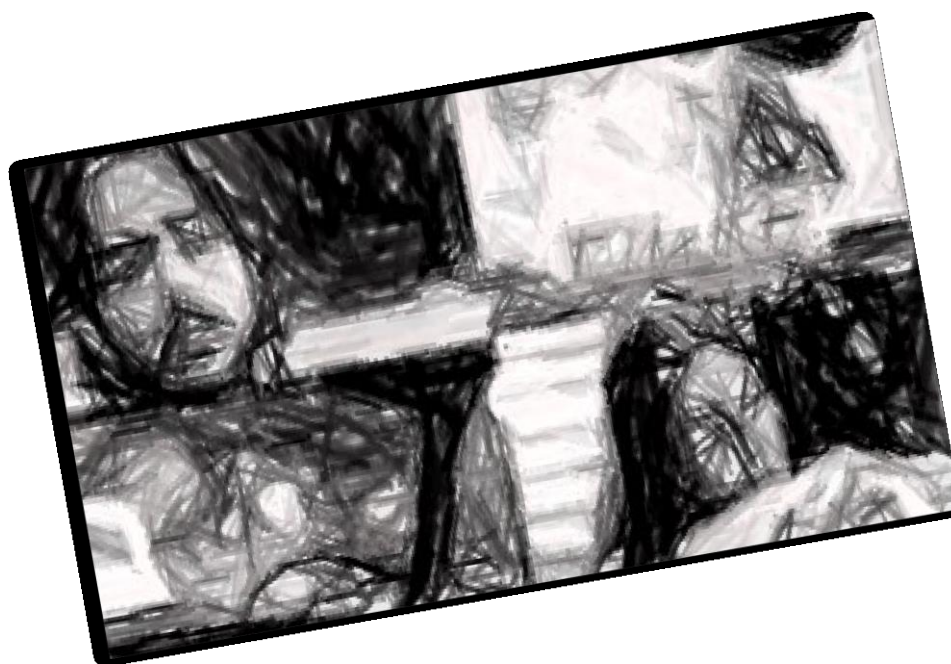


**Minor Research Project of the University Grants Commission
(UGC)**

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(Sanction letter No 23-1458/09 (WRO) 11th March 2010)

**Cynicism and the Eternal Romantic:
Social Unrest and Human Values in Three Films of Gulzar
(*Mere Apne*, *Maachis* and *Hu Tu Tu*)**



Cinema should make you forget you are sitting in a theatre.

(Roman Polanski)

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Project Completion Report

I, Dr Charanjit Kaur Singh (Charanjeet Kaur), hereby submit that I have completed the Minor Research project on **“Cynicism and the Eternal Romantic – Social Unrest and Human Values in Three Films of Gulzar”**, which is being submitted to the UGC. The MRP has been awarded to me in March 2010 vide UGC letter No 23-1458/09(WRO) dated 11th March 201.



Signature of Investigator
of College

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Preface

Kai pinjaron ka kaidi hoon...
Kai pinjaron mein basta hoon
Mujhe bhaata hai kaidein katna
Aur apni marzi se chunav karte rehna
Apne pinjaron ka...
Miyadein taye nahi karta mai rishton ki
Aseeri dhoondta hoon mai
Aseeri acchi lagti hai

(From *Neglected Poems*)

Writing about Cinema in India is a daunting task. On the one hand, the sheer bulk of the films made in India every year (more than 700), has ensured that films touch the lives of people across the social and political spectrums and community, caste and class divisions. The diverseness and variety of the regional cinema in all the languages of the nation is often forgotten in the glamour and sheen that the Hindi film industry, located in Mumbai, presents. Also, there has been the condescending attitude to mainstream films, which, by virtue of their popularity have been seen as catering to the lowest common denominator in audiences, which patronise them for their escapist elements. The „creative“ cinema, sometimes called art cinema, has inspired a great deal of critical and theoretical writing in India and abroad, but popular Hindi films have, at best, attracted a laidback,

reflective nostalgia, and a sense of apologetic enjoyment from intellectuals. These films are meant to be enjoyed, not to be understood or analysed, seems to be the common perception of cinema scholars.

But popular culture and the mass media, which propagates popular culture, are indices to the mood of the times, as perhaps, nothing else can be. Documenting the times happens willy-nilly, even in the most innocuous and banal representations of the love triangles and revenge dramas that form the bottom-line of the Hindi film. They reflect a view of reality, which, it sometimes comes with a shock, reflects the pulse of the people at any given point of time. And it can be legitimately claimed that the one function that popular films have fulfilled is to understand the state of mind of the masses and to reflect their ideas, ideology, mythologies, attitudes, cultural preferences, stories, prejudices.

It is in the context of these ideas that the idea of taking up a preliminary study of three significant films of Gulzar came to mind, because Gulzar is not that mindless filmmaker, churning out and

recycling predictable, B-grade films or sheer entertainers which are sustained, largely, by media hype. His background as a creative writer, - poet and short story writer and with a substantial contribution to children's literature, gives him a place in Hindi films which is unique. His films may be pure romances (*Khushboo* and *Kinara*), historicals (*Meera* and the teleserial *Mirza Ghalib*), social or political dramas (*Mere Apne*, *Aandhi*, *New Delhi Times*, *Maachis*, *Hu Tu Tu*), explorations into the psyche of women and children (*Kitab*, *Namkeen*, *Ijazzat*), but, there are clear markers of the mind of the poet-writer and his vision of life stamped on them. There is the holistic mind of the creative artist that binds them all: a mind which is delicate, sensitive to human needs, deeply affected by emotional states of the people around, which does not see human beings in stark black and white silhouettes, and which is imbued with an understanding which comes from felt experience of social and political trauma, his sense of finely-tuned irony, satire and humour. No doubt, there is a touch of the sentimental in both the films and the literary output of Gulzar, which sometimes becomes a restricting factor in his explorations of hard social realities. But working within the commercial Hindi film industry framework, which is largely profit-driven and mass-oriented

this conflict between writer and filmmaker is bound to arise. As a fellow lyricist and script-writer, Javed, says:

For me, a good writer has to respect the medium of good cinema. A good fiction writer is not always a successful script writer for cinema. When you are writing a film script, you cannot assume that viewers have a literary sensibility. Writing literature is like talking to a select, intimate group with very cultivated ideas about taste, whereas writing a film demands that you address 50,000 or more spectators. Yet you cannot let down the man in the crowd.

(Gopalan 1988: xiii)

It is not surprising, then, that the films of Gulzar, with a few exceptions have been moderately successful, and he has never been able to make films with grand paraphernalia, entailing huge budgets or an enviable star cast. In that sense, he is with the middle-of-the road Hindi filmmakers – Bimal Roy, Hrishikesh Mukherjee, Amol Palekar and the like. Though this has restricted their cinematic styles to some extent, the little gems that they have created have faithful audiences of their own and they have been able to bring a new sensitivity and vision into the otherwise uni-dimensional productions that big budget films have wallowed in.

What makes Gulzar's films memorable is the personal voice in which he speaks intimately through the camera to his audiences. His skill as a dialogue writer is seen best in the one-liners with which some of his films end: *Mausam* ends with the protagonist telling his adopted daughter *Hum dono ke liye peeche mud ke dekhne ke liye, kuch nahi hai*. Similarly, *Namkeen* ends with the hero leading his beloved out of the ruined house, with the statement that all those she loved and sacrificed herself for left her and abandoned her, and that she must move out of the ruins that have imprisoned her by her futile emotional attachments to a dying and disintegrating family. In a pithy scene in *Maachis*, Paali and Veeran face the reality and inevitability of their brutal deaths much before it actually happens:

Paali: Mera ant jaanti hai tu.

Veeran: Jaanti hoon. Darte ho kya maut se?

Paali: Dar lagta hai. Akele.

(Chatterjee 2007: 233, slightly modified)

Veeran's *Darte ho kya maut se?* is not a question, or a statement: in the context in which Gulzar places it, it becomes a challenge and a reassurance at the same time.

Similarly, his sense of humour and irony add layers to the meanings that emerge. In *Mere Apne*, his spoof on politicians (which takes ominous overtones in *Hu Tu Tu*) is reinforced by his casting of comedians in the crucial roles of the corrupt and self-seeking politicians (Asit Sen and Mehmood), and the comic vein in which he presents them shows that he believes that the situation is still redeemable, as against their bleak portrayal in *Hu Tu Tu*:

Bilaki Prasad: Panditji nahi hain, Netaji nahi hain, Gandhiji nahi hain aur meri bhi tabiyat juch theek nahi rehti.

Anokhe Lal: Azaadi ki aag Himalaya se Jhumritalaiya tak phail chuki thi, Jhumritalaiya nahi, Kanyakumari tak. Woh azaadi hum logon ne, leaderon ne, aapko de di hai

(Chatterjee 2007: 67)

It is from this brazen insensitivity that the future tragedy of the public systems of India has arisen,- this is what is shown by the journey from *Mere Apne* to *Aandhi* to *Hu Tu Tu*.

Given his significant contribution to films, and his ability to foresee the shape of things to come through the medium of his films, what came as a surprise to me was that, not much has been written about

Gulzar's work. In the vast literature about films, his work was hardly mentioned. Only after he stopped directing films and restricted himself to writing lyrics and the occasional screenplay, has there been some interest in his films evinced, and the Oscar Award for *Jay Ho* did mark an increase in his prestige in the industry. Even today, the three significant books that are the starting points for any research into his work are his biography *because he is* by his daughter Meghna, *Echoes and Eloquences – The Life and Cinema of Gulzar* by Saibal Chatterjee and *Conversations with a Poet* by Nasreen Munni Kabir. By their very nature, all three are anecdotal, eulogistic, and non-evaluative. Having seen nearly all the films in the 30 years when he was active as a film director, I felt that subjecting his work to close critical scrutiny would yield insights which have hitherto been underestimated. At best, what I have attempted in this project can be viewed as a pilot study in this direction.

The question that I have been asking myself in the three years when I have been working on *Mere Apne*, *Maachis* and *Hu Tu Tu*, has been Why these three and not any of the others?

Some answers:

- They mark the beginning and near-end of Gulzar's directorial journey. Hopefully, not the end yet, but it seems to be so yet in 2015.
- From the first tentative start in 1971 upto 1999, the three films show a remarkable consistency of vision and cinematic style.
- The personal touch infused with active political comment.
- Depiction of crucial matters which confronted the nation at the time when the films were made – youth unrest in 1971, terrorism in 1996, and corruption in high places in 1999.
- Very forward-looking, progressive films which anticipate the future course of events: future of India political systems, the understanding of an introspection about internal insurgency movements, middle class concerns with an amoral political ethos and corruption, which burst forth under the leadership of Anna Hazare and others in 2012.
- Sensitive handling of volatile themes within the humanistic framework.

One regret remains: that I have overlooked another significant film in the same league: *New Delhi Times*.

The films express the times, and questions to which answers seem
receding now:

Darr lagta hai

Insaan ki naslon ko , pairon mein rondaa hai, chand logon ne!

Jaago, jaago, jaagte raho...

Phir giri garden, sir katne lage hain

Log bat te hi, khuda batne lage hain

Naam jo pooche koi, darr lagta hai

Kis ko pooje koi, darr lagta hai

Kitni baar mujhe sooli pe taanga hai, chand logon ne!

Jaago, jaago, jagte raho...

(Hu Tu Tu)

(100 Lyrics of Gulzar)

Curtain Raiser: Poet-Filmmaker



I strongly believe writers must be aware of what is happening in the world and have a strong sense of values. They do not have to be activists or be actively involved with politics, but believing in some kind of ideology is essential. I don't really know whether to call it ideology because ideology is not necessarily political. (In the Company of a Poet, 46)

I would like my writing to speak of the history unfolding around me – literature must be a record of its time. (CP, 110)

Gulzar has not directed any film since the turn of the century, after his politically searing *Hu Tu Tu* was released in 1999. True, it was not a major box office success, unlike many of his earlier films. Its take on corruption in high places and the power games that lead to dehumanisation and cynicism; and the toll taken by this brazen acceptance of an amoral worldview, by the custodians of an unjust social order, particularly on young, idealistic minds, was something that, perhaps, a society increasingly in the grip of globalisation and the rising consumerist culture wanted to push out of sight. Sadly, it remains till today, the last of Gulzar's social and political commentaries on contemporary India. "I entered the world of films reluctantly and walked away by choice", he says at the end of the extensive Conversation with Nasreen Munni Kabir (CP). The choice may have been dictated by the terms of reference in Bollywood, within the framework of which Gulzar made some of his finest films, but which, increasingly, is very high on the entertainment quotient, and social and political issues are either absent or are addressed in either a superficial or a pedantic manner.

Flashback to the first film of Gulzar – *Mere Apne* (1971), which became a kind of signature film for much of the work that was to follow: a hardcore social issue, with memorable characters, who, in their idealism, fail to estimate the evil that works in insidious ways to destroy their world and their faith; evil, - inherent both in human nature and in systems – an encounter with which brings suffering and maturity. Coming of Age films in which characters like the old widow in *Mere Apne* learn to sustain in the harsh realities; and as they suffer, they reaffirm the human values they stand for. The deep humanism which becomes the bedrock of socially/politically sensitive films like *Maachis*, *Hu Tu Tu*, *New Delhi Times*, *Namkeen* and *Achanak*, is also the mainstay of the bitter-sweet, more romantic films like *Kitab*, *Ijazzat*, *Kinara*, *Khusboo* and *Parichay*.

Rooted strongly in the particular problems of the volatile post independence India, the three films, *Mere Apne*, *Maachis* and *Hu Tu Tu*, form a natural trilogy traversing the journey from the days of student disillusionment, unrest and unemployment rampant in the 1970s, to the heyday of Panjab terrorism, which destroyed an entire young generation in the 1980s, to the cynical destruction of all norms

of social and political decency and the open near-legitimisation of corruption at the highest levels of the socio-political spectrum in the 1990s; - Gulzar has put his finger on the pulse of the nagging problems that define the three decades in which these three films were made. Given the surfeit of disturbances that the nation has gone through, it can hardly be said that these films represent fully the times in which they have been made; activists, and even political commentators would be quick to point out that Gulzar's work does not take up contentious issues, and in a film like *Aandhi*, he soft peddles one of the most traumatic intervals of recent Indian history – the authoritarianism of Indira Gandhi, and the role played by her in the decline of national institutions. However, it must be remembered that Gulzar works within the framework, not of realism and social documentation, but within the parameters of the romantic vision and the heroic mode.

Mere Apne (1971) – with its strong „elegiac undertone“ (Chatterjee 2007: 69), a layered film about the home and the world, delineates sensitively the plight of the elderly marginalised widows of a social system which has no use for them and, more significantly, who are

economically unproductive. The new nuclear family which selfishly uses the cheap labour of near-destitute women, with distant „relatives“ forging false family ties with them, only to use them as domestic servants with minimal wages and facile emotionalisation. From the village to the city, the film delves into the issues of enforced migration and the rootlessness that takes over, when in the heartless household, the widow slowly learns the realities that shake her innocence and force her to acknowledge the soulless realities of urban living. From the warmth and security of the village home to the cold insensitivity of the urban household, and then into the streets, the film propels the viewer into taking stock of the plight of the street children, the world of frustrated, unemployed young men, caught up in gang wars, apart from the pressing concern about the exploitation of elderly women. It is also about a generation which is acutely conscious of its failure and the failure of the systems that have bred them. In many ways, *Mere Apne*, is a relentless film, in which the only redemption that is possible is through suffering, death and penance. It is the humanity and intrinsic sense of dignity of the widow, the ultimate sacrifice of her brutal death on the Mumbai streets that offers the ray

of hope to the redemption of the young men who have slid inexorably into the alleys of crime.

Maachis (1996) – made eight years after Operation Bluestar and the assassination of Indira Gandhi takes up the issue of young innocents caught up in the crossfire between the hardcore militants of the Khalsitan movement in Panjab and the oppressive state machinery. Placing the atrocities committed by both sides within the larger context of the partition of the Indian nation in 1947, the film is about wounds that lie unhealed and which open up every time a fresh wave of violence is let loose in the name of religion and community. The manipulations by the political class, police brutality, the ruthlessness of the terrorists - all form part of the narrative in which an innocent joke/ prank becomes the sinister starting point for the needless human tragedy that unfolds in all its terror and beauty. The film shows how Kirpal, Jassi and Veeran are entangled in an intricate web, in which they forge the deepest human bonding and come face to face with the most brazen deceit, cruelty and destruction. All the characters in this enchantingly painful film are men and women with a mission: the terrorists and the representatives of the state machinery are baying for

blood – blood with which they hope to avenge the injustices they have faced. The missionary passion of the youngsters in this saga of vendetta contrasts with the cold calculativeness of the powers in control of both the terrorist groups and the state functionaries. Their heroism in their desperation and helplessness adds dignity to their sordid lives and terrifying deaths. Significantly, the sympathy for the terrorists and the victims of terrorism is palpable, while the harshest criticism is leveled against the representatives of the state – the politicians and the police.

Hu Tu Tu (1999) carries the themes of *Maachis* forward in a different locale and situation. Malti Barve's journey from the rural environs to the highest seats of power in the metropolis, Mumbai, in Maharashtra is one in which loss of innocence, lust for power, unabashed assault on and degeneration of human relationships, dehumanisation and increasing criminalisation of the governing classes emerge as the norm. The nexus between the political and the business class, builders and the crime world is in sharp contrast with the social commitment of the old communist schoolmaster, the revolutionary poet and the offspring of the two power centres (political and business). The

idealism of the young protagonists, their growing disenchantment with the systems in which they are victimised, and their acts of rebellion against money power and political power become the battlefield for the conflicts between generations, between the status quo and the desire for a more decent social order, between a defunct moral order and the stirrings of conscience. Death ends all, literally, in this dark tragedy. The futility is all that remains. And a strong reiteration of the belief that it is only in the resuscitation of human values, goodness and integrity that the social order will endure.

The thematic unity of these three films is obvious. Rooted in the heroic mode, all three of them romanticise the struggle in the very personae of the protagonists. The old widow in *Mere Apne*, Kirpal and Veeran in *Maachis* and Panna and Adi in *Hu Tu Tu*, are characters who dare to question the status quo in their own individual ways, feel strongly the injustices that are being perpetrated by dominant power structures (family, state, class, insurgents) and increasingly become aware that these injustices are destroying the body politic and hitting out at the very base of a decent social order. This converts their individual fights into causes and their brutal deaths are raised from the

level of personal tragedy to symbols of victimhood and heroism, - emerging as the conscience of the times.

Violence and brutality engendered by social inequities, injustice, political aspirations and the naked and cynical pursuit of power, form the base of all three films: the particular events that they are centred around are broadly representative of their times; the gangwars in the 1970s, which attracted the urban youth in their desperate quest for quick-fix solutions to their dilemmas, the reprisal that the terrorists and Sikhs had to face after the quelling of the Khalistan movement with Operation Bluestar, the assassination of Indira Gandhi and the anti-Sikh riots in 1984, and the legitimisation of corruption in the political agenda in the 1980s and 1990s. At a time when depiction of violence, especially with the advent of the angry young man figure in the 1970s (*Zanjeer* was released in 1973, just two years after *Mere Apne*) was becoming voyeuristic and an instrument of desensitisation, a „crowd-puller“, a staple of entertainment, and gory details of crime and murders were being applauded in films that catered to the atavistic instincts of the audiences, Gulzar's concern with violence and brutality as disruptive and destructive forces, which needed to be

stemmed, stands out in stark contrast. As against the individual quest of the protagonists in films like *Zanjeer*, *Sholay*, and others, where token service is paid to social issues, and where the valour and the injustices directed at the protagonist are foregrounded, and his victory and glorification, therefore, is *essential*, in these three films of Gulzar, the protagonists are always subservient to the narrative and the forces that conspire against them. And their death is essential and *inevitable* to make the point that no individual is strong and powerful enough to take on a system single-handed; if some kind of justice is to be meted out to them, it will be done not only through their own courage and bravery (though this aspect is not discredited at all, and the protagonists *have to* take the initial and decisive steps), but through the entire transformation of the system in which their conflicts are rooted. In that sense, the sharply-etched protagonists of these three films are representative of larger realities. As in all tragedy, it is the very failure of men and women with conscience that emerges as their glory and redemption also.

In Gulzar's vision, human tragedies are not futile or gory, but uplifting. Again, neither of the three films offer any hope at the end.

Unlike Shakespearean tragedy which speaks of the restoration of order („All calm of mind, all passion spent" – Milton in *Samson Agonistis*), this does not happen in *Mere Apne*, *Maachis* and *Hu Tu Tu*. *Maachis* does provide documentary evidence that the state has taken up the responsibility of punishing all those who were responsible of the excesses in Panjab, but it is a mere token, perhaps even mere tokenism in the light of the gravity of the tragedy portrayed all along. The film, by showing the blurring of the boundary lines between terrorists and citizens, between friendship and treachery, between the Cause and its repression, is a reminder of the complex and conflicting relations that this kind of situation fosters. In *Maachis*, all the deaths are, simultaneously, revenge, vindication and justice. In *Mere Apne*, the death of the widow on the streets, homeless and destitute, serves to tug at the conscience of the two gangs, who have brought it about, thus making her a symbol for the nation (Mother India), and at least hints at the soul searching that will follow and the possibility of a moral redemption of the young boys; and the images of the street children, tragically abandoned by the mother figure, is a powerful emblem that continues to haunt the viewer, and forces the reality on the consciousness of the nation. *Hu Tu Tu*, the most cynical

of the three films, offers no such solace. The human bombs that destroy their parents as revenge for what they have done to the system, do not achieve anything much beyond the revenge. After the blasts, what? The closing scene in which you are back to the village, the only surviving member of the doomed family taking on the responsibility of nurturing a new generation in human values, is the film's salute to the undying human spirit and to the hope that the change that you wish to bring in may not happen in your lifetime, but you cannot stop working for it.

In one of his poems, W B Yeats says, "A terrible beauty is born." The connection between terror and beauty, and despair giving rise to and nurturing a strong sense of the lyrical and the beautiful is strongly reminiscent of vision expressed by Viktor Frankl in his account of the holocaust, *Man's Search For Meaning*, and is intrinsic to the three films under discussion. *Maachis*, particularly, with the camera caressing the lush landscape of Panjab and Himachal Pradesh is the work of a cinematographic-poet. The visuals in all the three films, whether of locales or people are stunning. Also significant are the moments of sheer romanticism between the characters, - whether it is

the exchanges between the young Anandi and her husband in *Mere Apne*, or the moments of happiness snatched by Veeran and Kirpal under the shadow of imminent disaster and death, or the bonding between Panna and her father when he confesses to his daughter his knowledge of his son's illegitimacy, - reinforces the romanticism within the cynical framework of the films. Or is it the other way round? That it is cynicism that is framed in the romantic vision? Apart from providing a rich cinematic experience, this breathtaking beauty of relationships, (Gulzar is, ultimately, the poet of relationships), the point that is underlined by it is that happiness is to be found or rather discovered only in moments – fleeting moments, at that – and in the darkest of hours, it is these moments that add meaning to life.

Beauty through visuals, beauty of poignant moments, and beauty of language – all combine to create the ambience and the power of the three films. Essentially a poet, Gulzar's lyrics, in the three films, are not mere embellishments. Standing as great poetry by themselves, the lyrics are thematic and coalesce with their overall vision. Gulzar has often stated that his lyrics ("In Conversation with a Poet") are written, keeping in mind the ethos of the films, the characters and their social background, the language habits of the characters and their locale.

This is evident in the „revolutionary“ songs in *Mere Apne* and *Hu Tu Tu*. *Maachis* does not have overtly revolutionary songs; instead the angst is expressed in songs which sing of the tragedy inherent in the situation – songs of loss and longing, steeped in nostalgia. Using folk rhythms and forms, - the bhangra in *Maachis*, the lavni in *Hu Tu Tu*, not only help in localising the narrative, but also use the essential features and emotional impact of these forms in strengthening the core aspects of the films. „Pure poetry“ as in “Roz akeli aaye” (which could not be used in the film, but remains the most popular song of *Mere Apne* till today), „Paani Paani Re/ Khare Paani Re“ in *Maachis*, and “Chai Chhapa Chai/ Chappa ke Chai” in *Hu Tu Tu* create the mood of nostalgia, pain, joy, longing, happiness, robustness – giving expression to the entire gamut and range of emotions that the films dare to include.

This „Curtain Raiser“ on the three films indicates the direction this study will take in the forthcoming chapters. I have deliberately kept away from the other films of Gulzar, mentioning them only in passing, because I would not like the focus on these three films to be diluted. I am aware of the dangers of this kind of exclusion or

„inclusiveness“ in my approach; but since my main aim is an in depth analysis of the three films, I will have to risk the wrath of all those who would advocate a more broad-based or comparative, inter-textual approach. I would not wish to miss the trees for the woods in this case. If God lies in the details, as Albert Einstein has said, who am I to challenge the wisdom of so great a man? Especially, when it suits me so well! So, it will be the finer details that I will be looking for in the next few chapters. For those who wish to take a holistic view of the oeuvre of Gulzar, the bibliography at the end of this work – in which both his literature and his films have been included, will take care of it.

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My study of the three films is, as is obvious by now, based on my first hand and persistent viewing of them, the cross connections I make between them and my sporadic film viewing and my training in literary studies. Again, I do not desire to take a pedantic view of Gulzar’s work, and there is no particular theory or ideological base in which I ground my observations. Being based in the practice of literary analysis, the cinematic aspects takes a back seat very often and principles of cinematography are used sparingly and thematic matters

are at the forefront. Though, I do draw freely from all that I have internalised due to my love for films and literature and my decades-long relationship with both.

“Bollywood” a term used to describe mainstream Hindi films made by the Mumbai film industry, - a term which I believe is of recent origin, is a term I have avoided in the entire work. I have even tried to steer clear of expressions like commercial cinema, arts films, middle-of-the-road films, avante garde cinema, since my exploration is basically impressionistic and I would prefer not to pigeon-hole the work of a sensitive film-maker. Cinema, like the act of reading, is direct experience, and it is this direct experience that I seek to recreate in the course of my journey into this work.

Scene I: Cynicism/ Cut to Social Unrest



Scene I: Cynicism/ Cut to Social Unrest

I always ask myself one question: what is human? What does it mean to be human? Maybe people will consider my new films brutal again. But this violence is just a reflection of what they really are, of what is in each one of us to certain degree.

(Kim Ki-duk)

“Is generation ke paas savaal bahut hai”

“Jawab bhi toh nahi milte”

(Adi in Hu Tu Tu)

Violence is an integral part of the worldview of the three films – *Mere Apne*, *Maachis* and *Hu Tu Tu*, since all of them deal with conflicting and tragic situations prevalent in the social order of the day. Among the most powerful visuals in all three of them are scenes which depict the death of some of the important characters. In *Mere Apne*, the shots of the election campaign riots in which Anandi Devi is shot dead accidentally by one of the boys of the criminal gangs is haunting, as also are the following shots of the ambulance which picks her up, the lone child in the empty street who wails for her death, and the pair of her *mojaris* that remain as mute witness of the tragic events, after the body has been taken away. The swiftness with which all this happens adds to its intensity and pathos, underlining the needless killing of innocent citizens in such encounters, among other things. Similarly, in *Maachis*, the opening shots are unforgettable: a dark, eerie, hostile night, a deep well, the sounds of the drawing of water from the well, and the dead body of a Sikh, hair and beard open and drenched, who has committed suicide, dangling from a rope as it is taken out from the well, while the police officers look on either in boredom or with some „official“ anxiety writ on their faces. In *Hu Tu Tu* the death of Anna Sawantrao Gadre, mentor of Malti Barve, bleeding to death at a

wayside station, after a pre-planned electric shock from the geyser, because orders have been given that the train in which he is to be brought to the city is to be held up at the signal till he dies, is not brutal in the normal sense of the word. It is cunningly contrived with a cold calculation that speaks for the brutality of the mindset which can arrange for such a death, without appearing to be anywhere in the picture. Villainy and violence by proxy, seems to be the norm in politics. These three scenes, taken from each of the films, form the base of the exploration of the violence that stems from the mentality that has made them happen: in *Mere Apne*, the agency is identifiable: it is Shyam's bullet that kills Nani, as she is called by the boys. In *Maachis*, it is the third degree torture by the state police force that Jassi is subject to, that forces his suicide. But in *Hu Tu Tu*, there is no identifiable hand that wields the weapons of destruction: it all happens at the behest of the „higher ups“ – a fact that is well known to all, but which has left no trace with which to nail the culprits. True, that while the deaths of Nani and Jassi rattle the conscience of the viewer with their injustice and meaninglessness, the cold murder of Anna does not invoke a sense of guilt in viewers, because it is made clear that he is as much a perpetrator as victim of the setup that finally gets him. In a

sense, therefore, *Hu Tu Tu* is a film about the complete loss of innocence and, at least, a passive vindication of the old adages like „he who lives by the sword will die by the sword" or „As you sow, so you reap".

Mere Apne is, perhaps, one of the earliest films in which youth unrest as a social phenomenon is the basic and dominant theme. Earlier, a film called *Nayi Umar Ki Nayi Fasal* (1965) spoke about students and their involvement in politics, and, its overall message was that students should stay away from politics, and concentrate on their education, because the involvement of students in political life is counterproductive and a waste of the years that need to be used fruitfully in their preparation for life. *Mere Apne*, which displays a more sympathetic attitude to youngsters and is conscious of their struggles, helplessness and hopelessness, is set in the early part of 1971, before the 14-day Bangla Desh War between India and Pakistan, when the „civil war" between the two wings of Pakistan has started a regular flow of refugees from the erstwhile East Pakistan to India, and there was pressure on the Indian Government to intervene in the neighbourhood strife. Two years before that Prime Minister

Indira Gandhi had arrived as a leader with an iron will and firm hand, with particularly two decisions which had a far-reaching impact on the body polity of India – the splitting of the Indian National Congress, leading to the marginalisation of senior Party leaders, and the nationalisation of 14 public sector banks. In a way, these decisions marked the beginning of the change from and disillusionment with the Nehruvian idealistic vision to a more pragmatic, even cynical idea of governance. It marked the realisation that idealism had failed and that new ways of handling the situation were required. The location in time of *Mere Apne* is very significant. Two years after Mrs Gandhi had established herself as the Supreme leader of the Congress, just a few months away from being acknowledged as a powerful leader of the nation who could take tough decisions and lead the nation to a victory over Pakistan, and four years before the declaration of the Emergency in 1975.

Similarly, *Maachis*, is located in troubled, volatile times and is about specific historical happenings: the aftermath of the Khalistan movement, the assassination of Indira Gandhi as revenge for Operation Bluestar and the massacre of the Sikhs in New Delhi and

the hunt for insurgents in Panjab in its wake. It is one of the earliest attempts in either literature or cinema to explore the wounded psyche of the nation in the light of these traumatic happenings following the 1984 anti-Sikh riots in Delhi, and it has been criticised as taking a soft line and a facile view of Partition and post-Partition trauma. Also noteworthy is the fact that it was made nearly twelve years after 1984, when the tragic events, perhaps, could be viewed in a perspective, with the advantage of the distancing in time to make the portrayal more objective, perhaps. Not necessarily, though. The first Indian English novel to emerge from this experience, Partap Sharma's *The Days of the Turban* (1986) was published just two years after the tragic happenings and recently Amandeep Sandhu's *Roll of Honour* (2012): nearly three decades have gone by and the paucity of literary output or cinematic representation of the events points to the delayed response that traumatic events provoke in India; perhaps, even in South Asia.

The location in time of *Hu Tu Tu*, in 1999, when globalisation and the rising influence of the middle classes and the consumerist ideology, marks it has a futuristic film, since corruption issues had always been

a major concern of these classes since they were directly affected by it. Also, by 1999, ethical and moral issues no longer dominated the psyche of the nation, and corruption in public life was seen more as an irritant, and a political issue rather than a moral issue. The politician-builders nexus had been the subject of other films of the 1980s and 1990s. *Hu Tu Tu* gave it a deeper attention than earlier films. The anger that seethes in *Hu Tu Tu* is directed at failing and degenerate institutions and institutional practices rather than at individuals.

The family as a site of suspicion and violence is a common feminist perception, but in Gulzar's films, this perception is present, though in a subtler manner. In *Maachis*, however, the family remains a safe haven, idyllic and full of warm bonding. No doubt, entire families are destroyed in the wake of terrorism, but the family as a unit sustains, and this makes *Maachis* a film which harks back to the family as a source of sustenance. However, *Maachis* also provides an exploration into a larger concept of family – the terrorist groups consider themselves as one large family, (even though the Chief warns against it, when he tells Kirpal that if he wants to revenge himself on the policemen who have brutalised Jassi, he will have to do it himself; all

that he can expect from „them“ is „protection“ and the weapons). The lack of conscience and sense of values within the domestic setup is the highpoint of *Mere Apne* and *Hu Tu Tu*, while in *Maachis* the idyll surrounding family relationships is kept alive.

As mentioned earlier, it is not surprising that the three films end with the death of the protagonist – death is inevitable in all their cases: the message of the films is that it is the *system* that is responsible for the tragedies and no act of individual courage or valour can change the system. At the most, what can be achieved is an awakening of the conscience of the community groups to which one belongs.

The family becomes the site of insensitivity and exploitation in *Mere Apne* when, the urban couple living at Allahabad, bring Anandi home with false promises of love and bonding. Leaving a peaceful life behind in the village where she lives alone and where has a regular source of income by virtue of the mangroves she owns, Anandi comes to a home where she is dependent even for the basic needs of existence on the so-called „love“ and „affection“ of the „family“. She is happy to take care of the child of the couple, and perform chores for

the family as both the husband and wife are employed, and they need someone to look after the child, so that they can find some time to spend with each other. The jibes they have at her innocence reveal their insensitivity and their casual selfishness. It is left to the servant of the family (played by Leela Misra) to draw Anandi's attention to the fact that she has been brought to the town only because of her „usefulness“, and that it would be only right for her to ask for fair wages for the work that she does for them. This point is reinforced very strongly when another „distant relative“ comes in search of her, and by which time Anandi has become wise to the situation. Gulzar's understanding of social and gender issues is marked by subtlety and compassion, and he is, perhaps, the first Hindi filmmaker to raise the issue of paid domestic work – an issue which has found favour with women's rights activists only recently in India, and that too, only on a theoretical level, yet. Further, her old-fashioned views about the dress sense, hair etc are tolerated only because the couple does not take her seriously. To them, she is, in effect, a servant; nothing more.

Another significant, but unobtrusive detail of the place of Anandi in the urban „family“ space is that she lives with the couple only for

about a month. When Shyam goes to collect her wages he asks for ₹ 20/- which would be her wages for a month. She is driven out of the home in no time, as soon as she is perceived as a nuisance by them, when she brings a street child home and feeds him. She is thrown out unceremoniously by those who claim to be her relations, and she finds shelter on the streets with the two homeless children. Her desire to find her „*apne*“ leads her, ironically, to the streets, where she bonds with strangers who share a common homelessness and a loveless existence. The fast pace of the film derives from the fact that the insensitive family fades into oblivion as soon as Anandi moves out of their domain, and they are never featured again.

Gulzar does not, however, discount the warmth of family life in either *Mere Apne* or *Maachis*. In a flashback to her marital home, the film depicts Anandi's hardship in understanding her husband, who is violent and caring at the same time. Her *suhaag raat* leaves her in terror of her husband who is a member of a local *nautanki* group, because of his harsh behavior, which is the result of the patriarchal upbringing which he has internalised. But as time passes, we find her gaining control over the situation, and coming into her own and

keeping step with her man who, emerges as an idealist and a supporter of the freedom struggle (reminiscent of a similar situation in Bimal Roy's *Bandini*, in which the on-the-run freedom fighter is sheltered by a family/ woman. Maybe, this is one of the many unobtrusive tributes that Gulzar pays to his mentor in his films). His death, during a rescue operation during the partition riots, establishes his goodness and his basic humanity, giving him a heroic halo. It is important to note that these flashbacks indicate that Anandi is no stranger to violence and the outside world. Even though all her life has been spent in the village, she has encountered the social and political world in which her husband moves and operates. She comes across as a strong woman, capable of standing up for herself, and later on, for others; in short, for standing up for what she believes to be right.

Cynicism with family relationships is inbuilt and vital to both the families depicted in *Hu Tu Tu*. With power as the central operating force, adultery, illegitimacy, discord, and callousness define the relations within the Barve and the Patel families. Both Panna Barve and Adi Patel are disillusioned by the stark obeisance which her mother and his father pay to the lust for power – both economic as

well as political. Malti Barve's betrayal of her husband and her illicit liaison with Sawntrao Gadre draw the first stone of revolt from Panna when she is a child. Malti's language, whenever she speaks to Panna, is invariably abusive, partly, also, because she is a girl child, thus foregrounding the question of gender. Her son (illegitimate, because he is Anna's child) takes after her, and is well on the road to becoming her heir in the political world, both practically and ideologically. Even when Panna has an accident and her miscarriage is made known to Malti, the mother is hardly concerned about her daughter's health or delicate state of mind. In fact, one of Panna's grouses is that Malti does not even ask the doctor whether the stillborn child was a son or a daughter. When Panna is kidnapped, Malti talks loftily about placing the interests of the „people“ above her own personal interest for the sake of an undefined social good. Unlike a film like *Trishul* in which the conflicting father-son relationship is actually based on a deep love and bonding between them, the relationship between Panna and her mother is completely unredeemed. Nowhere in the film, except in the very last scene, does Malti show any soft feelings for Panna. It is not hatred that Malti feels for Panna: she is absolutely indifferent to her, - right from childhood;

in fact, she considers her as a roadblock in her ambitious progress. Similarly, Adi is alienated from a father for whom, money power and status far over ride all other considerations. The film has only one scene which shows the father-son together and it is a confrontation, in which the father's contempt for Adi's way of living, and his idealism is placed in the context of the urban land grabbing and slum razing that has marked the landscape of Mumbai. His father, obviously, considers Adi to be a wastrel, who does not understand the value of hard-earned wealth because he has been born and brought up in the cradle of luxury. Further, Adi's affiliation with the slum dwellers, his work with them, his deep respect for his school master and the revolutionary poet, Bhau, who have shaped his thinking process, is initially regarded as juvenile, and as the film progresses, as downright dangerous. A very shrewd, but unstated comment on the shrinking nuclear family in the upper echelons of the social spectrum, and the noose-like hold on the younger members, who are seen as heirs to vast fortunes, forms the subtext of the father-son relationship in *Hu Tu Tu*: there are only two members in this family, both male, and they are alienated from each other. Not only is the mother not present in the film, there is no mother figure or mother presence which is ever

evoked in it. The family to which Adi belongs, is, therefore, arid, hostile, suspicious and crafty, as also is Panna's family. In this, again, *Hu Tu Tu* goes against the grain of the typical mainstream Hindi film, which valorises the family as an island-space of security, peace and love; sometimes with aberrations, no doubt; but, with aberrations that are open to correction.

In *Maachis* the family is actually the idyllic island-space of security, peace and love, which is disrupted and finally and completely destroyed by the intrusion of political unrest into the domestic space. This aspect will be explored in detail in the next chapter. Here a few comments on the simulated/ substitute family which the young terrorists start depending on, its seeming offer of emotional bonding and the false and deceptive sense of camaraderie that it generates. After their family lives are threatened/ destroyed, both Kirpal and Veeran come together in the scenic beauty of the hills which form their hideout and haven for a brief time. It has all the features of a close knit and intimate family: the relationship between the couple is understood and they are provided the necessary space and privacy for the few moments of happiness that they are able to steal. Veeran

immediately takes over the role of the responsible daughter-in-law vis-à-vis Sanatan, and *bhabhi* for the other boys – cooking for them, cleaning and washing up, and creating a warm circle of domesticity around them. Already, Kirpal has met the boy Jimmy, who has seen the brutal murder of his father by the Delhi MLA, Kedarnath, has stabbed him and believing him to be dead, has sought refuge with the terrorist group in charge of Sanatan. The ironical twist of fate that brings him and Kirpal together is that Jassi, Veeran's brother, has been destroyed because his dog's name happens to be Jimmy; and when the police officer, S K Vohra, comes in search of the absconding Jimmy, Jassi leads him to the dog and the inspector takes it as an affront to his authority, and takes brutal revenge by arresting Jassi on trumped up charges. The only one who does not share the emotional bond which binds Paali (Kirpal), Jimmy (Jaimal), Kuldeep, Vazira and Sanatan, is the Chief or Commander, who remain immune to any human feeling. All the others bond in their desperation and because of the wounded psyches they carry within them. Yet, once the bubble bursts, all of them become thirsty for each other's blood and each of them succeeds in killing the other.

The first casualty is Kuldeep. Facing imminent arrest by the police for carrying ammunition supplies, he escapes with a few injuries and returns to the shelter, having faced a close encounter with death. In his panic, he pleads with the „group“ to let him go home and give up terrorist activities. His fear and terror are palpable and real. Sanatan recognises that he has become a threat to the organisation, and decides to let him go. But he is too dangerous alive; on his way home, in the beautiful mustard fields that he traverses, and the lovely lilt of a man returning to the home that he has left behind him, the bomb placed in his bag explodes. His death has been a certainty ever since he has expressed his panic. Before he can reach his family fold, his simulated family demolishes him.

A similar fate awaits all of them, once Kirpal is arrested. Immediately, all bonds are snapped: Veeran, who stands by Kirpal, is under suspicion and Jimmy is given the charge to guard her and kill her if the police discover the hideout. She kills him instead and then launches her hunt for Sanatan, whom she finally tracks down and shoots. No grain of fellow feeling or warmth for the harmonious times they have shared together under the shadow of death remains to stay

any of their hands. Their emotions for each other have been, no doubt intense and genuine, while they lasted, but they are, finally, temporary, short-lived and transient.

One of the significant features that bind the three films together is that the conflicts that they focus on are set within the larger social framework. All interpersonal conflicts are rooted in class, the social milieu and the political spectrum. The films are layered with various dimensions to the social and personal angles, each running into the other, but each of the films has a dominant political theme that frames it and within whose framework all other conflicts are located. Youth unrest is the underlying motif, and it is related to the special political ethos in which each film is historically placed: in *Mere Apne*, youth unrest is primarily due to the failure of the education system, with the incumbent unemployment, lack of focus and direction in the younger generation which consequently provides human fodder to the political class during electoral clashes and student unrest movements in the late 1960s and the 1970s; Also, looming large in the background is the imminent war with Pakistan in December 1971 and the increasing cynicism in the public and political life of the nation.

In *Maachis*, Gulzar, as we have seen earlier takes on terrorism vis-à-vis the Khalistan movement and the aftermath of Operation Bluestar, the assassination of the Prime Minister, under whose command Operation Bluestar was carried out, and the backlash to this assassination in which thousands of Sikhs were brutally killed with the connivance of the ruling Congress government. The Sikh youth, who have helplessly witnessed the reign of terror let loose by the state machinery and seen their kin brutalised for trivial reasons (as in the case of Jassi) or those who have lost their family members in police encounters or the Delhi riots, go out in search of like-minded people who would help them to take revenge and run into the likes of Sanatan. One of the important aspects of *Maachis* is that Gulzar opens the question as to whether the Khalistan Movement is a homogenous, centralised movement, or whether it is a hit-and-run movement which draws sustenance from the mentally scarred youth caught up in the idea of revenge for what they have seen. The question he poses is: Is it a movement or a counter movement? The answers are not clear. All that emerges is that there is some kind of organisation, whose cold, visible face is The Chief, who is the only one among the terrorists whose personal relation or equation to the „movement“ is unknown

and who is just the Chief without a name and without a personal history and, therefore, with a strong but calculated mission in mind. Sanatan, the other „senior“ and the actual mentor of the young boys, places all their action beyond the immediate happenings and harks back to the Partition trauma and links the current events to the forces that were let loose in the Indian subcontinent in 1947. The indoctrination and training of Kirpal by Sanatan has been seen as a weakness in the film, because what Sanatan presents is a straightened out and prejudiced view of history. But it must be remembered that only such „false“ and one-sided views of historical processes can nurture the terrorist mentality: it is Sanatan's, not Gulzar's account of partition and the 1984 riots, and the filmmaker is expressing the character's anger. It would not be right to view Sanatan as the mouthpiece of the film-maker.

Each of the other boys has a personal agenda, and as the Chief tells Kirpal, if they are out for the sake of vendetta, they will have to work it out on their individual levels, and „we“ will supply the ammunition and the protection. The word „protection“ itself takes on sinister overtones in this context: only one of the terrorists (Kirpal) in this

group is subject to third degree treatment by the police and the state. Three of them are killed by members of the group itself and two commit suicide and choose to escape police brutality in this manner. So what does the „protection“ amount to anyway?

The protagonists of *Hu Tu Tu* differ from the protagonists of *Mere Apne* and *Maachis* in a very important manner: they choose to become victims because they both belong to the class that wields power. They are, therefore, in one sense already protected. They move out of this protection zone, because they rebel against what they see in their own social and political class and they take on the system of which they are a part. They are witnesses and not active agents in the events that unfold initially, as they watch the injustices that are meted out to the lowest classes, the slum dwellers in the city of Mumbai, by the political class-builders nexus. Corruption in high places, which has become the rallying point for the middle classes in the first two decades of the 21st century (Anna Hazare) and which has been drawn in broad, sometimes comic, outlines in *Mere Apne* is the point de departure of *Hu Tu Tu*. The victims and martyrs in this film are the revolutionary Bhau and the idealist school master, both of whom are

the conscience of the community and the rallying points for the brutalised population that makes up the underbelly of the city. Both pose a challenge to the establishment and the power brokers; hence, both are eliminated in different ways. Their removal from the scene is also necessary for the political class, as punishment for Panna and Aditya, both of whom have been „led astray“ by them and have dared to bypass social boundaries. Panna and Aditya are not the disempowered: they choose to be on the side of the disempowered because they are in a vantage position, from which they can see in close-up mode the atrocities inflicted upon the dispossessed by the perpetrators of an unjust and dehumanised political system.

As is obvious from the foregoing discussion, the three films – *Mere Apne*, *Maachis* and *Hu Tu Tu* – are all crafted around the violence and traumas that are a natural corollary of the ethos in which they are located. In a way, *Mere Apne*, two years before Prakash Mehra’s *Zanjeer*, anticipates the action films which were to become the staple Bollywood fare from the 1970s onwards, - films in which the violence is depicted in a voyeuristic manner, many times justified as the only method of getting justice in an unequal and tyrannical social system,

and glorified as being macho (*mardangi*) and a sign of courage and bravery. In fact, violence at the end of any popular film in the 1960s, was a *fait accompli*, and the hero had the legitimate right to bash up the villain/s in order to destroy them (rarely) or reform them (often).

In Gulzar, the attitude to violence marks a definite turning away from these trends. In the three films under scrutiny, violence is an unfortunate part of a system which needs to be reformed, and Gulzar questions the unqualified acceptance of it. The violent outbreaks in *Mere Apne* – the fights that break out between the two gangs is often viewed through the perspective of either the elderly parents of the boys, the two street children, or Anandi,- all of whom are the unwitting victims of the fighting. Maybe not in the Gandhian sense, but in its essence violence is seen to be counter-productive and it carries a sense of guilt with it. When Nani/Anandi is killed, it is a moment of conscience for both the warring groups. Throughout the films, too, nowhere is the violence glorified or projected as a value. It is tragic and it leads to tragedy – tragedy for the older generation represented by Anandi, who makes the ultimate sacrifice, tragedy for the two homeless children who are thrown back into the streets after

her death, tragedy for the youth who see clearly the wasted years behind and, perhaps, ahead of them. „The pity of war, the pity of war distilled“ as Wilfred Owen has said in another gruesome context. The scenes of the violence in this film are brutal, no doubt, but, there is no camera lingering over the gory details, which would appeal to the atavistic instincts of the audiences.

Given the inherent and dominant „idea“ of violence in *Maachis* and *Hu Tu Tu*, the actual depiction of it in both of them is sparing, and even bare. This may not appear to be the case on a first viewing, but a closer look at both the films reveals that even though *Hu Tu Tu* has large scale violence inscribed into it, - as in the scenes in which the slums are razed and the brutality that is unleashed on the protesting slum dwellers, and in the final explosion in which all the protagonists are destroyed. What is disturbing about this film, though, is that in all of Gulzar's work, it is the only film in which the revenge motive is justified; perhaps it is a sad acknowledgement in the film that violence **can** be the ultimate form of justice; and the viewers are expected to feel a sense of fulfillment and catharsis in the just killing of Malti and Patel. In *Maachis* the killings of all the terrorists is seen as inevitable,

but open to question. Preventable tragedies, which, had the situation been handled with political and administrative will and maturity, need not have taken place at all. In *Mere Apne*, the death of Anandi is the ultimate martyrdom, which will serve the purpose of making the characters and viewers introspect and question the validity of this way of dying and killing of innocents.

Otherwise, especially in *Maachis* and *Hu Tu Tu*, violence is portrayed more in its effects rather than in action: the opening scenes of *Maachis* show the limp dead body, and the ennui on the face of the police inspector and his boredom shows that such custodial deaths are a routine matter for the police. The senior officer, Khurana, upbraids his junior that the torture that is inflicted upon prisoners should not have exceeded their capacity of bear it, proving that it is the third degree treatment that Jassi is subject to that forces him to commit suicide. As the film progresses, we see that the youthful, happy and cheerful Jassi is arrested on flimsy charges; when he returns, the wounds on his body have their own story to tell. No amount of footage of actual torture in the lock up would have produce the impact which his bruised body, as it collapses in the arms of Paali, and the

agonised expression on Veeran's face does. When Sanatan and Kirpal alight from the bus which explodes in flames almost in the next few minutes, Gulzar takes a quick look at the conflagration, Kirpal's unbelieving look, and the scene fuses into the robust *Lohri* dance around the bonfire in distant Himachal Pradesh, quickly establishing the fact that Kirpal has come a long way since the bus bombing and he is now very much Sanatan's protégé now. No close ups or even long shots of bodies and limbs strewn in the debris are required to drive home the horror of the incident. Instead, the chilling truth comes home to the audience: that Paali is one of „them" now, and can even take part in their celebrations. The process of his dehumanisation has been initiated; it is to the credit of Gulzar that he does not allow this dehumanisation to be complete, and even in the worst circumstances Kirpal does not lose his basic humanity. Thus, when he set upon shooting Vohra and at that very moment the officer reaches out to hold his young son, Kirpal is not able to carry out his mission for fear of killing the child. This act of humanity destroys him, but on another level it also redeems him and establishes the faith of the film in an ethical worldview. Also, it counters the sense of achievement that is

seen on Paali's face, when he shoots a rabbit for the first time, and when he kills Khurana in cold blood in the bustling market place.

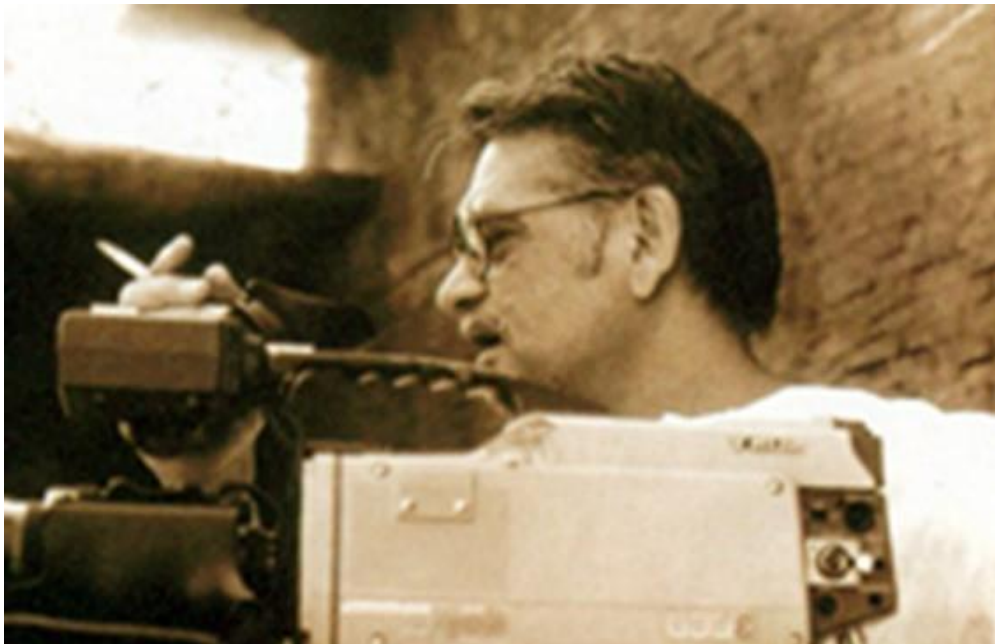
Similarly, the death of the schoolmaster in *Hu Tu Tu* and the vegetable state to which Bhau is reduced bear witness to what would have been done to them in the lock up. As far as he can avoid it, Gulzar does not show how killings take place in both *Maachis* and *Hu Tu Tu*. When Veeran kills Jimmy, it is only the sound of the pistol shot that is heard. Even when a killing is shown, as in the case of the Khurana in *Maachis*, which happens in broad daylight in a busy marketplace and in an atmosphere of domesticity and relaxation, the killing is neat and swift. Gadre's killing in *Hu Tu Tu*, is planned and executed off screen, and even when he lies bleeding to death at the wayside station where the train has been deliberately held up till the time he breathes his last, the camera does not focus on him but on the other party leaders, who discuss the happenings amongst themselves.

Cynicism may be regarded as an essentially contested concept. When used in the analysis of the domestic bonding, the socio-political scenario and the notion and depiction of violence, as has been done in

this chapter, it points to a deep rooted malaise in systems which need to be cleansed. „Something is rotten in the state of Denmark“ a la Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. The disrupted systems will lead to disaster, but they have to be cleansed if sanity is to be restored. In the three films, the mood of cynicism of the protagonists is reflected and explored. All the characters are drawn to a cynical perspective. But the films themselves are far from endorsing the view of the characters. In *Mere Apne* and in *Maachis*, the message that is strongly conveyed is that by taking on the system, standing up for what is right and by suffering for it, the individual can rise to heroic levels and help in stemming the rot. It is this belief in individual valour, coupled with the conviction that redemption is possible both on individual and societal levels, that these three films become rooted in the romantic vision that is rooted in hope, faith and truth. The assertion and affirmation of human values is what makes for the redeeming qualities of films which otherwise essay some of the darkest moments and concerns of India since the 1970s till today.

Scene III

The Eternal Romantic/ Cut to Human values



Scene III

The Eternal Romantic/ Cut to Human values

Cinema should make you forget you are sitting in a theatre.

- Roman Polanski

*I demand that a film express either the joy of making
cinema or the agony of making cinema. I am not at all
interested in anything in
between.*

– François Truffaut

In an Interview with Muse India – the literary ejournal (www.museindia.com) (No 51, September-October Issue), the novelist Amandeep Sandhu in his response to the question regarding the dearth of writing on the Khalistan Movement in Panjab, implies that *Maachis* takes a soft look at the problem, and the songs and dance sequences used in it divert from, and dilute the tragic aspects of those caught in the cross fire of the traumatic times. This attitude is in consonance with the notion that Gulzar is a romantic at heart and that by making the film „beautiful“ as „film“ - locales, the attractive actors, the songs, the background music, the robust dances, the lingering nostalgia - the basic human tragedy is undermined. It is true that Gulzar works in all the three films within the romantic mode, and the tragic and the beautiful often merge one into the other. Just one example from *Maachis* at this point to prove that his vision incorporates the tragic and the romantic in one holistic frame: there is a scene in which Paali travels by bus in search of his cousin who is reported to be a part of the terrorist movement, and he meets Sanatan for the first time. When they alight, Paali turns to Sanatan to tell him that he has left his camera behind. The bomb explosion that follows almost immediately shows the bus bursting into flames and bodies of

the unfortunate passenger-victims thrown helter-skelter; and the look on Paali's faces reveals the horror, and the realisation that dawns on him that this has been the handiwork of the man with the camera (Sanatan). The shot merges into another fire – the celebration of *lohri* in the scenic mountains, as Paali is a member of the dance group and also the terrorist group. The song (*Chappa Chappa Charkha Chale*) evokes nostalgically and with an undercurrent of loss and grief of what life could have been for these lost souls, - symbolically, the loss of innocence for the entire community and generation. The vigour and robustness mock at what fate has done to these boys and of what it has in store for them. The juxtaposition achieves graphically what close-ups of the brutal deaths could not have achieved. Then, with a shock, the viewer sees that Paali has reached his „destination“ – a destination which will now permit no escape. The entire song emerges as an ode to beauty and to grief. „A terrible beauty is born“, again. The passion that infuses all three films shows that they belong to a tradition which has created for us „an intimate and moving vision of man“ (Khopkar 2012: 11)

It is a typical feature of all the three films that scenes of violence and brutality are underplayed and Gulzar very carefully avoids the voyeuristic and atavistic emphasis on the bloodshed and the gory details. *Mere Apne* does have a number of violent encounters between the two gangs, and during the riots that erupt during the election campaigns. But it is kept to the minimum with sharp editing and humanistic foregrounding. Many tragic events are merely reported, without the use of flashback visuals – like the death of Anandi's husband in the partition riots, when he is out on rescue work. For a master of the flashback technique like Gulzar, it is his strict and artistic sense of discipline that makes it possible for him to rise above the temptation to delve visually into the past and present some scenes of devastation that would probably add to the raw emotional impact of the film. The masterful, climax scene of *Mere Apne*, the death of Anandi, is swiftly portrayed with a combination of long shots and close up, but again, the focus soon shifts from Anandi to the child who wails at her death – a strong comment on the orphaning of the generation that had come to depend on her. The Mother India motif cannot be missed in this evocative picturisation. Anandi is innocent, but she is not naïve; her strength and her ability to mould young

minds which could have been the guiding force for the betrayed generation is lost forever; but, by cutting her life short and making her a victim of situations and circumstances that are beyond her control, even understanding, the sense of irreparable loss is deepened. It also invests her with the halo of the heroic: her death is the ultimate sacrifice which can purify and cleanse and therefore, possibly, redeem a generation.

By the time, he comes to *Maachis*, Gulzar has honed the art of subtlety to an art form, and violence, which is thematically so significant, is handled in a sensitive and discreet manner. As in the scene analysed above, the violence resides in the layered depiction: police brutality, which is the mainspring of violence, is not shown on screen. The bodies of the victims, Paali and Jassi, in three crucial scenes – when Jassi's body is removed from the well in the opening shots, when he comes home after the third degree treatment he receives in police custody after he has been needlessly arrested by Vohra, and when Veeran goes to meet Paali after his arrest at the end of the film - are used as proof of the atrocities that have been committed by the law enforcing agencies. In fact, it is by „looking“ at

the bruised body of his friend, Jassi, that Kirpal sets out in quest of revenge. Whenever footage of the actual violence is used, it is done so in a documentary manner and with clinical swiftness – mostly taken from official recordings and newspaper cuttings of the drastic events. Similarly, in *Hu Tu Tu*, what happens to Bhau and the revolutionary school master in police custody is revealed only through the death of one, and the vegetative state to which the other succumbs. Even the death of Annasaheb which could have visually attracted to the audiences fed on strong doses of the gory details of brutality in mainstream cinema of the times, and his slow bleeding to death at the wayside station, are kept in low key.

It is the romantic vision of Gulzar that makes him portray the violence in the tragic rather than the melodramatic mode. As per the Aristotelian model, all three films are about larger-than-life tragic figures who stake their lives for a cause that affects human lives on a massive scale. The same courage and conviction mark the lives of Anandi, Kirpal, Veeran, Bhau, the schoolmaster, Panna and Adi. All of them are destroyed by forces larger than them: none of them are defeated though, as per the Hemmingway vision of the grand tragic

vision („Man is not born for defeat; a man can be destroyed but not defeated", he says in *The Old Man and the Sea*). All of them are sensitive and vulnerable; and all of them rise above their sordid circumstances by taking decisions which lead to their tragedy, but which, at the same time, speak volumes for the courage with which they face their chosen destinies.

Humanism lies at the core of personalities of the tragic figures: in *Mere Apne*, it is significant that even though Anandi disapproves of what the young boys are doing, and knows that they are in the wrong; but, she does not become judgmental about or bitter about them. Instead, she reaches out to them in their sorrow and waywardness, and offers solace to both the warring factions, applying the healing touch, both when they are physically injured and also to the scars they have suffered mentally and psychologically. She shows her strength by taking to the streets when she is driven out from her „home" and she becomes the rallying point for the misguided youth, becoming a mother figure in their lives and actually taking the two orphaned children under her wings. Apart from the Mother India role, Gulzar also invests her with the qualities of a Mother Theresa.

In *Maachis*, all the terrorists, except the Chief, have a very soft side to their personalities. They all walk with tragedy writ large on their faces and seek to bond with each other. Even though they kill each other eventually, the intimacy and warmth that develop within the group, is as real as the compulsions that drive them to destroy one another. The two „camaraderie“ songs *Chhap Chhap Charkha Chale* and *Chod aaye hum woh Galiyan*, speak of common shared sorrows and friendship born out of it.

The simulated family in *Macchis*, which is formed under the shadow of death and disaster, in the scenic locales of Himachal Pradesh, carries forward the warmth of the real families of Veeran and Kirpal and the easy, but intense friendship between them. Their love for each other cements the love between the two families, and even though the marriage has not been solemnised, Veeran is the „daughter“ of them both. After Paali's disappearance, she goes to meet his grandfather, and their interaction shows mutual familiarity, love and respect. In an earlier scene, when Veeran's mother humourously asks her son Jassi whether he intends to make Paali the *gharjamai*, Jassi

responds with typical Panjabi humour *Toh main uska ghar saala ban jaata hoon*, underscoring the fact that they are inseparable.

In the simulated family, comprising of Sanatan, Jimmy, Kirpal, Vazira and Kuldeep, Veeran enters as the new missile shooter, and the tragedy deepens. The last straw has been broken for Paali and her: with Jassi and Beeji both dead, Veeran has had to join the terrorists in order to escape police harassment. But, as they both know, her fate is also sealed, by this act of hers. The protection that the terrorists offer is short-lived, deceptive, provided at a price, and on their terms, they both know. Somewhere, at the back of Veeran's mind is also the fact that, by this act of her, she will be able to share the fate of Kirpal and be one with him and his destiny. The love story, from this point onwards becomes the stuff of which legends are made – the tragic story of lovers who needs must die together, since they cannot live together - the *Heer-Ranjha* and the *Sasi-Punno* traditions of Panjab.

The near idyllic days that Kirpal and Veeran are able to spend at the footshills, under the shadow of imminent death, are strongly reminiscent of Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, in which

after Tess has murdered her seducer and tormentor Alec D'Urberville, the true love of her life, Angel Clare, shields her from the tracking law enforcing agencies of England for a fortnight, giving her all the happiness that he can in those few days, when they spend the days in which they are on-the-run, in deep intimacy. Veeran is accepted by the group as the beloved of Paali, the daughter-in-law of Sanatan, the sister-in-law (*bhabhi*, in all the emotional overtones the relationship carries, combining the affection of both mother and sister) of the other young comrades, and she takes on the domestic roles of cooking, cleaning, swapping etc for this „household“ with so much pleasure. It may be play-acting, but it satisfies a deeply felt need in all their souls and they are grateful to her for bringing in some kind of normalcy into their fractured lives. Both Veeran and Paali are able to build a „home“ of their own, however short-lived and deceptive it may be. The very fact that it keeps them near each other till their deaths itself is deeply satisfying. Of course, it cannot be forgotten that as in the case of Tess, „the President of the Immortals“ will one day „finish his sport“ with both of them and send them to their doomed destiny. But till then, they are given an opportunity to live their life to the fullest and

recapture the lightheartedness and the passion that marked their relationship in their own homes, before their innocence has been lost.

Love as the redeeming force in tragic times is also central to *Mere Apne* and *Hu Tu Tu*. The role played by Anandi's maternal love in transforming lives had already been discussed earlier on in this work. Her relationship with her husband, which begins in fear, but which evolves into mutual companionship and respect, becomes the spring from which she continues to draw sustenance long after he is dead. The fact that he has sacrificed his life for the social good adds another dimension to their relationship, which marks it as something special: a relationship which is nurtured not only by love, but also a commitment to human values.

The romantic interest in the film is provided by the flashback love story of Shyam: again, the ingredients are more or less the same: the growth of love, family resistance, and the decision that the lovers will make a sacrifice for the sake of family and social values. This ennobles both of them, and as years go by, their fondness and respect

for each other remains intact. Immortal love, though in a slightly different sense.

Hu Tu Tu presents a different angle: there is no parental opposition to their love, which is also seen as a kind of marriage of convenience, since it will benefit both the families. Their love grows out of the lovelessness that is the hallmark of the two families. Made in 1999, it is also possible for Gulzar to portray the physicality in the relationship in a more open and direct manner; and the death of their unborn child becomes the pivot on which their lives change: their one-ness is threatened by the authorities and succumbs to it. In spite of the consummation of their love and the common ideology that cements it, Panna and Adi find themselves ranged on opposite sides in the final battle, unlike Veeran and Kirpal in *Maachis*. Adi and his gang kidnap Panna to seek revenge on her mother and his father. It is not a love-hate relationship, but one of distances. Once Panna goes back to her mother, and Adi is drawn into the world that functions on the other side of the law, after witnessing the brutality with which the politician-builder nexus decimates Bhau and the school master, there is no communication between them, and when they meet eventually,

Panna has to be educated into the cause of justice, and understand afresh that so many innocent lives have been destroyed. As usual, she learns that her mother, the Chief Minister aspirant, has mouthed inanities about all people being her children and she is willing to sacrifice her daughter rather than bow before the kidnappers. She learns from Adi about the total annihilation that his father and her mother have engineered, and she joins forces with him to leap with him towards the final revenge. As in *Maachis*, in their death, they are not parted.

Death as redemption and noble is a necessary requirement of the tragic mode. It is also the chief vehicle of achieving the catharsis that makes for a perfect tragedy – „Calm of Mind, all passion spent“ to quote John Milton in *Samson Agonistis*. Anandi's death in *Mere Apne*, in true romantic tragedy mode is a bloodletting and redemptive, since it serves to awaken the conscience of a generation. It is not inevitable thematically, but it is a philosophic necessity and required to get the message of social transformation vividly across. In *Hu Tu Tu*, the death of the two protagonists is anything but redemptive: it is a cry of helplessness and a revenge which does not really achieve anything in

social terms. By liquidating the two „villains“ the message that they film sends out is that revenge itself is a kind of justice, and when all else fails, this kind of killing becomes a necessity in order to weed out the evil that is destroying the system. In fact, *Hu Tu Tu*, which is Gulzar’s directorial swan song, is the only film which is so pessimistic, in that it offers no hope at all. The two main evil-doers may be dead, they have destroyed their most promising children and the system that they have spawned will continue to flourish. „After such knowledge, what forgiveness?“ both Adi and Panna seem to ask at the end of the film in the manner of Euripides. Similarly, the deaths of Masterji and Bhau are futile, and indicators of the depths to which the social and political systems have sunk: they too hold out no hope. They are final, irrevocable and meaningless.

In a way, the deaths of Veeran-Kirpal and Adi-Panna represent a personal triumph and glory because in both their cases it is a matter of conscious choice. Veeran, with her kiss of death, helps Paali to die honourably, rather than face police torture and in this way, saves him from Jassi’s excruciating fate. She herself knows that it is a matter of time before she is either arrested and subject to police torture or

tortured and shot by the terrorists. Her suicide is the choice she exercises to overcome her victim state and status, under these circumstances. And the sense of fulfillment in both cases arises from the fact that their immediate missions have been completed. But in a strange poetic and indefinable way, the deaths of Veeran and Paali do not seem as futile as those of Adi and Panna. They are both heroic and what they achieve is to establish the invincibility of human dignity and sense of purpose. Also, that some kind of cleansing has to take place before order can be restored after trauma.

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*Waqt se panga mat lena
Waqt ka panja bharī hai*

*Chhai chhap chhai chhapak chhai
Paniyo pe chhinte udati hui ladkī
Dekhī haī hamne
Aati huī laharo pe jatī hui ladkī*

Motiyon jaise taare, aanchal mein hain saare

*Arre jhuthee muthee moine hay hay moine
(Jhuthee muthee moine rajoi mepukara tha
Lohe ke chimte se lipte ko mara tha) - (2)
Oye biba teraa chulha jale*

*Jaha tere pairo ke kawal gira karte the
Hanse toh do gaalo me bhanvar pada karte the
Teree kamar ke bal pe nadee muda karte thee
Hansee teree sun sunke phasal paka karatee thee*

Scene III/

Jo matti me ugate hai: The Poetry of the Earth

Gulzar is basically a poet. In the many roles that he dons in his creative career – as filmmaker and writer – his work is defined by the poetic genius that underlies it. As a writer, he is primarily a poet who has contemporarised the idiom of Hindi-Urdu poetry, evolving forms and rhythms which rise from the soil and which incorporate modern, urban living. His two major poetry collections *Pukhraj* and *Raat Pashemani Ki* are remarkable for his innovative style and homespun rhythms. Translations of his poetry abound and those in English by Pawan Varma succeed in recreating the magic of the original Hindustani he uses. The spoken voice is always there, but it is most pronounced in his writings for children, which catch the essence of childhood joys and sorrows in short expressive stanzas (*Lakdi ki kathi/kathi pe ghoda, Chaddi pehan ke phool khila hai*, for example). As a short story writer, he captures the subtle nuances of the human mind and human relationships and his contribution to partition literature – particularly the short stories *Raavi Paar* and *Khauf* and the adapted *Kharashein* – is remarkable.

As a filmmaker, Gulzar has done it all – he is a producer, director, story writer, script writer, screenplay writer and lyricist, with a cameo

thrown in here and there. And he has won accolades in all his roles. Always working with mid-budget actors, reinventing them in his own image (Jeetendra, for example) working with experimental music directors like Hemant Kumar, Salil Choudhary, Pancham (R D Burman) and A R Rahman, his exquisite lyrics have provided the ideal take off points for the major themes in his films.

Songs have been the soul of Hindi films right from the 1930s (*Alam Ara*, the first talkie made in India is reputed to have as many as 18 songs) and in the 100 years of cinema in India, only a handful of Hindi films have done away with songs (*Kanoon* by B R Chopra was the first of this kind, and it still is a rarity). Highbrow studies of the Hindi film have traditionally viewed the songs and dances as its primary weakness. Increasingly, the beauty and magic created by the versatile geniuses who have created the abiding music of films have been appreciated and there is an increasing acceptance of this unique feature of the Hindi film. But, the Euro-centric approach to film studies has denied any systematic exploration into it. The only filmmaker whose picturisation of songs has been applauded is Guru Dutt, in whose films, it is commonly agreed that in his films the song

and music is integral to the concept of the film. Otherwise, the songs are relegated to (and in many cases they actually are) the mindless entertainment quotient of many films.

Gulzar's literary background ensures that his songs do not belong to the inane category in which words and images are jaded. He is a poet-lyricist in the rich tradition of poet-lyricists like Sahir Ludhianvi, Pradeep, Shailendra, Kaifi Azmi, Indiver, Qamar Jalalabadi and Jan Nissar Akhtar, who have written sensitively about love, nature and social issues. Beginning with Urdu dictions, moving on to standard Hindustani, and finally to the English-Hindi variety of film lyric, Gulzar has been part of this varied tradition. He has often said that in his film songs he does not speak in his own voice, but in the voices of his characters (*Goli maar bheje mein*, etc) and he uses the language and diction which the character uses in the entire film. Even within this framework, his poetic touch is inescapable. And a complete study can be taken up comparing his poetry with his film lyrics and contextualising it within the Hindi film lyric tradition. This study can only scrape the surface of this vast minefield, and will restrict itself to an analysis of some of the songs in *Mere Apne*, *Maachis* and *Hu*

Tu Tu, and touch upon their relevance in the films and their picturisation, which is again within the rich romantic tradition.

Mere Apne has four songs – *Roz akeli jaaye*, *Koyi hota jisko apna hum apna keh lete yaaro*, *Haal chal theek thaak hai* and *Ganga ki bhari god mein*. *Maachis* has five – *Chod aaye hum woh galiyan*, *Chappa Chappa charkha chale*, *Paani Paani Re*, *Tum gaye, sab gaye*, *Yad na aaye koi/ lahu na rulaye koi* and *Bhej Kahar Piya Ji Bulalo*, and in *Hu Tu Tu* we have *Itanaa lanbaa kash lo yaaro*, *dam nikal jaaye*, *Bandobast Hai Jabardast Hai*, *Chhai chhap chhai chhapak chhai*, *Ghapla Hai Bhai*, *Jago jago jagte raho he*, and *Ye aankhe ye nam aankhe*, all written by Gulzar and set to soulful music by Salil Choudhary and Vishal Bhardwaj, and picturised in most scenic locales.

These lyrics may be divided into three categories: songs of joy, celebration and exuberance, songs of longing and nostalgia and songs of revolutionary fervor. It may be mentioned that two of the songs mentioned above have not been actually used in the film *Mere Apne*, and what is surprising is that *Roz akeli aaye* has been so popular

that in spite of the fact that it exists only as an audio recording, it has come to be identified as almost the signature tune of the film. *Ganga ki bhari god mein*, too, is not part of the film and it is a recent discovery on Youtube (its video is also available).

All three films contain songs of joy and exuberance: in *Mere Apne*, it is the theme song, *Ganga ki bhaari god mein*, set to Bangla folk music and it sets the tone for the entire film, almost like the S D Burman river-songs that Bimal Roy uses so creatively in *Sujata* and *Bandini* (it cannot be stressed enough that Gulzar cut his cinematic teeth working as an assistant for Bimal Roy, and his influence on his cinematic style is unforgettable). But it is the full-throated *Chappa Chappa charkha chale* in *Maachis* and *Chai Chhapa Chai* that are marked by extraordinary speech rhythms, enhanced by repetition of key words and alliteration that remain the odes to joy and celebration. The all-male *lohri* dance of characters we see for the first time, and the gay abandonment of their lyrical dance movements, coming immediately after the terrible bomb blast in the bus, carry the story forward so swiftly that the viewer, later on, has to piece the parts of the story together for himself/herself. The terrorists are presented as

artists the first time they appear as a group, they sing, they dance, they mime, they laugh, and what they sing of is birth, harvest and love. The poignancy is acute – these young men dancing the night away are, in reality, the condemned, and these are the few moments of reprieve that make their sordid lives meaningful and beautiful. Thus, rural Panjab comes alive in stanzas which depict the *mastii* between lovers:

*goree chatkoree jo katoree se khilatee thee
Jumme ke jumme jo surme lagatee thee
Kachchee munder ke tale*

*Arre jhuthee muthee moine, hay hay moine
Jhuthee muthee moine rajoi me pukara tha
Lohe ke chimte se lipte ko mara tha
Oye biba teraa chulha jale*

Typical Panjabi diction, with puns used extensively in words like *surme* (meaning, in tune and the surma that is applied in the eyes), *lipte* (the flame that rises and the man who is embracing the girl), - the carefree enjoyment it shows ending with the blessing *Biba tera chulha jaale*, - and what we have is an ode to pure, young love. The delicacy of the rich folklore of love is so subtly underlined in the last stanza of the song:

*Chunni leke soti thee kamal lagatee thee
Panee me jalta charag lagatee thee*

Not only is the visual of the beloved sleeping with her *chunni* over her face evocative of youthful romance and beauty, the following image of her being like a lamp lit in flowing water (specially, if one remembers the hand movements of the dancer with which this scene is picturised) is poetry itself and it offers a living picture of the graceful. Introspection, remembrance of love and gusto give way to nostalgia and longing in the line, *Beeba teree yad na tale*, followed at once by the raw visualisation of *Goriyon ke peiron tale, peeli peeli mehndi jale*, taking the mood back to celebration.

In the same vein is *Chai chap chai*, a duet of the lovers, from *Hu Tu Tu*, bringing to light the innocence and mischief of the situation:

*Paniyo pe chhinte udati hui ladki
Dekhi hai hamne
Aati hui laharo pe jati hui ladki*

The girl sprinkling beads on water on the waterfront, the girl emerging from the waves. As in the earlier song the native tones and the images are beyond translation. It is also a song of loss, pain and reclaiming:

*Likhate rahe hai tumhe roj hi
Magar khwaisho ke khat kabhi bheje hi nahi
Kabhi padhana wo chitthiya
Aankho ke pani pe rakhna wo chitthiya
Tairati najar aayegi jana*

Gote khati aati hui laharo pe jati hui ladki

It is vocal about letters which have been written but never sent, and implores the reader to read those letters with moist eyes and it immortalises the girl in the midst of natural surroundings. As in the *Maachis* song, there is so much graceful moment in the images and the sound patterns that create the inner music of the lyrics.

Longing and nostalgia are infused into the romance of these lyrics, but there are the others which speak of loneliness, grief and deep, intense longing. First among these is *Roz akeli aaye*, a song ostensibly addressed to the night but inscribing human loneliness. The night is compared to a beggar, which comes everyday, holding the moon as the begging bowl, - seeking ... love, happiness, peace, solace? Something that is never verbalised. She holds the treasures of the world (*motiyon jaise tare/aachal mein hai saare*), but she still begs everyday. She is like the *jogan* who has renounced the world, but her maternal instinct still search for the child-morning which she can nurture, symbolising the endless quest for the unattainable, - a staple of romantic literature all over the world. The *virah* of the lonely woman, waiting... and when Shyam thinks of his lost love he sings:

*Bhoola hua koi wada
Beeti hui kuchh yaadein
Tanhaai dohraati hai raat bhar*

A similar intense longing forms the theme of the songs which Veeran sings when Kirpal is away and the longing merges with a feeling of imminent disaster.

*Pani pani in pahaadon ke gharaanon se
Utar jaana
Dhuaan dhuaan kuchh vaadiyaan bhi aayengi
Guzar jaana
Ik gaaon aaye ga mera ghar aayega
Jaan re ghar jaaye
Neendein khaali kar jaaye*

*Ye rudaali jaisi raatein gum raaton mein
Bita dena
Meri aankhon mein jo bolni ke paakhi ko
Uda dena
Barfon mein lage mausam pighle
Mausam hare kar jaaye
Neendein khaali kar jaaye*

The *paani* is the river, it also refers to the tears Veeran sheds when the lover is away. She directs the river waters to her village and her home, as if in the belief that it is the river which will show the right way to Kirpal. In this sense, the poem is not only about Veeran and Kirpal, it is also a poem addressed to people who have lost their way, and who look to nature and God to show them the way, and it takes on the aspect

of prayer. The night is compared to a *rudaali*, one who is in perpetual mourning and sorrow, and beseeches the night to absorb her own sorrows. Again, the last line of the stanza is a prayer that the dark winter night see its end, the snows of suffering melt and greenery once more line the mountain slopes by which the river flows: a symbol for the renewal of life and its resurrection. The poem, therefore, works on the physical, emotional and metaphysical levels and attains the stature of poetry which few contemporary lyrics can even think of. In

Bhej kahar piya ji bulalo
Koi raat raat jaage
Doli padhi padhi doli mein
Arthi jaisi laage

The pall-bearers could refer to the men who would raise the *doli* or those who would lift the coffin, emphasizing the near relation of death and fulfillment of love. The *doli*/arthi dichotomy is another typical symbol of romantic poetry, used again, in

Jala bhee nahee tha, do hatha balan
Koyla kar gai rat, rabba

Aur na jalaye koi, yad na aaye koi

The tone is reminiscent of the Meera bhajans that are such an essential part of the expression of unrequited love in Hindi films.

Itanaa lanbaa kash lo yaaro, dam nikal jaaye
Jindagee sulagaa yaaro, gam nikal jaaye

Dil mein kuchh jalataa hai, shaayad dhuwaan dhuwaan saa lagataa hai
Aankh mein kuchh chubhataa hai, shaayad sapanaa koe sulagataa hai
Dil foonko or itanaa foonko, dard nikal jaaye
Jindagee sulagaa yaaro, gam nikal jaaye

Tere saath gujaaree raate, garam garam see lagatee hai
Sab raate resham kee naheen par, naram naram see lagatee hai
Raat jaraa karawat badale to, par nikal jaaye
Jindagee sulagaa yaaro, gam nikal jaaye

This lyric is central to the vision of *Hu Tu Tu*: lives being snuffed out and burnt out. It is a poem which shows the pervasiveness of death in the whole film: the unborn, nameless child killed in Panna's womb, which shows the audience the relentless and the inexorability of the situation in which they are trapped. Images of fire and all else related with it: *sulgaao, jaltaa hai, dhwanaa, foonko, itna foonko, sulagtaa, itna lambaa kash lo* (cigarette) in quick succession, along with the focal images of *dam nikal jayee/gam nikal jayee/ dard nikal jayee...* the quiet desperation of the words mirror the desperation in the lives of the characters. Finally, death bursts upon Panna, Adi, his father and her mother as a funeral pyre when the human bombs explode in the open *maidan*.

In almost identical imagery, the last stanza of the delicate *Chod aaye hum woh galiyaan*, the agony of the heart of Panjab is expressed:

*Dil dard ka tukda hai patthar kee dalee see hai
Ek andha kuan hai ya ek band galee see hai
Ek chhota sa lamha hai jo khatm nahee hota
Mai lakh jalata hu yeh bhasm nahee hota*

Which shows the distances that have been traversed since:

*Jaha tere pairo ke kawal gira karte the
Hanse toh do gaalo me bhanvar pada karte the
Teree kamar ke bal pe nadee muda karte thee
Hansee teree sun sunke phasal paka karatee thee*

*O jahan teree edi se dhup uda karatee thee
Suna hai uss chaukhat pe abb sham raha karatee hai
Lato se ulajhee lipatee ek raat hua karatee thee
Kabhee kabhee takiya pe woh bhee mila karatee thee.*

In short, water and fire imagery predominates in the soulful romantic lyrics of the three films.

Since the films are embedded in the social and the political, Gulzar has included a number of songs which point to the state of the nation in the three films. Except for the last stanza of *Chod aaye hum galiyaan*, there is no such direct comment in *Maachis*, which is a film made more in sorrow and agony rather than in anger. The anger is most vocal in *Hu Tu Tu* and it is imbued with a fine sense of irony in

Mere Apne, as is obvious in the song, *Haal chaal theek thaak hai*, in which this line of reassurance is followed by details of all that is wrong: it implies „all is well, but...” and so the list goes on:

*BA kiyaa hai, MA kiyaa,
lagataa hai vo bhi aynvayn kiyaa
Kaam nahin hai varanaa yahaan
aap ki duaa is sab thik thaak hai*

*Aab-o-havaa desh ki bahut saaf hai
Kaayadaa hai, kaanoon hai, inasaaf hai
Allaah miyaan jaane koi jiye yaa mare
Aadmi ko khoon voon sab maaf hai
Aur kyaa kahoon, chhoti moti chori
Rishvat khori deti hai apanaa guzaaraa yahaan*

This is poetry of statement. Poetry of the streets written in the language of the streets, which Gulzar has written, consistently, whenever the needs of the script and characters have demanded it. About twenty years before *Mere Apne*, in the 1950s, Guru Dutt had experimented with this style in *Aar Paar*, which is the story of a petty thief who makes good, and it had become a trend in the case of the comic characters (Johnny Walker) who would have one or two songs in this „tapori” language. In *Mere Apne*, it is the irony that is prominent, but in *Hu Tu Tu*, anger predominates, even when it is presented in the humourous mode. Bhau's songs in *Hu Tu Tu* are set to the folk lavni rhythms, and their basic propagandist mission makes

them simple enough to be accessible to the common man towards whom they are directed and addressed. The slogans are calculated to make the blood boil and to rise in revolution with a refrain like *Khun ki khusbu badi badmast hai*:

*Samay barabar kar deta hai
Samay ke hath me aari hai*

*Jo matti me ugate hai
Unko dafna ke kya hoga
Jo nange tan jite hai
Unko kafna ke kya hoga
Dafan karo na matti me
Chade hai apni matti hai
Matti me dil boye hai
Hum ugate hai matti me
Kokh ki are kokh ki muthhi
Badi hi sakht hai.*

The harsh tones and rhythms of these verses contrast sharply with the sensuous lyricism of the romantic rhythms of the songs of joy and sadness. The harshness of the sounds and lines reflect the harshness of the life they reflect. *Ghapla hai, bhai ghapla hai*, harks back in to resonance to *Haal Chaal theek thaak hai*, minus the irony of the earlier situation and lyric. In *Hu Tu Tu*, Bhau feels the need to hit the nail on the head and hit hard:

*Deva re o ho
Log bechare tin tin tare
Tin tin tare log bechare*

Til til marne wale
Til til tarne wale
Kide or makodo jaise log bechare
Tin tin tare
Ghiste ghiste fat jate hai
Juto jaise log bechare

In *Hu Tu Tu*, the songs of the street are also the songs of the anonymous, dispensable slums of the mega city.

The range of the poetry of Gulzar can be gauged by the range of his lyrics. At a time when the literary element has almost disappeared from the Hindi film song, it is Gulzar who has kept it alive by retaining Hindi, Urdu and Panjabi folk idioms and combining it with the expressions that are used by youngsters in the milieu in which they live.

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Parichay (1972)

Koshish (1972)

Achanak (1973)

Mausam (1975)

Khushboo (1975)

Aandhi (1975)

Kitab (1977)

Kinara (1977)

Meera (1979)

Sahira (1980)

Chatran (1980)

Namkeen (1982)

Angoor (1982)

Libaas (1988)

Ijazaat (1988)

Lekin (1991)

Maachis (1996)

Hu Tu Tu (1999)

Mere Apne (1971)



Direction: Gulzar

Story: Indra Mitra

Produced by: N C Sippy, Raj N Sippy and Romu N Sippy

Lyrics: Gulzar

Music: Salil Choudhury

Film Editing: Waman Bhonsale and Guru Dutt Shirale

Art Direction: Ajit Banerjee

Cast:(Main Characters)

Meena Kumari: Anandi Devi/ Buaji

Vinod Khanna: Shyam

Shartrughan Sinha: Chaino

Sumita Snayal: Lata Gupta

Deven Verma: Niranjan

Ramesh Deo: Arun Gupta

Abhi Bhattacharya: Freedom Fighter

Asit Sen: Biloki Prasad

Leela Mishra: Gupta's servant

Paintal: Bansi

Asrani: Raghunath

Danny Dengzonpa: Sanju

Dinesh Thakur: Biloo

A K Hangal: College Principal

Mehmood: Anokhelal

Yogita Bali: Urmila/ Urmu

Maachis (1996)



Direction and Written by: Gulzar

Produced by: R V Pandit

Lyrics: Gulzar

Music: Vishal Bhardwaj

Film Editing: M Ravi and Sadanand Shetty

Art Direction: Niti Desai

Cast: (Main Characters)

Om Puri: Sanatan

Tabu: Virendra/ Veeran

Chandrachur Singh: Kirpal/ Paali

Kawanjit Singh: Inspector Vohra

Kulbhushan Kharbanda: Commander/ Chief

Raj Zutshi: Jaswant Singh Randhawa /Jassi

Suneel Sinha: Vazira

Jimmy Shergill: Jimmy /Jaimal

Ravi Gosain: Kuldeep

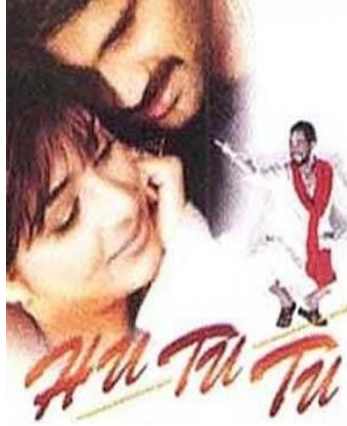
Navninder Behel: Mother

Amrik Gill: Nanoo

S M Zaheer: Khurana

Kuldeep Sharma: Kuldeep

Hu Tu Tu (1999)



Direction and Written by: Gulzar and Meghna Gulzar (Assistant)

Produced by: Dhirajlal Shah and others

Lyrics: Gulzar

Music: Vishal Bhardwaj

Film Editing: Ram Koti

Art Direction: Niti Desai

Cast: (Main Characters)

Nana Patekar: Bhau

Sunil Shetty: Aditya/ Adi

Tabu: Panna

Suhasini Mulay: Malti Barve (Malti Bai)

Shivaji Satam: Amol Barve

Mohan Agashe: Sawantrao Gadre

Kulbhushan Kharbanda: P N Patel

Raj Zhutshi: Raj

Ajit Vacchani: Police Commissioner

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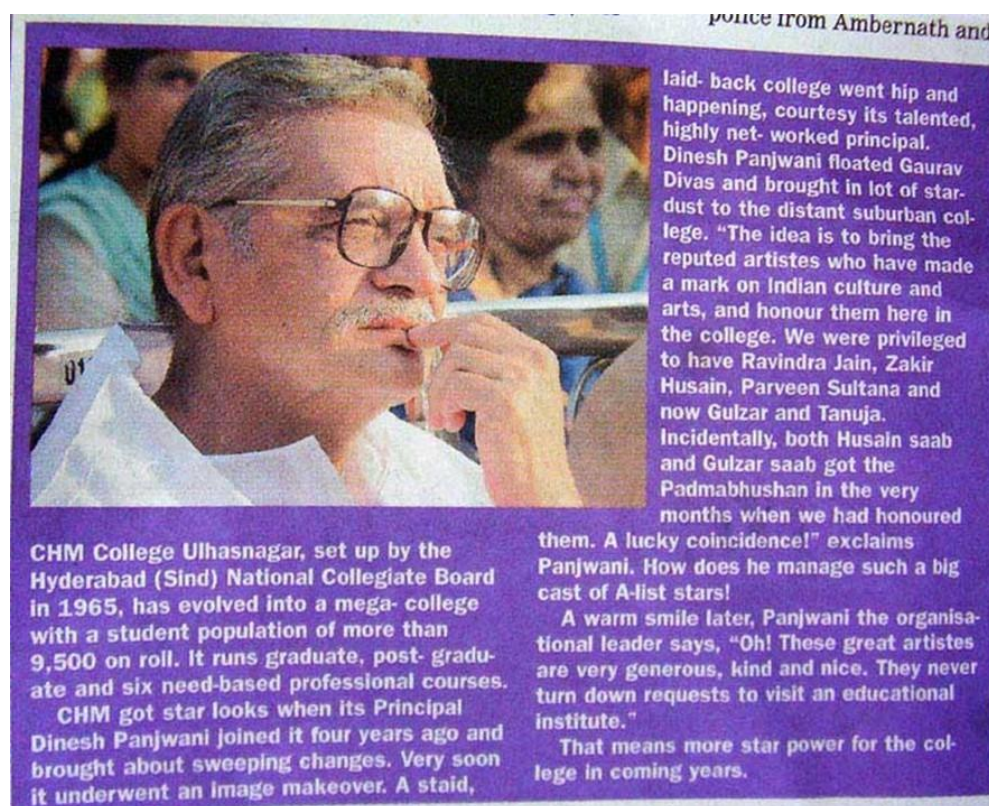
Simran Kaur, the Kauregous, my niece and my inspiration

Gurudarshan Singh, my brother.

Afterword

The Beginnings of this Project

The seeds of this project were sown by the conceptualisation and the successful organisation of *Gaurav Diwas* annually from 2002 to 2009, with eminent personalities like Rabindra Jain, Begum Parveen Sultana, Ustad Dilshad Khan, Ustad Zakir Husain, the late Jagjit Singh,



Gulzar, Rajesh Khanna, Suresh Wadkar, Ram Jethamalani, Indu Shasahni, among others inspired the youth of Smt Chnadibai Himathmal Mansukhani College by their acceptance of the *Gaurav* and the *Yugantar Gaurav Puruskars* conferred by the College.

Principal Dinesh Panjwani, initiated the concept of the annual *Gaurav Diwas*. In 2004, Gulzar and Tanuja graced the occasion and I had the opportunity to be a part of the preparations for this momentous occasion. I had been an avid reader of Gulzar's short stories because of my interest in trauma literature, particularly partition literature embodied in his *Raavi Paar and other Stories*. Meeting him was an experience in itself. My colleague, the late Dr Jyotika S Ozarkar, Head, Department of Marathi and the then Vice Principal of the college and I, went to Boskiyana, his Pali Hill residence to escort him to the college at Ulhasnagar – a good two-hour drive. A unique opportunity it was to study the mind of the great artist at close quarters.

I remember Gulzar as a silent man, and a sharp, keen observer. The silence that he speaks about so often in his poetry is so much a part of his personality. Yet, his face was so mobile! And even through the silence, both Jyoti and I could sense the sharp mind at work, drinking in the sights and sounds of the way. When he spoke it was about poetry and partition. The topic, naturally, veered to partition and Ulhasnagar, the small town in the outer suburbs of Mumbai, and the settlement of the Sindhi community which had made it their home. He listened carefully to the accounts that we had heard from the Sindhi colleagues,

stories of displacement and relocation, stories of loss and rebuilding, stories of rebuilding from scratch by an entire displaced community. All the while, we could sense the tense attention he paid to every little detail. His book *Raat Pashmine Ki* in Urdu played, all the while, in his hands. I had read the poems in the Hindi transcript; even then, for the first time in my life I realised what it meant to be illiterate in any language of the world.



As the *Gaurav* moment arrived and he spoke, before a 3000-strong audience in the open air auditorium in the foreground of the college, in the late evening hours, amidst the chirruping of the sparrows returning home, the sheer magic of the creative mind came home to us. In a well-modulated voice that was at the same time passionate, introspective,

reflective and sonorous, he dwelt upon what he had absorbed during the two-hour drive. When he spoke about the narrow lanes and the disorientatedness of Ulhasnagar, the struggles that the ‘refugees’ must have faced on their arrival at what was then a military barrack area, it was a first-hand experience of how hardcore facts get transmuted into something wonderful and creative in the hands of a mind so fine and sharp. It was then that the seed of this project was sown. Intense reading and viewing of his films followed suit; it was a few years later that the idea that all this must be written down took shape. A special word of thanks to Jyoti, here, and to all the other colleagues who have been consistently associated with *Gaurav Diwas* in those nine years.

As I submit the Project in 2015, it is a kind of renewal for me that *Gaurav Diwas* has been revived in the College by the current Principal, Dr Padma Deshmukh and College. The dream has been rekindled with the efforts of Subhash Athavale, Kishore Peshori, Nitin Arekar and others.

Like the films of Gulzar, this revival shows the way forward in what are cynical times: that art, culture, literature and cinema can revitalise the social systems of the nation.

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