

THE CULTURESPECIFIC USE OF SOUND IN INDIA CINEMA

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PART I

The History of Sound in Indian Cinema

"The positive fallout of technological change will be a greater sensitivity among Indian audiences to sound in films; perhaps we may develop Indianness in sound in the way we use sound in Indian films, like our relationship with music."

Introduction :

Amrit Gangar, Film Historian

Like everywhere in world cinema, sound in Indian cinema, has been marginalised to a fault. It is taken for granted as a part of the entire audiovisual ambience that cinema produces and reflects. Instead of being defined as having an independent, distinctive identity of its own, sound *per se*, has remained on the backburner, and everything associated with sound in Indian cinema has almost always, historically and in the present, been equated with music and song. Though music and song form an integral part of Indian cinema, there is no reason to ignore the contribution of sound *per se*, which of course, includes silence along with speech, voiceover, interior monologue, noise. In fact, the marginalisation of sound within the design of a film is obvious from the credit designation that is given to the sound engineer as 'director of audiography or, 'sound engineer' etc. though, in point of fact, the sound design of a film is as responsible for the quality of the final product as is the production design, the cinematography, the histrionics, the script and the direction. One never gets to see the phrase 'sound designer' in the credits of any film. In this scenario therefore, it becomes important to highlight the important role sound plays not only in contributing to the quality of a film, but also, and very significantly, the its role in cinema as a cultural signifier of a people. Critically speaking, very few film critics and reviewers pay attention to the use of sound and silence in their film critiques and reviews. Mainstream Indian cinema too, takes the sound design of an average film for granted, since songs and music form a major part of the narrative and cinematic space, and are almost automatic ingredients of Indian cinema.

The History of Sound:

The statistical story of the Indian sound film in its earliest years may briefly be summarised. It was, in large part, a story of new units, in which individuals from older companies were brought together by new capital. The Bombay producer who made the first talking feature, Alam Ara in the Hindi language was Ardeshir M Irani. Born in 1885, he started out in his family's musical instruments business, grown restless, gone into distribution of foreign films and finally, joined with tent showman Abdulally Esoofally in buying the Alexandra Cinema in 1914 and building the Majestic Cinema four years later.' Exhibition profits edged the partners into production. After involvement in several other companies, they launched the Imperial Film Company In 1926 and built a studio for it. In 1931 this company

won the sound race among Bombay producers. The equipment Irani obtained for the US was virtually 'junk' but somehow, via its singlesystem process, he completed *Alam Ara*. In this system, later used mainly for newsreels, sound goes directly onto the picture negative. In the more versatile double system, picture and sound are kept separate for flexibility in editing, to be combined in the laboratory as one of the final steps of the production process. Irani is said to have been strongly inspired by Universal's *Showboat* which he saw in New York. *Alam Ara* has never been described as an artistic triumph and no one seems to have preserved even a fragment of it. But its impact was astonishing. The Majestic theatre was besieged. Tickets disappeared into the black market. "Police aid had to be summoned to control the crowds Fouranna tickets were quoted ar Rs.4 and Rs.5." Later, units went on tour with the film, taking sound projection equipment with them, and everywhere drew surging crowds.

That same year, 22 other Hindi films appeared, and all seem to have made money. Also, in 1931, three films in Bengali, one in Tamil, one in Telugu, appeared in their respective language areas. 1932 saw eight films in Marathi, two in Gujarati. In 1933, 75 Hindi features [2]

were made; production in other languages was also growing. Film after film appears to have had tumultuous reception. Virtually all the films appear to have earned back their cost. In the 1930s, as one producer recalled wistfully, "almost all films made money: [3]

By 1933, trepidation over the coming of sound had given way to unbounded optimism. That year, the compiler of *Who's Who in Indian Filmland*, in a jubilant preface gave expression to the mood:

What with scanty resources, stepmotherly Government aid, with keen competition from privileged foreign films, with few technically qualified men, with no interested capitalists, with less interested fans, with actors and actresses scarcely able to spell their names (for it was thought a disgrace by society people to be associated with the screen), with no market excepting India, with censoring censors, with discouragement to the right, cheap sneers to the left, despair in front, and criticism from behind, the Indian Film Industry, thank God, has marched on and on to the field of victory, battling against a thousand other misfortunes. Has she not made a giant stride?

The reasons however, were not far to seek. Firstly, in a land where foreign languages dominated the councils and pleasures of the mighty for a thousand years, film in a vernacular tongue which the local man could understand, vested Indian cinema with a status it did not earlier enjoy. Secondly, sound granted the Indian producer 'natural protection.' He now had markets which foreign competitors would find difficult to penetrate. , the protection that the Government failed to give him through a quota system had now been conferred with the coming of the spoken word. But more than all this, there was another very strong potent at work. Songs.

Alam Ara included about a dozen songs. Another early Hindi film, *Indrasabha*, is said to have had about around 59 songs. *Shirin Farhad* had 42 songs. An early Tamil film is said to have had over 60 songs.' All the sound films produced in India in these early years had a profusion of songs. Most also had dances. Advertisements described some of these films as "all talking, all singing, all dancing" features. The Indian sound film, unlike the sound film of any other land, had from its first moment, seized *exclusively* on musicdrama forms. In so doing, the film had tapped a powerful current, one that had given it an extraordinary new impetus. It was a current that went back some 2000 years. In ancient India, in the Golden Age of Sanskrit theatre, the idea of drama was inseparably linked with song, dance and music. This has been the Indian tradition for many, many years, till 1000 A.D. when

Sanskrit drama went into decline with the death of Kalidasa (ca.400 A.D.) It underwent a rebirth in the 19th century under

British rule. It flourished first in the form of private family theatres maintained in the large jointfamily homes of educated Indian families, specially in Calcutta.

Thus the sound film of 1931 was not only the heir of the silent film; it also inherited something more powerful and broadbased. Into the new medium came a river of music that had flown through unbroken millennia of dramatic tradition. While this strengthened the film, it also had other effects. It struck a mortal blow to rural and folk theatre performances in villages and smalltowns. The sound film almost wiped out the reborn theatre with one brush of its hand. While cinema appropriated folk song and dance to its purposes, it changed these along the way. In their new environment, they began, quite naturally, to respond to new influences. The songs were ~formed through new instrumentation and new sometimes Western rhythms. Musicologists, just beginning to discover the same folk music, howled in anger at this sudden hybridisation and plagiarisation of traditional Indian tunes. Today this very 'hybridisation' defines the unique persona of Hindi film music and songs.

In 1931 and 1932, at what seemed a dark moment in Indian film history, song and dance in part derived from a tradition of folk musicdrama played an important role in winning for the sound film, an instant and widening acceptance. "With the coming of the talkies, the Indian motion picture came into its own as a definite and distinctive piece of creation. This was achieved by musical. This same music was expected to temporarily block the Indian film from Western markets, and this proved to be a perceptive prophecy. It was also noted by observers that the obsession with music was a hazard to script values. The indiscriminate use of songs robbed the early talkies of narrative cohesion and dramatic force. Stories were loosely strung together to make room for songs and more songs.⁷ A film periodical commented: "Cases of singing before drawing a sword for a fight are not uncommon." In the Indian film world, writers would have problems.

The First Sound Films:

In India, the earliest demonstration of what was known as 'Phonofilm' a process invented by Dr.Lee DeForest, in which sound was synchronised with the picture, was given at the Royal Opera House in Mumbai, in May 1927. The programme comprised of scenes from *Julius Caesar* with Basil Gill, the famous London actor, in the cast. Lillian Hall Davies and Miles Mander appeared in a comedy skit entitled *As We Lie*.⁹

The earliest attempts at synchronised sound film production in India were made by Madan Theatres. Early in 1929, Madan Theatres exhibited the first talking picture in India, Universal's *Melody of Love* at the Elphinstone Picture Palace in Calcutta. This was the first theatre in the East to be equipped with permanent sound apparatus. Soon after, on February 21, the same film was presented at the Excelsior Theatre in Mumbai. By the end of 1930, more than 30 out of a total of 370 theatres in the country were technical ready for sound projections of film. 10 J.J.Madan had seen *The Jazz Singer* in New York. The tremendous public response to the film had convinced him about the unavoidable impact of sound in cinema.

Alam Ara is India's first fulllength sound film. It was released on 14th March, 1931 at Majestic Theatre, Mumbai (then, Bombay.) It narrowly beat *Shirin Farhad* (1931) to make cinema history. It established the use of music, song and dance as the mainstay of Indian cinema. The film was a period fantasy based on Joseph David's popular Parsee theatre play and narrated a fairy tale. *Alam Ara* was made on the

Tanar single system camera, recording image and sound simultaneously, which was difficult especially for the songs which were the film's highlights. Wazir Mobanurtd Khan's rendering of a wandering minstrel's song number *de de khuda ke namme par pyaare* was particularly popular. It pioneered the use of a commentating chorus, a device adopted in several later films. In an interview with the Indian documentarist B.D.Garga, Irani said, "since there were no soundproof stages, we preferred to shoot indoors at night. Since our studio is located near a railway track... most of our shooting was done between hours that the trains ceased operation. We worked with a single system Tanar recording equipment... There were also no booms. Microphones had to be hidden in incredible places to keep out of camera range." Along with his assistant Rustom Bharucha, he learnt the elementaries of sound recording from Wilford Denning, an American engineer, who had come to India to assemble the equipment for them. "*Alam Ara* shows the range and variety of sound reproduction involved in the production of a complete story ... it has shown that with due restraint and thoughtful direction, players like Vithal and Prithviraj and Miss Zubeida could by their significant acting and speech, evolve dramatic values to which the silent screw cannot possibly aspire. ,12

Within three weeks of *Alani Ara*, Madan Theatres released its first Bengali take, *Jamai Shashthi*. This was followed with the release of *Shinn Farhad* in Hindi, also from the Madan's production house. This film beat *Alam Ara's* record at the box office. Three reasons given for its thumping success are : (a) the dialogue by Aga Hashar Kashmiri, (b) the songs sung by Kajan and Nissar and (c) the crystal clear recording done on the RCA Photophone. The recording for this film. was done on Double System Sound by foreign technicians. Madan Theatres turned out eight sound films in 1931 and 16 in 1932. Almost simultaneously with Hindi, films in different languages began to be made in the country. Among the first regional language films were *Jamai Sashti* in Bengali (1931), *Kalidas* in Tamil (1931), *Bhakta Prahlad* in Telugu (1931), *Ayodhyecha Raja* in Marathi (1932), *Narsimha Mehta* in Gujarati (1932) and *Dhruva Kumar* in Kannada (1934.) But in terms of form and content, they were copies of the Hindi formula, full of songs, dances and music. The scenario has remained more or less the same today.

The Technique of Sound:

Technically speaking, during the earliest days of sound in Indian cinema, the Audio Carnex was the most popular among the sound recording machines used for filming sound. Around 1935, about 25 such machines were in use. Second in priority ranking was the Fildelytone, with 20 machines in operation. B.A.F. was in use in four studios. Other recording machines in use were Rico, Vinten, Visatone, R.C.A., Balsley and Phillips, Blue Seal, Adair Jenkins and Fearless." The Tanar Sound System was no longer in use by 1935 and two machines were lying idle in two studios. The introduction of sound changed the entire style of production and projection of motion pictures. It also led to the growth and adaptation of new equipment, and the creation of a hitherto unknown creative and technical vocation sound engineering. The first response to sound in cinema was to clarity of speech and song. If 80 per cent of the dialogue was clear and distinct, then producers were happy. 14 Earlier, when the cameras were noisy, their sound was controlled by using cotton blimps or cover. Silent cameras are a relative rarity in India. But a silent revolution has taken place in the technology of sound. Mani Kaul's Indian representation of Erotic *Tales* entitled *The Cloud Door* used Dolby SR for the transfer from negative to Beta video format to Avid (digitised computer system in which pictures and sounds are stored on hard disc) which is a nonlinear editing system, allowing for simultaneous editing of sound and picture. Avid offers the scope for nondestructive editing where original sound is not destroyed while cutting. The film was edited by Lalitha Krishna, exwife of Mani Kaul, at

Media Artists Studio in Chennai, considered to be the best in India. Sound processing in labs is now going through the process of being standardised. Sound labs are becoming conscious about the *quality* of sound rather than emphasise only clarity.

Sound technology in the country has shifted from optical to magnetic quite some time ago. Today, optical is used only in the final stage of filmmaking. Magnetic technology offers greater range in sound than the mono-optical system. The earlier loop system of recording has made way for the rocknroll system. New technology has made the hierarchy of sounds more complex, more exciting. Innovative sound designers like Vikram Joglekar and D. Wood have done a lot of experimenting with sound such as processing sound effects, bringing them close to music without necessarily musicalising it, sampling sound effects, taking real-life sound and arranging them in a certain way. Raja Dholakia who is a sound designer and music director, learnt to go beyond music to know, understand and apply the musicality of sound while working on the sound design of Mani Kaul's film *Siddheshwari*, an aesthetic impressionistic documentary on the famous thumri singer Siddheshwari Devi. "I tried to evoke the environmental influences in Siddheshwari's music through sounds" says Dholakia.

Masters of Sound among Indian filmmakers:

Some Indian filmmakers have paid close attention to the sound design of their films to combine aesthetics with realism in order to work out a smooth harmony between sound and other elements of film. Sadly, they are all from off-mainstream cinema. Because, mainstream filmmakers have conveniently taken refuge under music, songs and long-winded dialogue, ignoring the significance of sound almost completely. The few mainstream filmmakers who need to be mentioned are Ramesh Sippy (*Sholay*), Dayal Nihalani (*Andha Yudh*), Mahesh Bhatt (*Saransh*), Partho Ghosh (*Agni Sakshi*) etc. B.R. Chopra, Subhash Ghai, Yash Chopra and Suraj Kumar Bazjatya, who have broken several records at the box office with their stupendously successful films have worked out a strange blend of music and song to organise the entire sound design of their films. Their films spill over with songs and dances and with a lot of music on the soundtrack, sound effects *per se*, are cleverly sidetracked without hampering the aesthetics of the film. The characteristic sound effects associated with each entry of the dreaded dacoit Gabbar Singh in Ramesh Sippy's *Sholay* offers a model lesson on how sound can be used to signify the terror a character evokes. *Sholay* is also exemplary in its use of sound-matching to jump cut to a different scene and time, without breaking the continuity of the narrative, yet, intensifying the drama. Among off-mainstream filmmakers Shyam Benegal picks up natural sounds despite the long footage of location shoots his films demand. He almost never uses the services of a dubbing theatre. Gulzar uses sound lyrically, since he is a poet himself and has a wonderful ear for music. Basu Bhattacharya used sound as 'design by inference' which in common parlance, is known as the sound-picture counterpoint. In his film *Avishkar*, he uses the sound of a running train on the soundtrack to hint at the drifting apart of the couple who are in bed, like two passengers travelling towards the same destination, apparently together, but emotionally distanced. Kuar Shahani used a similar sound-picture counterpoint in *Tarang* whereas Govind Nihalani used it very strongly in the climactic scenes of *Party* and throughout the film in *Hazaar Chaurasi ki Maa*.

Hritwik Ghatak was a master of asynchronous and non-diegetic sound to produce irony and ambiguity in his films. In his essay, *Sound in Film* he offers interesting examples of his own use of sound. In his *Meghe Dhaka Tara* (the Cloud-capped Star), he uses the sound of a

whiplash while the camera closes in on the face of the heroine, the face registering an expression of deep, emotional pain, anguish, and helplessness. The impact is much more stronger and lasting than showing the woman crying would have been. "Sometimes, one has to comment on a particular piece of music in another director's film. I have done this myself In *La Dolce Vita*, during the final orgy, where Fellini has cracked the whip at the whole of Western civilisation, we hear *Patricia*. I tried to say something similar in the context of today's intellectual Bengal in *Subarnarekha*. I have used the same music in the scene at the bar as a Comment,, writes Ghatak.¹⁶

Ketan Mehta (*Mirch Masala*), Prakash Jha (*Damul, Mrityudand*), Kalpana Lajmi (*Rudaali*), Govind Nihalani (*Party*), Kumar Shahani (*Tarang*) have made creative use of sound by detailing both is social and aesthetic elements. Shahani has experimented with flat speech patterns, aboslutely without variations in tone, loudness or pitch in his films *Maya Darpan* and *Char Adhyay*. Mani Kaul has dynamised the use of sound in Indian cinema. He has tried to explore it at multiple levels of intelligibility. He plays around the middlespectrum and changes ones while laying or relaying tracks. He has changed the concept of soundmatching. In *Uski Rod*, long spells of silence in the narrative and cinematic footage substantiates the loneliness of te wife as she waits for her husband to come home, or, to collect his lunch. Mani Kaul's films are the most significant for the use of nonlinear sound narratives in Indian cinema. In his film *Nazar*, there are no live sounds in the film. But it has long ambiances of sounds that evoke the idea of simultaneity of melody. ¹⁷ In his latest film, Mani Kaut is reported to have experimented with new, micro sized, pickup microphones stuck to the body of the actors in his film. These microphones will pick up the body vibrations of the characters as they move, which is apart from the other sound paraphernalia used for speech, music, sound effects and so on.

PART II

The Meaning of Culture

In its most general sense, culture is the whole way of life of a people that is transmitted from one generation to the next. The concept "culture" is often used interchangeably with "society." But society refers to interacting people who *share* a culture, while culture is the *product* of that interaction. Thus, this limited meaning of culture is an abstraction. In everyday speech, culture is often interpreted as refinement or sophistication in the arts. Sociologists and anthropologists commonly define culture as the social product of a human group or society which includes values, language, knowledge and material objects. The people of any group or society share "non material" meanings of what is right and wrong, good and bad, some medium of communication; and knowledge about the environment and about ways of doing things. They also share a body of "material" or physical objects, such as tools, money, clothing, and works of art that reflect nonmaterial cultural meanings. Not only is culture *shared* but it must also be *learned* by each new generation through the process of social interaction. In India, mainstream cinema is the most immediate and popular process through which social interaction can and does take place.

The Hindi mainstream film and culture:

Perhaps, the most important social function of the Hindi film is its ability to act as an interface between the traditions of Indian society and the *disturbing* modern or Western intrusions into it. At this plane, the Hindi film is a means of (a) giving cultural meaning to Western structures superimposed on society, (b) demystifying some of the culturally "unacceptable" modern structures which are increasingly in

vogue in India and (c) ritually neutralizing those elements of the modern world which have to be accepted for reasons of survival.⁹ But are Western intrusions into the Hindi mainstream film. ethos really *disturbing*? One would not believe so because the emphasis is not on the inner struggle between modernity and tradition. Nor is it on any deep ambivalence towards the West. The function of the Hindi film, according to Shyam. Benegal, a noted Indian film maker, is to externalize an inner psychological conflict and handle the inner passion generated by social and political processes as problems created by events and persons outside. These events and persons are both ideal types and representatives of different aspects of a fragmented self These fragments are separately controlled and the Hindi mainstream seeks to sustain this control by sharpening the focuses of these differences the hero and the antihero, the heroine and the antiheroine, the largehearted fatherinlaw and the middleaged don. The Hindi mainstream does this because integration of these separate fragments into a unified whole would highlight the gray elements of characterization which it does not wish to adhere to.

The Indianness of Mainstream Cinema :

But the question is not about *what* culture mainstream Indian films produce. We know the culture it produces is defined and redefined by the time, the place and the socio political context in which it functions. Not to leave out the basic question of economic viability without which the industry's very existence stands to be threatened. The question is about its own cultural *identity*. Does Indian mainstream cinema have a cultural identity that is predominantly and obviously *Indian*? Or, has it become rather hybrid with influences of Hollywood pervading the screen with sexual innuendoes and graphic violence? Is the *Indianness* of Indian cinema under threat of succumbing to the commercially motivated pressures of external values and norms? Or is it being redefined by the stimulus it receives from the Western, specifically Hollywood brand of cinema? All answers to these questions are undercut by the fact that culture itself is in a constant state of flux because it is being influenced and determined by the changes that are taking place in our social, economic and political domains. Culture is not a rigid, static word that defies It does not exist in a vacuum. Nor is it bound anymore within the framework of geographical parameters which are themselves constantly threatened by modern warfare and communicational globalisation via the electronic media. Culture therefore, is itself "hybrid" in its sense of defiance of all *Western* notions of what constitutes "Indian Culture" It is also hybrid in the way it resists all *Indian* academic attempts to entrap it within predetermined concepts and preconceived notions of scholastic terminology.

Culture has initially meant, in our context, the monuments of antiquity, the temple sculpture of a glorious past, the texts of ancient scriptures, all "the wonder that was." So when we turn to look at presentday cultural practices, weighed down as we are, by the golden past and therefore, by a certain notion of culture, we react with incomprehension, dismissal, embarassment or shame. Is it, perhaps, the very modernity of our culture that prompts this realisation?²⁰

The Language Divide:

In terms of language, though Hindi was, and still is, the principal *lingua franca* for Indian films, the talking picture drew upon target audiences marked by the linguistic divide. Indian films are today made in 17 different languages. The earliest talkies used Hindusthani which was a strange blend of pure Hindi and pure Urdu. Today, we have Hindi films using regionally accented Hindi in the dialogue such as the Bumbaiya Hindi which uses a vulgarised version of Hindi spoken in Mumbai. Or, the Telugustressed Hindi spoken by characters set against a Telugu backdrop. Such as in Shyam Benegal's film *Ankur*. There are

dialectical versions of Hindi too, as spoken by illiterate tribals, such as in Govind Nihalani's *Aakrosh*. The tone, the pitch, timbre, rhythm and even singsong notes of dialogue delivery vary from region to region, and from different pockets within the same region. Besides, Indian films have the unique quality of different characters speaking different varieties of Hindi according to their social status, their caste, communal identity, education, profession, financial status, etc. Thus, within the same film, you have the educated hero speaking very good Hindi peppered with impeccable English when needs be. The heroine, if she is semiliterate and comes from a rural setting, speaks in some dialectical, hybridised form of Hindi to suit the costume she is wearing, which reflects the region she seems to come from. The villain's goons, speak in a special vulgarised, Bumbaiya (from Bombay) Hindi concocted specifically to typify such screen characters in Hindi cinema. If there is an Indian Christian character, specially a female, she speaks her lines in a typical Goanaccented Hindi stressing the long vowels with her grammar all wrong. This, even if she is not really from Goa today, writes :

In Prakash Jha's *Damul* (Death by Hanging) the dialogue is a rustic Bihari dialect. It is easy to understand and is also symbolic often simplicity of the village folk. At the same time, the powerful people in the village intersperse their lines with heavily accented English words like *kundidate*, *dangerous problem* and *uppojishun*. This shows the political awareness of vested interests. These days, a lot of English crops into the dialogue and songs of Hindi mainstream films, since in the larger metros, English is as popular and as common as Hindi among the upperclass, urban and educated class. English phrases like "I Love You" and sentences like "CAT CAT, *Cat Maane Billi*, RAT Rat, *Rat Maane Choocha*" (CAT means 'cat' and RAT means 'rat') often form the lyrics of film songs.

Chidananda Dasgupta, the seniormost and most scholastic film critic in the country

"The 'Hindi' film is a misnomer. "The language in most of the productions grouped under this rubric is Hindustani, with a bias towards Urdu. The official 'national' language, with its predilection for shuddh (pure) Hindi, is far removed from what passes muster with the populace. The businessman out to make money has succeeded in determining the practical possibilities of an allIndia language of a culturally underdeveloped (low literacy, violence against women and low castes and religious orthodoxy) area, naturally susceptible to totalist promptings, on relatively superior cultures. The film industry's interest lies in the widest possible accetpability for the eclectic, open language its products use in selling themselves to all corners of the country. Thus, the Hindi film is accepted in the northeastern states where English enjoys predominance, in the south where local languages hold sway, in the east, in Orissa which has a rich and old history, and in Bengal, where Bengali literature has reached very high levels of contemporary consciousness. ,21

The Musical Metaphor:

Music in Indian cinema is unique in its cultural implications because it spells out the Indianness of cinema even when the songs or the background score are influenced, inspired and now, even plagiarised from Western, African and Arabic hits. Music in Indian mainstream cinema defines a new synthesis of traditional and international genres of music. Each level involves such a synthesis that any one particular level cannot simply be reduced to another. A cinema song cannot be reduced to its classical or folk roots. The fact that a particular film song is based on a classical *raaga* or on a folk tune does not deny it its distinct genreidentity. As film music grew, it became clear that good composers of film music would of neccessity, have to be trained within the musical ambience of Hindi cinema itself. Though earlier grounding in classical and folk forms offer sound support to music directors, a

truly loyal and committed music composer for mainstream films must seek inspiration from the kinetic visuals of cinema. Today's music director often does just this.

Classical and folk Indian music are intimately tied to our feudal, historical past. The essential function of folk music is to glue individuals into a group to perform ritualised functions. Folk music tends to be collectivist, tied as it is, to rural life where functions are collective and songs are sung mainly in groups. Classical music on the other hand, invokes and celebrates the grandeur of power and aristocracy. Its main aim is to distance the mind from worldly cares and material pleasures in favour of abandoning oneself to the love of spiritualism and of dedication. It is therefore, estranged from the world of reality and consequently, from the masses. Indian film music is said to be the ideal adaptive response of Indian culture to the technology-inspired, jetlike pace of the 20th Century. Unwittingly, Hindi film songs have created and underscored democratic values of equality and freedom, of patriotism and secularity, of love and brotherhood and solidarity.

Songs and dances in popular Indian cinema are used as natural expressions of everyday emotions and situations. While seeking to intensify the element of fantasy through music and spectacle, popular cinema also reinforces the impression that songs and dances are the natural and logical expression of emotion in a given situation within the filmic; narrative. This coincides, to a large extent, to the Indian social reality where music forms an integral part of life itself, whether it be in celebration of a happy event like a birth in the family, or a wedding, or, when the occasion is one of grief such as a death within the home. Music contributes a vital ingredient in the cultural reconstruct of emotion. Popular cinema however, has learnt to adapt it to suit to the changing demands of an increasingly global audience through exaggeration, plagiarisation, adaptation of Western fads like rap, and has placed it against spectacle.

No modern musical form from any part of the globe, including jazz, can boast of such diversity, richness, subtlety and reach as the Hindi film song can. The Hindi film song has cut through all language barriers in India to engage in lively communication with a nation where more than 20 languages are spoken. Whether the film is a family melodrama, a historical adventure, a mythological tale, a comedy, a love story or a thriller, songs are bound to be part of each finished film. Exceptions to the golden rule were sometimes made with drastic results at the box office. To mention a couple, B.R.Chopra's courtroom drama *Kanoon* and his murder mystery *Ittefaq* were both without songs in them. *Kanoon* did break even but that was mainly because of its star value and imaginative cinematography than because it was songless. *Ittefaq* flopped and the same goes for K.A.Abbas' film *Munna*. But all these films had rich background scores to express theme, mood and ambience. Prakash Jha's offmainstream film *Damul* is also songless. The background score is amply infused with atmosphere and mood. For atmosphere, you hear the humming of crickets in the night. For mood, there are sounds of pathetic of the *basti* women, which sounds like moaning the dead. The sound of drums heightens the tension of a tense scene. Since the director claims that the entire film was shot in natural light, in the semidarkness of the evening and night shots, the sounds acquire loudness and clarity, underscoring the 'reality' of the tragic circumstances of the oppressed people.

PART III

The Culturespecific Character of

Sound in Indian Cinema

Sound/s in Indian Cinema:

Sound in Indian cinema has a specific *rhythm* which is unique unto itself. The 'sound design' of an entire film is composed of speech, music, songs, noise and silence. The average Indian film has a stereotypical 'sound design' which is reflective of the Indian ethos and the Indian culture. Irrespective of its generic classification, this sound has the following common characteristics:

- **background score** theme music, musical motif signifying the entry of a specific character, mood music, etc.
- **songs** - theme song repeated over the narrative space of the film, songs lip synched by the characters in the film in solo or in duets, chorus songs, songs sung to dance numbers, mood songs on the soundtrack and so on. Sometimes, the same song is repeated in varying tempos to signify the changing mood of the character and the changed situation in the storyscript. Most importantly, there are purely soundcentric, and soundbased songs in Indian films where the lyrics of a song are peppered with actual *sounds* such as

(a) the sound of quickened heart beats (dhak dhak karne laga from *Beta*)

(b) the sound of thundering rain (lapaka jhapaka tu aare bbadarava from *Boot Polish*),

(c) the sound of the spinning wheel (chappa chappa charkha chale from *Maachis*),

(d) the sound of dancing bells **Ghanak jhanak payal baaje** from *Jhanak Jhanak Payal Baaje* and **chhamma chhamma, baaje re mori paayaiya** from *China Gate*

(e) the sound (?) of night Ghoom jhoom dhalti raat in *K6hrraa*),

(f) the sound(?) of tears (naina barase, rimjhim rimjhim in *Woh Kaun ThO*), (g) the sound of lapping waves on the shores (chhai chhapapa chhai, chhapapa chhai in *Hu Tu Tu*), (

h) song to match the beat and rhythm of a running train in a hilly terrain (chal chhaiyyan chhaiyan in *Dil Se ...*),

(i) the sound of the singing nightingale (kuhu kuhu bole koyeliyaan in *Rani Roopmati*) and so on, offering a rich texture and a neverending panorama of sounds within songs, making for an unique blend of sound, music and song. Usually combined with colourful visuals and harmoniously choreographed dances, these songs add both to the market value of the film at the box office and to the final audiovisual effect the film leaves behind.

- **dialogue** if this is a voiceover, or an interior monologue, it is usually sombre, soft spoken, articulate, with clear enunciation. If this is a dialogue, it is generally longwinded and wordy, loud and highpitched, alternating between the ornamental and the crude, with shades in between. The accents of different kinds of Hindi create varied sound effects. Because of the multiplelanguage culture, no cinema in the world offers the variety in dialogue, speech, monologue, etc, that Indian cinema offers. Voiceovers

by female characters are a rarity in Indian films. Two out of a handful of specific exceptions however, are Satyajit Ray's *Ghare Baire* (Me Home and the World) and Rituparno Ghosh's *Dahan*. One brilliant example of ways of speech, enunciation and designing of silence, along with special sound effects to generate an ambience of fear, is the mainstream offering *Sholay* (Flames) directed by Ramesh Sippy. Sippy took special pains to draw out different speech patterns to suit the different characters in this film each character's personality being defined by his/her distinct manner of dialoguedelivery, tone, voice and pitch. The director offered sound counterpoints through the two major female characters, one extremely talkative and the other totally silent, offering another sound design which invests the film with an unusual richness. The silent girl is shown to have been very talkative through flashbacks, as a young and filmloving maiden. The present timeframe projects her as having withdrawn into a selfimposed shell of silence, postwidowhood. The sound of speech of dialogue in Indian cinema, is a highly subjective exercise.

- noise In his essay, *Notes for an Aesthetic of Cinema Sound*, Kumar Shahani says that incidental and atmospheric sounds in cinema lie between organised sound (music) drifting into entropy and contextual sounds (speech), while the rest is silence. Sound defined thus, needs to be classified differently.

(a) environmental noise in rural and urban settings is not necessarily culture specific to the Indian situation; this is more universal in character and quality consisting of birdcries, chirps and twitters, the sound of a moving bullock cart, a mobile herd of cows or sheep with bells jangling around their throats, traffic noise, a running train, a screeching car, noise within interior shots such as slamming of doors, swishing of curtains, noise associated with violent scenes like fights and rape scenes, gunshots, sound of steam rollers, etc. Men there are the natural sounds like rain, thunder, lightning, storm, blowing winds, etc. The only exceptional is a Kannada film. This offers a brilliant example where environmental sound has been turned into an integral *character* of the Story is Girish Kasaravalli's Kannada film *Mane* (House.) The film makes imaginative use of every conceivable sound to show how sound can make it very difficult for a newly married couple to settle down in life. Sound not only initially plays the metaphorical villain in the film but later, also shows how important its existence is, in everyday life. The juxtaposition, blending and overlapping of different kinds of sounds in the film offers an insight into the hybridisation and mechanisation of life in an Indian small town. It also infuses the miseenscene with ambiguity. But this is not really culturespecific in character or quality because it is used globally by filmmakers.

(b) environmental noise evolves a purely cultural characteristic in Indian cinema when it emanates from the body/person of a female character in a film. This applies especially to the sounds of ornaments and jewellery worn by women within films. The rustling sound of a long skirt while a girl is rushing across a meadow may not be culturally unique to Indian cinema. But jingling glass bangles around a girl's wrist is definitely culture specific. The jingling of bangles suggests laughter, cheer, fun, happiness, love, anticipation. The sound of glass bangles breaking, with or without visual support, signifies something entirely different widowhood, grief, tragedy, or, the premonition of a sad event. Glass bangles are mainly used because of the

musical sounds they reproduce. Because, in reality, the organic making of the bangle is reflective of social class gold suggesting affluence and aristocracy, pearls and diamonds hinting at royalty and fiefdom, bone demonstrating low caste untouchables, etc. But glass bangles cut across the caste class divide in India so far as films go because they represent the same things both within the script as well as for the spectator in an Indian film. There is just a single example of a film directed by Sai Paranjpye, which had *Choopiyaa* (Bangles) as its title. This was a short fiction film aimed at the deaddiction of men in an Indian village which is reduced to sheer penury by virtue of its men being incurable addicts of country liquor. The women in the village gather together to teach them a lesson. They force bangles on the wrists of the men who refuse to give up drinking. This hints at the emasculation of the men. Both sound and picture underscored the moral lesson contained in the film, though in sum the film was not an aesthetic masterpiece.

(i) Dangling earrings are not used for their sound effects, but more for lyrics of songs supported by strong, expressive visuals. Earrings used in songs generally suggest erotica (*Gunga Jumna*) or just pure entertainment (*Wera Saaya*.)

(ii) Dancing bells worn on the feet are generally classified into two kinds silver anklets which are purely ornamental and do not have a sound design typical of Indian culture; and dancing bells worn mainly by dancers but mostly associated with dancing prostitutes. The jingling sound of silver anklets have the cinematic effect of youth, maidenhood, marriage; alternately, it is sometimes used to intensify and highlight suspense, terror, panic in the mind of the spectator in scenes of suspense and eerie ghostliness. Even with the screen remaining dimly lit or almost totally dark, just the sound of anklet worn feet rushing through a forest or field is enough to heighten suspense. This is often used in mainstream ghost and suspense films with good effect despite the monotonous repetition.

(iii) The collective striking of brass plates by a whole group of women is a Hindu ritual practised in a manner of announcing the birth of a boy in some regional pockets of India such as Rajasthan, Gujarat, U.P., etc. One filmmaker has neatly reversed the significance of this same collective sound by investing it with a totally different meaning collective female rebellion against feudal patriarchy and dictatorship. Ketan Mehta demonstrated this very expressively in a scene in *Mirch Masala* (Spices.) No one talks, and all the women of the village gather together under the leadership of the village head's wife, to express their protest against the forceful victimisation of one of the girls who works in the village spice factory there. This is a unique gender-specific use of sound in Indian cinema which underscores the culture-specific use of sound.

(iv) In Prakash Jha's *Mrityudand* (Death Sentence) makes similar use of collective clapping by village women, beginning softly to steadily grow into a rising crescendo, as a strong statement against the raping and kidnapping of village women by the villainous promoter and landgrabber. Collective clapping by a group of eunuchs in India, in film and in real life, is both an identity card as well as a professional strategy adopted in order to draw attention to themselves. The sound of the clap and the manner in which it is executed, is distinct and very different from the way ordinary people would clap. They clap when they beg for alms, they clap to make their presence felt, and they clap to herald the entry of a newborn. The family is expected to shower them with gifts and money. They then form a circle around the newborn and begin to dance and sing, clapping all along. These, and all other sounds and speech patterns of Indian eunuchs came across tellingly in Kalpana Lajmi's film *Darjiyaan* which literally translates as 'in between.'

- **Sound as an expression of emotion.** This refers to laughter, which is generally speaking, quite universal in cinema. But weeping, crying, yelling out in grief and pain, are culturespecific and generally differ from one culture to another. Unlike in Occidental cultures, where any public expression of grief and pain is considered indecent, because grief and pain are taken to be extremely private and intimate, in Oriental cultures, to withhold such public expression of grief through loud crying or weeping is considered to be unhealthy and almost abnormal. Though with the rapid pace of urbanisation and Westernisation, this open show of grief is on the decline, Indian cinema has held on to convention and tradition. So, crying and weeping in Indian cinema takes different forms and shapes depending mainly on the director's handling of the scene to intensify the pain just so that it communicates itself to the spectator and lends conducive to audience identification. But an absolutely culture and genderspecific practice unique to India is the concept of professional mourning women, called *Rudaali*. Though with the collapse of feudal landlordism and fiefdom, this profession is dying out, its pathos was movingly brought out by Kalpana LaJmi in the film *Rudaali*. It narrates the story of a woman who is forced into the profession because of the sudden death of the professional mourner. But her problem is that she cannot cry. Nor can she shed tears. The horrific tragedies that life had in store for her, sucked her tears dry. When the time comes for her to beat her chest and wave her thick mane and cry loudly, she finds she has just to draw on her storehouse of pain and personal grief to earn her livelihood when the dying landlord of the village, finally dies. Sound, colour, songs, music, and a vast visual landscape of Rajasthan make for an aesthetic and very socially relevant design for the film though the overdose of glamour in the form tends to overshadow and dilute the essence of the content.

Musical Instruments used as Visuals:

Indian cinema, mainly of the mainstream kind, is flush with visuals of musical instruments used within the *miseenscene* of the film. The two most commonly used instruments to make their presence strongly felt are, the grand piano and the flute or the *bansuri* (flute carved out of bamboo.) Very interestingly, the visual use of these musical instruments can be interpreted as cultural signifiers of two distinct groups. The piano defines itself as a permanent fixture in the spacious drawing room of an affluent family. It is sometimes used by one of the leading characters to belt out a song with double entendre lyrics at a crowded birthday bash. But even if it is not really in use, it forms part of the decor of the house. Within the Indian ambience of cinema, the piano suggests affluence, Westernisation, urbanisation, sophistication and aristocracy, natural or acquired. The flute, on the other hand, is a direct descendant of Lord Krishna, whose famous flute is both the sign and the signifier of his visual or aural presence. As such, even when an urbanised hero plays the flute, (Jackie Shroff 'm Subliash Ghai's *Hero*) the flute is suggestive of total ethnicity, simplicity and poverty. Satyajit Ray's Apu played the flute in *Apur Sansar* when he lived alone in the city. Here, it underscored his loneliness. The use of the flute also goes back to the RadhaKrishna love story from Hindu mythology, and often finds favour even with the sophisticated spectator. Ironically however, neither the piano nor the flute is common in India's everyday cultural ethos. The piano has become a nonentity because of dwindling spaces in urban apartments. The flute is neatly sidetracked because it is not considered 'hep.' Yet, Indian cinema thrives on its visual and aural use. This representation, tied to tangible musical instruments, is not really in keeping with contemporary Indian reality.

Granted, that the question of culturespecificity of cinema in any nation is today fraught with the fear of the great Hollywood invasion. The crisis of culture in an era of economic globalisation has itself evolved

into a significant issue of discussion and debate. India is no exception. Yet, India is an exception. Because, in its cinema, simply by virtue of the massive size of numbers of films released every year, the threat of the Hollywood influx is dissipated. It is not possible for the cinematic influences of a foreign culture to uproot the cultural roots of a nation dotted with a largely illiterate mass population nurtured on a steady and generous diet of mythology, folklore, theatre, folk arts, music, all of which have successfully found themselves reflected, represented, interpreted, distorted and even questioned in and by its cinema, both of the mainstream and of the arthouse variety.

The Politics of Silence as a Metaphor of the Oppressed :

"Only in a sound film, can a director use silence for dramatic effect" wrote VY Perkins. Music director Bliaskar Chandavarkar says "if you cannot express things through music, you can use silence which is likely to reveal more than what music or dialogue could have revealed. Silence does not exist in an absolute sense. Bresson once said, "on the obvious level, silence in music relates to space indirectly. In the cinema, on the other hand, it relates to space in movement." Though mainstream cinema in India does not accept 'silence' as a part of the sound design of the film, (Along with its sophisticated cousin, off mainstream or arthouse cinema), it has, almost unwittingly, defined the role of silence with reference to particular characters in some films. This silence, or 'muteness' in the characters is voluntary and not physiological or genetic. It therefore, is also culture specific to Indian films, never mind the generic label. It would be right to define it as a political statement on the oppressed, the marginalised, the poor and the outcasts, which includes women. Silence in this sense, is an explosive expression of resistance, revolt, suppressed anger, rebellion, which finds eloquence because of its juxtaposition against all the sounds that characterise the normal sound film also because it is selfimposed. Therefore, its dramatic impact is more coincidental to the director's total design for the entire film than intentionally imposed from without. The culturespecificity lies in the significant revelation that almost without exception, it the marginalised who recede into this shell of selfimposed silence, either for the entire film, or for part of the narrative footage of the film.

Hrishikesh Mukherjee's mainstream film *Abhimaan*, is a case in point. It unspools the story of a famous singer who, on impulse, marries a village girl and brings her to the city. She turns out to be more gifted than him, and becomes more famous in the field of film music. This comes as a jolt to the husband's ego. He finds this difficult to digest. In a fit of anger, he throws her out of the house, not knowing that she is pregnant. Back with her musician father, the girl loses the child, and takes refuge in near total silence. She simply goes into an emotional limbo, failing to react to anything at all. This selfimposed silence of the wife acts as a pointer to patriarchal values where, within a conventional married relationship, the wife ought to have no right to supersede her husband in the field of work and in public. In reality, the problem is a global issue. But its cinematic expression through selfimposed silence is culturespecific.

Govind Nihalani's noted film *Aakrosh* is one of the most brilliant cinematic examples of voluntary silence used as a strong political statement against wrongful indictment of a lowcaste, poor and illiterate man by vested interests in the semirural place he lives and works in. Lahanya Bhiku, a poor, illiterate tribal, is accused of having murdered his wife Nagi. In actual fact, the woman was gangraped and murdered by the bigwigs of the village. But Lahanya refuses to speak, even to his lawyer, who has more than empathy for Lahanya because he himself has risen from his lowcaste birth. Lahanya's selfimposed silence is his 'voice' against an Establishment where, he knows and understands, speaking out will be in vain. He is sentenced to death. In

the climactic scene, he is brought to perform the last rites of his dead father, his hands and feet shackled. As he ritually circles the burning pyre, he lets out a final cry of anguish (*Aakrosh*) and slays his young sister, lest she befall the same fate his wife did. This total silence of Lahanya stands on its own throughout the film's cinematic and narrative space. But the final cry, loud, long, expanded and echoing in the vastness of open space, intensifies the drama, the pain, and the futility of being born poor and low caste in a country that breeds and promotes inequality. That sudden cry coming out of Lahanya takes the spectator by both surprise and shock, making the silence that precedes it all that more potent and powerful. Nihalam skillfully links the exercise of social power with sexuality, masochism and the final denouement in the climax.

Throughout Prakash Jha's *Damul*, the audience is almost continuously subjected to a series of audiovisual shocks. The onslaughts on the oppressed are like a whiplash unleashed on them. There is coldblooded murder, there are mass killings of defenceless people, sexual blackmail of a helpless young widow from an uppercaste family, holding the entire lowcaste *basti* to ransom, *geraoing* the *basti* to stop them from casting their votes, and finally, the death by hanging of an innocent Harijan Sanjeevana, because he has turned wise to the landlord's wicked ways. Two characters in *Damul* are reduced to silence in the second half of the film. One is the Harijan (lowcaste) leader Golcul, who is touted as an electoral candidate for the *basti* people but loses because the election is a total farce. He turns mute out of the shock at the carnage in the *basti* caused by a fire engineered by the landlord and his henchman. He seems to have lost his voice completely. The other is Sanjeevana himself, who becomes totally silent in the courtroom. Illiterate that he is, his silence is motivated by the fact that this will perhaps, appease the judge to free him of the crime someone else has committed. The silence is wasted. It is also the director's personal comment on the injustice which the oppressed fail to rise against because they are poor and therefore, illiterate. This is perhaps, much closer to reality than one would like to believe.

In Ramesh Sippy's blockbuster *Sholay*, there are two female characters. One draws a tonga and the other is the daughter-in-law of the local landlord, a widow. The tonga driver, Basanti is a beautiful extrovert, extremely talkative who just cannot keep her mouth shut. The widow is quiet, sombre, solemn, clothed in stark white widow's weeds, never smiles and never talks unless extremely necessary. But in a brief flashback into her past, we find the same woman as a young maiden, playing with colour, jumping about, laughing away, and talking to the dozen. The sudden widowhood immediately after marriage, the visible carnage of her entire family, shocks her into silence. Her present silence juxtaposed against the talkative past underscores the burden life as a widow has imposed on her. Her voice has been sucked dry because, as the sole survivor in the carnage, she perhaps bears an additional burden of guilt inside her. It is as if, her self-imposed silence is a sort of life sentence she has inflicted on herself.

In *Namkeen* (Salty), Gulzar's lyrical and rather unusual love story set in the picturesque, hilly terrains of the North, is the story of a stem and nonsensical mother and her three daughters, who take in guests and grind spices to eke out a sparse livelihood. Of the three, the middle sister (Shabana Azmi) cannot speak. Yet, she is not physiologically dumb. She is a hearing person. The older daughter is a serious person who does not talk much and the youngest is very talkative. As the story proceeds, one gets to learn that the middle sister's silence is the direct result of her being kidnapped by hoodlums as a kid. By the time she was released she had lost her voice. Therefore, no one (within the film) really knows what happened to her in captivity. She finally loses her sanity, jumps off the cliff to her death. Her silence stands testimony to another 'marginal' person being forced into a world of

silence and tragedy.

Buddhadeb Dasgupta's film *Andhi Galli* (Blind Alley). Hemanta and his wife Jaya arrive in Bombay. Jaya is naive and innocent, totally ignorant about the compromises demanded in trying to eke out a living in a metro city. Hemanta is trying to make it in the jazzy world of advertising where, he feels he can make a quick buck and move into the spacious apartment of his dreams. He is taken by surprise when the agency he does business with, suddenly find in Jaya the ethnic model they are desperately looking out for. Jaya is surprised and confused when asked to model. But after a few compromises at baring and daring, she puts her foot down when she is asked to strip for a certain campaign. Hemanta, who was away, returns to find that his wife has turned down a promising moneymaking deal. He flares up and yells at her. Jaya's shock deepens when she discovers that her husband is prepared to put his wife up for physical display against her express wishes, in exchange for the money needed to buy the 'social status' he is so anxious about. She withdraws into a shell. Her body language changes as she shrinks and coils into foetuslike postures, her face filled with silent anguish, fear, confusion, and her willingness to speak disappears almost completely. The silent, shrivelled up Jaya offers a dramatic contrast to the earlier Jaya, innocent, charming, naive and ever-smiling. The spanky and spacious apartment seems to throttle her because she faces a Hemanta starkly different from the Hemanta she was married to. Then, one day, without warning, she jumps off the balcony of the skyscraper they have moved into. Her suicide is symbolic of her silent but explosive 'voice' of protest against the erosion of values in contemporary urban society of which Hemanta is but a microcosmic example. Her silence is as aggressive as her suicide turns out to be. A very different kind of silence of the female lead in a film that ends in suicide is shown by Mani Kaul in *Nazar* (Sight), loosely derived from Fyodor Dostevsky's short story, *A Gentle Creature*. The girl, whose relationship with her elderly husband is captured only through glances frozen, fluid, sometimes painfully slow, glances that are more confused than meaningful, glances that are self-questioning even while they are not directed at a man, finally walks out of the relationship. She steps out of the balcony as if she is stepping out for a walk. Most of the story is narrated by the husband, either through monologue or voiceover, or sometimes imaginary and sometimes real dialogue with his wife. The wife hardly has anything to say. So, the glances. *Andhi Galli* and *Nazar* offer diametrically opposed cinematic definitions, of silence for the female lead. Whilst in *Andhi Galli*, the silence may appear to be an extension of Jaya's submissiveness in the first half of the film, in reality, it is just the opposite. In *Nazar* however, the silence of the girl is a pure character-trait she is perhaps, born with. It just is. It does not mean anything other than what it really is.

In sum, the following facts emerged from this writer's enquiry:

1. Silence in Indian cinema is invested with the questionable 'quality' of ambivalence
2. Silence is associated with *characters* in a film, not with the narrative or the cinematic
3. Silence is rarely used to intensify the quality of sound in a film.
4. Character-centric silence is not associated with the spatial element of the film though the time-element is often confirmed through flashbacks and interior monologue.
5. The *characters* such as silence is linked to are always found to belong to 'social outgroups' such as tribals (*Aakrosh*), lowcaste untouchables (*Damul*) women (*Sholay*, *Andhi Galli*), minority communities, working class people (*Main Zinda Hoon*).

6. Charactercentric silence is both ambivalent and ambiguous. It could mean rebellion in one character, it could mean submission in another. It could be read as 'protest' in yet another. Or an expression of appeasement in a fourth one.

Conclusion:

Many Indian films are often focussed on describing the dominant paradigms of caste as a manifestation of the essentially hierarchical nature of Indian society through films like *Achhyut Kanya*, *Sujata*, *Jaag Utha Insaan*. It has also produced particular interpretations of the caste question through films like *Damul*, *Aakrosh*, *Ankur* and *The Bandit Queen* (none of which strictly conform to the ideology upheld and propagated by the mainstream) which, by virtue of their commercial success, (except for perhaps, *Damul*, could be brought within the periphery of the mainstream. It would be in the fitness of things to say that mainstream Indian cinema unwittingly adheres to the beliefs of people like Benjamin, Williams, Hall, Bourdieu and Foucault who have brought in newer ways of theorising culture Mainstream cinema, like Stuart Hall," reflects culture as "a site of convergent interests rather than a logically or conceptually clarified idea." The field of culture is seen as "a constant battlefield" where "strategic positions" are "to be won or lost." Mainstream cinema departs from Hall's belief that there are no victories to be gained because here, the box office must be appeased at all costs so far as commercial Indian cinema goes. Like all politics however, the politics of silence in Indian cinema, mainstream or offmainstream, is the art of the possible.²⁴

1 *Hatf a Century* in Exhibition Line, in *Indian Talkie*, 193 156,p. 12 1. 2 *Indian Talkie*,193156, listpp.ixxvii.

3 Interview,B.N.Reddi.

4 B.D.Garga: *So Many Cinemas The Motion Picture in India*, Eminence Designs Pvt.Ltd.,Mumbai,1996.p.80.

' Interview,T.R.Sundarain.

6 Desai, "Overseas Market for Indian Film" in *Indian Cinematograph Year Book*, 1938,pp. 29193.

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8 *Journal of the Motion Picture Society of India*, June, 1937.

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10 *Ibid*.

11 *Ibid*.p71

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13 Editorial, *Moving Picture Monthly*, Annual Issue, 193 5

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