive possibilities see *Coming of Age in Nineteenth-Century India: The Girl Child and The Art of Playfulness* (2013) by Ruby Lal.

cinema has a tone of criticism, a social commentary that relies on laying bare the ironies of ordinary urban life with an empathetic eye. The humoruous touch allows an engagement with the cultural tensions of a society passing through a new phase of modernity. What is crucial about this application of humour is that it bears the stamp of time and space where the narrative unfolds. As I will show in this chapter, Paranjpye's art of playfulness within the domain of cultural practices reveals vital aspects of space, gender relationships, issues of agency, ethics, and aspiration in middle-class youth. These humorous texts tend to address the different ways of being in distinct spatial contexts. It is the playful simultaneity of generic cinematic elements and iconography with a reimagined narrative purpose that allows *Chashme Baddoor* and *Katha* to become pleasurable tales of the naive and the eloquently astute.

Based on Paranjpye's telefilm *Dhuan-Dhuan* (*Smoke*) telecast on the Indian national TV channel Doordarshan, *Chashme Baddoor* is a tale of friendship between three male college students, based in the Indian national capital of Delhi.[63] The film focuses on the city-based Indian youth seeking jobs, love, and a good life. The struggles of surviving in a city, finding a job, dealing with institutional corruption, as well as having to negotiate with gender dynamics in transforming space, all come together to form the experiential space of *Chashme Baddoor*. This film displays an interaction with the city space in various private/public moments and humourously

[63] The exact year of these teleplays is difficult to establish mainly because there is no archival information available nor Paranjpye's autobiography records the year of their production. Even during an informal conversation with the author, Paranjpye could not recall the exact year when these teleplays were shown on Indian national TV, *Doordarshan*.

engages with the narrative strategies of commercial Hindi films, such as singing and dancing.

To capture the phenomenological diversity of Indian city space represented in Paranjpye's films, the chapter also focuses on *Katha* to underline specificities of the built environment unique to the western Indian city of Bombay, while drawing comparisons with the spatiality of *Chashme Baddoor*. *Katha* retells Aesop's famous tale but as Paranjpye mentions in her autobiography, it is inspired by a Marathi play *Sassa Ani Kaasav* (*Hare and Tortoise*) by S.G.Sathe. *Katha*'s protagonist Rajaram is a clerk who lives in a mass housing complex known as *chawl*.[64] The film depicts the constricted housing set up of a *chawl* and the unique social aspects of this architectural form of dwelling; the '*chawl*ness' manifested by the particular use of space enforced by the spatiality of the *chawl*. *Katha* is a symphony of spatial interpretations of socio-economic segregation in Bombay. The act of dwelling contoured by a certain spatial context plays an important part in establishing the cultural specificity of urban patterns affected by socioeconomic forces. The historical origin of *chawl*s in Bombay throws light on the underlying cause of the city's chronic housing crisis.[65] However, *Katha* not only provides an opportunity to delve into the living conditions in India's financial hub in the 1980s but also enables the viewer to look at those conditions as a survival system, a social network. The cramped space of a *chawl* dictates the use of everyday space, it shapes the nature of relationships among the residents, a support system which *Katha* celebrates, unlike, for example,

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[64] A *chawl* is a colonial housing structure built for migrant workers in Bombay. The architecture was essentially composed of rows of single or double room tenements usually designed in multi-storeyed strictures.
[65] For more on the politics of urban restructuring in colonial Bombay see "Housing the Poor in a Colonial City: The Bombay Improvement Trust, 1898-1918"(2001) by Prashant Kidambi.

the ‘middle cinema’ film, Basu Chatterjee’s *Piya Ka Ghar* (*Husband’s Home*, 1973). In contrast to *Katha*, *Piya Ka Ghar* depicts *chawl* life as a symptom of crowded urban life. It highlights how the limited space of the *chawl* shapes dilemmas of individual privacy and can be potentially detrimental to the emotional unity of a city-based middle-class family structure.

This aspect of representation differs in *Katha* where Paranjpye constructs the constricted space of a *chawl* as a self-sustaining habitat. It is the ecosystem of the *chawl* which makes mutual survival possible for all the inhabitants, while *Chashme Baddoor* is a more playful ode to the city of Delhi where the dreams and mischief of youth are contextualised through the influence of contemporary visual culture.

Barsati Musings*: intertextual space, contested masculinities and desires in *Chashme Baddoor

If Bombay cinema is an “archive of the city” (Mazumdar, 2007, pxxxv), it is essentially an archive of space in architectural forms and vivid spatial experience which is not necessarily always limited to the geography of Bombay. Sai Paranjpye’s *Chashme Baddoor* is a film that engages with the city life of Delhi through the unique architectural form of *barsati* where its central protagonist Siddharth lives with his two friends Omi and Jomo. Barsati is a crucial spatial marker in the socio-historic journey of Delhi and is intricately linked with the urban experience of educated young migrants in the city, a detail that the film registers. As Debika Ray (2015) notes, “these apartments – generally, a small shack with a large terrace – afforded a new generation of urbanites cheap living space near the centre of town” (no page). It is this small, rooftop space where the three friends have created a base for themselves

in the national capital city of Delhi. The Barsati as a liminal space tucked on a terrace establishes their in-between status in the city as outsiders who have migrated for higher education from somewhere outside of Delhi which remains unspecified in the film.[66] Siddharth is studious and is looking for a job with his degree in economics, unlike Omi and Jomo who haven't been able to graduate from college -they all survive on the money sent from home. Omi and Jomo spend their time loitering on Delhi roads, teasing and chasing girls who cross their paths. Events take a dramatic turn when both of them end up having a crush on the same girl, Neha, and they decide to try their luck by wooing her one by one. Later, Siddharth falls in love with Neha and they plan to get married but his jealous friends create troubles to separate them. It is when Siddharth gradually breaks up with Neha and becomes alienated that the two friends confess. Siddharth and Neha finally unite in an eventful ending.

Fig.4.1: The customised interiors of barsati in the film shared by Siddharth (L) Jomo (C) and Omi (R).

[66] From Indian painter M.F Hussain to writer Arundhati Roy and historian William Dalrymple, there are many well-known names who have spent a part of their life in a *barsati* in Delhi attesting its specific relationship with city's intellectual and aspirational migrant population. In the post-independence architectural identity of Delhi, *barsati* marked a unique contemporary development and negotiation with the emerging housing types particularly in the 1980s-90s. The roof in Indian house is a space of household activities (washing and drying clothes and grains etc) and *barsati* was built as an extra storage space given the frantic rains experienced during the North Indian monsoons hence *barsati* as the term derives from Hindi word *barsat* for rains. Later, it developed into a cheap rental accommodation for single migrants in the city usually occupied by students, journalists, struggling or emerging writers and artists. The rooftop single room of *barsati* with attached kitchen and toilet, is a humble lived space laced with liminal qualities of a threshold that provided access while marking the marginal status in the urban sprawl of Delhi. With rapid urbanisation and redevelopment, *barsati* gradually lost its charm though it continues to live in the literary or cinematic memories.

In this story of friendship, love dreams, crisis and resolution, the intimate space of *Barsati* takes the center stage and is introduced as nothing less than a sensate being in the opening sequence. The film opens with a close-up of a lit cigarette being passed around by the three men, using both hands and feet, with a *ghazal* (Urdu poetry song) being played on a gramophone in the background. The cigarette can easily be called a character in this room as it not only binds the men together but also connects them to a very specific gendered outdoor space in the film.[67] As the camera moves slowly, rhythmically matching the twirling smoke, the close bond between the characters is established without a single dialogue. Their closeness is evident but the distance maintained by their bodies seems to be ruling out any sexual possibilities, establishing an intimate space for heterosexual men.[68] This is the private space of three young men studying in Delhi, staying away from their native ‘home’ during the summer vacations for various reasons. It is a small yet crucial detail in relation to the characters and their migrant lives as they are not torn between the memories of a lost home and urban despair. The home is referred to only in their conversations with respect to money received through money orders. This depiction is in clear contrast to the previous cinematic projections of an unavailable and remembered rural home. The nostalgic memory of a distant home finds no representation in the city life of new urbanites as they begin to search for an independent existence. The home remains an off-screen space and this small detail points to the transformation in the cinematic perceptions of home over the decades.

[67] That space and its spatial qualities are discussed later in the chapter.
[68] The term homosocial has been used to refer to the pursuit of enjoyment and/or an inclination towards the same-sex friends/company (Lipman-Blumen, 1976). However, I am refraining from labelling the shared private space in the film as homosocial as I do not want to foreclose the queer readings of this space that future researchers might wish to explore.

The cinematic nostalgia for home has no emotional pull in this city-based narrative as it used to have in the Hindi films of the 1950s-60s as scholars have noted:

> For a long time, perhaps up to the 1950s, the metropolis did not acquire in the minds of the Indian middle class the moral security and stability of the home. Something of the popular attitude towards the big city as a deeply profane place, corrupted by money and commerce and littered with dangerously seductive amusements, was shared by the urban middle classes as well (Chatterjee, 2003, p182).

Throughout the 1950s-60s, the cinematic city was mediated through naive migrant outsiders and films generated themes where the city was treated with ambivalent feelings. Hindi films such as *Kismet* (*Destiny*, 1943), *Baazi* (*Gamble*, 1951), *Do Beegha Zameen* (*Two Acres of Land*, 1953), and *Sri 420* (*Mr. 420*, 1955), represented the city as a space of wealth and opportunity marred by exploitation and loss of familial relationships. However, from the 1970s onwards, the city-country divide no longer provided the lens through which to explore the Indian urban experience. The cinematic city emerged as a text of lived spatial experience, particularly in popular mainstream Hindi films - and to some extent also in middle cinema. In these films from the 1970s, the struggle is about claiming a stake in the city space through secure jobs and well-settled lives. The city does not lose the familiar characteristics of the earlier films of being exploitative, competitive, and corrupt but the rules of engagement with the cinematic city change. The experience of loss of home and displacement attached to the migrant population no longer characterise the emotional structure in this aspirational landscape particularly shown in middle cinema. The young men arriving in the city strive to make the metropolis their new home and deal with situations that urban life has in store just like the three friends do. There may be no home in the traditional sense of the word but their

shared space has ‘home-like’ qualities that provide identity to their life as single men in the city.

The first sequence of *Chashme Baddoor* provides crucial spatial cues in establishing how Siddharth, Omi, and Jomo filter their self-identity and what influences their modern urban selves. This built space of the rooftop apartment is organised as the primary site which anchors the relationships and identities of the characters inhabiting the space. In *Lived Space: Embodied Experience and Sensory Thought*, Juhani Pallasmaa notes that architecture performs much more than utilitarian functions as “the impact of the art of architecture derives from the ontology of inhabiting space, and its task is to frame and structure our being-in-the-world and give it specific meanings”(2021, p6). What is unique about *Chashme Baddoor* is the way it structures the idea of being in the world through the shared yet customised personal space of *Barsati*. Siddharth, Omi and Jomo have different walls assigned to them that work as a window to their self conceptualisation. Stylistically, the visual construction of the opening sequence is strategised in such a way that it does not reveal the spatial information immediately. The camera allows the viewer to make connections between the residents and their space intimately and slowly. Starting from the close-up of the cigarette, the camera moves on to the characters one by one and withholds spatial information until the camera pulls back in a wide shot to reveal the images in the background and the way they relate to space and its inhabitants. The intimacy and proximity are established as primary qualities of this space before anything else is specified about their lives.

As the scene cuts from a close-up of Siddharth to a wide shot of their room, we are introduced to Omi, Jomo, and Siddharth sitting on the right, center, and left of the frame respectively. The differences in personal traits and the corresponding imaginary division of the space are encoded through the wall imagery, the clothes, and the conversation that follows. Paranjpye establishes the inner space as a space of coexistence of various masculine types in terms of physical appearance, behavioral economy, and sexuality. Siddharth, seated on his bed against the wall, with his thick reading glasses, cigarette between his lips, and book in his hands, stands out in comparison to Omi and Jomo who are sitting on the floor with colourful images of female models and actresses stuck to the wall behind them. The visual display reflects and reveals the essence of their desires as they stick anything they wish on their respective walls. Siddharth, being the soberest and studious one, has pasted an image of the Greek philosopher Aristotle and Indian philosopher Swami Vivekanand, projecting 'worldly wisdom' and intellect as his personality traits. His interest in books and refusal to follow his friends 'filmy wisdom' has led them to name him Aristotle, the philosopher type. Siddharth has a typical middle-class goal of having a decent job in the city after graduation. The wall assigned to Jomo is filled with nude images of female bodies that he has pulled out from the pages of lifestyle magazines, while Omi fills his wall with nude pictures as well as bodybuilders. The setting and the objects in the apartment evoke a sense of frugal living devoid of an expensive, luxurious lifestyle. The *Barsati* has an attached kitchen with a small coiled heater and a few utensils for cooking. The visual cues create a sense of frugal life running on minimal resources. The three men occupy the small space comfortably and use it for studying, leisure, or even for working out.

The male-only private space of these friends reinforces the gendered social structure through Omi and Jomo's characters who objectify women as seen in the sexualised images in the private space and their behavior towards women in public spaces. Paranjpye's depiction asserts a sense of bonding yet multiplicity is established through the spatial organisation of the lived space. With its focus on divergent identities, barsati in *Chashme Baddoor* emerge as a microcosm of Delhi; a constructed city attracting migrants, a space of multiplicity and fragmentation.[69]

Paranjpye's aesthetic strategy of communicating divergence encoded through wall images, clothes and body language of Omi, Jomo and Siddharth are determined by her playful narrative intentions of creating a self-reflexive and dialogical space. The room serves as an intertextual strategy of an encounter between the prototype of a goal-oriented, focused, and a harmless middle-class male protagonist who appears in earlier middle cinema films such as *Rajnigandha* (*Marigold*, 1974), *Chhoti Si Baat* (*A Small Matter*, 1976), and *Chitchor* (*Heart Stealer*, 1976)) and the daydreaming, impractical buffoons[70] whose lives are mediated by the unrealistic formulae of commercial Hindi film.[71] As mentioned, in this juxtaposition of masculine imaginations, spatial organisation is at the forefront in shaping the perceptions about

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[69] Dupont (2000) states that as a big metropolis Delhi has attracted millions of people in search of job opportunities. This diverse migrant population varies in terms of socio-economic backgrounds and origins and has played a major role in Delhi's demographic evolution, particularly after India's independence in 1947.

[70] The buffoon has a long tradition of representation in Hindi comedies particularly by actors like Mahmood and Keshtho Mukherjee. The purpose of buffoonery has mostly been aimed at providing a comic element.
However, this kind of humorous behavior is generally contextualised with circumstances where the buffoon is always a failure with women.

[71] As I have mentioned before in the chapter, the 1970s is particularly marked for its greater engagement with city based stories in commercial Hindi films. For instance the protagonist of Amitabh Bachchan starrer angry young man films was always a city based hero wronged by the society or system. The commercial Hindi film mostly relied on the spectacles of action sequences, music and dance along with tried and tested formulas of romance, revenge etc.

influences and the belief systems of the characters. The difference between their self-conceptualisation, film-inspired lifestyle and the surrounding visual culture is mediated through the lived space. Thus, I concur that *Chashme Baddoor'*s all-male pad is constructed as a narrative site of reflection and negotiation between intersecting masculine types available in the two different main cinematic forms of the 1970s. Through this simultaneity of different cinematic forms embodied as male characters, Paranjpye creates a spatial playground of popular cultural references available to the Indian youth: the middle cinema with its realist roots in the socio-cultural environment, and the spectacles of popular mainstream film.

Paranjpye's construction of a multiplicity of attitudes and desires is reflected in her camera movements, highlighting the intensity of various situations: disagreement, sadness, or decision-making processes involved in the lives of the characters. This is evident in the opening scene when we first see the three characters, the camera takes a long shot to capture all of them in proximity suggesting their connected lives and incoherent character traits. Jomo tries to distract Siddharth by showing a female picture and Siddharth ignores him signaling his disinterest. In the next shot, as Jomo moves to the other corner to change the music record, he is joined by Omi in discussing why they are sitting inside the room during their vacation. The two friends are captured together but Siddharth does not join them. Similarly, when Omi clears the ashtray on the terrace and he calls for Siddharth and Jomo after seeing Neha walking on the road. While Siddharth ignores them, Jomo runs to the terrace and they are together in a two-shot looking at the girl from the terrace. Both the friends get back inside the room and sit next to Siddharth in a medium three-shot trying to distract him again. Siddharth warns them not to disturb him. Omi and Jomo once

again move away from him and stand together in a medium shot in the kitchen talking about the girl. This constant aligning of the two characters separately or in the opposite direction to Siddharth indicates their mutual interests and similar outlooks while Siddharth maintains a distance from their mischievous endeavors. Similarly, Siddharth's bed in the room has been used as a community space whenever the three friends have to make a decision or when Omi and Jomo try to argue with Siddharth that he needs to 'man up' like them. The bed becomes a specific spatial point of negotiation where the two friends draw closer and try to counter Siddharth's opinions or manipulate situations as the plot proceeds. The *Barsati* is a home-like spatial organisation in a big city where new social bonds of kinship are performed and negotiated independently to sustain urban life.

The playful strategy of contrasting the sober, goal-oriented hero with ludicrous characters opens up the possibility of unexpected events as well as challenges the convention of using the figure of the familiar middle-class hero occupying a territory away from the hegemonic masculine type protagonist of the commercial *masala* Hindi film. [72] By placing the purposeless, dreamy characters inspired by the formulaic *masala* films and the serious, aspiring kind hero together, Paranjpye creates a tangible intertextual space that performs the dual functions of negotiation and coexistence, opposition and complicity. Exploring intertextuality in Bresson's film adaptations, Eva Maria Stadler (2013) states that "incorporated genres within the film can expand intertextual possibilities while the structuring of filmic space can thematise the threshold position of characters" (p16). The possibilities of reading the

[72] *Masala* means spices and is generally used in relation to the spectacles and well known elements of commercial Hindi film form such as song and dance.

characters as the intersection between the text and the pre-text allow *Chashme Baddoor* to enter into a dialogic relationship with populist cinematic strategies. If Siddharth is a middle-class hero from the films of Basu Chatterjee, Omi and Jomo are influenced mainly by the mainstream Hindi film characters of Amitabh Bachchan in films such as *Amar, Akbar, Anthony* (1977), where chasing and stalking the female protagonist is passed off as 'true love'. Paranjpye uses this trope to strategise her own politics of favouring the middle-class hero while denouncing the rogue masculinity of his friends through humorous episodes of rejections.

Chashme Baddoor has been seen as a spoof on commercial cinema but I argue that by remediating the commercial film form, its humour underlies a critical comment on the cultural moment in which the film is situated. This intertextual reading is first enabled by the spatial coding of the built space as well as the living patterns shown right from the opening scene. The diegetic space is composed of the sound of a ghazal playing on an LP record, and the wall imagery cut from magazines and newspapers, all of which give clues about the inhabitants and their relationships with each other as well as the ecology of popular culture and the mixed media environment of the moment. The cluttered walls of the *Barsati* work as the sub-environment that relates to the broader context of the transforming visual culture of the 1980s, with its booming print cultures, and the objectified female images as symbols circulated in mass media through which young men like Omi and Jomo make sense of their everyday world. In a detailed exploration of male behavior and hegemonic masculine ideals, Bird (1996) states that "the sexual objectification of women facilitates self-conceptualization as positively male by distancing the self from all that is associated with being female" (p123). Omi and Jomo are depicted as

loafers identifying with the patriarchal norms of seeing women as the weaker sex, hence they call them *shikaar* (prey) and exercise predatory behavior. In one of the scenes, the three friends meet outside the apartment and Siddharth enquires about their plans. Omi responds that “hum shikaar par ja rahe hain, is waqt yahan achhi ladkiyan ghoom rahi hoti hain” (we are going hunting… nice girls are roaming around at this time). The spatial organisation of Siddharth, Omi and Jomo’s lived interior space gives them the freedom to idealise their versions of masculinity and act accordingly in public spaces such as parks and streets. The spatialisation of Siddharth, Omi and Jomo’s life and behaviour in *Chashme Baddoor* reveals some of the most crucial aspects of modern urban experience: multiplicity of masculinities and new forms of kinship. If Siddharth’s characterisation is closer to the affable middle-class hero of Hrishikesh Mukherjee and Basu Chatterjee, Omi and Jomo display contrasting hegemonic masculine traits.[73] This multiplicity of identities gestures towards fragmented ideas of self-conceptualisation and desires. The shared lived space of friends in *Chashme Baddoor* is an example of new social bonds of kinship in the city away from the traditional ties of birth, marriage, or lineage. The familial ties have been replicated if not replaced by “mutuality of being” (Sahlins, 2013, p2) as friends living together in a home-like environment. But co-lived space does not mean shared lives in the city, which stands in contrast to *Katha*’s imagination of collective life.[74] The warmth of familial connections and the communal bonds that exist in *Katha* and *Disha* does not characterise *Barsati* in *Chashme*

[73] Sharon R. Bird (1996) describes some traits of hegemonic masculinity as “emotional detachment, competition, and the sexual objectification of women” (p. 122) that Omi and Jomo constantly exhibit.
[74] Anthropologist Marshal Sahlins (2013) used the phrase ‘mutuality of being’ to argue that the traditional kinship relationships based on procreation, affinal bonds or descent can be formed or performed in life depending upon the cultural context in which such constructed bonds take shape. By being there mutually means the possibility of creating bonds on the basis of practices mutualluy performed by people in interpersonal interactions and relationships.

Baddoor. Compared with the geography of human relationships that the *chawl* creates in *Katha*, a shared apartment in Delhi is not constructed as the emotional psychological space that creates intimate connections. In the architectural sense, the spatial cohesiveness that defines the social character of the *chawl* does not appear to perform a similar function for the three friends. Where can one locate the roots of social relationships in this city if they seem absent from the realm of geographic proximity? Here, jealousy and competition emerge as the commanding emotions between the male characters. Omi and Jomo have common ideas about performing masculinity or how to be a man while Siddharth imagines and constructs his modern self differently. Despite the male bond being an anchor of these masculine types, the urban men are not competing against the unjust social structures like the angry young man of the 1970s mainstream film; here they are competing with each other both professionally and personally, fashioning themselves to keep up with the pace of the urban environment. The lived space represents the divergent male identities and ideas that are visible in their behavioural patterns in outdoor spaces. The public space is also a marker of how gender affects everyday life in *Chashme Baddoor*'s Delhi.

In the context of mobility and the city space, a significant element that acquires metaphorical meanings in the film is the use of the motorcycle by the three friends. The fun and thrill that comes with riding a motorcycle depict a gendered experience of *mazaa*, the freedom of occupying the urban space in motion. But the motorcycle in *Chashme Baddoor* is more than an automobile used by friends for private transportation. It is a material manifestation of their bond, a navigational tool that enables the production of a sensate and intense mobile experience of the cinematic

city. The constant use of the motorcycle allows Paranjpye to position Delhi as an accessible and experiential space for these male characters. As a vehicle distinct from the security and safety of a car, the motorcycle has a specific social text of its own as noted by anthropologist Daniel R. Wolf (1991), “when a man rides a motorcycle, he crosses a border that represents a divergence from those values that underlie the rational, secure, and sensible things of established middle-class society (…). The citizen who is satisfied with the conventional identity he has achieved within the system is likely to condemn riding as irritatingly gregarious, an irrationally dangerous way of getting kicks” (pp51-52). In this sense, the motorcycle in *Chashme Baddoor* is a device used not only to generate the cinematic experience of thrill but also to convey the liminal identity of its characters who have not settled within the conventional secured ways of being middle class as yet. In The Gendered Motorcycle: Representations in Society, Media and Popular Culture (2018), Miyake mentions that the representation of a motorcycle is connected to technology, travel, time and speed. It shows mobility but it also relates to the specifics of identity. While a car with its roof and doors creates a private and domesticated space, the motorcycle symbolises liberation and mostly the “male time-out” (2018, p31). This is how Paranjpye depicts the motorcycle where it is not a transport used for survival but a gendered practice of sharing some moments of *mazaa*. In Miyake’s words, “a masculanised form of taking time out; one where there can be no wife, no kids, no work” (ibid, p29). Through the motorcycle, Paranjpye constructs the sensational experience of the street while revealing the cultural text of social identity

Spatial connections and intertextual spaces

Deconstructing the cultural politics of middle cinema in the 1970s, Suvadip Sinha (2019) argues that the middle cinema's strategy of location shooting does not capture the

> unexpected figments of modern unfixable experiences (...) Almost entirely shot on location – even the indoor scenes – middle cinema, however, underscores an erasure of any spatial gap between the real and the fictive and reinforces a temporal regularity to produce a consistent and quotidian city. Both space and time, cinematic and actual, become curiously unnoticeable to accomplish an invisible interpellation of the urban subject. They are obviously filled with shots of regular public spaces; the city we see is always blindingly well lit, curiously noiseless, and puzzlingly accessible (2019, p98).

Sinha's reading is mainly based on Basu Chaterjee and Hrishikesh Mukherjee's films where spatial imagination is quite different from *Chashme Baddoor*. Here, the "interpellation of the urban subject" and the issues of accessibility are visible in private/public spaces. The gendered order of the male-only space of the *Barsati* in *Chashme Baddoor* connects to certain outdoor spaces in a manner that highlights the gendered urban spatial practices seen as normal in the Indian social structure. As mentioned earlier, smoking is an act of shared *mazaa* for the three friends, but it also connects them to a minor character Lallan Miyan, a roadside small shop owner who sells *paan*[75] and cigarettes.[76] Lallan's shop is a common outdoor space where the three friends constantly go and spend leisure time but what is intriguing about this space is that it acquires the characteristics of private space. Michel de Certeau writes that the private space is equal to the domestic space where one can withdraw

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[75] *Paan* is a chewable combination of betel leaf and areca nut mixed with slaked lime or other ingredients like dried cherries for sweetness. Its geographical distribution is primarily centered on South Asia and Southeast Asia but is said to be dynamic in reach.

[76] Lallan's Muslim identity is portrayed through the cinematic stereotypes of clothing in Hindi films: *lungi*, *topi* and *paan* though his presence marks one of the few muslim-subaltern characters in Hindi cinema who have been portrayed as everyday people (and not as mythic feudal characters from the past) in the city seen in relationship with Hindu characters.

to heal and recuperate from the ravages of the public world, which is out there in the open (1988, p146). The “public world” in this sense is a space incapable of offering any connection or comfort but this private/public distinction is not how modern life and relationships are defined in different societies. Recuperation and connections are not dependent on domestic spaces as *Chashme Baddoor* evocatively establishes. It is Lallan’s shop that performs those functions in the lives of Omi, Jomo and Siddharth. Lallan gives them cigarettes on credit and even lends his cycle to Jomo when he tries to find out Neha’s whereabouts. He goes along to see a play with Omi when Jomo ditches him for a girl on the road. As with the overall politics of the film, Lallan is shown to be a little more sympathetic toward Siddharth given his affability. He advises him to quit smoking and he is the first one to know about Siddharth’s employment signifying his importance. In a city that is not yet ‘home’ to the young migrant students, Lallan’s shop offers a space of warmth and connections that challenges the conceptualisation of social and spatial relationships in strictly private and public terms.

Fig.4.2: Siddharth meeting Lallan at his shop

Paranjpye frames the close bond between Siddharth and Lallan by capturing their conversations in two shots and close-ups, each time they have a chat with each other at his bright yellow painted shop. The tight two-shot framing (both together in a

single frame) is strategised as a visual cue to the emotional connection and comfort that characterises the feeling of the space as well as the nature of the relationship they share. A small roadside shop becomes a crucial spatial marker of overlapping categories that construct each other. This is a cinematic representation of the possibilities that spaces offer for human interaction and social relationships in the modern world. As Dipankar Gupta (2003) writes, the conceptions of the private as the inner, virtuous realm and the public as the crafty, immoral and impersonal domain, no longer explain the modern conditions of living. The changing face of socio-economic life created new logic of dwelling in urban areas which form the basis of spaces like Lallan's shop to acquire a social character. The new logic of urban social life offers the possibility of transforming the nature of public spaces into an intimate spatiality of connectedness. These experiences and spatial qualities convey that modernity is a complex multidimensional process constituted in everyday life through ever-evolving and competing imaginations of space, time and self.

The probability of forging connections at places such as the paan shop however reveals the gendered order and the implicit nature of the modern public space in Indian life. Throughout the film, it works as a spot of male camaraderie, which is not shown to be "puzzlingly accessible" (Sinha, 2019, p98) to women as we do not see any woman (including the main female character) even standing near Lallan's shop, forget about buying cigarettes or tobacco. This is not a fictional narrative of an imagined space with no definite cultural context. The shop is a signifier of the prevalent invisible gendered narratives of the right to use public spaces and accessibility of certain urban areas/spots which are exclusively available to men in

reality. The idea of public space in India is closely related to the moral discourse of *bazaar* (marketplace), a space outside the secured realm of a home that is accessible to anyone and everyone and hence dangerous and unsuitable for 'respectable' women who do not want to be seen as 'available'. Despite the growing participation of women in Indian public space since the nineteenth century, their presence continues to be a source of moral threat and anxiety. This scenario has changed to some extent in certain parts of metropolitan cities like Delhi and Bombay since the time of the film. Now, young women can also be seen buying cigarettes from such shops but it is still far from becoming a normal spatial practice.

The Indian streets and public spaces in general, evoke fear of harassment of women at the hands of strangers (men) which is usually absent in the case of men. Elizabeth Kissling and Cheris Kramarae (1991) state that "the rules of conduct guiding women's and men's public passage through urban areas are asymmetrical" (p75). This means that public spaces are not equally accessible to women as they are discouraged from being active users of public spaces like men. Thus, the paan shop in *Chashme Baddoor* is inadvertently linked to an unspoken and invisible asymmetrical gendered cultural practice within the terrain of Indian social life. As De Certeau (1984) writes, the "space is a practical place" (p117) that is appropriated by its practitioners in everyday activities. But one can become a practitioner only by having the right to use the space which, in this context, is culturally unavailable to women. Feminist geographer Tovi Fenster (2005) argues that everyday practices build the foundations for a sense of belonging and attachment. She states that the idea of belonging is connected with the ritualised use of space as it allows for the accumulation of memories and spatial knowledge. In this sense, the minor character

of Lallan Miyan and his shop illustrates the gendered and exclusionary spatial practices in the street cultures of India.

The shop is a spatial signifier that performs a dual function of offering the intimacy of private space for men while signaling a culturally symbolic meaning of restricted public areas as far as women are concerned. As a public space available to everyone, in theory, the absence of women from Lallan’s shop, with men as the only users, reflects on the subtle form of patriarchal power relationships and the moral discourse of respectability, which sets the boundaries of movement and functions as an everyday reminder that women’s autonomy, mobility and public life is controlled by the gendered order of the society. The perception of these spaces also reveals the imagination of the ‘public’ as predominantly male. Thus, seen through everyday experiences, the practical concept of ‘public’ rests upon the exclusions of certain social groups and reveals implicit hierarchies that constitute its spatial practices. It also highlights the potential of public space as an embodied and contested political territory of unspoken negotiations by various social groups.

In addition to this, an interesting aspect of spatiality in *Chashme Baddoor* is that the private and public spaces are closely connected in other performative ways. The private space opens the window to individual desires and ideas that translate into actions unfolding in public spaces whereas public space performs the functions conventionally assigned to the private space. In this sense, the relationship between the indoor and the outdoor space in Siddharth, Omi and Jomo’s lives has been constructed with fluidity. There is constant communication between the private/public through the character's intentions and motivations. This is particularly mediated through Omi and Jomo’s mischievous attempts at following women in public spaces,

similar to the antics of commercial Hindi films. Their interior space represents the make-believe world where they fantasise about women and try to replicate that through tricks learned from Hindi films. In a scene that makes the public space an intertextual face-off between the real and the reel, Paranjpye brings the biggest star of the 1970s, Amitabh Bachchan, along with actress Rekha, into the scene. Jomo tells Omi that he saw this scene where Bachchan successfully strikes up a conversation with Rekha on the pretext of returning her handkerchief in a park. This scene is perhaps moulded after Amitabh Bachchan's iconic *masala* film *Amar Akbar Anthony* (Manmohan Desai, 1977), where he plays a character who tries to strike up a conversation with a woman by following her on the pretext of returning her handbag. Jomo thinks that this will actually work and replicates Bachchan's moves only to be left humiliated as the girl takes the handkerchief and goes away. From the fan culture perspectives (Jenkins 1992; Linden & Linden, 2017), Omi and Jomo's character traits and costumes connect them to the practices of fandom where 'cosplay' (costume play) is a performative act of immersion as well as meaning-making in popular culture.[77] Omi and Jomo's embodied fandom makes *Chashme Baddoor* a carnivalesque space of performance and subversion. It is through these characters' relationship with the mainstream film texts that enable Paranjpye, a marginal voice of middle cinema, to ridicule the dominant visual culture. Because a film engages with popular texts closely does not automatically mean that it always loses a critical eye. Henry Jenkins' (1992) ideas on critical distance with respect to popular texts are relevant here, though he discusses it in relation to Television

[77] Umberto Eco (1986) states that the fact that a book or a movie is loved by people is not a sufficient condition for it to become a cult object. To acquire the status of a cult object, "It must provide a completely furnished world so that its fans can quote characters and episodes as if they were aspects of the fan's private sectarian world…" (pp197-198).

fandom in America. Jenkins quotes Bourdieu who suggested that “bourgeois aesthetics” consistently values “detachment, disinterestedness, indifference” over the affective immediacy and proximity of the popular aesthetic”(cited in Jenkins, 1992, p62). In this sense, the proximity with popular text is inevitably conceived as lack of “rational control” that is possible only through contemplative distance and not engagement. I suggest that in *Chashme Baddoor*, it is the proximity to popular texts that enables the politics of appropriation for subversion of genre conventions. It is through the inhabitation of popular texts within *Chashme Baddoor*’s text that it becomes a source material that can be critically examined and meaning is generated. It is through this engagement with mainstream filmic imaginations that many linked discourses become available for critical inquiry.

Discussing the intentions of referencing mainstream cinema in the 1970s middle cinema, Sinha states, “the mainstream cinema functions as that uncoded narrative necessity through which middle cinema forms and performs as narratives of realism”(2019, p105). My reading of *Chashme Baddoor* here differs in suggesting that through the mainstream references, the film does not aim to authenticate its realist credentials. It deconstructs cinematic fantasy and disrupts the spectator identification process with the popular mainstream tropes by ridiculing them and strategising their failure but this is not intended to replace it with purported identification with middle cinema’s hero as Sinha suggests. Here, it is more of a pleasure politics of rupturing the fantasy of cinematic tropes and implicating popular cultural images in a dialogical relationship than any political attempt to legitimise middle cinema’s aesthetic of ordinariness or the ordinary hero of *Chashme Baddoor*. This is evident in another sequence where Siddharth and Neha are seen in a famous

park in Delhi and Neha jokingly suggests that the moment is apt for singing a song. They wonder how film songs are shot in a park surrounded by people and where they get the music and words instantly. This scene leads them into singing a song together among flowers and trees but they eventually get interrupted by people by the time they finish singing (Fig 4.3). This is a construction inflected by an awareness of the most popular images of Hindi film history re-enacted here not to render a realist representation but to subvert the power of dominant tropes. This subversive use of a well-known genre trope allows Paranjpye to not only make a tongue-in-cheek comment on the commercial form but also point to the constructedness of her own cinematic text rather than confirming her commitment to realist verisimilitude.[78]

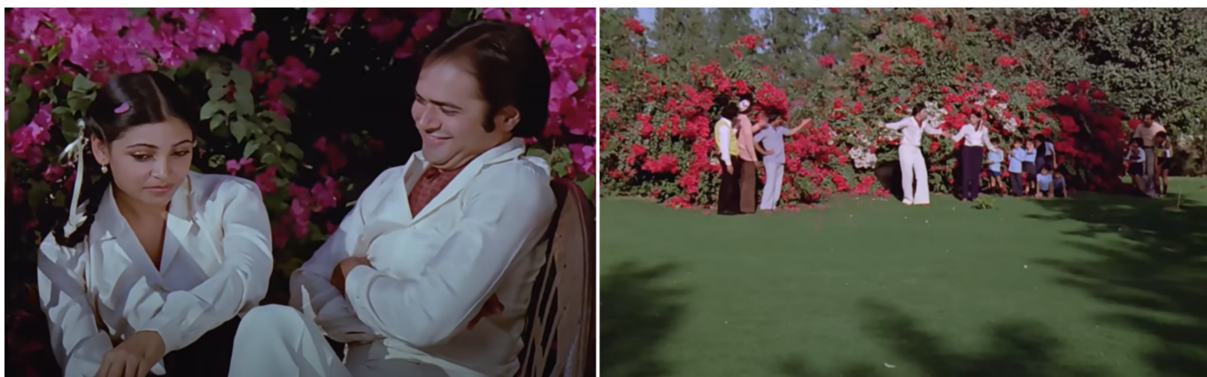

Fig.4.3: Siddharth and Neha sing a song in a park but get interrupted.

Through the use of popular tropes, Paranjpye transforms the public space of a park into a reflexive ground of intratextual dialogue. However, the scene discussed previously where Omi and Jomo try to ‘act filmy’, along with a few others in the park or on the street, where Omi and Jomo follow girls, is inadvertently linked to the fact that it is the presence of people like them that plays a role in generating fear of

[78] This is one of the tendencies of a pastiche as discussed by Richard Dyer (2007). I elaborate on this ahead in the chapter.

sexual violence that shapes public spaces as dangerous for women, particularly in the capital city of Delhi. Although Paranjpye does not create a sense of fear in women, as they are seen walking the streets freely or seen waiting by the roadside alone to meet their lovers when Omi and Jomo interrupt their free movement. It is logical to raise concerns about the depiction of Jomo and Omi, harassing and stalking women in public spaces constantly and never being stopped or chased by a policeman or any fellow citizen for that matter. However, Paranjpye's narrative strategy of making sure that Omi and Jomo are left humiliated and unsuccessful in every attempt at pursuing a girl makes this particular performance of masculinity as much a mockery of film-inspired heroism as it is an attempt to construct a moral universe where the worthy and the lumpen are construed to meet different fates.

Apart from the physical, tangible and conflicted urban space, Paranjpye constructs an innovative intertextual space through the technique of flashback. In these flashback sequences, Omi and Jomo translate their fantasies into false stories about their romantic encounters with Neha which serves as a strategy to subvert the genre conventions of commercial cinema. Omi and Jomo fail miserably in their attempts to impress Neha but they feel embarrassed to reveal the truth. In his flashback story, Omi narrates how he and Neha went to a garden and sang a song in a boat on a lake dressed like a Mughal king and queen. In reality, Neha mistakes Omi for a plumber and he runs away before she finds out. Similarly, Jomo's flashback story depicts how he went wearing a floral shirt and white bell-bottom trousers (a common attire of Hindi film heroes in the 1970s-80s). He introduces himself to Neha as a film director. Neha believes him and happily agrees to audition; Paranjpye creates a montage of superhit Hindi songs from the black-and-white to the colour era,

replacing original actors with Neha and Jomo. This is a significant intertextual moment where popular songs have been re-enacted and drawn into the narrative space humorously through an aesthetic of exaggerated expressions aiming to subvert the genre conventions of commercial Hindi films. She uses the trope but also rejects it as the concocted story exaggerated by the character. The actual story was that Jomo had gone in the disguise of a film director thinking that Neha would be mesmerised to see a director of Bombay films at her doorstep not knowing that Neha is not a fan of films. She understands his real intentions and makes her brother beat up Jomo.

Flashback is a commonly used narrative device that alters the temporal structure and summons memory in a film. Turim (1989) talks about the multidimensional functioning of the flashback in Hollywood silent cinema, European and Japanese cinematic cultures and in the avant-garde film form of the 1980s. She states that the flashback is concerned with the representation of memory, history and the past, and constructions of subjectivity and ideology. Discussing the varied ways in which flashbacks have functioned in film history, Turim (1989) states that the use of this technique can be seen “simultaneously as both devices to be covered with referential and narrative justification and as a means of portraying thought processes or circuitous investigations of enigmas” (p6). This suggests that, in a film, the flashback can function as a referential system, alluding to other texts and tropes (or even its own tropes and formulas). Paranjpye uses the flashback as a transgressive intertextual dream space where Omi and Jomo live their *masala* film-inspired dreams of singing and wooing Neha. Since these flashbacks are not real events of the past in the story (they are told from the perspective of a particular person manipulating

reality), the flashback attains a dream-like quality, an abstract space where unfulfilled desires are projected by the subconscious mind. This abstract space where the action happens without actually happening in the narrative space is another example of Paranjpye's playful use of a conventional device as an intertextual space.

What is more, the references made in the flashback stories demand a familiarity with the tropes of Hindi cinema. The audience is expected to recall how the hero of a Hindi film stalks a girl and wins her, while this film juxtaposes it with the real experience of rejection and humiliation of Omi and Jomo as they pursue Neha. The entire montage is created with various locales found in Hindi films - the gardens, mountains and palaces, which are used in Jomo's story but their function is different here. The montage is neither used as a memory nor an exotic commercial display to attract the audience, nor is it meant to pay homage to the commercial form of Hindi film texts. The flashback works to make an intertextual statement in relation to the familiar tropes of commercial film. The conventions and tropes are employed as narrative devices for humour as well as serving as a tongue-in-cheek commentary on the contradictions of the lived reality. The source material is utilised and composed with quirkiness to highlight the unrealistic ways in which identification with popular cultural imagery can mediate everyday lives. Thus, it is not simply a rejection of the dominant form of cinema but a dialectical process of reflection in which intertextual space becomes the tool of humourous excess as well as an invitation to the audience to reevaluate their own understanding and appreciation of the cinematic form.

The use of humour led to the labelling of *Chashme Baddoor* as a light-hearted comedy film.[79] I am not disputing that it is a film that uses humour to engage with its subject matter but simply classifying it as a film inclined towards caricaturing the tropes of mainstream cinema will not do justice to its own form which I think can be discussed as pastiche. Pastiche is a historical category of cultural production that relies on borrowing or imitating aesthetic elements. Scholars such as Linda Hutcheon, Margaret A. Rose, Dan Harries and Ingeborg Hoesterey have offered critical perspectives on the art of pastiche but for my argument, I am turning to Richard Dyer's discussion on pastiche as an imitation. Dyer (2007) noted that "pastiche is concerned with imitation" (…) and it is "an aspect of a work, something contained inside a wider work that is not itself pastiche" (pp1-2). In other words, pastiche is a "language of quotation" (Hoesterey, 1995, p501) that is structured within the work that pastiches the previous text. It is this referential language that Paranjpye utilises in constructing her flashback sequences and scenes that execute the tactics of a masala film.

As I have discussed above, in *Chashme Baddoor* certain scenes are imitations of some of the narrative devices or popular codes of mainstream Hindi films. These scenes serve the purpose of establishing the dominant popular cultural environment as the operant conditioning of Omi and Jomo. By using the style and approach of the popular filmic traits of a hero wooing a woman or singing songs in public spaces but making her actors being interrupted by people, Paranjpye facilitates as well as disrupts the experience of the work that it is imitating. For instance, in the song that I have mentioned earlier, the mise en scene echoes the romantic attitude of the title

[79] See *Encyclopedia of Indian cinema* (1994) edited by Ashish Rajadhyaksha & Paul Willeman.

song from Amitabh Bachchan's film *Kabhi-Kabhi* (*Sometimes*, 1976) where two lovers are singing a song in an open space surrounded by nature, lost into each other as if there is no one around. Paranjpye's technique of constantly framing the couple in a single frame to convey intimacy and bright flowers filling up the background is also quite similar to the popular tendencies of filming romantic songs in myriad Hindi films.[80] It is humorous, light-hearted and not outright critical. However, there is an inherent critical possibility in the way those tactics that appear impactful or are shown to be successful in mainstream cinema fail in this form. Those formulaic tactics are pastiched as mediated reproduction of elements structured within the narrative of the film, not outside of it which is the case with parody or spoof. Here, Paranjpye's structuration incorporates as well as distances itself from the mainstream form mainly in two ways. First, through casting lead actors who never became popular mainstream faces and whose names were aligned with middle cinema. Second, by deconstructing the fantastical world inhabited by the popular faces.

Thus, it uses the codes of representation of a genre in an attempt to dismantle those codes. *Chashme Baddoor* sets in play the audience's relation to the film form that it pastiches and from which it aims to keep a distance yet appears close. The imitation is part of the overall narrative and visual scheme but in the end, the film appears closer to that form, and that is what makes it a film that can be considered pastiche. It is perhaps not aiming to be critical but it is not completely devoid of that critical tone that is generated by playing with aesthetic and narrative elements of the film

[80] Flowers have a significant role in mainstream Hindi films especially in songs where a kiss between the hero and the heroine is expected to happen. The flowers were used to cover the screen to avoid any objections of explicit content by the censor board.

form that *Chashme Baddoor* is not aligned with. It is not palimpsestic in the sense that it is not layering its narrative on something else. Rather, this film works out a dialogical scheme of pastiche to generate a space of visible constructedness.

The final inter-textual battleground is constructed in the film's climax, which closes the possibility of any redemption for Omi and Jomo as they fail in their dramatic plan of reuniting Siddharth and Neha by pulling yet another trick that often succeeds in winning the female love interest in Hindi films. They plan a fake kidnapping of the female lead so that Siddharth can be established as a hero by saving Neha. The scene where Neha is dragged away by the goon to an untamed landscape is reminiscent of Hema Malini being captured by the villain Gabbar Singh's henchmen in the Hindi film *Sholay* (*Embers*, 1975). For this last sequence, Paranjpye's visual strategy changes from intimate close-ups to a mix of shots in a moving car and expansive long shots with a pacey soundtrack. The generic conventions suddenly shift to accommodate a commercial film style pacey fighting scene, which is uncharacteristic of middle cinema. Siddharth enters on his bike and attempts to save Neha through hand-to-hand combat;[81] the usual late arrival of the police[82] finally saves all the lives. By portraying the wicked villain, and the damsel in distress saved by the hero, Paranjpye gives a commercial film-style thrilling twist and allows the shy hero to realise his conventional masculine self, which otherwise finds no expression in his everyday city life. Siddharth is ultimately given a chance to perform conventional masculinity by saving his future wife after hand-to-hand combat with a small-time ruffian. A philosophical hero passes the physical test of conventional masculine abilities, he is capable of fighting like the angry young hero of *Sholay* or

[81] *Sholay* is credited to have initiated the trend of hand to hand combat in Hindi cinema.
[82] This was a common trope of Hindi commercial film plots of the1980s and earlier that the police always arrive at the end to restore law and order, after the spectacle of violence between the hero and the villain has been displayed in its full glory.

Deewar (*Wall*, 1975) but that's not how his everyday self is imagined. It must be noted that throughout the film, masculine hegemonic traits pastiched from *masala* films are presented as idiocy and failed tricks of unemployed losers, but they also serve as a site for reimagining the contested masculinity of its hero.

In one of the scenes, when Omi and Jomo are chasing a girl in a plant nursery (plantation garden), Siddharth arrives and stops them to share the news of his employment. The immediate contrast between an ideal, goal-driven man and a jobless middle-class urban masculine self is established. Omi and Jomo's idiocy, confidence and lack of purpose are shown to deepen their inability to claim a stake in the transforming urban space dominated by the aspiring middle-class hero equipped with education and a job. As I have argued throughout this thesis, Paranjpye is not purely invested in dealing with middle-class anxieties of sustaining class privilege and multiplicity is at the core of her narratives. Although this representation relates to urban multiplicities, I must point out that by reproducing a virtuous goal-oriented, employed hero against lumpen figures, Paranjpye loses the opportunity of intervening in the symbolic cultural politics of middle-class status where education and a steady job equate to social values of an individual. Siddharth is laced with social symbols that the middle class has historically valued as a means of upward mobility and class distinction. His character has been provided with a symbolic edge that confirms and does not confront the middle-class narrative of "what kinds of people and whose codes of behavior are worthy in the eyes of society as a whole (…) and reinforce status beliefs, such as who is competent, prosocial, or otherwise valued, and who deserves privilege" (Mendelberg, 2022, p52). The narrative is structured around ridiculing film-inspired hegemonic masculinity performed by Jomo

and Omi but it evokes other meanings related to social stratifications. By portraying them as purposeless middle-class characters, denying them the pleasure of succeeding in any effort they make inadvertently results in a symbolic internal classification that plays a key role in the sustenance of class privilege. A crucial symbol of Siddtharth's superior self is metaphorically implied in the recurring act of attempting to start the bike in the film. While Omi never tries his hand (or rather his foot), Jomo always starts by kicking the bike but never succeeds in starting it, no matter how much intensity he applies. The bike only starts when Siddharth kicks it - and it starts in one go. One can stretch this to imagine the particular act of successfully starting the bike in one kick as a powerful communication underlining the virtuous capable man versus the ineffectual masculine self. To create a compatible heterosexual couple, Paranjpye creates a similar kind of female lead like Siddharth, an educated character who is driven by aspiration and goals of self-upliftment, whose professional persona marks a shift in women's social role amid the economic restructuring of the 1980s.

The saleswoman: Class anxieties, disruptions and negotiations

Chashme Baddoor and *Katha* construct multiple masculinities in interaction with private-public spaces and gender identity. However, Paranjpye's female characters inhabit male-dominated spaces, constantly negotiating with the hegemonic patriarchal family structures and emergent urban social conditions. However, the male-dominated homosocial private and public space in *Chashme Baddoor* is disrupted by the confident figure of a saleswoman Neha. Neha is portrayed as a young vibrant city girl who is passionate about learning classical music. Although her

father has the means to support her studies, she works part-time as a saleswoman to be self-dependent.

The job of a saleswoman or the emergence of shop-girls behind the counters in department stores in the city problematised the narrative of urban modernity in various cultural contexts including India. It is through women's participation in the growing commodity culture that we can reflect upon the urban service sector economy, gender relations, sexual anxieties and the meaning of increased visibility for women. Neha's job provides an experiential site for negotiating self-identity, class and gender anxieties in the city space. Her participation in propagating consumer culture is also a reminder of the gradual construction of India's complex consumer society punctuated by its diverse and multilingual socio-cultural ethos.

Fig.4.4: Neha trying to sell Chamko detergent to Siddharth in her part-time role as a saleswoman.

Paranjpye introduces Neha through a close-up, over-the-shoulder shot as she encounters Siddharth when she knocks on his door to sell a pack of washing powder for clothes. Along with the cultural politics of sexuality at work, this scene also establishes crucial details about Neha's confidence and her negotiation skills. With a big black bag on her shoulder, Neha is formally dressed in a saree (traditional Indian

attire for women), her hair neatly tied back. She enters the male-dominated space knowingly but carefully. Paranjpye keeps her in the centre of the frame with a close-up capturing her eyes completely focused on the book as she logs her final entry. The visual strategy is very clear: the woman in question here means business and there is not much scope for gestural economy or bodily movements and glamorous clothes for that purpose. Her attire, body language and words are all in sync with a determination to complete her professional responsibility. This is an emblematic figure, a lone woman freely navigating interior spaces, stirring up the sexual anxieties of a patriarchal social order. It also symbolises the transforming ‘now’ of consumer culture with its focus shifting from family as its target customer to the individual urban buyer in the 1980s.

In contrast, Siddharth’s body language looks uncomfortable as he talks to her. Although this has partly to do with his characterisation, it is also due to a woman’s presence that appears to be threatening to him in his lived space. The scene captures the anxieties around transgressive, autonomous female figures posing a threat to the male-dominated interior space. In *Bombay Hustle*, discussing the anxieties that emerged around the figure of women cine workers during the early periods (1930-40) of Bombay cinema, Debashree Mukherjee notes that

> the fact that a woman on the local train, dressed in a smart cotton sari with a matching handbag, could have just as easily been a journalist, a hairdresser or a sex worker was a new and disconcerting realization. Who was and who was not a prostitute? What kind of girl was she, the woman who “wandered about aimlessly,” with “mischief in her eyes” behaving like a “vagrant”?” The figure of the woman works as a powerful symbol of both the dangers and the promises of the modern age (2020, p29).

The threat and danger that Mukherjee mentions spring primarily from the dynamics of gender identity and the power relationship that is challenged by the mobility and autonomy of modern women such as Neha's autonomous saleswoman avatar. An intriguing contradiction that emerges in the narrative space is that Jomo and Omi's hegemonic masculinity that signals a threat to women in public spaces is contrasted with a woman's unsettling presence in the homosocial space. If Omi and Jomo evoke fear of sexual violence in public space, a saleswoman's presence signals a potential moral threat to the dominant sexual order of their lived space. The spatial experience and spatial qualities thus intertwine with the social text of gender binaries in the film.

Discussing the sexual tension unleashed by the unregulated female presence in city spaces in the 19th century, Elizabeth Wilson (2001) states that "the very presence of unattended – unowned – women constituted a threat both to male power and a temptation to male 'frailty'" (p74). Since women were largely confined to the private domain and domesticity, the impersonal yet physical proximity with anonymous women in the urban space was perceived to be potentially dangerous. The danger emanates from the sexual possibilities unleashed by the autonomously functioning woman. As Wilson (1992) puts it "their presence symbolised the promise of sexual adventure" (p6). The distant possibility of a sexual encounter in the closed inner space is the source of Siddharth's nervous demeanour as he encounters Neha at his doorstep. Her unanticipated arrival manifests a threat to the masculine order of this phallocentric interior space and that is reflected in Siddharth running towards Omi's wall in an attempt to cover the nude female imagery with a towel. According to Wilson (1992), freely operating young men and women arriving in cities to find paid

work were susceptible to moral, sexual and social threats. Wilson (1992) argues that in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the greater visibility of women in public spaces in England posed dangers to traditional patriarchal constructions, particularly those associated with rural social structures. This anxiety is particularly related to the figure of sex workers, the act of street walking and its relationship to the city. The act of walking in the street – or the sex worker's mobility – displayed a twofold threat to the patriarchal order. First, through her sexual agency, the sex worker challenges the gendered order of male-dominated city space. Second, her ability to navigate the city space significantly relates to the possibility of renegotiating her identity and the control imposed by woman's relegation to the private space of domesticity. Thus, any woman, such as a saleswoman, attempting to access the city space poses a similar threat of potential sexual encounter and weakening of patriarchal control. The saleswoman on the city roads meant greater visibility for women, and their increased participation in shaping the public space, but it also meant that this visibility had to be presented in a certain manner to confirm the dominant middle-class norm of respectability. Ledger (1995) explains that, in order to be able to walk the streets of the metropolis, the saleswoman had to confront and avoid the label "public woman', synonymous at the *fin de siècle* with 'street walker" (p266). Just like the sex worker, the saleswoman is the important figure that problematises the notions of class and sexuality through her autonomous mobility.

The saleswoman's job also throws light on the nineteenth-century urban strategies of proliferating consumer culture through door-to-door reach. The job required her to encourage the culture of consumption, and her use of 'feminine energy', which is stereotypically aligned with domesticity and private space, was expected to play a

crucial role in reaching out to the potential customer in the home economies. Commenting on the mediatised figure of the saleswoman, Sangita Gopal (2019) states that saleswomen were “the harbingers of the consumer revolution” (p55) who sold household products through door-to-door marketing and later these companies emerged as major advertisers of television screens of middle-class homes. In this medial context, Neha’s saleswoman avatar is the site of specific intermedial reference in the overall narrative context of evolving consumption practices mediated through visual cultures. Rajewsky (2005) explains that intermedial reference “thematizes, evokes, or imitates elements or structures of another, conventionally distinct medium through the use of its own media-specific means” (p53). It is interesting to note that Paranjpye used the exact reference to the saree-clad middle-class woman from washing powder advertising that populated the commercial spots of the Indian TV screen of that era.[83] Paranjpye brings a specific televisual aesthetic of the 1970s-80s to her cinematic form, drawing from the emerging consumption practices of the urban middle class mediated through televised imagery. This complex reference structure not only required prior knowledge of TV imagery but also identified the middle-class TV viewer as its audience group whose moral universe is also negotiated through the overall look of this female salesperson.

In the context of this disruptive figure of a saleswoman in *Chashme Baddoor*, it is also important to understand the significance of clothing as non-verbal communication. Neha wears a carefully draped saree and a plain white blouse with no plunging neckline and a fully covered back, thereby catering to the fragile moral

[83] See “40 Years Ago...and now: Unsmiling *Lalita ji* to celebrating stains” (2014) By Masoom Gupte.

universe of the middle-class masculine order. This code of clothing communicates that she is at work and her intentions are not seductive- a common argument given as a crude justification for sexual violence against women. Neha's attire throws light on the way a particular culture makes sense of the message encoded in fashion and clothing. Malcolm Barnard (2002) notes that in the USA and Britain, fashion and clothing evoked an ambiguous response. There were negative perceptions attached to 'fashion' as deception, a signifier that one is trying to be someone else by wearing fashionable clothes. This is not much different in the Indian cultural context where clothes are seen as speaking for the person itself, particularly concerning women. This cultural coding of clothes as communication is reflected in the way Paranjpye constructs a difference between Neha's private and public self through her costumes.

A modern, educated young woman of the 1980s who is otherwise seen in the western outfit at home, such as skirts and midi dresses, drapes a saree when she goes to work. The cultural respectability of the saree as formal wear for Indian women provides a site of negotiation for women entering into the labour market and the public sphere of commodity culture. Neha's firmly worn cotton saree, restricting any sensual display of her body, is a negotiation with her intersectional modern self in the transforming urban space where middle-class women have traditionally been relegated to the spaces of privacy and domesticity. To be identified as a working woman in public and not as a 'public woman', the dress serves as an aesthetic and cultural tool for Neha.

This whole sequence, which takes place within the confined space of Siddharth's *Barsati*, emphasises that the looks, clothes, and the ability to manage the customer's response and emotions emerged as major practices for customer services professionals particularly in the retail sector. The two terms that have been used to describe these specific qualities of labour are 'aesthetic labour' and 'emotional labour'. Cox (2017) explains that aesthetic labour relates to "the management of workers' physical looks, style, personal presentation and appearance and the requirement that they embody certain attitudes and capacities" (pp7-8), while emotional labour requires them to be able to channel their emotions and feelings when required to perform professional duties. Arlie Hochschild's (1983) path-breaking conceptualisation of 'emotional labour' in the service sector threw a much-required focus on the emerging tendencies of the labour market in the wake of a growing city-based service sector and consumer culture. Although the study contextualises the 1980s American experience, the insights provide a useful lens through which to look at the experience of Indian urbanism. To be able to work as a saleswoman in the city, Neha is required to manage her impressions, expressions and a particular way of presenting herself. Her job entails a vigilant deployment, both of her body and body language. Neha has to do the emotional labour of persuading a reluctant Siddharth with a smile on her face, giving the new customer the confidence to believe in the product that she is selling while the aesthetic of her dress signals that it is only the product that is available for sale, not herself.

Hence, the judiciously saree-clad Neha, foregrounded against the nude or semi-clad female images is a suggestive construction of a new city-based female type who is shaping the private/public realm of the city space while producing her own identity in

the context of gender, class, labour and the growth of consumer culture. The door-to-door job provided mobility and freedom to women to be able to present themselves independently, in a less inhibited environment, but it had to negotiate class anxieties, as also the presence of multiple kinds of masculinities. For a girl from a middle-class family like Neha, the job of a saleswoman created a liminal functional space where she is required to acquire the characteristics needed to be a part of a modern workforce while negotiating middle-class values of respectability and sexual behaviour through the overall management of her physical and emotional appearance.

In *Chashme Baddoor*, space and spatial practices are deeply intertwined with the dynamic socio-cultural text of its time. The film utilises everyday spaces to reveal the phenomenological experience of urbanity mediated through the dominant visual cultures of a transforming age. Its humorous focus on the specific aspects of 'publicness' of urban space raises pertinent questions about cultural anxieties imposed on spaces, gender relations, access and availability of space. By deploying the antics of commercial cinema, Paranjpye positions her film in a dialectical relationship with the practices of mainstream Hindi film and raises questions about the reel and the real experience of city spaces. If Paranjpye narrates the spatial discourse of Delhi through an intertextual play of identities in *Chashme Baddoor*, her next film *Katha* presents another delightful and nostalgic spatial story based in Bombay, thereby creating a wholesome picture of the divergent phenomenological experience of specificities of Indian urbanism in two metropolitan cities during the early 1980s.

Katha: Architectural fabric, colonial history and patterns of urbanism

Sai Paranjpye's *Katha* is a document of some unique elements of South Asian urbanism, which according to many sociologists has been under-studied, as the focus has mostly been on 'colonial urbanism'.[84] *Katha* takes the path of archiving the lived experience of Bombay's unique urban housing type- *chawl*.[85] The film portrays *chawl* life as an enjoyable slice of Bombay life and adopts a celebratory mode in engaging this spatiality of provincial urbanity (Gangar, 2011). Historically, Bombay's growth as India's textile hub is a complex story of the city's socio-spatial contouring in which certain architectural forms, such as *chawl*, occupy a unique place.[86] As a spatial reservoir of '*chawl*ness', *Katha* becomes even more significant given that *chawl* is a fading architectural form in the forward march of modernity. *Katha* is not only a film but a piece of memory of Bombay's life that shaped the dynamic and chaotic Indian urban experience. Bombay is a young city and its landscape is generally remembered as a living memory of colonial modernity and *chawl*s form the monuments of that memory. The spatial order of Bombay and the architectural organisation of *chawl*s, are both reminders of Bombay's uneven socio-economic landscape developed during its tryst with various phases of urbanity and its relationship with the dynamic sociological group of the Indian middle class(es).

[84] See "Rethinking Urban Studies Today" (2018) by Sujata Patel.
[85] Paranjpye shot the film in a chawl in the nearby city of Pune and not in Bombay.
[86] Bombay was not an existing city when the Portuguese landed on the Western port of India in the 16th century. The Portuguese gifted this fishing island to Britain in dowry which was then leased to the East India Company in 1668. The British arrival gradually changed the status of Bombay from a fishing hamlet to a robust commercial and trading centre From the 1850s onwards, Bombay saw the emergence of textile mills on its landscape nd witnessed the cotton-textile industry boom. The growth of the cotton-textile industry and related trades had a major pull effect on agrarian labour, resulting in major repercussions for the space of Bombay. The population began to swell and encroach upon the Southern part of Bombay, the main hub of the colonial elite. The urgent need to house this working-class population away from the 'European city' led to the construction of a native inner city of *chawl*s closer to the mill compounds. The *chawl*s catered to the changing urban patterns as well. They initially housed rural mill workers but gradually the *chawl*s were built both for labourers and for migrants from northern parts of India working in the emerging financial and manufacturing sectors.

However, it must be noted that in its quest of representing *chawl*ness as a unique lived experience, the film does not engage with its immediate context of social and economic turmoil that struck Bombay's working class. The disastrous Bombay textile mill strikes (1982) and the eventual destruction of the cotton- textile industry does not encroach upon this spatiality of kinship. Instead of looking at the troubled times, Paranjpye pays homage to the cultural memory of *chawl* as a spatial practice of kinship and a social network in the city of dreams.[87] The sociology and psychology of '*chawl*ness' have been represented in numerous Hindi films produced before and after *Katha* such as *Piya Ka Ghar* (*Husband's Home*, 1973), *Vaastav* (*The Reality*, 1999), and *Striker* (2010). The cohesive spatiality and extended familial connections of *Katha* come closest to films like *Piya Ka Ghar.* As I have indicated before in *Piya Ka Ghar*, the lack of privacy takes precedence and the constricted space threatens to disrupt the patriarchal middle-class family. However, *Katha* establishes a lack of privacy as a flowing spatial organisation that shapes the structure of feelings through shared spaces and community relationships. Paranjpye works with identifiable material of middle cinema: the upper-caste Hindu hero, with aspirations of finding a financially secure job and a domestic life in the city. However, neither *Chashme Baddoor* nor *Katha* works towards constructing any idealist reformist role for their middle-class hero. His interaction with the transforming nature of space, his dreams and his negotiations with city life are shaped by the spatial context that he is part of, the Bombay *chawl*.

[87] In the cinematic narratives of Bombay, the city has always appeared as the quintessential space of modern experience, money and opportunity along with its representation as a space of poverty, exploitation and crime. Its industrial and financial might has earned this metropolis the status of the city of dreams where anyone and everyone has a chance to change its destiny.

Katha retells Aesop's famous fable: The Hare and the Tortoise with a twist adapted from a Marathi play. *Katha*'s Tortoise, Rajaram Purushottam Joshi, lives in a congested housing type, the famous Bombay *chawl* where all the action is set. The film is shot in a real *chawl* (though not in Bombay but in the neighbouring city of Pune – Poona at that time). A clerk by profession, Rajaram's love interest is a charming girl from the same *chawl*, Sandhya Sabnis. He is almost set to reveal his feelings to Sandhya when the Hare of this story, Basu, arrives. He is Rajaram's college friend and is malicious to the core. Basu, whose real name is Vasudev, not only prefers a shorter name but believes in shortcuts in life by misleading people or lying about his actual self. He charms everyone around and Sandhya falls for him, romantic encounter follows but Basu eventually disappears without informing her. Sandhya agrees to marry Rajaram and the tortoise wins the race somehow though not with much heroism to display as the victory came because Basu moved on to his next adventure (or mischief). *Katha* is noticeable for its quirky take on the changed rules of race in modern times but the deeper significance of the film rests with its spatial aesthetics. It is the story of space shaping the lives, actions, and relationships of people inhabiting it. The *chawl* here is not simply a dwelling, it is a space that acquires an influential social character. To read and articulate *Katha*'s ethos, we need to ask why the architectural form of *chawl* and *chawl* living is so significant in understanding the urban landscape of Bombay. The answer to this question is multidimensional and stores the economic, social and cultural journey of the urban imagination of Bombay.[88] As I will discuss ahead, the way Paranjpye captures the

[88] For an in-depth social history of Bombay city see *The making of an Indian metropolis: Colonial governance and public culture in Bombay, 1890-1920* (2016) by Prashant Kidambi.

interior spaces of the *chawl*, the film allows the viewer to experience the agency of space in expressing feelings and shaping relationships.

Spatio-social network and the psychology of home in *Katha*

The meaning of the unique spatial form and the social character of *chawl* living begins to unfold as soon as Rajaram breaks the news of his promotion in the first scene of Katha. Rajaram returns from the office with a smiling face and is seen climbing the staircase towards his *kholi* on the first floor when he is greeted by *daadi maa* (grandmother), the maternal figure in the *chawl* who lives across the corridor. Rajaram informs her that he has been promoted and his job status has changed to permanent now. The grandmother expresses happiness and brings him sugar, a gesture to celebrate his upgraded professional standing.[89] Kaiwan Mehta (2011) writes that in the mill districts, “the matriarchal figure running common canteens or eating at homes was a common feature” (p.84). *Katha*’s daadi maa is a symbol of that maternal figure who provides care given the fact that the protagonist lives away from his family. From the staircase to his own room, Rajaram greets and encounters three people in less than two minutes before opening the door of his own room. The portrait of his parents, who live in an interior village in Maharashtra, hangs on the wall. We later see a glimpse of their rural life in an open landscape with cows around. Rajaram’s parents are present in his everyday city life as a photographic memory stuck on the wall. *Katha*’s young migrant man has not lost connections with his rural roots but the nostalgia and yearning for the village as the ‘real’ home is absent from *Katha*, an emotion which is missing from *Chashme Baddoor* as well.

[89] In Indian cultural traditions, a moment of happiness or success is generally celebrated through sweets. In the absence of sweets, sugar is used as a substitute to mark the moment.

What does this missing emotion say about the urban migrant life that these films depict? In her discussion on nostalgia, Svetlana Boym (2001) states that nostalgia as an emotion is more about a cherished memory of a lost time and less about a place. She notes, “nostalgia is rebellion against the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress” (pxv). The absence of longing for the lost time and unavailable home in these narratives is a cinematic invitation to engage with modern transformations and ‘the existing time of urban history’. The lack of mourning here for a mythical past that characterised cinematic nostalgia in the 1950s films intends to construct a representational space where city life, its rhythms, its charms and its dangers can be explored without being inflected by the visions of the past.

Accordingly, Paranjpye’s camera invites the audience to engage with the intimate space of *Katha*’s *chawl* right from the start. There is no conventional establishing long shot depicting the geographical location of the *chawl* as a physical space or neighborhood. Following the opening credits, the camera cuts to a close-up of daadi maa who is actually narrating the story to *Munna* inside their *chawl* room. She then moves into the corridor and there is a POV shot of the courtyard where children are playing cricket. She notices Rajaram on the staircase across the corridor and we are introduced to the not-so-heroic hero of this story who looks elated. Wearing a white half-sleeved shirt and brown trousers, the office-going, middle-class hero announces his promotion from casual to permanent status in his current job as he climbs the staircase to his first-floor room. He instantly runs into another man possibly returning from the toilet holding a plastic container that was used to package *Dalda,* vegetable

fat for cooking.[90] Paranjpye positions them in the centre of a wide but tightly constructed shot, creating a frame within a frame near the staircase where the two men encounter each other. The entire frame is filled with the structure of the staircase in the foreground and in the background. This whole sequence immediately establishes the sociality or the publicness of the spaces of the *chawl*, the sense of community living and extended familial connections. It also indicates the inevitability of encountering people in this constricted space, there is no escape from people in the *chawl* as you have to use common corridors and connecting stairs. In constructing the spatiality of *chawl* spaces, Paranjpye erases the sense of constriction or lack of privacy by establishing a network of interrelations enabled by the closed nature of *chawl* spaces.

Fig.4.5: Rajaram greets daadi maa and meets a member of his chawl on the staircase in the opening sequence.

The architectural features that enable mobility such as staircases and corridors, traditionally seen as non-spaces, are the primary site of socialisation for *chawl* residents in *Katha*. In these spaces, men spend their leisure time playing cards and

[90] *Dalda* brand was launched by British Lever Brothers under the name of Hindustan Unilever in India in 1937. It was marketed as a 'healthy' substitute to indigenous *desi ghee* (clarified butter) used in Indian homes. Its target was the middle class consumer and the brand achieved monopoly in the vegetable fat segment until 1980s. It later came under attack and gradually lost its market share owing to the rising competition with refined oil brands that entered into the India FMCG segment during 1990s.

discussing politics while women typically use the spaces to socialise after finishing the household work when men are away. The common spaces such as galleries and the staircase acquire the role of a connecting mechanism; a network of human relationships facilitated by the spatial organisation of the *chawl* establishes this built structure as a lived experiential space. The '*chawl*ness' transforms the defined architectural features of a *chawl* as a spatial concept into the *chawl* as a lived spatial organisation redefined by its inhabitants. This difference between the designed or planned spaces and the actual usage of lived spaces can be understood with respect to the differences noted by Michel De Certeau (1988) between the concept of the city - the city of urban planners or cartographers - and urban spatial practices. De Certeau (1988) states that "if in discourse, the city serves as a totalizing and almost mythical landmark for socioeconomic and political strategies, urban life increasingly permits the reemergence of the elements that the urbanist project excluded" (p95). The elements that De Certeau refers to are the lived practices of common people, the mundane everyday activities that redefine and rewrite the overarching top-down narrative of a city. This analysis helps in understanding '*chawl*ness' as essentially a play and display of spatial practices of the "ordinary practitioners of life" (Certeau, 1988, p93). These practices reveal a reciprocal process of lived life in a particular spatial organisation that is beyond the capacity of formal disciplinary mapping. The inhabitant's life in *Katha*'s *chawl* is shaped by the built spatial context but the ways of living in turn construct an emotional geography of human relationships. That geography represents a specific form of urbanism unique to Bombay and rooted in the historic sociological patterns of migration.

The first sequence reveals crucial spatial information as well as the traits of its main character Rajaram. We see the nature of his relationship with other members of the

chawl, and his small dreams of climbing a few steps of the ladder of social mobility but not too high, as he shares with *Daadi* that he aspires to become a head clerk (and not an officer) in the near future. The choice of the ironed plain white shirt indicates that he has a white collar job in the post-industrial economy of Bombay while communicating the non-adventurous nature of his personality, that he plays safe in life. In the entire diegetic space of the film, Rajaram would never be seen wearing any bright color, only a white or pastel blue shirt, in complete contrast to the vibrant floral and colorful shirts of his notorious friend Basu.

After Rajaram's brief interaction with some of the *chawl* members, another important sequence brings the male and the female protagonists together inside his *Kholi*. This is the private space of Rajaram which brings out various aspects of his domestic side. This sequence generates a sense of Paranjpye's creative play with words as a humorous device as well as the significance of his *Kholi* which acquires different characteristics at different points in the story. Rajaram is making tea for himself when the female lead, Sandhya, enters his kitchen space (called *mori*) to ask for some milk. Like the wind, she just makes her presence felt, standing next to him and the camera turns to her, capturing both of them together. Rajaram's soft expression immediately hints at his feelings but Sandhya remains indifferent to Rajaram's subtle emotions as she wanders inside his *kholi* without paying much attention to his visibly softened expressions. Paranjpye frames them in a two-shot close-up for most of this sequence, capturing the comfortable relationship they have with each other. The *Kholi* is a dwelling space for Rajaram but it is constructed as a liminal space from Sandhya's perspective. It is an autonomous space away from the patriarchal

presence which allows her to transform from a charming, carefree girl-like figure into a desirous woman after Basu's arrival later in the film.

In this sequence, Sandhya and Rajaram's relationship is mostly established with their gestural economy. Her constant movement away from Rajaram's body gives a sense of a non-sexual friendly relationship, which is also established by Sandhya's answer when Rajaram tells her not to use the formal suffix *Ji* with his name as she addresses him as *RajaramJi.*[91] Sandhya wittily retorts that "*aapki personality mein hi Ji hai*" (what to do, your personality is made for *Ji*), making it clear that Rajaram might be able to earn her respect but he is not the type to who she can be attracted towards. She moves from the kitchen into the room to pick a wooden nameplate with Rajaram's name inscribed on it: he has bought it to memorialise the personal milestone of his promotion. Sandhya goes on to fix the plate on the door, while a few other *chawl* members gather to witness this historic moment in Rajaram's life. The camera goes from close up to wide again to capture the community celebration of a private triumph. When Sandhya reads Rajaram's name plate, it is amusing to note that his long name could not fit into the length and breadth of the plate, forcing him to adjust to the funny-sounding shortened middle name as 'Pu' instead of Purushottam. In the shortened name on the nameplate, Paranjpye creates a humorous material expression of modified, and in turn altered aspiration. For Rajaram a small but permanent job is a major moment of happiness, a step up in the ladder of the hierarchical, urban, socio-economic structure that he believes will concretise his prospects with Sandhya. This desire for ascendency is a common factor, almost a norm, for the middle class that dreams of rising high in the new economic

[91] Hindi suffix *Ji* is used after names to address someone in a formal and respectful manner.

environment of business, finance and information that dawned in the 1980s and exploded in the 1990s. A similar quest for promotion is seen in Basu Chatterjee's *Rajnigandha* (Marigold, 1974), whose hero Sanjay is again a clerk like Rajaram and desperate to get a promotion to become an officer. As for Rajaram, the desire for permanent status is a way of consolidating his identity and his self-worth to be able to win love and have a life, an outsider's way of claiming a stake in city life. Rajaram's singlehood, his job and his dream of marrying a city girl are reminders of the pattern of migration and the practice of urban migrant homemaking. In this sense, the nameplate on the door of his *Kholi* is a material signification of a step forward in achieving the limited ambitions of Rajaram which concretises his prospects of settling in Bombay.

In a discussion on the context, form and language of architecture, Frederik Jules (1974) states that "architecture is the delicate balance of meaning associated with the built environment. The meanings may be intrinsic to our ways of seeing or they may be culturally or emotionally significant" (pp36-38). The space that *Katha* represents or reproduces is intricately linked to the cultural and emotional ways of being in an unfamiliar terrain of a big city. In one of the scenes, Rajaram comments that *chawl mein toh sabhi rishtedar hote hain* (everyone is a relative in the *chawl*). The sense of extended communal relationships and the porous nature of architectural form in *Katha* enigmatically plays with the idea of 'home' as a closed, interior private space of the dwelling. Most of the rooms in the *chawl* (except for Rajaram's and a newlywed couple's) do not have closed doors, with often only a curtain separating the room from the gallery. Even the closed door of the newlywed couple's room cannot keep the secret of intimate private moments. Each time

Rajaram passes their door along the gallery, he smirks and smiles as he overhears the romantic overtures. The *chawl* is clearly a big extended family which comes very close to the North Indian idea of *mohalla* culture, where everyone knows everyone and participates in each other's life.[92] However, a *mohalla* is a completely different space as it consists of private homes, they may be big or small but they have clearly defined boundaries. Here, the concept of a home gets redefined and the physical characteristics of the constricted spatiality force a more socialised self.

Fig.4.6: The Corridors and courtyard serve as public spaces in the chawl.

According to Kaiwan Mehta (2011), the rural or regional connections that characterise *chawl*s allow for an amorphous idea of a family. *Katha* depicts that feeling of belonging to one big home where people are available for each other and the walls are not separations but connections that bind the spatial configuration of the *chawl* into one unit. But the most important thing to understand here is neither the possibility of an amorphous family nor how *chawl* transforms into the home, but rather the relationship between space and the concept of 'home'. The idea of home relates to the spatial sense of cultural and social identifications. Home, then, involves

[92] The term *mohalla* has its origin in the Arabic word *mohaalla* which broadly refers to socio-spatial stratification of residential areas. The word has been used in various languages including English, Turkish, Portugese, German and Italian. It connotes an informal spatio-cultural organisation in terms of community relationships and sense of belongingness. For more see *Keywords for India- A Conceptual Lexicon for The Twenty-First Century* (2020) edited by Rukmini Bhaya Nair and Peter Ronald deSouza.

a sense of deep psychological connection which goes beyond geography and spatiality. The space of a home is constantly produced and reproduced in interaction with social and psychological factors. The spatiality of ‘home’, as an enclosed physical structure of a ‘house’, loses its fundamental spatial characteristic of being a private domain when the ‘home’ is a *chawl*. The topology of the *chawl* not only represents the physical space of an extended home but also the complex psychological space of the home where cultural connections supplement the absence of blood relations. In unfamiliar terrain, regional and rural connections provide the sense of security and belongingness associated with the idea of home but *Katha* represents a psychology of home that is much more intricate and involves various processes of identity formation and social existence. It is the experiential economy of the physicality of home that explains the relationship between space and the humans living in it.

The crowded inner space in *Katha*, which forms the structural and emotional connections, echoes the central crisis for a newlywed couple, Ram and Malti in Basu Chatterjee’s *Piya Ka Ghar* (*Beloved’s Home*, 1973). The marriage between Ram and Malti comes under tremendous pressure when the young couple is unable to find privacy and intimacy in Ram’s shared ‘home’. *Piya Ka Ghar* exhibits *chawl* life in contrast with a big house and the open spaces of the interior town and sees it through the prism of a middle-class home as a sacrosanct unit that is ultimately secured. However, Paranjpye’s concerns are different from Chatterjee’s as she captures the constricted *chawl* space shaping the lived experience while creating an inner space that gets violated by a friend, a man belonging to the same aspirational social class. Both in *Katha* and *Chashme Baddoor*, the middle-class home is not

necessarily a secure space, particularly for women. Hrishikesh Mukherjee's *Guddi* (1971), where the hero, an image of a robust masculine self who is distinct from the educated, professional middle-class hero, kindles Guddi's sexual desire. It is an act of transgression on her part and she is shown to be rescued from the dangers of falling outside the real and tasteful world of the middle class. The lure and the unrealistic fantasy of a commercial film hero and the threat that he poses to the middle-class order emanates from outside the secured order of the family and home. However, *Katha* brings the subject of attraction right inside the 'home' where Sandhya lives. Initially, she is careless about Basu's presence but as he plays his deceitful tactics to charm everyone around with his false stories, Sandhya gets attracted to him as she had already declared early on in the film that "mera pati toh raub wala hoga" (my husband would be a man of vigour). She does not need to transgress the boundaries of her home to encounter that man who she finds attractive and who turns out to be ill-intentioned and treacherous. Sandhya is not as naïve as Guddi in falling in love with a film hero who she has seen onscreen and does not know as a person. To Sandhya, the carefree-looking outsider with a fake demeanour looks much more exciting than the socially homogenous social group of the *chawl* that she belongs to. The socially consistent environment of the *chawl* is intercepted by an exotic outsider. Hence, the threat posed to a woman is no longer external. It is not only the public space where women are susceptible to malicious intentions, as seen in films such as *Rajnigandha* where the female protagonist Vidya goes to the cinema. While she waits for her boyfriend in front of the theatre alone, she is asked by random men if she wishes to accompany them, intruding her right to the public space. *Katha* blurs that private-public divide: the private space is equally full of lure, treachery, and exploitation. Hence, the charming and loving middle-class

domestic space here confirms the dark reality of sexual abuse by family members, acquaintances, and close relatives to which women and children are equally susceptible.

Gender, sex, and marriage

The idea of barracks-style housing that was meant to accommodate single men explains the gendered logic of this particular built environment and the lack of privacy it ordered. The very fact that the *chawl* was an architectural type that was not constructed to accommodate women or heterosexual families plays a major role in understanding how the architectural logic shaped women's lived experience within the *chawl* in *Katha*. Enunciating women's experience in *chawl*s, Smruti Koppikar (2011) states that

> *Chawl*s were designed by men, meant for men, and initially inhabited by men…Increasingly, men brought their mothers and wives to the city, to the *chawl* life, pitchforking many of these women into completely strange, unfathomable, even unhygienic and unliveable conditions. It was left to women to negotiate this space, both with men and with other women (p119).

The commonly used open spaces of the *chawl* became the site of engagement for women's everyday lives. The in-between spaces of the gallery and the courtyard were the sites where women negotiated domestic life with other women. They had to learn the ways of being within this space which involved moments of home-grown tensions.

Katha gives a slight glimpse of such tensions in the scene where children are playing cricket in the courtyard and the ball breaks the wooden tumbler containing curd in

one of the *kholis*. The woman inside the room furiously cuts the ball into two pieces and throws it back at the boys. The mother of those children shouts at her, blaming her childlessness for her lack of empathy for small kids. So, the close-knit structure allows for intimate relationships and a strong support structure but is also responsible for causing friction among women over smaller things. The same shared space which enforces sociality and bonds can also create conditions for hostility and misunderstandings. The blurred lines of private-public space also allow access to intimate knowledge and voyeuristic opportunities to the neighbours. In her article, Koppikar (2011) describes that there were *chawl*s in which newlywed couples did not even have space to sleep together. Sometimes, the situation was such that the bride had to sleep in someone else's room. If the couple would get a chance to sleep together for one night everyone would be aware of what could possibly happen between a young married couple. That's what happens each time when Rajaram crosses the room of the newlywed couple on his floor and he can't help but smile. Paranjpye's camera navigates the spaces of the *chawl* without interrogating the problematics of an extremely crowded and non-existent personal space. The close-ups often bring the entire *chawl* structure into vision as one single unit asserting the intimate connection and unity of the lived space that it establishes right from the first shot. The lack of privacy, the chats happening through the window and sharing of food indicate a celebration of shared life within the constraints of limited resources in a city known for its financial might. Writing on *chawl*s in Indian films, Amrit Gangar (2011) points out that space "acquires an ethical dimension, glorifying poverty, and privileging the size of space inside the dil (heart) and not physical space outside" (p94). The propensity of glorifying poverty over ethics and emotions has been an essential idea in Indian philosophical traditions in defining the ideal self in the mortal

world. However, the characters inhabiting *Katha*'s *chawl* represent professional working-class people with jobs and finite resources at hand. They are not poor in comparison to the large number of people dwelling on open streets and slums. However, the representational strategy of fondness and softness through which the everyday struggles of the *chawl* are captured, conjures a sense of establishing comfort in discomfort, a triumph of the human will to survive in a space that might be materially insufficient but provides an immensely supportive social network. It fine-tunes the appalling conditions of limited availability of basic amenities of water, communal toilets and crowded corridors to create the rhythms of urban practices.

Katha does not invest much time in detailing women's domestic lives within the *chawl*. There are very small details that can be utilised in understanding the gendered aspect of Paranjpye's spatial construction. Daadi's warm presence and her constantly open door, serve as a metaphor for a big-hearted, maternal figure whose love and warmth are available to anyone in the *chawl*. Her character reinforces the characteristic unity of the *chawl* as one family. The other women in the *chawl* are seen to be busy with their domestic chores. However, Paranjpye does not establish her leading lady in the domesticated inner space of her paternal home in the *chawl*. Sandhya is never seen cooking or even making tea until she is in love with Siddharth who urges her to make tea. Until then, it was only Rajaram who is constantly captured within his kitchen space. Sandhya is not a working woman but this fact does not lead to her being placed and perceived only in a relationship with the domesticated space of *chawl*. She is a desiring woman who declares to her parents that "*mera pati toh raubeela hoga*" (my husband would be a man of vigour). She is shown to be playfully occupying the spaces of *chawl* which also becomes a

transgressive space of her sexual adventure. Against the backdrop of the second wave of feminism, Sandhya's character can be read as someone who shows the desire to command her sexuality. Paranjpye constructs Sandhya as a woman who is attracted to flamboyance which leads her to fall in love with Basu. She likes Basu and is not hesitant in acting as per her desires.

In the final act, Sandhya is all set to marry but Basu is nowhere to be found. Rajaram discovers his letter where he breaks the news of his departure without telling anyone. He then comes forward to marry Sandhya, only to be confronted by her request that he avoids taking any decision out of pity and not love. Sandhya's hesitation in accepting that Rajaram loved her is not only because he never mentioned it but also because she has in mind the middle-class value of a woman's chastity, which she has lost to Basu.

Fig.4.7: Sandhya talks to Rajaram about her pre-marital sexual relationship.

The act of being honest with Rajaram about her sexual encounter with Basu allows Sandhya to take back control of her sexuality but the ghost of her virginity captures the complex modern experience of women's negotiation between the changing desire for sexual freedom and the traditional institution of marriage. Her words,

“*bahut der ho chuki hai*” (it is too late now), play a dual role of establishing the female character both as a modern woman who owns her body and right to her sexuality but still feels helpless to navigate the social values inscribed in the institutional systems of patriarchal gender relationships, especially marriage. It would be a reductive reading to see Sandhya’s inhibition in accepting Rajaram’s proposal as a result of her personal shame of choosing to have sex before marriage. In the scene where Sandhya speaks to Rajaram about his marriage proposal after Basu’s departure, Paranjpye opts for restricted melodrama with no sharply edited shots or intense music generally deployed to intensify the sense of tension in such cinematic moments. This intimate and crucial moment is set in Rajaram’s Kholi, which has constantly provided Sandhya with a space of intimacy away from the patriarchal gaze. Paranjpye positions her centrally in a tight close-up where she questions Rajaram’s proposal as an act done out of pity, inviting the audience to identify with her while she negotiates this moment. In this entire scene, the closed doors and windows behind them are in sharp contrast to their earlier friendly exchanges with open doors and windows. It is the restricted opaque space that Paranjpye creates through her camera, steadily focused on the characters that heighten the intensity of this encounter. With nearly a minute-long close-up shot, Paranjpye gives Sandhya a chance to express her dilemma and keeps the audience close to witness how she is not repentant and still sure about her desires. She is troubled but not shown to be ashamed of owning her pre-marital sexual encounter before a man who is willing to marry her.[93] However, her final decision to accept Rajaram’s feelings is eventually a compromised position necessitated by the limited narrative imagination. It is

[93] Pre-marital sex is generally a taboo in Indian middle-class social structures. The woman’s body and sexuality is commanded by patriarchal norms of chastity for women which is controlled by the father (or brother) before marriage and by the husband after wedding.

governed by the patriarchal meta-narrative that dictates gender norms, which conditions men and women into thinking about themselves as part of a structure that they aren't allowed to deconstruct. As an ordinary girl in a patriarchal order, Sandhya's free will to find a partner as per her imagination transforms Rajaram's *Kholi* into a spatiality of sexual transgression and negotiations as any kind of sexual encounter before marriage is a highly contentious issue for respectable women and their families in India. The *chawl*, Sandhya's home is the first site where her desire rebels against society by claiming the right to her body, to be in a sexual act without formal patriarchal approval.

This context of negotiating sexuality and desires in *Chashme Baddoor* and *Katha* is important in relation to some of the generic elements of middle cinema films. The formation of couples and struggles of conjugality form an important aspect of how the trope of marriage is generally utilised. In many films, marriage is a narrative device through which middle-class anxieties of reproducing a distinguished world of morality are dealt with (*Abhimaan*/*Pride*, 1973 or *Thodi Si Bewafayi*/, *A Little Indiscretion*/1980). But the pre-marital phase in *Chashme Baddoor* and *Katha* shows a different kind of negotiation that addresses desires concerning how the characters see themselves and their expectations from life which may contradict the regimented ways of thinking about a middle-class moral world. This is not to say that Paranjpye breaks the patriarchal shackles that entrap men and women into gendered identities but to acknowledge that she succeeds in making a little space for desires and vulnerability.

The problems that arise before Siddharth reunites with Sandhya in *Chashme Baddoor* or Rajaram can express his love in *Katha*, are not caused by an impending threat to class identity or endogamy. The troubles are caused when the expectations of the prospective partners are not met as per individual ideas of what the spouse should be like. These films provide a glimpse of shifting attitudes to mate selection processes in India; while the role of the family is somewhat weakened in Paranjpye's film, it was rather decisive in the middle cinema films of the 1970s. Her cinema is constructed without the overarching presence of the patriarchal figure who populates most of the films in the middle cinema category such as *Guddi*, *Chupke Chupke*, *Kisi Se Na Kehna* (*Don't Reveal To Anyone*, 1983), *Golmaal* etc. Rather than reproducing the genre conventions, Paranjpye works through the material of middle cinema and some of its conventions while constructing a contradictory terrain of social relationships in which humor and intertextuality become the navigational devices.

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In this chapter, I have shown that *Chashme Baddoor* and *Katha* are narratives of space that break down the lived experience of Delhi and Bombay through various private and public spaces. I have argued that the built environment and lived spatial practices shape the nature of social life, relationships, desires and the invisible power dynamics of everyday spaces in both films. Both films establish a diverse and fragmented sense of Indian urban dwelling by locating the stories in small, congested and shared lived spaces that express the identity and desires of their occupants. I have demonstrated that the divisions of private and public space as two exclusive geographies of modern life are challenged by both films. While *Katha*'s spatiality imposes an expansion or a redefinition of the idea of private/public space,

Chashme Baddoor connects the private lived space and the public space through the possibilities of forging human connections. I have also shown the gendered practices of lived spaces in these films and how they relate to self-identity, desires, and human connections. Finally, space and spatial organisation affect human behaviour as it also works like the material expression of thoughts and ideas through which people filter their everyday life. This is the main aspect of inquiry in the following chapter where I am exploring the psycho-social conceptualisation of home, what constitutes the home environment and its dislocation triggered by the failed nationalist dreams of economic development in *Disha* and *Papeeha*.

Chapter Five

The troubled home in *Disha* (*Direction*/1990) and *Papeeha* (*Forest Love Bird*/1993)

If *Katha* and *Chashme Baddoor* are Paranjpye's quintessential city films, *Disha* and *Papeeha* bring the diverse spatial contexts of the village and the forest in a dialogue with the 'modern' city. These films recast the city-country divide in providing spatio-social scrutiny of the city-centric, industry-led path of economic development adopted by the post-independence state of India. By making a spatial turn to the village and the forest, these films bring the 'national interiors' to the screen and provide a cultural critique of modern Indian discourse of capitalist development. Weaving various threads of a life lived by the cotton mill workers in Bombay and their rural connections, *Disha* narrates the story of two migrant labourers - the protagonist

Vasant and his friend Soma. The inability to find work in the village forces them to migrate to Bombay and become mill workers. In the film, Paranjpye depicts the shocks of modernity encountered by the characters arriving in the city but her focus remains on the simultaneous transformations affecting the village home. *Papeeha*, on the other hand, creates an imaginary world of an indigenous Indian tribe, living in a dense forest. The tribe, for whom the forest is the home, suddenly faces the fear of destruction of its 'homeland' at the hands of corrupt state officials and illegal encroachment. Thus, both films represent a certain idea of a home and its familiar environment that comes under attack as these nurturing geographies grapple with an external economic environment centred on the development of cities.

In this chapter, I am arguing that, through the distressed geographies of the village in *Disha* and the forest in *Papeeha*, Paranjpye seeks to portray the post-industrial decay of the experience of home as a spatiality of cultural ties and livelihood severely impacted by the changing economic environment. The objective of exploring the filmic construction of the home and home environment in these films is to underline perceptions of cultural identity attached to the idea of home space. Building on the discussion about the concept of home in the previous chapters (chapters two and four), this chapter further explores the meanings of home and displacement specifically in relation to the national visions of development. By way of discussion on their visualisation of cultural specificities of life and relationships in the context of the village in *Disha* and the forest in *Papeeha*, I explore how these films constitute the geographies of home and how the changing social relations and economic structures create the conditions for its imminent destruction in the emerging neoliberal economic regime of the 1990s.

I demonstrate that the village and the forest are not represented as geographically and temporally contrasting territories against the exploitative modern city. The 'urban' and the 'rural' are not exploited as oppositional signifiers of modernity and tradition. Rather, they are shown as two interrelated spatial constructs shaping the lived experience of people marginalised by the flawed ideologies of development. My position here draws on and expands Rashmi Sawhney's (2007) insights on Aruna Raje directed *Rihaee* (*Liberation*, 1988) and *Disha*. Sawhney states that women film directors rework city/village binaries to present "an alternate vision of modern India" (p3). I examine this cinematic vision by exploring the interrelation of these geographies and how they shape or impact the experience of home in the films examined. Through the conditions triggering displacement at home –the loss suffered in the space of belonging, intimacy, and security –Paranjpye addresses the dark side of the city-based industrialisation in *Disha*, and environmental destruction, corruption, and indigenous resistance in *Papeeha*. I demonstrate that Paranjpye contextualises development and urbanisation as a transformational force at 'home' represented through different and differently lived spaces in both films. I am also exploring how the concept of legality clashes with the perceptions of home and the right to be at home, particularly in *Papeeha*. The chapters draw on the multidisciplinary discussions on the notion of home as discussed in chapter two to demonstrate how the home or home environment becomes the primary site through which the social, political, and economic structures are interrogated shunning the traditional cinematic binaries of the backward village and the modern city.

In the context of city-centric socio-economic development, it is important to recall the background of independent India's road to development, which *Disha* and *Papeeha* seek to question. The Indian nationalist leadership that led the freedom movement had envisioned two divergent trajectories of post-independence socio-economic development. These two visions are particularly associated with Mahatma Gandhi and India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. In Gandhi and Nehru's imagination of postcolonial growth and reconstruction, the village and the city remained deeper ideological issues. In a letter written to Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi stated that "if India is to attain true freedom and through India the world also, then sooner or later the fact must be recognized that people will have to live in villages, not in towns, in huts not in palaces" (2005, p512). Nehru, on the other hand, had an unsympathetic view of the village as a potential driver of India's growth. In his letter to Gandhi, Nehru writes that "a village, normally speaking, is backward intellectually and culturally and no progress can be made from a backward environment. Narrow-minded people are much more likely to be untruthful and violent" (1968, no page). Gadgil and Guha (1992) state that despite his bitterness about colonial rule, Nehru admired the industry-led growth and modernisation of the Western world, which became the mainstay of institutional growth programs of the Indian government post-1947. The intensive use of modern technology and industrial expansion was seen as the best bet for growth. The second five-year plan clearly stated that "the use of modern technology requires large-scale production and unified control and allocation of resources in certain major lines of activity. These include exploitation of minerals and basic and capital goods industries which are major determinants of the rate of growth of the economy" (GOI, no page).

Guha and Gadgil sum up the quest for development as the abandonment of Gandhi's idealised village republics and the championing of Nehru's techno-modern vision:

> It is clear that in the path of economic development eventually charted by the Indian nation the Mahatma's ideals were made redundant with quite alarming rapidity. Most Indian nationalists drew a wholly different conclusion from the colonial experience, arguing that India's subjugation was a consequence of its intellectual and economic backwardness. In this perspective, as contrasted with the dynamic and progressive West, India was a once-great civilization that had stagnated and atrophied under the dead weight of tradition. Its revitalization could only come about through an emulation of the West, intellectually through the infusion of modern science, and materially through the adoption of large-scale industrialization (2012, p28).

As Guha and Gadgil note, the Gandhian idiom of the village as the spiritual Indian self was made redundant by the post-independence political elite in the pursuit of industry-led national development. Interestingly, the Gandhian imagination of the village resonated in the melodramatic Hindi film narratives of the 1950s-60s. In more than a hundred-year-long cinematic history of India, numerous Hindi films have portrayed the city as the exploitative, wretched modern space, the 'other' of the humble traditional village - the unavailable home to the spiritual Indian self, suffering in the city life.[94] The cinematic city of Bombay, for instance, was a place of industry, mobility, opportunity and wealth but marred with corruption, greed and exploitation, and devoid of true relationships. Thus, binaries were established where the city was attractive, dangerous and ephemeral but the village home remained an imagined eternal and static space of retreat and spiritual self. Paranjpye does not work with

[94] I have discussed this aspect of city and the country in Hindi films since 1950s in chapter two.

these binaries in *Disha* and *Papeeha* though their themes address the questions of identity, dislocation and loss, some of which can be traced in the Hindi commercial films of the 1950s. In Paranjpye's films, the city and the village/forest are uneven topographies of the lived experience. She treats them as interconnected geographies coproduced through economic processes of industrialisation migration, and agrarian change affecting the home space.

Economic migration, displacement, and the lost home in *Disha*

Inspired by evocative real-life events and experiences, *Disha* is a tale of poverty, migration, and displacement on the one hand and dreams, hope, and a search for a sustainable resource for rural development on the other. Released in 1990, a year before Indian economic reforms (1991) were implemented, Disha attempts to chart the way forward while casting a critical eye on the experience of the quintessential cinematic city of Bombay. The film proposes a prospective vision of development while reflecting on the unfulfilled national dreams of economic prosperity through city-based industry-led programmes. The story revolves around Vasant Mandre and Soma Sapat, two friends with differing world views, living in the drought-hit village of *Bakuri*. Soma lives with his elder brother Parshuram Sapat, his wife, and their four children. Parshuram has been digging a well in search of water for over a decade. Soma's family owns substantial farmland but it is useless due to the lack of water needed for agriculture. Soma and Vasant constantly look for work as daily wagers without much success. Out of utter desperation, Soma decides to migrate to Bombay and Vasant joins him shortly after his wedding and they both become cotton mill workers. The narrative shows the course of transformation, both of its characters and their home space of *Bakuri* while they navigate the dystopic metropolis of Bombay as

migrants. Vasant’s wife Phulwanti joins a *bidi* factory as a daily wage worker back in the village.[95] While Vasant aims to earn enough to be able to return forever to his wife and home in Bakuri, Soma is unwilling to return ever. The circumstances at home take a major turn making Vasant’s desire to return home unattainable while Soma’s orientation is altered making him eventually return to his brother in the village.

Through a conjoined story of two migrant figures, Paranjpye utilises the trope of migration to the city as a forced journey of loss and displacement. The village economy, however, is also not free from the clutch of capitalist exploitation where the bidi factory is shown as a dangerous gendered site posing a sexual threat to rural women entering the workforce. The city and the village in *Disha* are imagined as two transforming geographies co-producing each other. The film depicts how displacement, both physical and psychological is not only triggered by the tumultuous urban experience but is made worse by the unfortunate alterations happening at home in the village. Therefore, migration is conceptualised as a life-altering journey, a complex experience of displacement embedded in economic structures, political controls, social relationships, necessities, and aspirations.

Ashis Nandy (2007) argues that journey as a metaphor has specific connotations in South Asia “as a trope for growth, learning, the unfolding of personal or collective experience, and for life itself” (p8). This is in contrast to the western imagination of the idea of a journey as he notes, “for Victorian England a journey might have been

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[95] [95] *Bidi* is indigenous cigarette made of leaves rolled with tobacco.

primarily the frame through which others could be seen, for South Asians it has been mainly the frame through which the self can be confronted" (p9). Paranjpye constructs the journey of migrant workers Vasant and Soma in a manner similar to what Nandy describes as a journey of self-discovery and revelation. It is through Soma and Vasant's journey from the village to the city that the complexities of self-identity, displacement and the imagined rootedness of home are dealt with. Leaving the home creates conditions of distanced intimacies between Vasant and his wife Phulwanti who is left behind in the village. Paranjpye's depiction of rural-to-urban migration is in line with the historic pattern of migrant experience where women never migrated with their husbands until men found a suitable job and a place to live. Phulwanti's effort to find work to keep herself busy leads her to a bidi factory where she is shown to be enduring the sexual advances of the factory manager. As she eventually falls prey to the manager's sexual advances, the home and the homely environment transform for Vasant. It no longer remains the space of love and warmth that he longs for and hopes to return. The changed phenomenological atmosphere seals his displacement upsetting the sense of being at home. What gets ruptured in this process is not only the marital bond and private space but the sense of belonging and emotional security that the village as a home space offers in the film. The relational geography of the village is a crucial element in negotiating self-identity in the context of economic structures and transformations.

The village home and home environment

Similar to *Katha* and *Chashme Baddoor*, Paranjpye begins to tell the story from the lived-in space of *Disha*, Bakuri village in Maharashtra. From the first image, visual cues are given that represent the home environment and construct the context of the

spatial experience. The opening credits roll against a bright yellow wildflower on a thorny bush that blooms in a barren land suggesting hope and despair that we are about to witness in this land.

Fig.5.1: The land of Bakuri in the opening shot.

In the opening scene, we see a man in a long shot, entering the dry and deserted land of Bakuri. With him, the film slowly takes the audience into the lived spaces of its characters and their relational environment (Fig.5.1). The man stops at Parshuram Sapat’s hut and introduces himself as Ganu Parab from the neighbouring village. In the ensuing conversation with Parshu’s younger brother Soma, Ganu enquires about a local man Vasant Mandre, the prospective groom for his sister. Soma mentions that Vasant is his childhood friend and happily takes the visitor to meet Vasant and his father. The whole sequence establishes the village as a fluid space without physical boundaries to restrict access. From the moment Ganu Parab arrives at Soma’s hut till the time they reach Vasant’s place, there is unrestricted movement in and out as if moving inside a big home with a big bushy backyard and scattered rooms. Soma’s hut has a symbolic boundary of piled-up stacks of stones with no gate. The porous nature of the boundary allows an outsider like Ganu to

have a direct chat with the children playing on the other side and then gradually enter the house. The absence of physical walls or locked doors signifies the fluidity of space and the village as a cohesive unit with unhindered access to all the inhabitants. This spatial connectedness is also articulated through Soma's statement that Bakuri has seventy huts and everyone knows each other. The sense of knowing each other forms the basis of the collective identity and belonging to the village community. What we see through the fluidity of space and access in *Disha* is people being at home, engaged in the patterns of everyday life. Paranjpye depicts spatial organisation, daily chores, conversations, cultural beliefs, and local economic conditions to signify the atmospheric qualities and the corporeal experience of the home.

Starting from the opening scene, the visual conventions of Paranjpye's film can be established both on the surface level and on the level of underlying deeper meanings. The establishing long shot of the opening scene where Ganu meets Soma shows more than just people and their physical surroundings. The framing allows the viewer to perceive the space with all its elements that form part of the atmosphere: the condition of the hut, Soma's niece washing clothes, his nephews playing and the sounds of birds- all visual-aural elements impart information about who all live in this space and how. The shot positions people in their surroundings, the realm of habitation and behaviour that gives a sense of at-homeness in Bakuri as "fundamental ways of life…the country way of life" (Williams, 1973, p1). The hut later forms the backdrop of the shot as Soma welcomes Ganu and makes him sit in the opened space in front of the hut. Placing the scene outside of the hut sanctions privacy to Soma's sister-in-law who is inside and whose character is to unfold in the

due course. The camera captures the frame from a distance where a door is visible on the right side of the frame though no access to the interior space is provided either to the guest or to the viewer's eye. This strategically framed shot creates a sense of inside-outside (private/public) within the lived space (Fig. 5.2).

Fig.5.2: Ganu (L) talks to Soma (R) and the camera constructs the inside/outside space.

The viewer may take the spatially articulated details for granted but here Paranjpye's visual strategy highlights how privacy is practiced in a dwelling space that allows freedom of access to each other's lives in the village. Paranjpye's scheme of keeping the camera at a distance combined with a limited number of close-ups of faces in the entire film is a significant tool in providing a sense of privacy. This strategy serves two main functions. One, this visual scheme reflects the intention of avoiding victimisation while constructing the spatial experience of economic hardships in the village. Second, the non-intrusive strategy of positioning the camera at a distance allows Paranjpye to provide a sense of privacy for its characters. It is interesting to note that this distance inevitably makes visible, the lack of privacy that allows Paranjpye to depict the village as a single unit.

The culturally and socially cohesive structures of life form the fundamental spatial experience of belonging in the village. The traditional patterns of relationships and values bear major political significance for self-identity in the tightly knit lived environment depicted in the film. As Avtar Brah (1996) notes, "(t)he question of home ... is intrinsically linked with the way in which processes of inclusion or exclusion operate and are subjectively experienced under given circumstances. It is centrally about our political and personal struggles over the social regulation of "belonging"' (p192). This regulation of belonging is the governing rule in Bakuri that requires the continuous labour of belonging as well. In one of the scenes before Vasant's wedding, a villager stops at Vasant's hut to tell his father Dajiba that he expects an invitation to the wedding. Dajiba responds that the entire village is invited to the grand party. Vasant objects to his father's intentions for arranging a big event when there is no money, Dajiba boasts of his *izzat*, the patriarchal honour that he needs to uphold in the village.[96] The socio-cultural codes of *izzat* hold high value for him in shaping his own identity in relation to the wider village community. Through a reference to various deep-rooted socio-cultural beliefs and conventions, Paranjpye constructs Bakuri as a space of home with a distinctive spatio-social environment. A home in the village is less about the built structure and design but more about its milieu and dwelling practices which create feelings of identification and belonging. Paranjpye constructs at-homeness and the sense of belonging through social interactions, cultural codes, and relations. However, the shared experience of economic constraints and deprivation are other lived experiences that distort the

[96] [96] The term *izzat* is an Urdu word that loosely refers to the idea of honour, pride or prestige. It is a difficult cultural concept that embraces the complex idea of *sharm* (shame/embarrassment) and carries a sense of duty towards family, community or fraternity. *Izzat* thus serves as a socio-cultural device that helps an individual to maintain socially inscribed idea of patriarchal family honour.

phenomenological space of the village perceived to be the secured home. The lack of rain and the absence of water resources has destroyed the agrarian economy of Bakuri forcing people like Soma to become daily wage workers despite being a landowner. Similarly, Vasant is seen desperately and unsuccessfully pleading for work. Both are eventually compelled to migrate to Bombay in an attempt to alleviate financial hardships. *Disha*'s home is not only a locale of comfort, rest, familiarity and security, but it is also a space of desperation, hopelessness and an uncertain future.

Fig.5.3: Parshu inside his well.

Despite growing impoverishment what is significant about Paranjpye's depiction is the constant presence of hope and the strong social fabric of inter-subjective relationships in Bakuri. Parshuram's character exemplifies this in the film. While people are migrating to the city, Parshu spends an entire decade digging a well in search of water (Fig.5.3). His determination is ridiculed by fellow villagers and even in nearby villages but he remains unhindered in his attempts every day. Interestingly, Paranjpye chooses to introduce Parshu at the place of his action and not in the house. He stands at the bottom of the well trying to move rocks with his hands in the hope of finding water. Paranjpye brings the audience to this particular site as it is symbolic of hope, revival and rural transformation. It holds the promise of a

resolution that can change the economic life of the village and improve the impoverished conditions. The man who is labelled as crazy by the village is the actual change-maker, a symbolic figure who keeps the hope of rural transformation alive in the film. Paranjpye uses Parshu's character not only for keeping hopes alive in the darkness of poverty, but his conduct also pronounces the quality of character and social relations that exists in the village. Despite facing desperate conditions, the village is still a home space of emotional ties where human relations hold supreme value. In a scene, Parshu and Vasant both stand together at a farm looking for work. The farm manager can only employ one person and there is no scope for the other. Vasant backs off and starts walking away but Parshu stops him telling him, "you go and work. Don't sit idle in front of your wife. You have just gotten married". This is a piece of advice that a father or an elder brother would generally give to his younger one in an Indian patriarchal family setup. Paranjpye reproduces this to signify familial connections and the intimate nature of social interaction that marks the distinctive space of Bakuri. Consisting mostly of long shots, the scene captures people working in the field, the sky, and the trees. The various human and non-human elements create an image that aims at depicting that it is not about people alone, it is about where they are and what constitutes their life as a community tied by a spatial context. It is this realm of relationships that comes under immense stress due to economic desperation forcing men to migrate and women to fend for themselves in the exploitative environment of capitalist establishments near the village.

While migration is mainly dealt with as a male experience, women's spatial experience 'at home' is disrupted by the deepening impact of economic trouble. Paranjpye depicts the multi-layered struggles of livelihood in *Bakuri* putting pressure

on the gendered private space and conjugal relationships. Parshu's wife Hansa struggles to provide food for their kids as he spends most of his time digging the well and his brother Soma has no consistent farm work. The economically distressed domestic life forces Hansa to find employment at a bidi factory. Paranjpye highlights the stark gendered impact of economic distress in the village through women's specific experience of impoverishment and sexual vulnerability. Vasant's bride Phoolwanti faces the burden of urban migration without actually migrating. Phoolwanti enters the domestic workforce and her experience is the harbinger of transformation (discussed later in the chapter) in the home environment marked by love, trust, hope and security of relationships. Through Hansa and Phoolwanti, Paranjpye represents how women's labour, mobility and bodies are generally controlled by the norms of patriarchal capitalist structures. They are forced to seek work in desperate conditions when their husbands are out of work or away leaving them in a weakened bargaining position. Here, Paranjpye nails the exploitative patriarchal practices that characterise rural women's encounter with capitalist structure in the village. The intersectional experience of economic distress and gender creates a threatening social environment for women workers, further marginalising them in socio-economic hierarchies. Paranjpye's representation reveals that women's ability to access means of production does not translate into financial empowerment and creates new forms of subjugation. Being at home thus is constructed as a gendered experience of marginalisation for women seeking economic means of sustenance closer to home. This experience differs from male migrants who have to survive displacement but the home remains a romantic memory of a safe space, an abstract or imagined perceptual continuity that keeps people connected no matter how far they go or even if they never return. This has

been depicted in many popular films of the 1950s and 60s where the village is a sacrosanct memory of a static place of warmth and comfort. However, *Disha* disrupts that imagined continuity of home and its environment reeling under economic pressures. In *Disha*, the village is a spatio-temporal reality where winds of change are felt and relationships begin to alter as people run out of alternative ways to sustain themselves.

Migration: A journey to the city, the spatial context of modernity

Since the later years of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the number of male migrants from the nearby rural areas to the industrial city of Bombay began to rise (Chandavarkar 1994; Vartak, Tumbe and Bhide 2018), increasingly facing conditions of homelessness and readjustments to the tunes of a fast-paced environment. The two male characters in *Disha* are also pushed to the city of Bombay due to the economic hardships caused by the agrarian crisis in Bakuri. Soma finds it impossible to get any farm work in the village as more and more people are trying to survive on contracting agricultural resources. He decides to migrate to Bombay and this is the point from where the home space is seen as caught between the city and the country. The events that unfold and the way lived space in the city/village is experienced in relation to economic misery in the film reveal that "space is a product of interrelations. Space does not exist prior to identities/entities and their relations (…), the relations 'between' them and the spatiality which is part of them, are all constitutive" (Massey, 2005, p11). Seen from this perspective, the home is a relational space constantly under production both in *Disha* and *Papeeha* which is constituted by various factors governing lives and affecting emotions, thoughts and relationships.

Fig.5.4: Soma (R) tells his elder brother Parshu (L) about his plans of going to Bombay

In the scene where Soma first reveals that he is planning to go to Bombay, Soma and Parshu are eating lunch together with the children inside the hut (Fig.5.4). This is a shot that becomes a contrasting image later in the film when Soma encounters Bombay's material realities away from home. Captured through a mix of eye-level mid-close-up and close-up shots, we see the two brothers engaging in a dialogue over the need to migrate. There is no play with lighting nor any other visual technique employed to suggest identification with either of them and their logic. The audience is not implicated in sympathising but is invited to experience the journey that Soma is about to undertake. Parshu questions Soma's decision of going to a city like Bombay "where people sell themselves to earn money". To this Soma replies," I have to sell myself somewhere, I might get a better price in Bombay". This dialogue is crucial as it marks the point of departure and a new beginning of hope and ambiguity in Soma's prospective city life. The fears and uncertainties discussed here imply a journey of a 'village self' into an urban space of capitalist modernity that requires a redefinition or as Parshu points out, the destruction of oneself for

economic gains. In this sense, Soma's migration is a 'process of liquefaction' discussed by Zygmant Bauman (2000) who sees modernity through the metaphor of 'liquid' or fluid as opposed to the 'solid' of traditional ties and values. Bauman characterises the forward march of modernity and free flow of capital in the later years of the twentieth century as defining traits of "liquid modernity" that necessitated the melting of what he calls solids of "traditional loyalties, customary rights and obligations" (2000, p3), that form the warp and woof of community and family life, the home as a space of traditional cultural ties is thus a space deeply affected by liquid modernity. The ideas of liquidity, fluidity, flow and flux are crucial for they underline the uncertainty and unpredictability as the most crucial human experience of contemporary modern times. The city-centric flow of capital in liquid modern times compels Soma (and later Vasant) to undertake a journey away from home by surrendering to uncertain economic forces.

This is the reason that the very thought of migrating to Bombay evokes the imagination of a cruel place of urbanity for Parshu which in his mind, dehumanises people for the sake of material gains. The above-mentioned scene also points to what has been called the "city of the mind" (Rodwin and Hollister, 1984, p3), the mental map of urban space, the urban imaginaire.[97] Neither Parshu nor Soma have experienced city life but they have a perceptual lens through which to judge the delirious and dangerous cityscape – one of wealth, hope, greed and exploitation – that characterises Bombay. For Soma, as opposed to Parshu, the city of the mind

[97] *In Cities of the Mind: Images and Themes of the City in the Social Sciences* (1984) Lloyd Rodwin and Robert M. Hollister discuss that the city is generally described through metaphors focusing on a specific aspect of the city. These metaphors point to the fact that cities are pereceived through mental maps or perceptions about physical, social, political or cultural aspects of the city space.

still holds the promise of ending the economic distress which plagues the village and his own life. The precarious nature of the local economy diminishes the image of a ‘home’: Soma is a landowner but is unable to sustain himself in the absence of viable solutions for his drought-hit village. Parshu’s unyielding obsession further diminishes Soma’s perception of his own ‘home’. Seen from the perspective of Bombay’s economic opportunities, the village home appears to be a hopeless place that Soma is willing to leave behind despite the indeterminate future or impending homelessness. Nandy states that “the city of the mind does not fear homelessness; it even celebrates homelessness. However, that merely camouflages the fear of homelessness which can be cured only by a home outside the home” (2007, p25). For Soma, the possibility of finding a home in the city of the mind remains alive due to the familial connections with people who have already left the village in search of livelihood and have found means of survival in the alien city.

Soma’s journey to the city begins with writing to the migrant men from his village. This is a crucial thread of social history, of the push and pull factors of migration as well as the social capital - the network that facilitates the process of the outward journey from the village to the city. When Soma arrives at the bus station in Bombay, his friend receives him with a smile and a hug. The shock of modernity first strikes him as he enters the dwelling space of his village folks, the cotton mill workers living in dire conditions. Carrying a jackfruit on his shoulders, Soma enters through the narrow passage and stands surprised at the entrance of the room where his friends stay. In a long shot framed from Soma’s perspective, the camera pans over the dimly

lit, constricted space of a room called a *gala.*[98] The camera pans from left to right, showing several men lying on the floor and in a bunk bed kind of sleeping arrangement. This arrival in the city is in utter contrast with the opening sequence of the film where Ganu Parab enters Bakuri. Both the scenes are shot in a long shot but, where the opening exhibits the vast, uncluttered land of Bakuri in bright daylight, Soma's entry in Bombay is constructed as an unpleasant encounter with the scarcely lit and visibly suffocating environment of the gala. This works towards contrasting the spatial value of the village home left behind in search of subsistence. It is perhaps that spacious geography of the village that haunts Soma at this moment of sheer shock as he stares at the overcrowded room that he did not expect (Fig.5.5).

Fig.5.5: Soma enters the gala and looks perturbed to witness the living condition of his friends in Bombay.

His friend's warm welcome does not prevent Soma's sudden expression of helplessness and disbelief, although the camera chooses not to isolate him in close-up to demonstrate his state of mind explicitly. Paranjpye's visual strategy here

[98] *Gala* refers to a single room living arrangement shared by the migrant mill workers in Bombay. The galas were organised along the connections of kinship and villages. These factors were significant in providing accommodation to new migrants to the city.

signals that he is becoming a part of the community in the hope of finding a new home among people from home, no matter how crowded and suffocating that might feel. This sequence illustrates the lived reality of migrant workers in Maharashtra and the spatial organisation of the gala where thousands of workers used to live during their time in the city, which could be decades for some or until death for others. Soma's friend familiarises him with the norms of sharing the space. Pointing towards a long clothes rail on the wall, he explains that each person has one hook allotted to hang anything they have, such as a bag or clothes. It suggests that none of them have any material possessions. In a noir-like dim-lit room, the clothes rail, with its occupied hooks and just one spot available for Soma, appears to be a metaphor for the worker's lived experience in the gala itself.

Just like clothes on the hooks of the clothes rail, the workers occupy a spot next to each other. One by one, the rules of survival at the gala are explained to Soma. The single room is shared by forty men on shift basis for eight hours to sleep and that he is lucky to be able to get a sleeping spot on his arrival because he is replacing the mill worker who just died of TB. Soma is visibly disturbed to witness the reality all at once, though his act of hanging his handbag on the clothes rail implies the initiation of a different journey with a new self. This metaphorical depiction is similar to what Nandy (2007) describes as an acceptance of a new self in the colonial industrial city, instituted on the ruins of the previous self. Nandy argues that "the new city enlarged the scope for a radical and legitimate rejection of the village as that part of one's self which had out-lived its utility. The journey to the city now meant an acceptance of the new city of the mind, which was to be founded on the ruins of an earlier self" (2007, p13). Although I agree that a migrant's journey is a liminal experience of transitioning

identities, I think more than the ruins of the earlier self, Paranjpye stresses the traditional strings perpetually attached to the earlier self that assist Soma in renegotiating his displaced identity in the city. The compulsion of securing financial means pushes Soma to accept a disenfranchised and marginalised self in the city but the new self is founded only through the social relations of the rural past. In this sense, his new self is based on the connections of his preceding identity that are still alive and support his displaced self. Paranjpye depicts the gala as a lifelong network of functional relationships among uprooted migrants tied through rural connections that helps them in regaining ground, no matter how small or uncertain. After leaving friends, family and community behind, this is the space that offers the possibility of cultivating a new sense of home and belonging but which requires readjustment with a new identity.

Paranjpye chooses to show this marginalised lived experience through long shots, low lighting, panning, and dialogues but refrains from constructing a dramatic scene of misery. She achieves this through the absence of aural and the use of gestural elements. Instead of using any background music or sound, silence conveys the misery of the gala as a survival space for disenfranchised migrants in the city. The panning serves two purposes: it communicates the smallness of the space and it also serves to suggest the space as a cohesive single unit. The constricted space and poor living standards are evident but the inhabitants' facial expressions and dialogues do not express shame or embarrassment. Rather the predominant idea conveyed is that of connection and shared living on limited resources with smiles and laughter. It is left for the audience to imagine what it means to live in a space where people sleep in shifts and still welcome new migrants becoming labourers in

the cotton mills. The image of the dystopic city is first constructed through the lived experience and later by the interiors of the monument of modern development in Bombay- the textile factory. Paranjpye critiques machine-based modernity through Soma's journey as a millworker which begins by touring inside his new workplace - the noisy cotton mill where machines are supervised by men amid deafening noise. This whole sequence inside the textile mill represents Soma's second encounter with capitalist modernity after the gala. In this sequence, he passes through a locked-out mill which forms a pivotal scene in the whole narrative strategy of the film.[99]

Fig.5.6: Soma (L) looks at the ruins of a textile mill.

The scene cuts from the noise of the machines to the utter silence of the non-functional mill. In a long shot, the motionless machines are foregrounded when Soma drifts inside the mill as if passing through a historic time in a time machine. The distance from the camera allows the machines to create a kind of web, again framed in a long shot where we can see Soma and his friend centrally positioned as

[99] Between January 1982 and Feburuary 1983, cotton-textile mill workers in Bombay went on a historic strike that did not succeed. The failure of this biggest industrial action in the working-class history of India led to the closure of mills leaving tens and thousands of workers unemployed. This was a watershed moment that transformed Bomaby's economic and spatial map with grave consequences for the labouring poor and the working-class in the city.

if caught in the middle of a web (Fig.5.6). The provocative dialogue between Soma and his friend seems to declare the death of dreams and hopes of development attached to the industrialisation led by the Nehruvian socialist vision for independent India:

Soma: Why is everything so still here?

Friend: These are the sick machines.

Soma: Sick? They seem dead to me. This looks like a graveyard.

Friend: The government took over the mills after the strikes but they aren't able to run them. Then came automatic machines which require fewer workers. Earlier there was one person on four machines now there is one on sixteen. What to do, the machines are gathering rust.

Soma: Idle men, idle machines.

The scene contextualises Bombay textile mill workers' strikes in the 1980s, which destroyed the textile industry (I have elaborated on this in chapter 3). It questions the instrumental rationality of the dreams of growth by equating the stillness of the mill with the death of a vision. The vision of an interventionist state pinned its hopes of development on machines and factories instead of people as drivers of economic growth. Paranjpye ends the scene with a metaphorical shot of a machine covered with white cotton wool (as if a dead body wrapped in a white sheet) in the foreground, evoking an eerie feeling. Soma is about to exit the frame in the background; he glances at the machine and says *Raam Naam Satya Hai* (the words uttered by Hindus during the funeral procession). Paranjpye constructs the factory as a failed site of urbanity, as ruins of modernity invested with a feeling of anxiety, fear, and destruction sensed through Soma's visit to the site.

The ruined factory space in *Disha* is strategically utilised to facilitate Soma's encounter with the past as well as to critique the lopsided vision of development. Underlining the interpretative potential of ruins, Hell and Schonle (2009) mention that "these traces—architectural remnants which had long lost their functionality and meaning—could be invested with various attributes: historical, aesthetic, and political (…) the dialectic of this temporal self-consciousness is troubling: do we need the trace to highlight the significance of the historical rupture or do we need the rupture to confer value on the trace?" (2010, p5). The historic rupture is what Paranjpye underlines when she depicts the ruined factory in the film as a graveyard of machines, a spatial signifier of capitalist volatility and multi-layered time in the socio-economic life of Bombay city. The still factory is a disused space that holds the critical power of dismantling the state's developmental vision. It is an indication of discontinuities, deprivation, and broken connections. Soma's encounter with the destruction of this modern space can also be interpreted as a scene that performs the dual function of summoning the material memory of an overenthusiastic industrial past while indicating the unrealised alternative humanist vision of modernisation. This vision later prompted Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to redirect and reconceptualise the path of development, as he stated in his foreword to the report of the Seventh Planning commission:

"In the final analysis, development is not just about factories, dams, and roads. Development is basically about people. The goal is the people's material, cultural and spiritual fulfillment. The human factor, the human context, is of supreme value. We must pay much greater attention to these questions in the future" (GOI, no page).

Paranjpye restricts the city part of the narrative only to the gala and cotton mill premises where its main characters work and bond with each other during lunchtime. The aesthetic construction of these scenes can be characterised as hybridised in nature. The scenes of the textile factory workers coming out for lunch reminds one of Lumieres' famous motion picture shots of workers leaving the Lumiere factory in 1895 in the French city of Lyon. Paranjpye's distantly placed observational camera comes closer to the non-fictional aesthetic of city symphonies of the 1920s and 30s where edited images suggest narrative intentions and patterns. When Soma begins surveying the textile mill before starting as a worker himself, the sequence starts with a long shot with huge spare parts of machines foregrounding and dwarfing Soma in the background as he enters the factory. Paranjpye continues to keep the camera at a distance as Soma passes by the workers handling the huge balls of cotton yarn, again foregrounded and minimising the workers behind them. The distance from the dwarfed human subjects in extremely noisy surroundings allows the audience to experience the space governed by machines. This critical imagination combined with the expressionist style visual construction suggests the powerlessness of humans against the capitalist regime of machines and the environment of production space. It invariably reminds one of Fritz Lang's dystopic worker's city in his famous expressionist creation *Metropolis* (1927), where the workers are seen toiling at the gigantic machines that make them seem completely powerless. Paranjpye's aesthetic of imposing machines and powerless humans is quite similar to Lang's overall visualisation of the exploitative processes of capitalist modernity. She captures the extreme close-up shots of huge machines and their frightening movement in a manner quite similar to the expressionist style of *Metropolis*. In *Disha*,

the visuals of giant machines and dwarfed powerless workers are woven into a montage mixed with music and machine sounds that last for almost two minutes. If we read these visuals together with the images of the ruined factory, it is possible to conclude that they form a critical visual commentary on capitalist modernity, inhumane conditions of work, and the inherent process of decay. The visual aesthetic embodies the victimisation of have-nots similar to the essence of *Metropolis* or Charles Chaplin's classic satire *Modern Times* (1936).

In addition to the critique of machine-based modern development, *Disha* also suggests that the urban-centric industrial economy lures villagers into the city and creates a newer context of life driven by economic structures. However, their social relationships are rooted in the community left behind in the village home. Paranjpye constructs the sense of these social relations not only through the gala but also against the backdrop of the factory in the scenes where the workers sit in a circle and share food. The camera is slightly elevated to give us a composite overview before going on to show a montage of how they share and serve a plate full of food for Soma who looks distraught as he is yet to become the earning member of this big family. This is the camouflaging of the village home where he used to sit with his brother nephews, and niece and share food. Paranjpye cuts back to the village – the real 'home' – with a close-up of a basket out of which Vasant is eating, with his wife sitting by his side under a cart in an open field (Fig.5.7). Rashmi Sawhney (2016) mentions that Paranjpye uses this juxtaposition of imagery between the city and the village in a symbolic manner. I concur that such juxtapositions constantly create parallel temporal dynamics of intimacy and circumstances suggesting the changed status of lived reality at both places. Sawhney aptly suggests that Paranpye is

treating both the village and the city as transforming spatial organisations affected by economic structures. The parallel editing of the city and the village life suggests the temporal continuity of a spatially divided narrative.

Fig.5.7: Soma eats lunch provided by his fellow mill workers (L) is juxtaposed to Vasant eating lunch with his wife Phoolwanti(R)

The immense pressure of a contracting village economy forces Soma's friend Vasant also to migrate to Bombay, leaving his wife behind. Following a similar pattern of migration through rural connections, Vasant reaches Bombay where Soma receives him as his friends had received Soma earlier. Paranjpye creates a visual variation in showing Vasant's induction into the gala by avoiding capturing the men lying on floors this time. Rather she conveys his arrival metaphorically through a montage of the clothes rail full of photos and clothes where at the end we see a coloured framed photo of Vasant and Phulwanti taken during their visit to the village fair. Vasant is now a part of this new home environment constituted by men and memories from the village home where his wife awaits his return.

The transformation in the home environment

The remembered home, longing and the desperate living conditions of the city are the dominant realities of Vasant's life in Bombay. Nostalgia and yearning for home

serve as navigational tool in the city as it draws the remembered and cherished past even closer. As philosopher Ralph Harper (1966) notes, “the past which is over and gone, from which we have been or are being removed, by some magic becomes present again for a short while. But its realness seems even more familiar, because renewed, than it ever was, more enchanting and more lovely” (p120). It is this enchanting “autobiographical memory” (Mills and Coleman, 1995, p205) that keeps the promise of home alive for Vasant while labouring under harsh conditions in the city. However, the village home tucked safely and romantically in his memory is set to change in his absence. In Bakuri, Phulwanti enters the workforce as a daily wager in the *bidi* manufacturing factory, covering a distance of 5 km every day on foot. Paranjpye conceptualises the bidi factory as an oppressive geography of capitalist modernity, with its exploitative practices encroaching upon women’s lives in particular and the household in general. The film visualises women’s traumatic experiences in the unorganised and gendered bidi industry, which mostly employs home-based workers with minimal infrastructural arrangements.[100] The factory is a space of economic hope and livelihood for unskilled, homebound women but is also a hostile territory of sexual negotiations, marginalisation, and exploitation.

In the scene where Phulwanti first enters the factory with Hansa, the village women are seen queuing up in front of a mesh-fitted window, hoping to get the job. On the other side of the window, the manager is sitting on an elevated seat deciding who gets the job that day, establishing the power dynamics of the space. He calls Phulwanti and Hansa ahead of older women standing in the queue, and with a

[100] For a detailed study on women’s labour in beedi industry see “Disempowered despite Wage Work: Women Workers in Beedi Industry” (1999) by Meena Gopal.

mischievous smile, he allows the inexperienced Phulwanti to start working in the factory. The tight POV shot gives immense power to the manager, from whose perspective the impoverished women standing against the window look entrapped in a small frame intersected by the crisscrossed mesh as if they are inmates in a jail. The camera shows the mid-close-up of the manager's half-lit face, providing only a slight hint to discern that he is up to something which the women aren't aware of. Or maybe only Phulwanti is not aware of the dangerous space she has entered, as she leaves the frame with a smile while Hansa keeps a stern look. The inexperienced Phulwanti struggles as the manager controls her daily wage depending on the rolled bidis. His sexual advances are subtly inserted in shots where he draws extremely close to Phulwanti while scolding her for coming late or touching her hands on the pretext of checking her daily work. By way of controlling women's labour and wages, the manager has acquired immense power to control women's bodies as well.

It is interesting to note that the bidi not only signifies women's encounter with industrial modernity but it also plays a potentially significant role as an object that mediates the altered geography of the relationship between Vasant and Phulwanti. In a scene discussed earlier, where Vasant is eating lunch with Phulwanti, Paranjpye positions them in a tight frame together under a cart, isolated from the vast field around them, as if giving a glimpse of their inner world in an open space. Vasant smokes a bidi and offers it to Phulwanti. At first, she hesitates but later she shares a puff and they both enjoy that secret moment of togetherness and intimacy away from the miseries of economic distress. Little do they know that the economics of the same bidi are going to destroy the warmth of their marital bond and dislocate Vasant

from his home where he told Phulwanti that he is not going to the city forever and that he will return after earning enough money.

The process of destruction of the home environment, which makes Vasant's desired return journey unattainable, begins with a humiliating experience during Phulwanti's visit to Bombay. Looking at Vasant's unhappiness as he misses his wife, the inmates at the gala suggest that he should arrange for a room in a chawl and call Phulwanti for a short stay. She arrives in Bombay for a week and they begin sharing small moments of pleasure. This brief honeymoon period is soon disrupted by the unexpected arrival of a relative of the room owner. Vasant and Phulwanti are suddenly made homeless at night in an alien city. The gala is the only refuge. Phulwanti is unwilling to spend the night amid strange men though she is forced to do so in the absence of any alternative. The turn of events forces her to end her visit and return to Bakuri the next morning. The precarious conditions caused by displacement and homelessness enter into the private domain of the intimate relationship between them. After seeing off a troubled Phulwanti going back to the village in a state of shock and despair, Vasant returns to the gala. Paranjpye isolates Vasant in a mid-shot set against the narrow space of the toilet; he is trapped in a constricted space with walls on both sides conveying his helplessenss as he breaks down alone. The humiliation in front of his wife and her sudden departure is a narrative device to mark the beginning of something unimaginable for Vasant. His wounded self-esteem makes him completely disgruntled with the city. In a pensive mood, he tells Soma that he is going to make this city pay. In a commercial masala film, this would probably mean that the character might diverge to the path of crime

and revenge but Vasant's rage is not expressed through violence, rather he chooses to toil day and night to raise his income to fasten the process of his return.

However, through the turn of events this return journey is abruptly ordered when Vasant receives Dajiba's letter asking him to come back immediately. This homeward journey, although hastened, is still a journey to the remembered village, the village that stayed with Vasant as a memory of a home where his loving wife and community awaits. In his imagination, he is returning to a place of love and warmth of the past. This is a journey from the not-self to the self (Nandy, 2001), a hope-filled return to the remembered phenomenology of home. Vasant reaches his hut and is welcomed by his father while Phulwanti is away at work. Paranjpye withholds information by making Dajiba avoid revealing the reason for calling Vasant. When Phulwanti returns, instead of looking happy to see Vasant, she looks confused and mysteriously uncomfortable to see Vasant. The critical moment is constructed in the late evening, which poisons the memory, intimacy, and the feeling of being at home in the world. The three characters are sitting on the ground when the harmony of this homely space is disrupted by the factory manager's sudden entry. Unaware that Vasant is back, he enters the hut unannounced and leaves the bundles of beedis for Dajiba before exiting the scene. His sudden arrival is received with uncomfortable silence as it breaches the privacy of the private space and hints at his affair with Phoolwanti who is visibly uncomfortable and avoids eye contact with Vasant (Fig.5.8). There is no verbal exchange, Paranjpye does not resort to a melodramatic scene rather she conveys an unexpected shift, the rupturing of the intimate space through Vasant's shock-filled silence. The lack of sound or dialogue in this scene intensifies the burden of a lost home.

Fig 5.8: The moment when the factory manager (R) enters Vasant's (L) home unannounced.

An expressionist style of low-key lighting is used to create a dark and mysterious atmosphere connoting the sudden and tragic loss of the remembered home, the space of solace for the 'real self'. Vasant and Phulwanti's faces are half-lit so that the audience can witness the moment while Dajiba remains in the dark. The visual coding shapes the gloomy environment when Vasant undergoes the altered phenomenology of the home and has been given no words to express himself. This stylistic construction suggests that the scene is not character-centered but underlines the moment which disrupts the spatial qualities of the home and the abrupt end of the spousal relationship between Vasant and Phoolwanti. The private space that used to be a space of love and intimacy between the spouses is shown to be violated, shattering Vasant's possibilities of returning home. The remembered home is no longer a space of retreat, and access to the past self is impossible. The home is rendered unattainable, necessitating another journey for Vasant, the journey which he never expected to take. The process of displacement forced by economics is shown to be exacerbated by the alterations in the imagination of home and its experiential environment.

The economic factors transforming the home environment and its perceptual domain have been conceptualised both negatively and positively. Phulwanti's entry into the village workforce is an indicator of the socio-economic prospects of an agro-based industry that has the potential to provide work for home-based workers. However, the disproportionately powerful middlemen translate this opportunity into the sexual vulnerability of women workers which ultimately affects Vasant's life, as he is forced to return to Bombay. The factory as a source of employment and economic growth – both in Bakuri and Bombay – is shown as a spatiality of exploitation for the rural population, but hope comes from within the village when Parshuram succeeds in finding water under his land after twelve years. This news from home impacts Soma's perceptual map of the village. The diminished image of home is transformed into a place of hope and affirmative change. If Paranjpye's narrative strategies allow the film to engage with ideas of home, migration and dislocation through Vasant's story, Soma's migration and return to home base is another journey that opens up the possibility of renegotiations with the diminished image of the village as a counterpoint to the city. The village emerges as an alternative spatiality where growth and change are possible, being at home is possible. However, in its search for a parallel discourse of development independent of the urban centre, Disha's narrative subsumes the woman's question. In dealing with national developmental issues, Paranjpye defocuses the women's question, a historic Indian experience.[101] By not focusing on Phoolwanti whose critical experience hints at the gendered aspects of India's tryst with capitalist modernity, the narrative obliterates her as a

[101] For more on Indian nationalist discourse and the women's question see "Colonialism, Nationalism, and Colonialized Women: The Contest in India" (1989) by Partha Chatterjee.

historical subject of modernity in *Disha* though *Papeeha*'s narrative space aims to reverse this through its engagement with women's experience.

Papeeha: Forest as home, dispossession, and resistance

The narrative intention of redeeming home and its environment through human action binds *Disha* and *Papeeha* together in achieving a sense of hope and possibility. As I have discussed earlier in the chapter, liquid modernity survives and thrives through the melting of traditional social structures and creates conditions of dislocation and homelessness in *Disha*, in *Papeeha* liquid modernity threatens to destroy the whole ecology regarded as home by indigenous people. If *Disha* is inspired by rural characters and their dislocation, *Papeeha* germinated out of the famous eco-movement called *Chipko* (Embrace the tree) in India.[102] The act of embracing trees as a tool of collective action and people's relationship with the forest fascinated Paranjpye.[103] Papeeha tells the story of a fictitious *Adivasi* community- a category of people historically residing in forests and hill regions of India. The community regards the forest as its homeland and is facing the imminent threat of destruction of their home due to crony capitalism serving private business interests.[104] The looming danger of displacement leads to *Chipko*-like collective action by Adivasi women to save the forest. Despite its ecologically engaged narrative and focus on the Adivasi struggle, nature and environmental issues,

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[102] The 'people's' ecological movement *Chipko* is a landmark moment in India's ecological history and non-violent grassroot participation. *Chipko* is the Hindi word for hugging or embracing that became a political tool of resistance against the commercial felling of trees in the Garhwal region of the Northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. The movement is traced back to the events of April 1973 when the villagers first demonstrated by hugging the trees preventing a government-contracted company to carry out the felling of trees.

[103] In her autobiography *A Patchwork Quilt: A Collage of My Creative Life* (2020), Paranjpye mentions that the Chipko movement inspired her to explore the destruction of forests and the relationship between Adivasilife and forests.

[104] For more on the Indian experience of capitalism and the role of "Crony Capitalism and India: Before and After Liberalization" (2008) Surajit Mazumdar.

Papeeha is unable to decolonise itself from colonial power relations as I will discuss throughout the chapter.

In this context, it is important to note that the film uses the term *Adivasi* which bears socio-political significance and indicates the political positioning of the film. In common parlance, the term tribe, Adivasi, aboriginal, or indigenous is invariably used to refer to the category of people living away from mainland areas, dependent on the forest and its natural resources, although each term has its historic origins and political connotations on national and international levels. The Indian term *Adivasi* (*Adi*- earliest time + *Vasi*- resident) used in *Papeeha* connotes the notion of 'original inhabitants' and is a complex political conceptualisation.[105] The term was coined in the 1930s to claim indigeneity as a political tool in asserting land and human rights against invasions "by the colonial government and outside settlers and moneylenders" (Karlsson and Subba, 2006).[106] It is used interchangeably to refer to the tribes in India even though the legal construction of Indian tribes was a colonial quest for classification of identities to mark spatial territories of imperial rulers and the ruled, the civilised and the uncivilised. As Karlsson and Subba state, a possible reason for the "acceptance of the term in India might be that "tribal" is connected to the constitutionally recognized category of "Scheduled Tribes" (STs), which since independence is linked to a comprehensive program of affirmative action" (ibid, p4).

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[105] For more see *Indigeneity and Legal Pluralism in India Claims, Histories, Meanings by Pooja Parmar* (2015).

[106] In his book *Painted Words* (2012) G N Devy notes that in the Indian context, it is extremely difficult to singularly classify the tribal identity in a manner exactly similar to the term 'indegenous'. This is because Indian tribes have been historically displaced and rehabilitated or have migrated themselves. In addition to this, there are nomadic tribes who do not stay in one place. These communities are also not racially distinct and have been in constant contact with non-tribal communities. The tribal identity then is a matter of socio-cultural beliefs, a specific sense of space and time along with a distinct language, rituals and specific material cultural followed by the community.

However, researchers have pointed out that Adivasi is the term that original inhabitants prefer to use as a marker of specific political identity, an identity which, according to Ajay Skaria, “is about shared experiences of the loss of the forests, the alienation of land, repeated displacements since independence in the name of ”development projects”, and much more” (1999, p281). Papeeha’s narrative is embedded in this discourse of loss and dispossession.

The film intends to engage with the struggle over forests and tribal rights to forestland and resources. This is a deeply troubled part of India’s ecological history that is entangled with the modern history of British colonial practices of commercial forest management (Bose, Arts and Van Dijk 2012; Gadgil and Guha 2012). Indian tribal communities have lived inside and around forests for centuries and have survived on forest resources. As Gadgil and Guha (2012) note, colonial forestry brought forests under state control and “radically redefined property rights, imposing on the forest a system of management and control whose priorities sharply conflicted with earlier systems of local use and control” (p27). The process of disenfranchising the Adivasi communities that started during the colonial period continued throughout the post-colonial policies that introduced even higher restrictions on the rights of Adivasis. In the 1970s-80s, the debate over the forest and Adivasi rights led to the Forest Act, of 1988, which tried to create a balance between forest conservation and Adivasi's right to use the resources. This period saw the intensified movement for Adivasi rights which culminated in the passing of “The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006”. The act recognised the rights of communities whose livelihood traditionally depended on forests and the need to encourage community participation in conserving and

protecting forests (Bhullar, 2008), although scholars have noted that the mechanism to ensure this participation remains ambiguous (Bose, 2012). It is in this complex history of Adivasi, communities, rights and protests that Paranjpye aims to intervene through *Papeeha*.

Though Paranjpye engages with these concerns through the popular cinematic trope of a love story between a forest officer and an anthropologist, she works directly with the narrative of historical change, a significant and quite unusual attempt for a genre filmmaker. In an article on cinematic narratives of Adivasis, Rashmi Sawhney argues that “politics is embedded in the moulding of the material, rather than in the material itself” (2009, p03). It is this moulding of material in Hindi cinema that has been aptly critiqued by scholars for negligible engagement as well as inadequate and ignorant representations of Adivasis (Sawhney 2009; Rekhari 2011). I am not suggesting that *Papeeha* overturns the oriental tropes of representations. Rather, I am demonstrating that the use of conventional tropes in accessing tribal cultural lives does not deter Paranjpye from moulding the material in a manner that enables *Papeeha* to make its socio-political commentary. It is through the multi-layered interaction between the conventional tropes, the central narrative concerns and the aesthetics that *Papeeha* generates new meanings. The complex moulding of material strategises political engagement with the postcolonial experience of Adivasi life entangled with the ‘modern’ and corrupt state in cahoot with the agents of liquid modernity- the multinational corporations. The film achieves two main purposes. First, it deconstructs the Adivasi imagination of the forest as a sacred home space. Second, it engages with the ironical post-colonial state destroying the life of its own people, compelling them to mobilise a protest movement in an attempt to save the

home. Adivasis in the film thus does not get projected as what Rekhari calls “folk culture curious, to be paraded at art and craft festivals abroad, as welfare objects, ignorant and backward” (2011s, p108) but rather as ecological subjects whose lives and home are on the verge of destruction due to corrupt governance and capitalist greed.

Papeeha is spatially located in a forest though Paranjpye did not localise it geographically in a real forest as she did with the village Bakuri in *Disha*. Rather she codifies a make-believe forest as a habitat for an imagined tribe or Adivasi community. By constructing a fictional world of an unnamed tribe, Paranjpye creates a specific habitat of Adivasis with its unique imagination of space-time relationships and belief systems. This lived world is decoded by a middle-class professional anthropologist, a figure who has been a contentious representational trope due to its colonial power position exercised through the act of looking and judging. In the film, the “orientalizing gaze of the anthropologist”(Sawhney, 2009, p103) offers value judgments about tribal beliefs and customs. However, this colonial gaze is disrupted and reversed in the moments when oppressive urban social practices such as dowry and bride-burning are questioned by the Adivasis. Similar to *Katha*, Paranjpye uses the folkloric tradition in *Papeeha*, although it performs a different function here. She constructs the narrative as a fairytale told by a member of the tribe, Gudang Baba who describes the protagonists Kabir, a forest officer as king and Jiya, the anthropologist, as queen of this story. The popular cinematic conventions of storytelling through a hero (the forest officer/king) and the heroine (the anthropologist/queen), unwittingly position the Adivasis in a subordinate relationship with the middle-class professional characters which is visible through the pattern of

social relationships within the forest. Gudang Baba introduces his fellow Adivasis as helpers and servants of the forest officials and Mangeram, the so-called environmental activist. This depiction reveals the continuation of colonial power relations in the postcolonial ecology of the forest where city-bred administrators/people have replaced ex-colonisers and occupy an authoritative position over the tribal people. The strategy of setting the film within the oral tradition raises hopes of an ecocritical intervention from an Adivasi point of view but Gudang Baba is not provided with an evaluative or critical eye to contextualise state power and Adivasi oppression. This raises questions about *Papeeha*’s commitment to essential ecological issues plaguing Adivasi life, although it is through Gudang Baba’s account that the film depicts social-political issues of deforestation, illegal felling, the question of legal rights and Adivasi resistance to save the forest home. However, the presence of the problematics of colonial gaze and oppressive state authority in the film allows for making meaning of post-independence ecological relations in India where Adivasis have been relegated to the margins. In their article discussing genre conventions and textual meanings in Hindi films, Anjaria and Anjaria (2008) argue that in cinematic narratives “conformity to conventions can be generative, rather than merely restrictive, of meaning” (p127). The conventional tropes and power dynamics here are not deterring but rather generate meaning for the audience to see and know the unequal and exploitative post-colonial world that they inhabit.

Papeeha’s narrative revolves around the make-believe forest of *Mantarvan* and Adivasis whose lives and ways of being are rooted in the flora and fauna of this geography. The forest is an essential character in the film that shapes Adivasi's life

and, in turn, they perceive the forest as part of Adivasi's identity and existence. The forest department administration protects the forest where the protagonist Kabir Sagar works. A sub-divisional forest officer, Kabir is portrayed as honest, hard-working and sceptical about the colonial gaze of urban social researchers. He is assigned to help Jiya, who reaches the jungle to study the life and traditions of Adivasis. Kabir is shown to be working to 'protect' the forest from illegal felling/smuggling of expensive timber and is initially seen ridiculing Jiya's intentions allowing the film to convey that the narrative is conscious of its construction and gaze. He gradually develops a liking for Jiya, who shows concern for the issues affecting the forest and Adivasi livelihoods, such as illegal wood trafficking, conflict over the right to use forest resources, and deforestation. The Adivasi home is constantly under threat from the timber mafia, excessive pressure on resources by Adivasis and a treacherous city-bred contractor Mangeram conspiring to destroy the forest to build a factory on behalf of a multinational company. The forest department officials are Mangeram's collaborators, except for Kabir who has to fight on multiple fronts to perform his duties as a forest officer. The forest home is under attack and is eventually saved by collective action mobilised by Adivasi women.

Affective bond, identity and representational aesthetics

Fig.5.9: Papeeh opens with visuals of lush green forests and blossoming trees.

Papeeha constructs the forest as a space of belonging and identity through various visual and narrative strategies in the film. The opening credits begin to roll with a huge tree as the backdrop. For the first two minutes, the camera only pans and tilts on trees and when the titles end, the first diegetic sound is that of the forest love bird, *Papeeha*. The expansive wide shots of the forest, golden sunlight piercing through the leaves of trees and the mist surrounding the lush green environment present the pastoral vision of this 'text of the forest'(Fig.5.9). The initial visual construction attempts to provide the viewer with a close look at the mystic spirituality of the jungle, establishing the forest and its environment as the primary subjects. This representation is in stark contrast to the Bangla film *Aranyer Din Yatri* (*Days and Nights in the Forest*, 1970) by Satyajit Ray where the experience inside the forest plays a significant role in the life of the four city-bred middle-class male characters who retreat into the lush green environment in search of a break from the pressures of city life. Ray's film opens with a flat and fleeting view of the forest at a distance from the window of a moving car suggesting the erotic possibilities of an untamed, unknown forest that the four friends are going to experience. Quite contrary to *Papeeha*'s opening, *Aranyer*'s forest is shown as being looked at or gazed at as the 'other', "an alien landscape which is waiting, hostile and impenetrable, to baffle the intruder" (Milne, 1971, p2) primarily because it is not a narrative invested in any exploration of the forest in relationship with the life of its tribal inhabitants like *Papeeha*. Unlike *Arnyer Din Ratri*'s dominant visual scheme of point-of-view shots of the jungle, the camera in *Papeeha* wanders in the forest, traverses the territory with tribal characters, captures life with varying degrees of closeness to stay connected and distance to avoid voyeuristic gaze at various points.

Another element in *Papeeha* that suggests this cinematic intention of engaging with Adivasi life is the use of fictitious language. Paranjpye constructed an imaginary language with the help of her assistant directors for representational purposes (Paranjpye, 2020) in an attempt to deal with "the most useful indicator of tribal identity" (Devy, 2012, px). This is one of the strategies of representation in the film that aims to specify the distinct identity of the fictional Adivasi group as Paranjpye aimed to create a fictional lived world.[107] She writes, "as our tribals were imaginary, their language, too, had to confirm that make-believe world. After my year-long affinity with the jungle, I had realized that it was not difficult to understand tribal speech" (Paranjpye, 2020, p367). This use of fictitious language that may have helped in constructing a wider Adivasi experience on-screen also raises questions about creative freedom and power relations embedded in the processes of filmic representations of tribes as marginal people. The hybrid language of the film is reminiscent of the process of sociocultural exchange that has been in place since ancient times (Devy, 2012). This does not, however, absolve the representational aesthetics of cinematic space from its complacency in power structures despite its intentions of engaging with the Adivasi plight.

[107] Paranjpye mentions in her autobiography that her assistants worked on the grammer of this constructed language and created a make-shift dictionary to adhere to the rules. This is an unprecedented attempt made in any Hindi film to construct a fictional language solely for representational purposes and it is indeed not too stretched to compare this to James Cameron's efforts in creating Na'vi language for *Avatar* franchise though without expert inputs in *Papeeha*.

Fig.5.10: A hut in the Adivasi settlement where Jiya stays during her visit to the forest (R).

The Adivasi settlements are shown inside the forests which allows them direct access to firewood, leaves, and fruits for daily sustenance, a source of livelihood that is a contentious issue between them and Kabir as the representative of the state in the film. The material cultures of Adivasi life underline rootedness in the forest land, establishing the forest as a unique and comfortable home environment that shelters, protects and provides economic means to the inhabitants. The tribal huts are made of mud, dried grass and wood, surrounded by trees attesting to the harmony of space and human life. When Jiya arrives to study the Adivasi life, their cultural beliefs and practices unfold before the audience (Fig.5.10). Through Jiya's exploration inside the jungle, the audience experiences the socio-economic aspects of Adivasi life and their indigenous practices such as treating trees as gods, song and dance, medicinal secrets and rituals of exorcism. It is her gaze that predominantly describes the cultural specificities, rituals, traditions and beliefs, although Paranjpye creates moments where Jiya's perspective is also countered and questioned. The first brief moment which brings Jiya's urban self and Adivasi cultural values face to face is in the scene where she is dropped off at her host's hut. Jiya enters the hut and is surprised to find a cow inside, to which her host Dolmaayi smilingly replies "she belongs to this home, where else would she stay?" Paranjpye

creates the sense of the Adivasi home in sync with nature through the visuals of open space, livestock, river, birds, absence of doors, and barely clad children playing on the trees all over the forest. It is important to note that the costumes worn in the film are in the realm of symbolic depiction. Women wear a high-waisted saree without a blouse but cover their upper body while men and boys are only shown to be covering the lower part of the body. However, there is no deliberate voyeuristic gaze employed at sexualising or eroticising tribal female bodies, as seen in some commercial films such as a snake-dancing heroine in *Naagin* (1954) or an exotically dangerous tribal woman, Sharmila Tagore in *Yeh Gulistaan Hamara* (1972). Paranjpye's camera refrains from exoticising the tribal body by avoiding fragmented close-ups or framing the bare Adivasi body as 'the erotic other' to be looked at, an approach that Satyajit Ray could not resist in *Aranyer Din Ratri* (Fig.5.11) while framing Adivasi women.

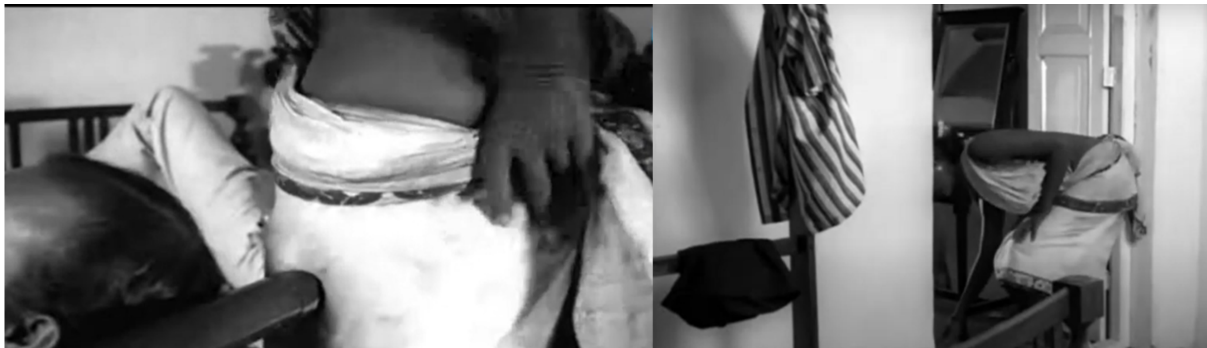

Fig.5.11: Adivasi women shown in *Arnayer Din Ratri*.

Paranjpye's camera travels inside the forest as a witness and an observer watching from a distance. Even in brief depictions of dancing around the fire, the camera is kept at a far distance avoiding the opportunity of the colonial gaze, arguably embodied by Jiya, over a primitive world. Despite resorting to the orientalist trope of generalisation or universalisation of diverse Adivasi identities, Paranjpye's restrained visualisation, observational camera, and countering of the dominant gaze save the

film from becoming yet another overtly exotic and unrealistic drama that ‘others’ tribes. The dominant gaze structure is broken or reversed at various narrative points when Adivasi men and women are shown to be engaged in conversations with Jiya during her visits to various huts in the Adivasi settlements inside the forest. In one of the scenes, Bichhua takes Jiya to his future bride Hirni’s home, where he has been living for the past five years and has no plans to get married anytime soon. Jiya is startled to know that a live-in relationship is common in the tribe. When she asks Bichhua about what happens if children are born out of wedlock, he laughingly points to a child and says, “I was his age when my parents got married“. Jiya’s surprised reaction indicates that she thinks of pre-marital sex and live-in relationships as progressive modern ideas which is why she finds it difficult to believe that these practices are common to the tribal world. This conversation underscores the colonial discourse of knowledge generation, the ideological fantasy of equating modernity to the west and difference as backward and primitive.

However, Jiya’s gaze is countered by Bichhua when he inquires how people get married in the city and Jiya explains that the boy meets the girl, they like each other and get married. She is immediately questioned by a curious Hirni, “then why do they burn the brides for dowry?” and Bichhua asks “boys take dowry in your city, right?” Jiya is caught unguarded by these questions and is left speechless for a moment. Paranjpye isolates her in a close-up before she utters that she is against dowry. The three characters sitting on the floor mat inside the hut are captured in a low-angle intimate style reminiscent of the famous tatami shot by the Japanese master Ozu. Jiya is left out of the frame, while Bichhua and Hirni are placed centrally, suggesting to the audience to pay attention to them as they exchange information with each

other about their distinct ways of life. While having them sitting across each other might suggest opposing positions, having both of them situated at the same eye level, connotes equality and is not representative of divergent socially hierarchical groups. These brief moments are clearly not enough to suggest that the film effectively subverts the power dynamic between the “orientalising gaze of the anthropologist” and the Adivasi subjects. The unequal power relations exist but these are a few narrative points where Paranjpye attempts not to reproduce them or reverse the gaze.

Fig.5.12 Jiya’s gaze is disrupted when Hirni enquires about the social practice of bride-burning in the city.

Jiya’s pedagogical journey alongside Bicchua aims to target and educate the city-bred audience while he reveals Adivasi's cultural beliefs and relationship with the forest. Since Paranjpye intends to establish the forest as home territory, the smaller details of an Adivasi trying to catch a mouse and Bichhua digging the land to find rice from the mouse hole have been used to throw light on the ways of life in a natural habitat shared between humans and other inhabitants. In *Disha*, if the village is both a home and an economic system that affects lives and livelihoods, the forest in *Papeeha* is a similar geography that shapes life emotionally, psychologically and

economically. In a book written in 1963, Verrier Elwin talks about the relationship between the tribes and the forest. According to Elwin,

> To a vast number of the tribal people, the forest is their well-loved home, their livelihood, their very existence. It gives them food—fruits of all kinds, edible leaves, honey, nourishing roots, wild game, and fish. It provides them with material to build their homes and to practice their arts (…). Their religion leads them to believe that many spirits are living in the trees. Tribal folk-tales often speak about the relations of human beings and the sylvan spirits and it is striking to see how in many of the myths and legends the deep sense of identity with the forest is emphasized […]. From time immemorial until comparatively recently the tribal people have enjoyed the freedom to use the forest and hunt its animals and this has given them a conviction, which remains even today in their hearts, that the forest belongs to them (1963, p51).

What Elwin suggested concerning the relationship between the forest and tribes, and which perpetuates the imagination of the forest as their home, resonates with the concept of *Topophilia* coined by the geographer Yi-Fu Tuan (1990). He defines topophilia as “an affective bond between people and place or setting” (p4). Tuan notes that this bond is expressed and shaped through perception, attitude, value, and worldview held by people. In other words, this suggests that people perceive their environment as home by attaching certain meanings and values, and by integrating themselves within the physical setting. This explains the Adivasi perceptions of themselves as ‘people of the forest’, distinct from any other social group. Topophilia points to the perceptual and emotional geography of home, which frees the concept of home from the realm of material and physical fixity, and allows it to emerge as a phenomenological and perceptual environment.

The tribe in *Papeeha* relates to the forest as the very basis of its existence and sustenance, an ecological as well as an economic system that shapes their

collective life. Their ways of life and identity are interwoven in this geography. Rashmi Sawhney (2009) mentions that “the film, in keeping with the interests of the popular genre, reduces the Adivasis to a contextual setting for developing the central narrative of romance” (p106). While I agree that Paranjpye develops the narrative with the forest officer and the anthropologist at the centre, it is not entirely justified to conclude that the forest is just a contextual setting, the way it is utilised as a mysterious other in *Arnayer Din Ratri* where Ray strategised the Black and White colour scheme to remove any spiritual impact that the lush green jungle might add to the narrative of urban despair relocated (Mukherjee and Singh, 2017). Within the central narrative of the romance between Kabir and Jiya, the forest is the third character that shapes Kabir’s intentions, decisions and ideas about his own identity. Paranjpye’s construction of a fantasy land of Adivasis reproduces the usual cinematic tendency of generalising the highly diverse demography of Indian tribes, but in effect, this constructed space succeeds in making significant assertions such as the relationship with a specific land and its environment as the material and psychological space of a home. The sense of belonging to the forest constitutes the specifics of Adivasi identity and forms the basis of their struggle to claim communal rights to the forest.

Law versus the right to be ‘at home’

Paranjpye brings various socio-cultural and legal discourses into the film that transforms the serene forest home into a political battleground of identity, legality and human rights. If Jiya’s anthropological study is constructed as a device to peep into the lived home of Adivasis, Kabir is represented as an embodiment of state law and the legal regime struggling to govern this ‘Adivasi home’. From the colonial

period, the forest land and its natural resource has been appropriated as state property by the ruling elite assigning ownership rights and control over forest produce to itself (Gadgil & Guha, 2012). The forest has been, to borrow from Laura Marks, a “power-inflected space” (2000, p1) in the Indian subcontinent where the notion of the forest as home clashes with the capitalist perceptions of the forest as a commercial resource. Kabir’s constant friction with Adivasis over the picking of woods from the forest reproduces the historical and political conflict between the state’s quest to regulate the forest economy and the traditional Adivasi rights to use their habitat and its resources. This confrontation is navigated in the film through Kabir’s simultaneous attempts at stopping the illegal cutting of trees as well as stopping the Adivasi women from collecting firewood in the forest. Kabir as an agent of sole state proprietorship over the forest is entrusted with the task of preserving the flora and fauna that ‘greedy’ Adivasis are allegedly destroying by putting pressure on the jungle. This becomes particularly salient in the scene where Kabir goes to the local police station to ask for women constables so that he can instill fear by threatening Adivasi women, orchestrating a confrontation between the law and the natives. Paranjpye uses long shots in this scene where she captures queues of women emerging from the forest singing and carrying wood on their heads, with Jiya at the forefront. Kabir is positioned at a distance and we see the women through his point of view, creating a sense of an impending confrontation between legality and illegality. The women’s body language conveys confidence about the act, which in their understanding is not illegal, as the forest has always been the natural source of their livelihood. But the law (Kabir) is standing right there to intervene and is placed on the opposite side, visually emphasising the conflicting positions (Fig.5.13). Kabir stops them and asks the women constables to take the women to the police station.

At this point, Jiya turns around and stands opposite Kabir in a mid-close-up. Women are visible in the background, while Kabir's back is towards us when Jiya confronts him.

Fig.5.13: Kabir stops Adivasi women from collecting wood and is confronted by Jiya over Adivasi's rights.

Jiya is prominently positioned in the shot with her face toward the camera, allowing her the power to command the audience's attention. She is the only character whose facial expression can be seen, while Kabir's back occupies half of the frame and we can only hear him. The viewer is placed inside the scene to witness Jiya questioning the logic of legality, which banishes the tribe from using forest products, while Kabir reiterates the need to save the forest from the excessive pressure of human activities:

Jiya: Why are you after them?[108]
Kabir: Because I have to save my jungle otherwise they will turn this jungle into the Sahara desert.
Jiya: By taking this paltry volume of wood?
Kabir: Madam, straw by straw this jungle would be destroyed.

[108] I have translated the original Hindi dialogues to make this whole conversation accessible.

Jiya: You are taking the breastfed infants away from their mothers.
Kabir: These infants are sucking their mother's blood now. While they were collecting the wood for household use, I ignored it but now they sell it in the market.
Jiya: What about those criminals who are looting the jungle? You can't catch those thieves who are cutting your expensive trees illegally but you can stop these innocent people.
Kabir: That's my life's motto to stop those criminals but their presence can't justify these people's acts and you won't do any service to the country by supporting this theft.

Jiya's engagement with the environmental politics of the forest and her confrontation with Kabir portrays her as the mobilising force behind the women's action that peaks toward the climax of the film. However, Paranjpye's strategy in using Jiya as the leading voice of Adivasi women is reminiscent of the colonial narrative of superior, educated, city-based citizens leading the uneducated, alienated, inferior Adivasis. By investing an outsider with the power to lead and speak on their behalf, *Papeeha* does not allow any Adivasi woman to emerge as a home-grown indigenous leader. This narrative decision removes the film from the reality of the actual Chipko movement where local women-led several protest movements. Nonetheless, the film highlights the contentious issue of forest rights and the controversial legal discourse of conserving the ecology of forests, which has colonial roots. This scene ends with Kabir authoritatively standing across from the women, asking them to swear to their god that they will not steal the forest produce anymore. Kabir, as the state-appointed guardian of the forest, works to protect its ecology against the people whose cultural identity is shaped around the forest. The state recognises the forest as its property and sets itself up against those who have long organised their lives and beliefs around the 'sacred' elements of the lived environment, but who might have affected the ecological balance by putting excessive pressure on this resource.

Papeeha points toward the tense history of forest-dwelling communities and the regulation of commercial forestry in India. Though this history is tremendously diverse in different regions, there are established facts that reveal the changing patterns of the relationship between the state, forest and Adivasis. As Mathur (2009) points out, by the nineteenth century, to exploit the commercial value of forests, the colonial government extended its legal authority in the name of scientific conservation and protection. The colonial state control over Indian forests started from the Charter of Indian forests in 1855, which declared the large land areas and jungles as government property. Later came the Forest Act 1865, “under which any land covered with trees or brushwood could be declared forest, and the government laid claim to it all. With a stroke, common property resources became a thing of the past” (Mathur, p173). The act also transformed the customary rights to forest produce as ‘privileges’. Through a series of laws and policies executed in later years, the colonial government restricted the rights of the communities dependent on them and facilitated an organised system of exploitation of forests and their resources. The post-colonial policy of 1952 introduced even higher restrictions on the rights of Adivasis; for example, cattle grazing was made a paid-for activity that required permission. As mentioned before, the Forest Act 1988 sought to achieve some balance between forest conservation and the Adivasis rights and “The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006” recognised the traditional community rights on forests and stressed the need to engage communities in achieveing state conservation targets. By bringing the conflict over the use of forest resources on screen, *Papeeha* situates itself within this long and complex history of struggle over forest land rights. As a forest officer

serving state interest, Kabir's coercive effort in stopping the Adivasi women from depleting forest resources on the one hand, and his fight with illegal wood trafficking on the other, is a cinematic attempt to dwell upon the question of nationalisation of forests and its impact on people who consider themselves citizens of the jungle. Their refusal to accept the state's authority is a rebellious act against the idea of an imagined unified nation. *Papeeha*'s narrative makes visible the conflict between the abstract and imagined conceptual realms of home and the nation-state. The notions of home and the ways of being at home conflict with the national process of subjectification through legal recourse.

Papeeha's lived space, the forest is a cultural and emotional geography embroiled in colonial and post-colonial attitudes and national practices in the management of forests. This conflict over the forest intensifies in the film when the corrupt Mangeram, disguised as the well-wisher of Adivasis, plans the felling of trees as a paid agent of a multinational company. The irony is that he relies on the Adivasis to destroy the forest. In one scene, Mangeram goes into the Adivasis settlement and boasts that he has helped them by giving them jobs. An Adivasi laments that only a few have work, and the rest are living in poverty and poor conditions. Mangeram takes advantage of the moment and lures the Adivasis into helping him clean the forest for a rayon factory to be set up by a multinational company. He mentions that the arrival of the factory means jobs and better living conditions. In shots where he is surrounded by poor Adivasis, Mangeram is centrally placed and captured in close-up as he attempts to falsely implicate Adivasi men in clearing the forest. His white attire and lighter skin are in stark contrast to the dark brown naked bodies of Adivasis, for whom he is no less than a colonial master aiming to exploit the subaltern. Mangeram

mentions that he has come to help them by creating new jobs through the factory but they need to cut the trees. The Adivasi men are apprehensive as trees are auspicious for them but agree when told that the trees have ghosts all over them. Through Mangeram's deceitful acts, the camera makes visible the off-screen space of liquid modernity encroaching the borders of home territory, threatening to destroy the secured spatiality of home and livelihood. The corrupt and hidden processes of crony capitalism that work towards disenfranchising forest-based communities are exposed by showing how forest department officials collaborated with Mangeram.

On the one hand, Mangeram and his aides were planning to source cheap labour by conning Adivasis into believing that the trees are captured by ghosts, on the other, Kabir was being sent away on training for three months. This suggests an off-screen conspiracy of capitalist interests of a multinational firm that successfully lobbies the state machinery to destroy the forest for commercial gains. The same state machinery sees the Adivasi or tribal communities as the destroyers of the forest. The film thus places the audience at the threshold of organised corruption, deceit, and the arbitrary nature of the state's role in forest management. It is this politics of forestry and the disempowerment of the Adivasis that causes a tribal movement as the film proceeds.[109]

As mentioned in the beginning, *Papeeha* shows the rise of an Adivasi movement to save the forest from complete destruction modelled after the Chipko protest that emerged in the 1970s. Once Kabir is sent away and Mangeram has convinced the

[109] For more on the history of tribal land rights movements see *Tribal Movements in India* (1983), volume II by K.S.Singh.

Adivasi men to cut the trees, the forest is on the threshold of destruction; the home is under attack. It is only the women who are left to imagine the consequences and avert the looming danger of complete dislocation. Paranjpye showcases the process of Adivasi women's awakening though she again (and problematically) chooses Jiya instead of an Adivasi woman to mediate the process of women's resistance. This is mainly because the film sticks to the popular trope of showing the leading female character as the changemaker. However, the process of engaging women is conceptualised interestingly and shows how women's mobilisation blurs private/public borders. In a tatami-style low-level shot, Jiya is sitting with Hirni and another woman inside a hut. The woman is feeding honey extracted from the *Mahua* tree to her infant. When Jiya enquires about her action, Hirni explains that the Adivasis believe that if they feed Mahua honey, to the babies, the tree will protect them forever, to which Jiya provokingly asks, "but who will protect the Mahua tree if it is in danger". Jiya is centrally placed and favoured with lighting in the shot, as this is the point where she begins to mobilise dissent and collective action to be led by women. Paranjpye constructs this process of mobilisation through small details of visual construction. In one shot, an Adivasi woman is shown to be confronting her husband who is sharpening his axe to cut the trees. The rising flame of dissent among women as the opposing group is suggested by positioning her opposite the husband in the same frame as she questions his decision to cut the auspicious trees. The man argues that the forest needs to be cleared off for the factory which will bring prosperity to Adivasi while the woman is strictly against the idea of destructing one's own home for false promises of jobs and prosperity. This dialogue is crucial from women's perspective as its oppositional aesthetic indicates that their mobilisation for saving the trees serves a larger purpose. By opposing their husbands, women claim

their agency and demand a greater role in decision-making on public issues that intrude on their private lives and ways of being. Their participation in the protest suggests a dual negotiation in their private and public role as women. By entrusting the pivotal role of organising the dissent to women, the film largely portrays it as a women's movement, in reality, women did partake in the Chipko movement though it was not exactly a women's movement.[110]

Fig.5.14: Bichhua performs and women listen as they begin to mobilise.

This is a powerful moment in the film and to capture the intense energy of this mobilisation, Paranjpye once again employs hybrid aesthetics. She uses a folk song performed by Bicchua in the style of street theatre (Fig.5.14). The song is meant as a message to fellow Adivasis to wake up and protect the jungle home. The impact of this process is enhanced by mixing the theatrical aesthetics of live stage performance with cinematic techniques of closeness achieved through close-ups and shot reverse shot editing conveying the fervent moment of rising dissent. Shot at night, the dark frame is lit with torches/firelights as a space of performance where women and children gather under a tree to watch it. Captured in the long shot, Jiya addresses the gathering, although she talks straight to the camera, implicating the

[110] For a detailed analysis of Chipko movement and its wider impact in India see “The Evolution, Structure, and Impact of the Chipko movement” (1986) by Vandana Shiva and J. Bandyopadhyay.

film audience in a direct address to witness the changing mood and environment in the jungle. She introduces the one hundred fifty years old story of the *Bishnoi* tribal community that worships nature and when their beloved trees were once threatened they sacrificed lives to save it. This powerful message is accentuated by the theatricality of the mise en scene that relies on intermixing elements of both mediums. It is achieved through long shots of Bicchhua's performance, simultaneously mixed with the close-ups of women's faces who are visibly elated and seem to be getting influenced by the creative mode of address. The fire, the use of percussion and the battle sound in the background declare the arrival of the revolutionary moment. The performance ends with Bichhua seen to be taken away by Mangeram's men.

Seeing that the men are too influenced by Mangeram's false story of a livelihood for all, the women secretly prepare to organise dissent and collective action against the felling of trees. On that particular morning, as soon as the men begin their deforestation drive, the women and children, led by Jiya, emerge from inside the forest. To stop the felling operations, they hug the trees, challenging the Adivasi men to kill their own people before 'killing' the trees. The Adivasi men finally refuse to harm children and women. They join the protesting women in beating up Mangeram's henchmen. This scene is conceptualised as a battlefield of conflicting interests in which the filmic space of action represents the corrupt pro-filmic politics of development and the tussle to take control over the forest land. The climax exhibits a dramatic confrontation where Adivasi men and women are fighting with Mangeram's henchmen and Kabir is suddenly back to help the Adivasis win the fight. This cinematic imagination is not too different from that of commercial Hindi films,

where those who execute the rule of law – the police – always arrive at the end when all the struggle has already taken place and justice has been delivered. While there is a long history of defiance against forest laws in India, the Chipko movement had the Gandhian philosophy of non-violence and assertion of truth at its heart. Paranjpye does not refrain from letting the movement turn violent, with the use of *laathis* (heavy stick used as a weapon) and fist fighting. The film utilises the essential ecological character of the movement as it was adopted by various villages resisting the restrictions imposed by the forest management laws in independent India.

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Both *Disha* and *Papeeha* suggest collaborative/collective action as a way out of the marginalisation and economic distress. In both films, economic deprivation translates into spatial marginalisation, the alteration of the lived environment and social relationships. Paranjpye conceives the driving forces behind the unwanted change as the gap between the conceptualisation and execution of development ideals and ideas. These spatial narratives of dislocation and the struggle to hold on to what is perceived as home, and the home environment, stress understanding the needs of those whose lives are tied to a specific spatial context, whether in the city, village or forest.

Chapter Six

Addiction, society and space in *Choodiyan* (Bangles, 1993) ***and Suee*** (***The Needle***, 2009)

In all the feature films of Sai Paranjpye discussed in the previous chapters, marginal social experience is a recurring theme (as discussed in chapter two), whether it is represented through a blind male character's experience in *Sparsh*, life in a working-class housing community in *Katha*, the displaced and disenfranchised villagers in *Disha* or the Adivasis on the verge of facing the destruction of their forest homeland in *Papeeha*. Along with marginalisation, the home space and the dynamics of power in social relationships are the binding elements in all feature films. These themes and elements remain central in many of her documentaries and non-feature films also. This chapter will focus on two of her non-features: *Choodiyan* (1993) and *Suee* (2009).[111] Produced sixteen years apart, these films, share common concerns and employ a similar kind of hybrid aesthetic approach in dealing with the cultural narrative of addiction and its impact. In these films, Paranjpye seeks to intervene in

[111] *Choodiyan* was officially classified under the non-feature category at 40th Indian National Film Awards. It won the best film award on social issues. The films nominated under this category are defined as short films (less than 60 minutes in duration) and are not necessarily documentaries. This term is an indication of the difficulty of classification posed by the hybrid and in-between form used in *Choodiyan* and *Suee* that blend fictional narrative with real incidents and people, blurring the boundaries between fiction/non-fiction. These films cannot be strictly called documentaries as they rely on re-enactment to narrate the stories. I discuss this fluidity of form and its function as we proceed in the chapter.

the dominant socio-cultural text of alcohol/drug addiction and HIV infection in India. What is more, as I will discuss further below, both films occupy a liminal space themselves as Paranjpye repeatedly crosses the assumed borders between documentary and fiction. My central argument in this chapter is that *Choodiyan* and *Suee* seek to depict addiction as a socio-spatial process instead of portraying it as an individual pathology although addiction is largely dealt with from the perspective of harm.[112] The films rely on re-enactment to engage with the cultural narratives of addiction but they end up co-opting the modern discourse of addiction as a problem, a gendered problem to be more precise.[113] Both films locate addiction in the larger social domain of relationships, morality, and identity through the physical settings of private and public spaces as the characters become entangled in the unfolding effects of addiction. Paranjpye engages with the process and spatial practices of addiction to highlight predominant spatial relations, social attitudes, stereotypes, stigma, and gendered tensions through the lens of addiction. The geographies of drug/alcohol addiction are shown as spaces of socially dejected and marginalised individuals in need of collective intervention. The chapter thus, explores the intricately connected narratives of addiction, power dynamics and space.

Contextualising addiction, reading spaces

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[112] The development of this narrative of addiction as harm has been a gradual process that shaped up mainly in the 19th and 20th century. I discuss this further in the chapter.

[113] Indian cinema has always shown a specific relationship with the idea of drinking and smoking. It has been traditionally linked either with moral corruption, degeneration and indulgence reserved for villains or disillusionment of the innocent protagonist from the cruelty of the material world exemplified by characters such as the distraught *Devdas* or the heartbroken poet in *Pyasa*. Within this visual regime, women consuming alcohol were mainly vamps as decadent figures (such as Nadira in Shree 420 or bar dancer Helen pouring drinks into glasses) seen as having ‘western’ influence hence perversion from Indian traditional values of feminity. Post-2000 Indian cinema has gradually become more comfortable with the idea of drinking for leisure and pleasure.

India has a long cultural history of substance use, particularly cannabis, raw opium and indigenously produced plant-based alcoholic beverages. The cultural and medicinal sanctions for using such products attest that substance use was not prohibited in society (Sharma, 1996). The modern narrative of addiction or substance abuse in India is linked to national and international developments and shifts in the socio-cultural perceptions of addiction. The contemporary vocabulary of addiction as harmful dependence, uncontrollable physiological compulsion and disorder predominantly developed during the 19th and 20th centuries. As C. V. Haldipur (2018) notes, medical publications such as the 1804 essay by Thomas Trotter, *An Essay, Medical, Philosophical, and Chemical, on Drunkenness and Its Effects on the Human Body*, helped in shaping the narrative of addiction as a disease. One of the most crucial examples of the moral discourse of addiction as harm and threat to modern life influencing the legal course is the Canadian anti-drug legislation, 1908 that prohibited the non-medicinal use of opium and criminalised addiction. Scholars have noted that this changing legal discourse of addiction was driven by moral panic around the demographic and economic impact of addiction on the modern state (Gordon 1994; Dias 2003).

Interestingly, it is not only the western medical and legal discourse that projected addiction as disorder and vice, as the ancient Indian texts also cautioned against addiction of various kinds. As Wendy Doniger (2014) notes, the Indian scientific texts: the *shastras* suggested ways to deal with addiction (p365). For example, in the ancient treatise on politics and statecraft, Kautilya's *Arthashastra* designated alcoholism as one of the most dangerous addictions that the ruling King could indulge in and cause major trouble to their capacity to rule, thus, implying a need to

control any such indulgence.[114] Clearly, *Arthashastra* aimed at engendering a discourse of addiction that warned against certain activities that may challenge or disrupt the power structure. These power structures take varied forms in personal and social life.

These ideas on the relationship between power and addiction invokes Foucault's delierations on the generation of knowledge in society "(…) in any society, there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterise and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse. There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth which operates through and on the basis of this association" (Foucault, 1980, p93). From this perspective, the gradual development of the modern discourse of addiction, aided by medical and legal research, fuelled a narrative that created a discourse about addiction as an anomaly to the normal functioning of society hence, required measures of control and management. The medical definition of addiction delineates it as "(1) recurrent failure to control the behavior (powerlessness) and (2) continuation of the behavior despite significant negative consequences (unmanageability)" (Goodman, 1990, p1404). This vocabulary of addiction as unmanageable and harmful behaviour continues to dominate as the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) still maintains that "people with addiction use substances or engage in behaviors that become compulsive and often continue despite harmful consequences" (ASAM, 2019, no page).

[114] The ancient text of *Arthashastra* deemed gambling as the most dangerous form of addiction, followed by drinking, sex and hunting.

I situate Paranjpye's *Choodiyan* and *Suee* within this narrative of addiction as harmful dependence and read space as a crucial agent in expressing the dominant power structures and cultural anxieties around addiction. In doing so, I will be discussing these films with regard to their engagement with social power dynamics, examining spatial categories of private/public, home/outside in relation to addiction and its impact. These films deal with the broader narrative of drug/alcohol use affecting and unsettling normative social roles and identities. Here, addiction triggers a transitional status, indicating that a threshold has been crossed, leading to an experience that can be understood through the anthropological conceptualisation of liminality.

The term liminality refers to the state of in-betweenness, of falling between the boundaries/categories was developed by French anthropologist Arnold van Gennep (1909) and later adopted by British anthropologist Victor Turner (1967, 1969), to primarily dwell on the phases in human life, a process of movement from one stage to another or crossing a social threshold. Designating this in-betweenness as formlessness, Kim Skjoldager-Nielsen and Joshua Edelman (2014) have pointed out that there is an inherent tension in the idea of liminality. They mention that the "term may be said to designate a transitory and precarious phase between stable states, which is marked off by conceptual, spatial and/or temporal barriers, within which individuals, groups and/or objects are set apart from society and/or the everyday" (p1). Gennep's and Turner's discussions and later deliberations (Thomassen 2009; Skjoldager-Nielsen and Joshua Edelman 2014; Horvath, Thomassen & Wydra 2015) on liminality are quite useful in understanding the in-betweenness of human beings

labelled as addicts and the spaces related to the experience of addiction. The core idea of liminality as a threshold and an in-between experience is helpful in understanding the way addiction mediates social identity and how, in these films, drug/alcohol abuse creates liminal spaces laced with emotions of shame and stigma.

In reading spaces and the relational possibilities, they embody, Deleuze and Guattari's conceptualisation of smooth and striated space helps in thinking about various private and public spaces in relationship with addiction in these films. In *A Thousand Plateaus,* Deleuze and Guattari (1987), differentiating between these two kinds of spaces, argue that smooth space is "directional not determinable, filled by events far more than by formed or perceived things. It is a space of affects, more than one of properties" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p479). Smooth space is beyond codifications and rigid patterns. Striated Space, however, is sedentary, a space of order, rigidity, form, visible and fixed elements, power and stratifications. They maintain that although these spaces are different, they are entangled and intermixed with each other affecting their simultaneous process of production. The striated space is a space of patterns, hierarchies and control while the smooth space is a potential field of liberating possibilities, but they are also not free from dangers. These conceptual categories have been utilised to read the dominant structures of home and the spaces of alcoholism to underline the specifics of spatial experience shaped by addiction in *Choodiyan* and *Suee*. The focus is on deconstructing the ways in which the films frame and contextualise addiction and social relations as well as examining how they construct the spatial experience of addiction that enforces a new context of identity (or the loss of identity) in the films. I decipher how space intertwines with the social-cultural narratives of patriarchal home, gender, shame and

marginalisation linked to addiction in these narratives. While this marginal status takes away some possibilities, it opens up a new path to an unchartered physical and psychological space for the characters shown as alcoholics/drug addicts in the films. As mentioned, these narratives seek to depict the broader cultural processes; the social construction of addiction, thus do not locate alcoholism as individual malaise. This intention has a specific relationship with the hybrid form that Paranjpye adopts through the strategies of re-enactment based on real-life stories. The affective politics of generating a sense of empathy and conveying the narrative of loss or harm in these films rely on re-enactment and fictional reconstruction of real-life stories placing the films in the liminal zone of docudrama. The formalist aesthetic of re-enactment has been described as "more or less authentic re-creation of prior events" (Nichols, 2008, p72) and remains a much-discussed subject in documentary traditions. Paranjpye's use of re-enactments poses interesting questions concerning these films such as: what political functions does re-enactment perform here and why can they not be simply categorised as documentary films? I will address these issues before moving on to the textual analysis of both films in this chapter.

The politics of re-enactment in *Choodiyan* and *Suee*

Choodiyan and *Suee* are not conventional documentaries as they do not necessarily use methods traditionally associated with documentaries, such as the use of archival footage, or the talking heads as a claim to the reality. Instead, these films are distinctive as they seek to generate engagement through fictional reconstruction and re-enactments of the subject's lives, characterological details and spatial experience. Their substantial reliance on fictive elements to "copy the past" (Agnew, Lamb and Tomann, 2020, p1) or to borrow Noel Currie's words, "the re-creation, by dramatic

means, of certain actually occurring events" (1999, p295), distinguishes them as docudramas relying on re-enactments. Because of their liminal formal status, the re-enactment allows these films to construct a fictional filmic space to represent a temporally distant profilmic reality. The fact that these docudramas reconstruct reality and not merely represent them shows the intention to bring the invisible domain of inner experience and cultural beliefs along with the visible spatial practices of addiction into the realm of inquiry. In this sense, the re-enactment in *Choodiyan* and *Suee* is an aesthetic decision that sharpens the political charge of these docufictions framing the experience of, and seeking 'social' remedies for, addiction.

Choodiyan is a film about a village where alcoholism in men is shown as the root cause of women's suffering. The opening of the film uses still photographs of the village Solu in the western Indian state of Maharashtra where women had organised a temperance movement in the past, as a remedy against alcoholism in men (Fig.6.1). The photographs serve as "traces of its subjects" (Currie, 1999, p286) but they have no role beyond the opening shots that aim to indicate the indexical threads of *Choodiyan*'s narrative. A brief opening narration by a female voice informs the viewer about the real-life events of Solu, and that the film is based on the experience of women and their 'collective triumph'. Beyond this brief opening, the rest of the film is a fictional construct based on the screenplay and performed by actors, as even the name of the real village is changed in the fictional reconstruction.

Fig.6.1: Choodiyan opens with real images of the village named Solu.

The inclusion of still photographs of the real village and its people before moving on to the re-enactment foregrounds its mode of construction. It makes visible the act of crossing the naturalised boundaries of the documentary form from what Grierson called a “creative treatment of actuality” to a film that commits itself to the re-creation of the verifiable but absent actuality. It is not certain whether the characters in the film are based on the real-life subjects shown in the images or if Paranjpye completely reconstructs characters and real events that have taken place in the past. Similarly, in *Suee*, re-enactment is the tool to execute the affective politics of the film. *Suee* explores the protagonist Eeshan’s journey into drug addiction leading to HIV infection. The film depicts Eshan’s socio-spatial experience and seeks to suggest the management of addiction/HIV through the wider familial and institutional networks of care (non-governmental organisations and hospitals). To this end, Paranjpye utilises re-enactment to depict Eeshan’s story, supported by other characters, recounting their experience of addiction directly to the camera. Paranjpye uses actors to perform as conventional talking heads in a way similar to actualities used in a documentary. It appears as if the actors are the real actualities of addicts recounting their life experiences with addiction. But they are scripted performances similar to mono acts performed by trained actors which place the film in the grey zone between

fiction and non-fiction, a docudrama. This creative reconstruction imbued with theatricality indicates the desire to intervene in the cultural discourse and not just reproduce images and evidence.

Apart from the term docudrama, the in-betweenness or border-crossing between fiction and non-fiction has been defined through varied terms such as docufiction or hybrid documentary. Discussing hybrid documentary in an article, British producer and curator Luke Moody (2013) states that hybridised work not only emerges from the interstitial spaces of fiction/non-fiction, but also encompasses creative pluralities of both content and representation. Moody argues that in a hybrid film, a director operates from the positions of “observation and instigation, life and art, the actual and possible, translation and interpretation, presence and performance, construction and deconstruction, evidence and hearsay, authorship and plagiarism, meaning and abstraction” (2013, no page). The acts of observation, instigation, interpretation, construction and deconstruction are particularly relevant to the intentions of re-enactments in these films.

Bill Nichols (2008) notes that “the reenactment forfeits its indexical bond to the original event” (p74) and allows it to have “fantastmatic power” (p74), the power to constitute the subject and explore reality in a way where reconstruction and re-enactment allow engagement with both- the personal and the social. The temporal duality, the joining of the past and present introduced by the past reality being mediated through a fictional re-enactment within a film produced at a later time, is significant from the perspective of creative and activist desire. The fact that the people and events that *Choodiyan* and *Suee* are reconstructing, and re-enacting

have existed in the past and cannot be reached out to shows the activist attempt to translate the limitation of an absent subject into an opportunity to deliberate. By resorting to re-enactment, the films seek more than observation, representation or documentation. They aim to create cinematic moments of redemption, revision or intervention. However, neither *Choodiyan* nor *Suee* is fully capable of offering a radical reworking of the past and at times appear to be complicit with the problematic patriarchal and neo-liberal structures that they seek to question. For instance, *Choodiyan* re-enacts the story of women organising collective action to get rid of the liquor shop in the village. This is shown to be the only solution to men's addiction and women's misery. The film appears to remain complicit in gendered power inequalities and offers no critique of the fundamental problem of the gendered home by simply attributing male violence to alcohol. The speculative potential of possibilities thus remains unexploited in *Choodiyan* and the opportunity to act upon the constructed world is lost, although Paranjpye shows this possibility again in *Suee* by using re-enactment to construct the spatial experience of drug addiction leading to HIV infection.

Reenactments using scripted performance, produce a potential liminal zone that represents a constructed reality where it is possible to provide a subjective voice to objective facts of the past, rekindle debates and offer a different perspective on perceived reality. Discussing the importance of performance in re-enactment, Katherine Johnson (2020) suggests, "reenactment potentially enables more active engagement in the historiographic process and in the questioning of dominant ideologies and identities, facilitating a more dialogic critical engagement within a broader sector of society. This feeds into larger, more significant socio-historical

issues” (p172). Paranjpye’s desire to use re-enactment as an enabler of active social and critical engagement with HIV-positive people and their lived experience is declared in the opening scene of *Suee*. The film opens with a blurred image of a man sitting on a chair with his back toward the camera against a dark backdrop. In a tight close-up, he turns towards the audience introducing himself as an HIV-positive drug user named Eeshan. With Eeshan looking directly into the camera, his out-of-focus image comes into focus as he announces his intention to disrupt the dominant cultural practice of making drug users and HIV-positive people invisible, hiding their identity and/or marginalising them. Eeshan recounts his introduction to cigarettes at school and the gradual process of using psychoactive agents such as opium, marijuana, finally leading him to inject drugs using and sharing needles that infect him with HIV. This opening scene is constructed as a reflective and confessional monologue meant to invite the audience on a journey of self-disclosure (Fig.6.2). Shot in a theatrical-style direct address staged against a black backdrop, this visual strategy aims at creating an intimacy between the subject and the audience. However, this proposed intimacy is not meant for a sympathetic spectatorial identification, rather it positions the audience as a fellow member of society that needs to be made aware of how an addict is socially constructed and the role that they might be playing in the discriminatory discourse of addiction.

Fig.6.2: Eeshan’s opening monologue in *Suee*.

To draw the viewer into the inner world of the protagonist and his experience slowly, the theatrical staging is fused with cinematic visual effects. Eeshan's monologue is reconstructed into a film within the film, thereby creating a hybrid aesthetic environment that charges the monologue with an 'authenticity effect' of actuality. This reconstructed part is meant to allow the audience an entry into the invisible world of his spatial experience with addiction.[115] In an analysis of schizophrenia on film, Pisters (2008) argues that "cinema in the 'old paradigm'" was conceived as the "machine of the visible"- a re-presentation of reality, but it has seen a paradigm shift to cinema as a "machine of the invisible" (p113) bringing experience and thoughts into the realm of visibility. The aesthetics of re-enactment serve as an essential tool in representing the unrepresentable, intangible and affective domain of fear, shame, stigma and alienation. The cinematic strategy of direct address in a tight frame combined with a fictional re-enactment of personal experience is crucial as it strives to bridge the distance between the addict as a distant sufferer and the audience as an observer. This aesthetic hybridity facilitates the viewer's entry into the inner world of addiction and its conflicts. The transition from blurred image to spotlighting thus gains a political meaning, it challenges the larger silence while inviting the audience to get deeper into the 'reality' that the film constructs where the social text of addiction is expected to be deconstructed.

***Choodiyan*: Addiction as a threat to the patriarchal home**

[115] I have discussed the impact of this hybridity in chapter two under the sub-head border and border-crossings.

Set in a fictional idyllic landscape of Chandanpur village, *Choodiyan* mainly focuses on the lives of four heterosexual couples: *Shankar* and his wife, *Chhagan* and his wife *Chachi*, *Girdhar* and his wife *Jamuni* and *Mallinath* and his wife. The village is conceptualised as functionally divided along gender lines: men work in the fields and women perform household chores and child care. But a sudden disruption is caused in this conventional order when men resort to drinking alcohol and spending their income at the local liquor shop run by a woman called *Mastani*. Alcoholism is thus shown to have disturbed the functional orthodoxy of family lives leading to economic stress and subjecting women to violence. Addiction is treated as a masculine crisis threatening the patriarchal household in the village where men are the locus of power. Through the gendered positioning of addiction, the film frames alcoholism from the perspective of moral and material harm and violent behaviour toward women.[116] It is the question of maintaining the conventional power dynamic in the domestic space that is central in dealing with alcoholism as deviance from the expected performance of gendered duties. The film amplifies the narrative of private space under attack through the re-enacted scenes of domestic violence by drunken men, death, and the lack of economic resources to fulfil medical and educational needs. The women gradually begin to mobilise against the alcohol shop perceived as the main cause of domestic violence and economic misery but not against the gendered power inequalities as a way of life. In the end, the film doesn't translate into a narrative that questions the fundamentals of an unjust social hierarchy nor

[116] In *Theory of Addiction* (2013) Brown and West mention that in the recent times, the idea of harm gradually became central to defining addiction instead of the idea of physiological dependence on substance use to remain functional. They refer to addiction as "a chronic condition in which there is a repeated powerful motivation to engage in a rewarding behaviour, acquired as a result of engaging in that behaviour, that has significant potential for unintended harm"(p4). The framing of addiction as harm connotes the need to reform and correct one's behaviour what Brown and West call the "disorder of motivation".

does it demand its revision as it attributes women’s misery to an external intoxicating element that is not seen as an individual choice but as a colonising power materially represented by the presence of the shop in the village.

Choodiyan’s commitment to indexical events and people as declared in the opening shots with still photographs seems to dwindle when it comes to re-enactment. While all the male characters have names, some of the women characters do not ever get addressed by their names in the film. This is particularly questionable as the film declares its intention to focus on addiction in relation to women’s real-life experience yet it fails to provide the basic tool of identification, a name for each woman character whose life is shown to be impacted. This reproduces the age-old problematic gendered practice of negating married women’s individuality by reducing them only to the status of someone’s wife who draws her identity from the role assigned to her within the patriarchal family structure in the private domain of the home.

It is not only the home space that is a crucial signifier of the gendered positioning of alcoholism, the space of the liquor shop propels the narrative of alcoholism as a ‘male problem’. The film shows no woman as an alcoholic, buying or even seen near the shop until they mobilise to uproot it towards the end of the film. The women are seen only inside the homes while the shop is always occupied by drunken men with Mastani being the only woman present. This representation reinforces the private/public dichotomies whereby women are relegated to the private world while men freely access public spaces. Thus, a very obvious division is created in the film, that between the shop as the male-only space of indulgence and the private space

as the ‘sacrosanct’ family domain facing transgression. However, my reading also suggests that this particular gendered aspect of the shop shapes a unique structure of spatial relations dependent upon the subjective experience caused by addiction in the film. On the one hand, for the women, it’s a destructive space causing misery and threatening the home, the only space of belonging available to them. On the other hand, the shop offers a social space for bonding for men who become a community of frequent users (Fig.6.3).

Fig.6.3: The all-male setting of the liquor shop.

A strong sentiment of community among alcoholics is suggested by the way men sit next to each other closely in the shop and share food and drinks enacting a sense of social relationship. Paranjpye interprets this affective environment of the shop and men’s connection by framing the men inside the shop in groups of four or at least in pairs, only occasionally isolating them in close-ups. In the scene where the main protagonist *Shankar* spends all the money meant to buy his son *Babu*’s medicine, he declares“*hum sab bhai hain*” (we all are brothers). He is kept in a close-up when, teary-eyed, he remembers *Babu*’s sickness but the camera immediately follows his close-up with a medium close-up of the four other men pronouncing their solidarity with *Shankar* and praying for *Babu*’s recovery. This display of bond and belonging

envisions the liquor shop as a space with its specific emotional regime and an affective practice shaped by addiction. This possibility of forging connections and kinship in spaces outside the home is unavailable to women, for whom it is anti-alcoholism, the stance to protect their designated space that becomes the legitimate reason to enter into the public spaces of the village.

As mentioned, the film draws the audience into the inner world of alcoholism and its impact through re-enacted episodes of death and violence battering the private space. Babu, the son of the main protagonist Shankar, falls sick and eventually dies without medicine, as Shankar snatches the money meant for Babu's medicine and spends it on liquor. Their neighbour *Girdhar* constantly perpetrates domestic violence against his wife *Jamuni* while another villager Mallinath is frequently found lying on the ground somewhere in the village. Alcohol also claims *Chhagan*'s life eventually. Amid these circumstances, women survive as frustrated, helpless sufferers until they mobilise to alleviate the perceived cause of violence: the alcohol shop. The narrative of masculinity-in-crisis is shown to be affecting the striated private space instigating women to urgently seek a collective remedy to the situation. Paranjpye begins the film by showing the troubled domestic space thus focalising the central conflict right from the start connecting it to the outside space of alcoholism as the narrative progresses. The film opens with a long shot of the serene village with trees, cows and huts, and a soulful flute playing in the background. But this serenity is immediately disrupted by a young girl named *Imli* desperately running barefoot. Crossing the scenic terrain of the village she arrives at the doctor's clinic. The camera remains at a distance, showing her POV, as one of the alcoholics, *Chhagan* accompanied by his wife, is warned by the doctor that his liver is completely

damaged. While the camera conveys the conversation between *Chhagan* and the doctor with close-ups, as they discuss his health, in order to draw the audience closer to the character's experience, no dramatic sound or other element is employed to enhance the sense of misery. This treatment is meant to draw attention to the harm caused by alcohol without creating a melodramatic spectacle of alcoholics. The real narrative of misery begins to unfold after *Imli* takes the doctor to his severely ill brother *Babu*. To depict an urgent encounter with the disturbed domesticity and escalating misery in the interior space, the camera goes straight to the close-up of the sweat-covered face of *Babu* lying on the cot surrounded by his mother and grandmother. The doctor declares *Babu*'s serious status and prescribes urgent medication, a close-up of the mother and the grandmother is used to deepen a sense of helplessness and entrapment due to the lack of resources they are facing. As soon as the doctor exits, all the female characters start looking for money kept inside the household objects or clothes in order to buy medicine for the boy. [117]This is the point from where the story takes a drastic turn. As the women put the money together and give it to the boy next door, to get medicine from the nearest city center, *Shankar* storms inside and snatches the money from the boy.

Paranjpye's visual construction in the scenes of troubled domesticity expresses the power dynamics of the home and how this shifts gradually. In the above scene, during the moments when *Shankar* enters the home and grabs the money, Paranjpye captures him in either close-up or mid-close-up, while positioning him at the center of the screen. He occupies the screen centrally throughout as he argues

[117] In Indian domestic cultures, generally, women from working-class backgrounds save small amounts of money from household expenditures and keep them in big utensils in the kitchen used to store grains or pulses. This money is set aside as an emergency fund or saved for expenses that may arise over some time.

with his wife in a shot reverse shot sequence, while she is seen cornered on the left. The close-ups help increase the tension in the scene and the looming danger over *Babu*'s health. All of them look helpless and scared because of *Shankar*'s overbearing presence representing uncontrolled masculine power. In the small space of his home, this construction allows *Shankar* to appear as an intimidating patriarchal figure and his wife as a powerless sufferer of his actions. However, *Babu*'s demise alters *Shankar*'s power position inside the same private space and the mise en scene conveys this shift. In the scene after *Babu*'s death, with a dim-lit face, *Shankar* is sitting on the floor occupying a similar position to his wife as she sits in the opposite direction. This levelling of physical positions contradicts his dominance of the earlier scene, captured through the close-ups in the same space. The framing suggests his waning power and that he is coming to terms with the changed dynamics of power. Paranjpye places *Shankar*'s mother, *Amma*, in the centre, who later becomes the main voice in organising women to take action. The scene foreshadows the actual moments of Amma taking the lead in mobilising women against the alcohol shop. In this scene, Amma is brightly lit as she mourns *Babu*'s death and curses *Shankar* for his alcoholism. *Shankar*, on the other hand, looks exhausted and his image is mellowed down by the effect of lighting to communicate the changing dynamics of power. The diffused light on *Shankar*'s face makes him look powerless as compared to the first time he enters the hut. This whole construction signposts *Shankar*'s addiction as a masculine crisis affecting the striated private space.

Fig.6.4: Shankar wears bangles after Babu's demise.

Babu's death cements the fact that *Shankar* has lost the ability to protect his family, the prescribed gendered role for men as a provider in the patriarchal order. This crisis of masculinity is visually translated through the device of bangles, an ornament seen as part of feminine identity after marriage.[118] Amma presents teary-eyed *Shankar* with a bunch of bangles (*Choodiyan)*, signifying his weakened power in the household (Fig.6.4). Paranjpye's camera goes on to take a close-up of bangles and then *Shankar*'s hands as he wears them and vows that he will remove them once he shuns alcoholism. The focus on hands enforces the moment of humiliation for *Shankar*'s masculinity as bangles have a specific cultural connotation related to women's subordination in patriarchal Indian society. It is an event that marks *Shankar*'s liminal status, the unacceptable queerness in the gendered power dynamics of Indian social structures. In the feminist analysis of jewellery, Rebecca Ross Russell (2010) deconstructs the social role of jewellery through the frame of

[118] As a piece of jewellery, bangles are a part of *solah sringar,* sixteen types of feminine adornment for married women in Hindu patriarchal family structures. Some women cover their upper and lower arms completely with bangles to signify their marriage. Women wear various kind of ornaments for the head, nose, wrist, and toes to mark their marital status in different parts of India. While Indian men might also wear jewellery like rings and chains, the function of these items is to display wealth or vigour. When they are worn by married women, these adornments function as part of a system that establishes male dominance and control over female bodies. The ornamentation of a married woman's body is almost like a mark of private property and subordination which can be found in the historic accounts of the ornament's role in perpetuating slavery.

incapacitation/ ownership which is quite relevant in understanding the mediation of crisis through bangles in *Shankar*'s social life. Ross states that "ornamentation delineates the specific boundaries, to situate the wearer precisely" (p3). As markers of a woman's marital-sexual status, ornaments such as bangles are not simply traditions but derive value from the phallocentric perspective of married identity. This role of jewellery as a marker of gendered identity evokes Judith Butler's (1988) discussion on gender performativity. As Butler notes, "gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as a mundane way in which body gestures, movements, and enactment of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self" (1988, p519). If jewellery serves as an enactment of a particular gender that has a weaker position in power dynamics then its wearer automatically denotes powerlessness. The social text of ornament is exploited here as a metaphor depicting a shift in *Shankar*'s status in the domestic sphere. The close-up on the bangles identifies a pivotal moment signaling the castration of *Shankar*'s socially defined manhood. In the rigidly codified social structure, men simply do not have the option of wearing anything codified as feminine without risking their phallocentric social power. It is not *Shankar* as an individual who is in crisis due to addiction, it is the embodied phallocentric structure that is under threat. The bangles denoting this crisis are problematically reproduced as a representative device that reduces women and men to mere vehicles of patriarchy. The women challenge and seek behavioural change in men but within the bounds of patriarchal imaginations, the binaries of male/female bodies, their functions and expectations are reproduced and reasserted to put life in an older 'order' without any reimagination of a new reality of equal status. Ultimately, it is the women who are shown to be the active carriers who seek the resurrection of the

traditional gendered order of the crisis at home. Thus, Paranjpye reproduces the gendered space of the home as a striated space that is designed through set patterns of roles, responsibilities, and expectations that are similar to what Eeshan faces in *Suee*. The deviation from these roles disrupts the hierarchies and challenges the performative identity structures that necessitate action. To be able to perform their roles, the rural women are left on their own to decide how to address the situation. Hence, the process of finding a shared ground against alcoholism is prompted in the film.

Anti-alcoholism as women's question: From home to the street

The mobilisation of women in *Choodiyan* is a spatial document of some of the crucial characteristics of rural women's collective action against liquor shops in many parts of India. The development of feminism has been a fragmented trajectory of urban and rural women's mobilisation in India that cannot be discussed within the scope of this chapter.[119] However, this film throws some light on how anti-alcohol collective action allows rural women to translate personal into political and how women's political mobilisation is essentially a spatial process. As mentioned, the women and children of Chandanpur are shown to be suffering from domestic violence and poverty because alcoholism prevents men from performing their household duties. The private domain is hostile and violent space of trauma and helplessness but that begins to change once women start forging a collective voice through what Alberto Mellucci (1985) called the "submerged networks" (p809) based on bonds and experience of everyday life. Initially, each woman is suffering individually inside their home but slowly they realise that it is not a private issue anymore, it affects most of

[119] See "Contemporary Indian Feminism" (1989) by Radha Kumar.

the women in the village and the future of their children as well. The culturally constructed duty of women as the preserver of the domestic domain becomes the legitimate reason for women to enter the public space of the village to protest against addiction. Thus, the home and the street lose the private/public dichotomy when women move into the spaces outside of the home as an extended performance of their 'homely' duties.

The 'private' begins to gradually move into the 'public' when the principal of the primary school in the village, *masterji* visits their home to find out why the children have not been able to buy books or pay their fees for months. He intends to meet their fathers but meets women instead who lament that there is no money to pay the fees. Women concur that things would not be that bad if women had a say in their domestic lives and *Shankar*'s mother, *Ammaji* becomes the leading voice asking women to unite for change. This particular scene takes place in the premises of *Chhagan*'s home where masterji is seen with all the women describing the miserable situation they are facing (Fig.6.5). The two important aspects of the spatial use here need attention: a) how women's negotiations transform the non-space in front of the house into an activist space of negotiations for collective action b) how the discussion fuses the boundaries of public and private in forming an agreement on subsequent actions.

Fig.6.5: Women’s mobilisation blurs the rigid divisions of private/public borders**.**

Lynn A Stacheli (1996) argues that the rigid categories of public and private do not help one understand the efficacy of women’s activism. The most common reason for this is the fact that women generally lack free access to public spaces and this socially constructed division fails to do justice to women’s activism or their material relationship with spaces that happen to be categorised as private. She suggests that “separating the content of action from the spaces in which actions are taken highlights the limitations of the unproblematized use of the categories 'public' and 'private' to describe politics” (Stacheli, 1996, p602). Looking through Staeheli’s lens, the spaces such as *Chhagan*’s home (Fig 6.5) illustrate the spatially fragmented material site that might be domestic, but the content of action taking place in these spaces has crossed the private boundaries of home. What matters is the way women are utilising the site as a resource and how helpful it is in forming a collective action beyond the public/private materiality of this space. It is in this spatial setting that a group of women come together for the first time, expressing sentiments against a common issue. Thus, the process of forming an opinion and the quest for

collective action is initiated in the domestic space. The women are constructing their own spaces of politics where public/private categories are intertwined.

Another space that performs a somewhat similar function for women's rising anti-alcohol stance is the temple where a formal meeting is called by guruji. The women gather to discuss the matter and a couple of men also come to take part in the discussion. In this scene, all four women and their children are sitting on the left side of the frame and the men are on the right staging women's solidarity against men as they argue about the situation. Paranjpye keeps the frame filled with women sitting quite close to each other throughout this conversation, only occasionally focusing on them separately as they speak. This visual construction clearly expresses women as a cohesive group with common concern and agreement. All four women have separate lines as dialogues but they together make one single argument that there is an alcoholic in each family and alcohol is the cause of their economic impoverishment. The final consensus among the women is that Mastani is the root cause of the problem while guruji concludes that there is a need to find ways to engage men in other activities.

The temple in the film is strategically important for organising a meeting: it is outside of domestic space as well as a crucial societal and religious marker. Using the temple as a site conveys the Hindu identity of the village and the villagers. It is a public space but laced with the idea of purity and hence assumed to be safe and accessible to women who are also shown to be fighting for the 'purity' of the private space. Thus, the cultural narrative of the temple and women's motivation to defend their traditional role align in overcoming the distinctions between private/public, home

and the outside. Also, the temple, along with the anti-alcohol stance of the women, can be linked to the Hindu religious discourse of abstinence as a domain of purity and spiritual reform.[120] This is women's first step towards political participation in the public sphere, and meeting at a temple confirms that women are not transgressing borders but rather attempting to find reformist solutions staying within the familiar socio-cultural domain. The temple is an in-between space, a kind of liminal space unavailable to women to develop connections and find accomplices like men do in the alcohol shop.

The women of *Chandanpur* do not have a cohesive, spatial area attached to their act of mobilsation. Their activism has a distinct relationship with fragmented spaces bound by the common intention of taking an action to restore the traditional order. These are spaces that potentially allow women to reposition themselves as active players envisioning political transformation against the passive role of economically dependent subjects supporting domesticity. However, in the absence of a radical demand for equality or any reversal of gender hierarchy, what they achieve is the solution to return to their roles as wives and mothers. Though the film seeks to foreground the women's experience in dealing with the idea of alcoholism, it never loses the perspective of men labelled as addicted. The film provides its male characters with a chance to show remorse, and hence relieve them of any individual blame for the violence they have been perpetrating. They seem to have 'succumbed' to alcoholism and that is not a well-thought-out choice but a circumstantial reality in the film. Temperance becomes a women's question but its demand is not female

[120] For more on Indian cultural discourse of alcohol and abstinence see "Culture and Alcohol use in India" (2015) by Pratima Murthy.

emancipation. The intended resumption of a patriarchal household in which men and women can fulfil their expected roles as providers and nurturers subsume any possibility of questioning patriarchal norms. In effect, the return to hierarchically and functionally divided Hindu family structure equivocates with the resolution of violence against women caused by addiction. Seeing alcoholism as a gendered issue was not the aim of this chapter but the filmic representation of *Choodiyan* made it inevitable to engage with addiction as a question of gender injustice. These questions of patriarchal social structures, social identity, stigma and shame are the themes that reappear in *Suee* in a new context of drug addiction and HIV infection.

Suee: Cultural narrative of drug addiction/HIV, identity, and liminal spaces

Produced in 2009, Sai Paranjpye's *Suee* was made three years after the third phase of India's National Aids Control Programme (NACO) was launched in 2006. NACO is the central agency for response programmes against HIV/Aids in India. It came into existence in India's post-liberalisation economic environment through a partnership between the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the World Bank in 1992. It has been mainly financed by the World Bank and its partners along with other donors including Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. By the time NACO's third phase was launched, India had reported 5.2 million HIV infection cases and expert reports were warning against India's approaching endemic that could thwart its dreams of post-liberalisation economic prosperity.[121] In her book, *The Coming Plague: Newly*

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[121] For comprehensive research on India's tryst with HIV infections, governnment response and prevention programmes see "Containing HIV/AIDS in India: the unfinished agenda" (2006) by Chandrasekaran et al.

Emerging Diseases in A World Out of Balance (1995), Laurie Garrett mentions that since its discovery in America in 1981, "AIDS became a prism through which the positive lights by which societies hoped to be viewed were fractured into thousands of disparate and glaring pieces" (p8). The governmental programmes to curb and control the prevalence of HIV/Aids infection should be seen as desperate attempts to put those pieces together through global financial partners and the media was a natural ally in this multilevel strategy of prevention and advocacy. A significant number of documentary films focusing on HIV/ AIDS and funded by various international organisations emerged such as *The Age of AIDS* (2006), *A Closer Walk* (2006), *Saavdhaan* (*Attention*, 2007), *The Hidden Plague* (2007). It is in this global neo-liberal regime of health and healthcare advocacy that *Suee* participates through its assertion on managing addiction and living with HIV/AIDS. It joined the wave of documentaries driven by the political vision of 'controlling the menace' of microbial infection to save modern life. The purpose of such documentaries is not to critique but advocate the need to 'manage' and 'control' the invisible enemy to 'restore' (and not disrupt or question) the prevalent orthodoxies in life. *Suee* focuses on a section of the most high-risk population, injecting drug users, and uses re-enactment of one such story, the story of its protagonist Eeshan.

In a narrative approach different from that of *Choodiyan*, the reconstructed tale of drug addiction/HIV in *Suee* does not frame addiction/drug abuse only from the perspective of the harm done to others. Rather it problematises the notion of addiction to deconstruct the sociospatial construction of addiction and the labelling of the addict as a risk factor escalating the chances of contracting HIV/AIDS infection. As discussed, Paranjpye resorts to re-enactment for vivification of socio-cultural

beliefs around addiction. Sulkunen (2007) notes that “addiction is, by definition, a craving that escapes reason and explanation, and therefore a condition beyond representation” (p2). He concedes that there are “indirect ways” of constructing narratives around addiction as films do not deal with an actual addict but interprets the experience. *Suee* brings a mix of “indirect” and direct approaches in its attempt to deal with addiction/HIV by remixing fictional re-enactments by professional actors with some real-life drug users in constructing its ‘scripted reality’. The film constructs a spatial narrative of addiction to interrogate the kind of socio-cultural contextualisation that characterises drug abuse and drives them to a riskier world of microbial infections. A risk factor that challenges the modern world which despite its myriad scientific triumphs, is quite unaware of how to deal with the invisible reign of microbes. The narrative theme of the film represents an interaction between material circumstances and multiple ambivalences of modern life- individual, social and cultural (Boothroyd, 2007). This critical social commentary asserts the need to secure a more humane attitude towards addiction within the existing socio-economic structures.

As indicated before, the film deals with the sociospatial context of addiction and refrains from locating the issue in an individual’s body alone. The main protagonist Eeshan whose story is re-enacted narrates his first encounter with smoking happened under peer pressure in school which he failed to resist. The notion of border and border-crossing (as discussed in chapter two) is crucial in making meaning of how the film text imagines Eeshan’s encounter with smoking which he failed to resist and forward journey into addiction as an act of crossing multiple borders: cultural, physical and emotional. The scene where he experiences his first

puff standing with his friends is taken in what looks like a secluded unfinished or abandoned building made of bricks that gives enough secrecy to the children from the public eye. Captured with a mix of long shots and close-ups, the children are standing together in the passageway as Eeshan's cigarette is lit by his schoolmate (Fig.6.6). This is a crucial image of a liminal site of the child's encounter with something that is culturally coded as unsuitable, particularly at his age. The image of the children placed in an unfinished building together allows us to imagine the possibilities embedded both in the spatial site of the building and their young bodies. As Eeshan begins to smoke, the camera isolates him in close-up to capture this as a moment of transgression. The first site of encounter with smoking in *Suee* is conceived as a symbolic site of culturally prohibited border-crossing for young Eeshan. A personal and social process of overcoming fears, collaboration, and entering the unfamiliar territory of myriad possibilities. It is that liminal stage where a person crosses the threshold from one ritualised social status to another, whether that status is positive or negative depends upon the border that has been crossed.

Fig.6.6: Eeshan smokes for the first time.

In the context of this particular scene in *Suee*, the border is not a tangible, physical real border that Eeshan crosses, rather he embodies a cultural threshold of childhood that transforms the site of smoking into a symbolic site of transgression.

Aitken and Plows (2010) state that “young people are always on, in, around, or going through a border of some kind. For example, although the socially and culturally constructed nature of ‘children’ and ‘childhood’ is today well acknowledged, social and political forces nonetheless reinforce borders between children and adults”(p327). The symbolic border of innocent childhood is crossed by Eeshan in secrecy away from the disciplining gaze of adults. The space of a secluded building transforms into a dangerous border transgressed by him to move into a culturally unacceptable domain of behaviour as a young boy. Surrounded and pressured by his friends, he takes that first step of shedding his inhibition, a crucial bordering moment that foreshadows his imminent encounter with multiple forms of drugs and spaces of drug consumption. After that moment, the road to various other kinds of psychoactive substances and injecting drugs opens for him as he recounts. This tells the story of millions of school-going children, for whom smoking begins with a puff under peer pressure.[122] The reality of experimentation and social relatedness to peer groups affects Eeshan’s capacity to resist and that infuses the site of the first puff in the film as the imagined site of transcending borders of fear which later becomes a routine life for him.

The second significant site in the film is Eeshan’s home, which serves as a site of addiction for him until he is dislocated when his parents discover that he is a drug user and HIV+. Eeshan mentions that it was during his college days that he discovered all sorts of substances- opium, brown sugar, marijuana and later started

[122]For a detailed research on smoking behaviour in Indian youngsters see “Cigarette Smoking Behaviour and Associated Psychosocial Determinants Among School Going Adolescents in Panchkula” (2017) by Vikram Arora et al.

using cocaine. It was his quest for cocaine that takes him to the outer spaces of addiction where he comes in contact with other drug users injecting through needles. The shortage of money to buy drugs and syringes leads him to share needles with others resulting in him getting infected with HIV. From the moment his HIV report lands in the hands of his parents, a different kind of spatial encounter begins where disconnection and displacement from home are enforced based on the cultural beliefs governing the notion of addiction and HIV. This spatial encounter is not associated with substance as an object of uncontrolled desire or lack of will but is navigated through what Rosie Thomas (1995) calls the "moral universe" of Hindi fiction films where "certain ideal modes of social relations and associated behaviours prevail"(p165). This moral regime of social relations is based on obligations and duties towards maintaining middle-class family honour which is shown to govern Eeshan's home. Spatially speaking, this moral universe creates conditions of disconnection from home that closes Eeshan's options for finding support and reimagining a different self-identity.

In a scene inside the house after his parents have discovered Eeshan's HIV-positive report, his mother is in tears and the father is angry. In a room, his distraught mother is sitting against a bed on the floor with Eeshan's report in her hands. As the mother is crying, the father goes on to close the window to control the privacy of the conversation. This small detail suggests that the interior space is organised by the cultural beliefs and values of a social order where drug and HIV is a matter of shame. The parents do not want the outside world to know that their son has taken a path that society, and in turn, they, do not approve of. The dialogue between them gives a sense of culturally defined expectations and a way of life from which Eeshan

has deviated bringing shame to the family. The mother laments and asks why he has landed in this mess, while the father blames the mother for spoiling him and declares that he must reap what he sowed, indicating Eeshan's impending abandonment.

The entire scene underlines the striated space of an aspirational middle-class home where socio-cultural roles and expectations from family members are set. The aspirations and future life is conceptualised through education and jobs. As mentioned earlier, a striated space is a space of organisation, it is channelled or controlled through static patterns. In Eeshan's patriarchal home, the parents have performed their social responsibilities by mobilising resources for his education, so that he can find a respectable job later on and make them feel proud by progressing in a socially acceptable manner. It is expected of him that he will finish his education, find a job, and fulfil the dreams of his parents who have supported him materially all through this time. In this scheme of a striated home of visible patterns and rigid forms of identities, there is no place for any activity or behaviour that is seen as a threat to the 'moral order' of things- an act of deviance from the culturally constituted linear concept of individual social progress and family honour. "Deviance is considered a vagrant form of human activity, moving outside the more orderly currents of social life…: it is an accidental result of disorder and anomie, a symptom of internal breakdown" (Erikson, 1962, p307). The use of drugs and HIV+ status are two factors that socially and culturally signify an individual's loss of control, a personal choice for which the person is seen responsible and hence punishable like his father says- "he must reap what he has sowed". Eeshan's home space denotes the larger cultural narrative of addiction prevailing in Indian society that forces his

parents to see him as a deviant human being, falling off the desired track of socially acceptable identity of an educated, professional young man.

Fig.6.7: Eeshan faces rejection at home and leaves.

This scene marks a turning point in Eeshan’s life as it drastically alters his life choices, and he hears the conversation standing outside the window. He immediately leaves after listening to his anguished parents and doesn't enter the house from that point onwards (Fig.6.7). Inside the house, Eeshan’s sister is told no one will marry her as she will always be the sister of an HIV+ druggy. At this point, the sister goes on to close the window, where Eeshan was standing a minute ago. The earlier shot of him leaving combined with the shutting of the window not only ensures secrecy for the family but also connotes emotional and physical disconnection, and the end of spatial security in the home for Eeshan. He is now displaced from this space which relies on a set pattern of living and growing up to achieve a standard way of life. The socially constituted idea of shame attached to addiction alters Eeshan’s spatial relationship with his home and Paranjpye shows the dangerous possibility of newer spatial connections. Just after Eeshan leaves the house, Paranjpye captures him in a long shot, lost in a crowd on a busy Bombay street. The street is filled with people, and the camera watching him from a distance suggests that this is the moment of departure from one spatial context and arrival to

the other. The moment itself is liminal in the sense that there is uncertainty about the new world that awaits. A moment that initiates a spatial encounter enabled by the socially constituted identity of a stigmatised addict as framed by Eeshan's father.

In his conversation with Eeshan's mother, the father refers to him as '*gardulla*' which is similar to the English term 'junkie'- a person who is seen as dependent on drugs, an addict. When Eeshan is labelled as a junkie, his body is characterised as affected or out of control. The notion of a junk body becomes the entry point or a filter for his current and future social relationships and spatial access. He is seen roaming around in the crowded streets filled with strangers, and later connecting with fellow addicts in alleys, next to railway tracks, staircases of railway stations, secluded corners of parks, and next to trash bins.
These geographies have been depicted as drug-injecting zones in the film and they become smooth spaces for Eeshan's drugged body where his nomadic self is free from any striations. To Deleuze and Guattari (1987), smooth spaces offer a possibility of transformation, they are marked by variation, trajectories, and movement as opposed to the predetermined or designed nature of striated space. The drug-injecting spaces in *Suee* allow Eeshan to become his wandering self, a possibility that the moral universe of his home cannot accommodate. The access to hidden drug networks and isolated spaces allow refuge to his 'junkie' self. These spaces are free from the constraints of striated spaces, but the film establishes them as filthy and dangerous.

With no money and no family support, drugs are the only respite for Eeshan and that mediates his new social and material relationship with the world around him.

Through Eeshan's constant movement in the drug dealing and injecting locations, the film shows the marginalised geography of disease, dirt, danger, and death linked to addiction. In one of the sequences, Eeshan buys his fix and reaches an injecting spot, but finds a drug user lying dead due to an overdose. In another scene, Eeshan is sitting with a fellow drug user whose arm is severed. They are captured in a mid-close-up shot, a busy rail track seen through a wooden fence forms the background. When Eeshan inquires about his arm, the man recounts how he was doped 'full tight', fell on the tracks after bumping into a man, and the approaching train cut his arm. As he narrates the incident, we see a moving train behind them. The construction of this shot, and many others, suggests the dangers of these exclusive zones of addiction, that for drug users like them, the distance between life, injury, and death is just a few steps away, right behind them in this particular shot.

Fig.6.8: Eeshan gains access to the secluded world of drug addiction.

These smooth spaces of *Suee* are liminal spaces of safety and danger at the same time. The spaces of addiction are private spots within public spaces, opened to all yet secluded, visible yet invisible to the public eye. The film captures the images of drug users in open corners of parks, spaces adjacent to trash bins, secluded corners of a road, and staircases of railway stations (Fig.6.8). The injecting zones, thus depict a practice of appropriation of legally public spaces as private, and controlled

zones because only those who inject drugs would access them, the public, in general, would not go there. The secluded injecting spaces of *Suee* illustrate a desire for privacy from the public gaze. Hence they are always mediated by spatial dispositions like tents, trees, abandoned buildings, fences, and walls. Thus, there emerges an unofficial spatial settlement of drug users, which Eeshan mentions as a 'junkie town'- a geography of addiction that challenges the social and legal concepts of public/private. The liminality of this imagined town allows drug users like Eeshan to form a marginal community of dejected drug users like himself, a safety from the cultural realm of shame and social stigma but a constant looming fear of death. The secluded and appropriated injecting zones are established as dangerous spatial assemblages of privacy from the public gaze that may lead to death in case of overdose or disease. The film uses these scattered moments as warning signs for Eeshan, a way of making him aware of what to expect from the path he has chosen. The first moment of this encounter with death from overdose comes when he reaches one of the injecting zones straddled with trees. He finds a man sitting next to an unconscious man lying on the ground. When he inquires, the man hints that the person is dead. Paranjpye captures Eeshan's scared and helpless face in a close-up suggesting that this could be him sooner or later. This unclaimed dead person lying in a secluded corner presents a moment that allows Eeshan to encounter what the future might hold for him in such spaces with fluctuating notions of safety, and danger for a drug addict. The injecting zones seem to offer safety and seclusion from social stigma but with the possible danger of suffering and death due to overdose as no one will find them and offer help in those controlled spaces of addiction.

In this spatial context, the pursuit of privacy entails greater self-harm, vulnerability to sickness, infection, or an invisible death. Eeshan himself develops a severe infection in his foot and when he passes out due to pain, his unconscious body is discovered next to the trash bins by the NGO workers. The trash bins, in this sense, acquire a metaphorical meaning in the film. As containers of discarded material and trash in a secluded corner of a residential area, their location conveys the social status of drug addicts who are seen occupying spaces around them. This geography of junk and refuse, however, appears to be an interstitial spatiality of addiction, a safer injecting zone because bins are used regularly by people and thus offer more possibility of being discovered in case of disease or drug overdose. The space intertwines and interacts with addiction in specific manners generating new spatial meanings and contexts of accessibility.

Social-institutional context enfolds the drugged body

Through Eeshan's narrative, the film shows how the spatial context is bound up with a drugged person in determining what spaces they can or cannot enter. The marking of injecting zones and the practices of buying/selling drugs displayed through Eeshan's movements are not simply the spatial economy of addiction where drug users and the spaces are two separate entities. Rather, Eeshan's experience of developing gangrene due to unhygienic conditions, reaching the hospital, and reshaping his life path through rehabilitation underlines how space and drugged bodies communicate with each other in the film.

In thinking about the body-space relationship in *Suee*, the Deleuzian concept of the fold is relevant in asserting that the film sees body and space as intertwined, folded

into each other. Deleuze identifies four primary types of folding in the work of Foucault. “The folding of our body …the folding of a force impinging on itself rather than other forces, truth enfolded in relation to us, and finally the ultimate folding of the line outside” (Deleuze, 1995, pp112-113). For Deleuze, the ‘fold’ serves as a way of understanding the Foucauldian concept of subjectivation- an interactional field of material and spatial forces in the production of one’s subjectivity (Malins, Fitzgerald & Threadgold, 2006). The fold is the process of the subject continuously evolving and morphing with respect to spatial materiality, the discourse of socially constituted knowledge, and the self. In other words, the fold itself is a state of liminality that possesses the possibility of becoming. Eeshan’s drugged body along with his fellow drug users and the spaces that they inhabit form assemblages where bodies and spaces are enfolded into each other, space and bodies are “merging and changing in response to one another” (Malins, Fitzgerald & Threadgold, 2006, p517). The use of various spaces for injecting substances creates a geography of addiction, a junkie town representing the merging of space and body. Just as the drugged body folds into space, the spatial characteristics of seclusion, invisibility, filth, and disease are enfolded in Eeshan’s body as he contracts an infection in his foot, and it only gets worse with time. Addiction mediates the body-space connections in the film, which is similar to what Malins, Fitzgerald & Threadgold (2006) note, that “injecting in a space that is dirty, however, risks more than an unhygienic injection or a harsher police response: it involves a risk of becoming contiguous with, or indistinguishable from, the space. More specifically, it involves an enfolding of ‘dirt’ and dirtiness into the flesh, such that the body itself becomes dirty” (ibid, p519). The unclean, unhygienic materiality of the junkie town is shown to fold back into Eeshan’s body, the dirtiness

of space dangerously becoming a part of his body and making him severely sick with gangrene.

As mentioned earlier, Deleuze's second fold concerns the creative and generative possibilities of the body, the liminal space between being and becoming. This continuous process of folding is filled with prospects of self-production where the body is the forcefield in producing itself as a subject. In terms of this possibility of forcing self upon self, the film does not provide much creative force to Eeshan with which he could negotiate his enfolding into the dirty spaces of addiction. Devoid of any tools for self-regulation and creative self-production to keep himself safe from the dangers of injecting spaces, he suffers helplessly and his health gradually deteriorates. Rather, he gets sucked into more despicable acts of stealing and begging. I presume this is because Paranjpye's narrative intention is to make Eeshan even more enfolded in the 'harmful' world of drugs so that the institutional contexts of NGO, hospital and rehabilitation could be made relevant in *Suee*. The labeling as '*gardulla*' in the striated spaces such as home and hospital, positions Eeshan within the discourse of deviance, degradation, shame, and stigma through which addiction is received in society. This is where Deleuze's third fold helps in thinking that Eeshan becomes an embodiment of this dominant discourse of addiction which shapes his possibilities of making connections and accessing spaces within that enfolded truth.

The unhygienic spatiality of addiction shared by others like him is the only form of socio-spatial relationship available to him with this enfolded discourse of addiction in his body. However, the NGO that finally helps him in reaching the hospital and later

in rehabilitation opens up the creative possibility of folding outside the discourse of addiction that limits the discursive field of self-fashioning for Eeshan. Though Deleuze's fourth fold entails a reckless possibility of unfolding the self in a dangerous manner that may become an irreversible process of reconnecting to the society or the self, in *Suee* the prospect of folding outside the limiting discourse in which the person is placed has been made possible through the institutional help. The NGO provides a spatiality to connect and reconnect with oneself and other people with similar kinds of experiences. Various spaces of the film are shown to be bound together in shaping the overall marginal status of Eeshan as an addict. As such, the film remains important for its intentions of revealing the social construction of addiction/HIV and the discriminatory practices that exacerbate social marginalisation. The film establishes that the cultural experience of addiction, shame, and stigma alters individual choices and relationships. However, Paranjpye depicts this as a liminal state of being, an identity that forges a specific kind of dangerous spatial experience, a stage that can be managed or overcome through assistance. It is this vision of control and management of addiction that forms the central drive of *Suee*, a sentiment that it shares with *Choodiyan*. The films project addiction as a condition that can be managed within the social structures of family, and community combined with the 'activism' of non-governmental organisations, leaving the state or its machinery out of the purview of criticism or questioning. Hospital as a space of biomedical control and management is the ultimate destination in this quest for controlling the 'menace'. The moral and cultural authority of the society and its perceived normalcy and standards is ultimately executed by the hospital and the NGO through medical procedures and corrective behavioural therapies.

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In this chapter, I have shown that Paranjpye intends to explore the sociality of addiction in *Choodiyan* and *Suee* though the films remain rooted in the dominant power structures. They do not offer anti-state or anti-patriarchy statements rather they construct narratives of harm and loss, and show that these troubling aspects can be managed by affective networks and institutional care. The strategy of re-enactment is politically applied to bring the viewer closer to the narrative of suffering in constructing a “discourse of truth” about addiction where an emotional plea for community support can be extended. As such, the films do not promulgate any radical idea as far as addiction is concerned rather they aim to assert the necessity of conventional (and even problematic) familial networks as an essential corrective mechanism in dealing with various issues surrounding addiction.

Conclusion

Warf and Arias (2009) note that “geography matters, not for the simplistic and overly used reason that everything happens in space, but because where things happen is critical to knowing how and why they happen” (p1). Where things happen, how and why are the main questions that this thesis set out to answer while investigating the construction/representation, significance and negotiations of space in Sai Paranjpye’s cinema. The overarching aim has been to look at how space has been constructed or represented aesthetically, why, and what can it tell us about the cultural specificities of life that it depicts. With this aim, I have textually analysed seven films following the central proposition that space is the essential vocabulary of Paranjpye’s cinema. I have studied cinematic space and spatiality in these narratives to contextualise the manifested imagination and approach to inhabited spaces and architectural forms. As indicated in the introduction, an essential part of this spatial exploration was to develop case studies of Sai Paranjpye’s films. Building these case studies organised through six chapters based on diverse themes that the films deal with, I have argued that the narrative concerns and aesthetic configurations of these films together strategise an encounter between the spatial and the social. This

encounter allows an interrogation of life at the intersections of space and social categories such as class, gender and identity. This spatial investigation uncovers power structures that inflect space and shape lived experience. The thesis scrutinises the notions of home, belonging, modernity and economic development to provide a cinematic reading of a new discourse of identity influenced by the economic-socio-cultural sensibilities that emerged in post-1980s India. The lived space in Paranjpye's cinema goes beyond genre conventions and performs the functions of depicting a culturally charged motif of experience. The language of space is structured through spatial practices, behaviours, emotions and relationships. The material experience of spaces configures the interior of the self and makes visible the texture of social relations. In these films, the idea of home/interior/private space often turns into an interstitial space caught in the middle of dynamic external forces that alter the familiar environment. For example, the centrality of single-room/apartment housing types along with constant images of shared communal lives across the films suggests a vision that frames Indian life as a hybrid of modern and traditional ways of being in the changing society of the post-1980s. Hybridity is also the keyword in reading Paranjpye's aesthetic choices where she makes use of intermedial and intertextual moments in structuring her films. My analysis shows that Paranjpye's playful and hybrid aesthetic in this repertoire of films makes a significant contribution to the evolutionary and interactive journey of Indian cinema. This eclectic mix-and-match approach reflects Hindi cinema's dialogical relationship and helps situate it within the ecology of various mediums such as theatre and TV. Her cinematic techniques of fusing elements from diverse traditional and new mediums aim at inviting as well as interrogating audiences in various films examined throughout the thesis.

I have looked at the predominant classification of Paranjpye’s films as middle cinema, an aesthetic category that has been mainly discussed as the cinema of the middle class. I have argued that Paranjpye’s cinema reworks the material drawn from various sources that place it in a dialogical relationship with the transforming socio-cultural landscape and is not essentially constructing a discourse of middle-class life and its concerns regarding class identity. Rather, her films are more inclined toward engaging with marginal identities (characters belonging to low-income strata, disabled, migrant figures) that problematise any stabilised notion of fragmented and diverse Indian middle classes residing in disparate spatial contexts. The study has established that to label Paranjpye’s cinema through the class-based lens of middle cinema is to overlook the core performance of space and spatiality that shapes life and experience in the films examined here. In bringing together multiple marginal identities, fragmentation, multiplicity and the playful reworking of material and elements drawn from various cultural sources, these films complicate the narrative of middle cinema.

Through a spatial reading of Paranjpye’s cinema, this thesis has suggested new ways of conceptualising what has been largely presumed to be a standardised narrative of middle cinema in Hindi as the cinema of the middle class. As a category sandwiched between the realist and the excesses of the popular, middle cinema can, I argue embrace a plurality of themes and forms through which diverse films attempt to negotiate cultural shifts. The predominant scholarly analysis of middle cinema suggests that this canon mainly consists of entertaining visual packages of secure middle-class identity. But, as the thesis – and Paranjpye’s films – have shown, the narratives that may appear to be iconographically familiar and conservatively secured ways of life can in fact be nuanced depictions of a highly unstable lived

experience based on the intersections of identities that are hierarchically organised and are constantly in flux.

The heterogeneous slate of middle cinema may offer a light-hearted tongue-in-cheek family drama, melodramatic tales of love and relationships or it may depict intense individual stories raising questions related to the collective experience and marginal identities. The films may play with medial boundaries in search of an entertaining way of communicating stories creatively and may disrupt the perceived borders to achieve that effect. The diverse creative energies deployed in these films suggest, it would be better to talk about “middle cinemas” instead of middle cinema. This is significant in two ways: a) it attests to the heterogeneous productive space of middle cinemas, thereby refusing any hierarchical classification that proposes cultural production and consumption can be neatly structured into definitive categories; and b) it embraces the multiplicity that the films offer and almost demands that any exploration tapping into their world take an interdisciplinary approach. This is crucial for any nuanced consideration of the cultural variability of the middle cinemas.

As such, shunning the automatic imprisoning of middle cinemas through the limiting lens of its class associations, I suggest looking at ‘middleness’ as an adventurous and invigorating hybrid, an in-between space of cultural production that speaks directly (or indirectly) to its time. In this sense, the cinematic middle path is an affirmative category of films that negotiate the cultural tensions of a society in transition and do not necessarily always reinforce the ideologies of middle-class sanctity and taste. These films may or may not subvert the conservative codes of social life, but they help to decode the predominant social structures at play and reveal the framing of cultural values. Deconstructing the cinematic language encoding these structures and values holds the promise of debating socio-cultural

hierarchies, value positions and a formal critical inquiry of their production contexts**.** In order not to approach the category as the conformist lowbrow 'other' of the modernist new wave, the middle cinemas must be reconceptualised as texts that portrayed, reflected and refracted the spatiosocial experience of Indian life particularly during the 1970s-80s. And in doing so, the films should not be defined through the suspicious vocabulary of disengagement, but rather as a transitional space that engages, integrates, and subverts multitudes of influences, an exciting site of continuities and discontinuities, connections and disconnections produced by the forward march of modernity in a postcolonial society, as shown throughout the chapters of this thesis. Through a hybrid, eclectic slate of diverse films, middle cinemas encouraged the audience to navigate, albeit in imagination, a changing material and social world of the 1970s-80s. The films often deal with a variety of threads of uneven and fragmented middle-class life, revealing the politics of aspiration, social mobility and the dynamic realm of material and human relationships. Through their engagement with domestic space as well as cities, factories, modern offices, cars and motorbikes, the middle cinema films can access and reveal the extraordinary and unstable sensory regime of spatial and social relationships that necessitates a close inquiry of each text. The specificity of space and spatial negotiations is particularly crucial to understanding and discovering how middle cinemas engage with lived experience, power dynamics of social identities, and class and class relations. This thesis asserts that the pleasures and potentials of the middle cinemas must be (re)discovered through the narrative strategies and structures that each film deploys in dealing with the contingencies of its time and space rather than grounding them in theories controlling the analytical possibilities from the outside.

What is more, approaching and (re)evaluating middle cinema in this manner aligns with the feminist drive to rediscover and reposition cultural artifacts. It also overlaps with how the project has approached the category of women's cinema - not necessarily oppositional in the classic feminist sense of the term but as a dialectical and contingent site of marginal subjectivities. This understanding of women's cinema registers and asserts the difference between woman-authored work and the American genre of women's films also known as weepies made during the period of 1930s-50s. As discussed in the introduction, women's cinema is a contested category where issues of authorship, women's experience, activism and spectatorship have been vigorously debated since the 1970s. Women's cinema is not about a specific type of filmmaking, nor does it follow a set of rules which can be tied to an all-encompassing definition or criteria. Rather, as Teresa de Lauretis (1990) suggested, women's cinema cuts across rigid classifications of various kinds such as high art versus popular or mainstream versus alternative practices. It thrives on intersections, bends boundaries, plays with aesthetic and narrative codes and reconfigures the system of looking, as discussed in various case studies of Paranjpye's films in this project. My findings in this thesis come close to de Lauretis in suggesting that women's cinema must be seen as a multisited practice of filmmaking that intervenes in diverse genres, thereby enabling an investigation of power relationships embedded in social structures. But I would also add that while women's cinema may not always be focused on a woman as a central figure, its narrative is invested in intersectional and gendered tensions and focuses on the social and psychological experience of marginalised subjectivities. Women's cinema focalises multiple kinds of vulnerabilities and explores women's desires and pleasures by placing them in a system of relationships that provides a frame of

reference for identities and power hierarchies. The complex system of linkages displayed by women's films produces a relational space in dialogue with dominant historical, cultural and critical discourses that define and dictate the predominant pattern of social relationships. Through this inquiry into Paranjpye's work that cannot be called "at home" in any genre, I have shown that woman's cinema demands to be read as texts that discursively frame subjective identities; engage with the socio-spatial experience generated by the intersecting systems of class, patriarchy, gender and material realities; reveal various facets of dispossession, oppression and disenfranchisement owing to the politics of social identity and power dynamics that regulate the everyday experience, while making space for pleasure and entertainment. Although studies on women's cinema across the world attest that women's filmmaking is marked by a heterogeneity of narratives and aesthetic styles, my thesis establishes the possibilities of a unified vision in women's work dealing with the ambiguities and contradictions of the lived world.

Despite the plurality and multiplicity of spaces in the seven individual films studied here, the project identifies underlying and recurring themes originating from the narratives and engages with them throughout the chapters of this thesis. I have identified five related themes and elements that throw light on the ways in which the films depict lived space and its interrelations. These common themes and elements that establish unity across the films are an intervention made by this project in reading the specificities of space and spatial experience in Paranjpye's cinema. These themes relate to the questions and ideas of borders and border-crossings; home and belonging; notions of private/public; socio-cultural marginalisation and playfulness. All underline the role of space as a catalyst in constructing the shape of

life in these narratives. The thesis shows that at the centre of Paranjpye's spatial narratives is a vision of the world as a complex mix of humour, emotions and existential struggles in everyday life. Various spatial organisations reveal forms of social contract which people value, and use, to function in their daily lives. The films engage with a certain logic of self, community and lived environment contextualised through socio-cultural and economic circumstances. Paranjpye's cinema cannot be categorised as radical or political in the sense of aiming to deal with national ideologies. But it is important to underline that a close reading of her films allows one to see that even the nuanced details used in characterisation, language, and the gestural economy of characters, along with the look and feel of the mise en scene in each film, are rooted in a particular worldview. The world that Paranjpye depicts is fragmented between subjective identities who have limited capacity to take control over their situation, affected as this is by the greater socio-economic and cultural forces. The films are essentially dialogical, bringing together polyphonic voices and depicting an amalgamation of varied subjectivities. As I discussed in the first chapter, most of these films focus on the experiences of peripheral members of society: the clerk, the job seeker and unemployed friends, the blind school teacher, a lonely widow, the drought-struck villagers and so on. Some are non-elite middle-class protagonists, others come from socially marginalised groups whose voices are amplified by the films. It is their social histories that these films engage with. As such, even if Paranjpye stresses that her films were made with the intention of entertainment,[123] they become a polemical space, intentionally or unintentionally. Paranjpye resorts to humour in dealing with these marginal subjects whose lives are

[123] In an informal interaction with the author, Paranjpye stated that the only thing she ever wished to do was to make entertaining films and bring a smile to people's faces.

steeped in the historic junctures of economic restructuring or marred by sociocultural orthodoxies. However, humour in these narratives does not exist merely as an entertainment strategy; rather it relates to differing outlooks on modernity, self, society and the cultural codes that govern lives. These fragmented subjects defy any national ideology of unified Indian identity and reveal fractured Indian life in its somewhat grotesque form. Paranjpye creates a lived world that is an imitation of the true character of Indian cultural-political life, an accord of discordance, of diverse and conflicting voices emerging from varied social groups.

Given the diversity of themes and treatment in the seven films, each chapter has particularised a specific understanding of space through a close reading of selected films. To answer the key questions related to space and spatiality in interaction with lived social experience, the interdisciplinary approach adopted in this thesis weaves concepts and knowledge drawn from various disciplines in addition to film theory as explained in Chapter One. Chapter Two is particularly important and plays a foundational role in the context of this project as it theorises the recurring themes that bind space and experience in the films that the subsequent chapters discuss. The thesis engages with these themes in the rest of the chapters that develop the case studies of Paranjpye's films and make specific arguments. In Chapter Three, I examined the interrelations of disability and space to underline sociocultural codes of marginalisation. Analysing the representations of the body-space relationship through private/public spaces, I argued that Paranjpye constructs lived space as the cinematic geography of disability. Chapter four engaged with the representation of specific architectural forms in the big Indian cities of Delhi and Bombay and demonstrated the spatial qualities, power relations and urban practices inscribed within these spaces. I show how living practices reconfigure the binaries of

private/public life and argue that space has been imagined as an interpersonal network of relationships in the city. In Chapter Five, I have demonstrated how Paranjpye blurs another conventional cinematic binary of city/country divide and represents them as home spaces dealing with the external socio-economic forces threatening destruction and causing conditions of dislocation. Finally, in Chapter Six, I explored the spatio-cultural construction of addiction to unpack how space intertwines with the narratives of shame, stigma and discrimination. I argued that the films depict addiction as a socially constituted and spatially-practiced process that produces marginalised experiences for those labelled as addicts though the narrative lacks any radical intervention in the larger modern narrative of addiction.

In the final analysis, what I have investigated and argued in this thesis is that Paranjpye's spatial cinematic language reveals the cultural specificities of Indian life. The dialogic relationship between her films and the social, cultural and visual context determines the look and the feel of the filmic space. The artistic corpus of Sai Paranjpye's cinema that I have engaged with, provides a cinematic tapestry of space in dialogue with life. The films not only represent but also act upon the physical world to make visible the spaces of human experience, emotions and relations.

The diversity of spaces, multitudes of aesthetic influences and multiplicity of perspectives in Sai Paranjpye's cinema has been vital to this study and there remains a reservoir of cinematic representation that can be opened up to new approaches of investigation in the future. For instance, an extended spatial inquiry into the production histories of each of these films revealing pre-production, production and post-production relations and ecologies would be an exciting exploration of the multilayered geographies of film history. It can offer a critical inquiry into industrial practices and labour relations in the creative economy of

cinema during the 1980s, a crucial decade before the Indian film industry was formally recognised as an industry in 1998. As far as further thematic approaches to studying Paranjpye's cinema are concerned, the use of humour and comic elements deserves further exploration as a means of creating more understanding of her work. I have touched upon the use of humour and the cultural role it plays at various narrative points; it remains beyond the scope of this thesis to develop it further due to the defined focus of this inquiry. Nonetheless, a much more detailed investigation of the use and forms of humour in her cinema is in order as it is not simply employed as an act of making jokes. In her films, it is a narrative strategy of making a social commentary or reflecting on the socio-cultural life of its subjects, a significant tool for underlining and negotiating incongruence. Humour is historically recognised as a characteristic of middle cinema (Prasad 1998; Poduval 2018; Sinha 2019) though its full potential as a way of thinking, as comic reflexivity in terms of social context, cultural idiosyncrasies and its capacity to subvert power relations remains unexplored. This could be a crucial intervention that would add critical dimensions to and expand our understanding of the politics of humour in this form of cinema. I close this project with the hope that future research would create fresh sites of investigation, expanding the discussions and the insights that this thesis has generated into new directions.

Appendix

A Short Conversation with Sai Paranjpye

Swati Bakshi (SB): There were very few women film directors when you started screenwriting and directing. I wanted to ask you personally about your experience of working as a film director during the 1970s-80s. It was a time of major changes in India. How would you describe the experience of working through that period?

Sai Paranjpye (SP): I think, I took things for granted. I have always been a positive and dynamic person, you can say pushy also. But I believe I made

my own opportunities. If I wanted to write a play and stage a play then I never thought about who will produce it and how will I stage it. I just went ahead and did it. One always found a way to put it across via a medium whether on screen, stage, radio or book form. In those days, I did not have much of a problem. I was young and I was reaching there, so I never had a problem knocking at people's doors but in later days when you become someone, it becomes a bit difficult. You can't ask people, can you finance my film? If they say no, you would not be able to take it. Today, there are many mediums for young people to express themselves which is a good thing. In those days, as I said, we made our opportunities and thankfully, I was successful. My first film *Sparsh* has received awards and by that time I was settled in TV which is a very demanding medium.

SB: You enjoyed TV and worked on a variety of formats. What is it about cinema that attracted you? Was it a natural extension of your media career or is it because you felt that some stories couldn't be told within the formats of TV?

SP: No, I did not feel that way. Yes, you could say that cinema was an extension for me. It was almost like, you have done TV successfully, here is a bigger paintbrush and a bigger canvas. It was mostly a spirit of adventure, a new medium, a new dawn. A lot of people ask me if I prefer theatre or TV or cinema. To me, only the technicalities are different. In cinema, you have a larger landscape and you can take more liberties whereas in TV you have to think that it is in the domestic space, families are going to see what you will make. You have to think in those terms. Theatre has a charm of its own and

the most exciting sound for me is the third bell before the play and you are in the make-up room or your play is on and you are in the wings, your ears are trained to hear the slightest rustle in the audience, are they enjoying it, are they laughing at the right moment, are they coughing unnecessarily. You know all these things are there, so every medium has its own excitement.

SB: When you started and made films during the 1980s, the cinematic scene in India was quite diverse. There was the angry young man, then what we call art cinema and middle cinema of Hrishikesh Mukherjee and Basu Chatterjee. Did these diverse creative forms influence your own directorial vision?

SP: I think Satyajit Ray portrayed life beautifully. I respect him for being truthful, maybe I will not do it in the same manner, you know his perception of reality. Even then I think there is a lot of humour in his films. Little things, humour and touches. I remember in *Aranyer Din Ratri*, if I am not mistaken, there was a shot, a close-up in which there are coffee cups on the table and you see it fleetingly, he does not overdo it. In one of the cups, you see that layer inside when something hot goes cold. I thought to myself, now that's the power of this medium and the way he creates the ambience, take *Shatranj Ke Khiladi*, such a delightful representation of the bygone era.

SB: But that's not how you think about realistic representation?

SP: No, You have seen *Disha*. According to me, that is my best film. There is a scene where a wife comes from the village to Mumbai to spend some time with her husband. They are thrown out of the room he had arranged for her arrival and they have no place to stay. She has to sleep amid forty men at the

gala. You can imagine that it is not a very pleasant situation for a woman to be in that situation where she has to sleep among forty men. Now, that's a very grim situation, even then people chuckle and laugh because a woman is coming. Someone starts wearing clothes, somebody covers his face. There is a funny side to everything and there is a positive way of looking at everything. For me the glass is always half full, it is never half empty. That is my vision.

SB: What is it about humour that appeals to you so much?

SP: It is a gift, I think. You either have it or you don't. I think I took after my mother. She had a very un-Indian sense of humour. It comes naturally to me. I will give you an example from my film, *Angootha Chhaap* (*The Illiterate*) on adult literacy. It's a story of a village grandpa who is learning to read and write from his grandson. The g lesson is on in a parked bullock cart, the grandson is dictating and the grandpa is reading. So, he goes Ka, kha (Hindi letters) and then he gets stuck and asks the grandson what is this and there is a goat in the scene, and it goes maaaa. People enjoy these little things, it is not very hahaha but adds fun to life.

SB: You have mentioned that you always see the positive side of life even if you engage with grim situations or marginal people. Many of your characters experience social margins. What do you have to say about this element of your work?

SP: You have pointed out something that I never overtly realised about my work but now that you have mentioned it, maybe because I have been marginalised my whole life. I have always been an *ajooba* (peculiar character)

My mother married a Russian, sensation number one when she got married and sensation number two when she divorced him. Sensation number three was when she brought back a *firangi* (foreigner), the funny-looking child which was me. On the road, people would stop me and ask, why did your mother leave your father? I used to tell my mother and she would tell me to give it back to them. I never used to get any roles in the school plays. That is why probably I have compassion for people who are marginalised.

SB: You call yourself a 'media woman' referring to your career in various media of theatre, radio, TV & Film. How do you draw connections between your films and the mediums you have worked with in your career?

SP: Yes, I kept juggling. That is what my *Patchwork Quilt* [autobiography] is all about. My mother used to say, please pick one thing, you are doing TV today, cinema tomorrow, stick with something. I told her I do lots of things and I am okay.

SB: You made use of animation and graphics to see the use of animation in *Katha* and *Chashme Baddoor* at that time, which was unique. What did you think these new media technologies allowed you to do?

SP: I think animation has always been part of my life since childhood. I use to wonder if anyone didn't like animation, now I think I would not make it but in those days I was intrigued. It was not like everything was calculated or intentional. It was more like, hey why not start the titles with animation and play with the idea? Even for *Chashme Baddoor,* the credit goes to the

animator, Ram Mohan. It mostly happened on the editing table, it was more like what to do with this and how to go about that sort of thing.

SB: And you bring various elements from all those mediums in cinema to convey some crucial ideas?

SP: Yes, I think when you have worked with various forms, you tend to find elements that you think would be best to reach out to your audience. You automatically turn to the other form and borrow.

SB: If you have to describe your cinema in one line, what will you say?

SP: Yes, I do think, and this is not just about cinema, it is about my plays and writing, etc as well, If my work can bring a smile to the face of a person who is seeing it, I think that is enough for me. I do not want to send a social message, I very strongly believe in entertainment.

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