

Lyrical Response to the 'Nation-Building' Agenda: Hindi Film Songs in the 'Nehruvian' Era (1947-64)

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Movies, along with their songs, are basically produced for the purpose of business and entertainment. However, this does not indicate that they are 'merely trivial excrescence' of the film industry.¹ Rather, they often act as an 'indicator of a nation's psyche'.² The late 1940s and the early 1950s were 'crucial years' of 'state formation' for India.³ Thus, immediately after the partition, many Hindi films and their songs echoed the nation-building energy of the postcolonial state.

Film scholars and historians have long neglected the importance of songs in the Hindi film industry. Some scholars argue that the Hindi film songs did not have any direct connection to the film's narrative.⁴ However, this view has been challenged by scholars like Anna Morcom⁵, Ashok Da. Ranade⁶ and others. Ranade documents some significant benchmarks in the evolution of the Hindi film songs by exploring the role of songs in the movies. However, the relation between state formation in the post-independent India and the changing nature of film songs, which now started to reflect certain aspects of this 'nation-building' agenda, has not yet been analysed extensively. There are only some biographies of specific lyricists from which we get indirect information regarding this issue.⁷

Thus, in this paper, we shall concentrate on the extent, to which nation-building activities of the postcolonial state found reflection in the cultural production of the Hindi film industry, particularly in the songs. As, after the partition, the Hindi film industry acquired the status of the 'national film industry'⁸, many of the contemporary Hindi films in general, and their songs in particular, resonated with either the prospects or the anxieties of the nation-building project.

This paper has three sections. The first one deals with how, after partition, the Bombay film industry was able to gain national status. This would enable us to understand

the reason why Nehru attempted to utilize Hindi films to inculcate a sense of national awareness among the Indians. The next section focuses on how the film songs performed a key role as tools for nation-building, by providing an emotional justification to the nation making agenda of the postcolonial state. The final section takes into consideration the criticism of the failures of the Nehruvian government through film songs, mainly written by some progressive writers who joined the film industry after the partition.

The Emergence of the Bombay Film Industry as the National Industry:

In the Nehruvian era, the Hindi film songs reflected various themes relating to the nation-building project of the postcolonial state. After the partition, due to massive migration, communal riots, serious refugee problem, the film industries of Lahore and Calcutta were adversely affected. The Punjabi film industry in Lahore, in the late colonial era, was dominated by the Hindu and Sikh artists who migrated to Bombay after the partition. Film artists, producers and filmmakers like Pran Krishen Sikand, Om Prakash, B.R. Chopra and many others came to Bombay from Lahore after the partition.⁹ The Bengali film industry also suffered due to the partition of Bengal, as 40 percent of its market was situated in the newly created East Pakistan.¹⁰ While the other industries faced several difficulties and became 'regional' industries, the Hindi film industry in Bombay was able to establish itself as the 'national industry'¹¹ in the postcolonial era, and as a result, the Hindi film songs very often reflected issues relating to the nation-building agenda.

Within a decade after Partition, the popularity of the Hindi movies made Bombay the 'acknowledged centre' of Indian film industry.¹² Music Director Madan Mohan claimed that the popular film songs were the 'first really national music' of India as it had cut through all the 'linguistic and provincial barriers'.¹³ Among the various

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kinds of art forms, Hindi film songs played a dominant role in capturing the 'national imagination'.¹⁴

In a multi-lingual nation like India, while the regional cinemas remained confined within their specific linguistic group of audience, the Hindi filmmakers were able to get a far wider viewership by evolving 'a national film language.'¹⁵ 'Hindustani', a mixture of Hindi and Urdu¹⁶, became the dominant language of the Bombay film industry, which ensured the largest markets in North India. Hindi films also became popular in the 'Urdu-Marathi' speaking Hyderabad and even in South India.¹⁷

Songs and dance sequences of the Hindi films also indicated the national character by diluting ethnocentrism. Javed Akhtar argues that the characters of Hindi cinema had an 'all-India culture' and thus, in a song, the heroine could perform Punjabi bhangra in a scene followed by a south Indian dance like Bharat Natyam in another scene. Thus, the Hindi movies picked varieties of cultural aspects of different regions and combined them together to give it a national outlook.¹⁸

After Independence, like Gandhi, most of the national leaders considered that the primary task of films was to act as a 'potential instrument of social reform,' which the industry failed to perform.¹⁹ B.V. Keskar prohibited the broadcasting of the Hindi film songs on All India Radio in 1952 as he thought that songs of the most of the films were 'seriously corrupted by Western influences'. Consequently, All India Radio lost as many as 90 percent of its listeners, who now turned their attention to Radio Ceylon.²⁰ In 1957, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting was compelled to uplift the ban on the Hindi film songs and thus, All India Radio regained its popularity.

As the Bombay industry was able to achieve a more or less nation-wide viewership, Nehru, unlike many of his colleagues, showed his eagerness to utilize films as a medium of reshaping the minds of the countrymen in order to carry forward his nation building activities. The Film Enquiry Committee was established in 1949, which gave its report in 1951, according to which Indian movies were expected to serve as 'effective instruments' for 'national culture, education and healthy entertainment' to raise a sense of national awareness among the viewers.²¹ The Committee considered movies as the most significant form of mass media. Thus, it asked the filmmakers to cooperate with the government by taking a positive step towards the process of nation-building by providing the state a cultural justification through their movies.²² Brigitte Schulze also points out that in the early 1950s, Indian films enjoyed 1.6 million daily viewers, and with such a large spectatorships, it certainly had a greater 'psychological influence' over the society than the print media or the radio.²³ Thus, unlike Europe, where print

media played a catalytic role in the growth of national consciousness, in India, forms of mass media like films and songs played an extremely vital role in this matter. Thus, following the lines of Pradip Krishen, it may be argued that the popular Hindi films and their songs, in spite of being a part of a profit-driven 'culture industry', acted as a 'channel for the transmission of ideas.'²⁴

Nehru personally maintained contact with some of the most famous film directors of the Hindi film industry like Mehboob Khan, Raj Kapoor and others. He performed the role of an 'unofficial consultant' of Mehboob Khan during the making of *'Mother India'*. He advised Mehboob to add more songs and portray the picture of industrial India to celebrate the nation-building agenda.²⁵ He also lamented the absence of child movies and asked Raj Kapoor to make a movie for children in which he even promised to give some personal time for shooting.²⁶

Songs as Tools of Nation-Building Project:

The independence of India brought about a significant transformation in the content of the Hindi film lyrics. Lyricists, scriptwriters and filmmakers in this era, having experienced the trauma of partition, showed a 'deeper commitment' to enrich the cultural sphere of the infant nation.²⁷ Profoundly influenced by Nehru's vision of a 'new India', filmmakers like Mehboob Khan, Raj Kapoor²⁸ and many others upheld a sense of 'Indianness' and called for the active participation of the countrymen in the process of nation-building through their cultural production. As the content of the films very often dealt with such issues, the song lyrics also reflected a national spirit.

At the outset, it may be pointed that along with the happiness of freedom, there was also a sense of deep pathos running in the air due to the bifurcation of the country. But there was an astonishing dearth in the number of the movies and songs relating to the partition in the early 1950s. There was only references to the agony of partition which helped to establish the background of the main character. Between 1947-1962, among more than 1800 movies produced in the industry, not more than merely 12 films like *'Lahore'*, *'Kashmir'*, *'Kashmir Humara Hai'* etc. dealt with partition. Thus, the songs of this era did not generally reflect the trauma of partition.²⁹ The reason for this lacuna of songs reflecting the pain of partition was that the lyricists, perhaps subconsciously, wanted to dilute the traumatic impact of partition on the psyche of the audience and thus, instead of such songs of mourning, they upheld in their lyrics, a euphoric notion of independence with a tinge of optimism.

In these initial years of independence, the movies naturally tried to celebrate the attainment of freedom and

thus, many films glorified the bravery and sacrifice of several freedom fighters. Many of the lyricists cheerfully portrayed the celebration of freedom in their songs. Thus, the 'Azadi Geet' became one of the main features of this era.

Gopal Singh Nepali's song 'Azad Hai Hum Aj Se, Jailo Ka Tala Tod Do, Ab Jao Apne Ghar Ko Angrejo, Bharat Chor Do' (Ahimsa) inspired other lyricists like Nazim Panipati, Raja Mehdi Ali Khan, Ramesh Gupta and others who wrote some of the most famous patriotic songs of the late 1940s. Songs like 'Ab Darne ki Koi Baat Nehi, Angreji Chora Chala Gaya,' (Majboor), 'Azad Ho Gaya Hai Hindustaan Humara' (Jalsha),³⁰ were successfully able to elevate the nationalist sentiment among the audience.

The 1950s witnessed the continuation of this trend of reflecting patriotism in the film songs. But now along with the celebration of independence, there emerged a sense of responsibility of nation-building which was reflected in the songs written by famous lyricists like Kavi Pradeep, Prem Dhawan, Shailendra and others. They injected a sense of hope and optimism in the minds of the audience through their songs, which were emblematic of Nehruvian nation-building project.³¹ The open message of patriotism along with an optimism for a better future, captivated the imagination of the countrymen.

Apart from the lyrics, the charming melodies, coupled with appropriate picturization, enabled these songs to instil a sense of patriotism among the audience. It is worth mentioning that as the Hindi films reflected the nation making process, the filmmakers, heroes and lyricists often talked about 'Naya Zamana'. 'Naya Dagar', 'Nayi Roshni' etc.³² These songs were written to inculcate a sense of optimism for a 'new India', which was to be free from any kind of socio-political evils.

According to Raju Bharatan, lyricists like Kavi Pradeep mastered the art of 'arousing nationalist fervour'.³³ In the Satyen Bose directed film 'Jagruti' (1954), Pradeep's songs like 'Aao Baccho Tumhe Dikhaye Jhanki Hindustan Ki', 'Hum Laye Hai Tufan Se Kashti Nikal Ke' and 'Sabarmati Ke Sant Tune Kar Diya Kamal' became extremely popular. In this film, Abhi Bhattacharya played a role of a teacher who teaches the children about the greatness of the country. Through the song 'Aao Baccho Tumhe Dikhaye' the teacher made his students aware about the geography, culture, history of freedom movement of India and glorified the 'past heroes' of the country, from Shivaji to Subhas Chandra Bose. Interestingly, in this song we find that every 'antara' comes to an end with a Chorus performed by the students- 'Vande Mataram'- which indicates that the children came to be profoundly inspired by such patriotic notions.

In another song 'Hum Laye Hai Tufan Se Kishti Nikal Ke', Pradeep termed the young people as the future of

India and thus, asked them to take up responsibilities in order to protect the country — 'Tum Hi Bhabishya Ho Mere Bharat Bisaal Ke, Is Desh Ko Rakhna Mere Bacche Sambhal Ke'. Pradeep warned the children against 'slipping into complacency'.³⁴ Although India had already attained the much-wanted freedom, the youth, whom the poet compared to flowers, had to adopt the responsibility to make the country proud — 'Tum Gaardo Gagan Mein Tiranga Uchal Ke.' Unlike the previous song, it did not have any chorus. But the melody changed its character in the last 'antara' with a crescendo, as the pitch went to higher octave when the teacher inspired his students to achieve the highest goal in their life and help the nation to move forward. Moreover, the visualization of the song attempted to flatten out the ideological differences of the national leaders in order to preach a sense of national unity. Thus, in the picturization of this song, the camera zoomed on the images of Gandhi, Subhas and Jawaharlal, to whom the children were paying tribute through the verses of Pradeep. The message of the films and 'true intention' of the directors were often hidden in the picturization of such songs.³⁵

Apart from Pradeep, other lyricists like Shailendra, Shakeel Badauni also wrote some songs of nationalist flavour. Although Shakeel Badauni was well-known for his ghazals, romantic songs, his song in the film 'Son of India' (1962) 'Nanna Munna Rahi Hu, Desh Ka Sipahi Hu' received huge applause. Shakeel adopted an optimist stance regarding this 'new time' and internalized Nehru's dream of an industrialized India — 'Naya Hai Zamana Meri Nayi Hai Dagar, Desh Ko Banaunga Mashino Ka Nagar'. This song also had a chorus as after each 'antara' the children jointly raised the slogan of 'Jai Hind'.

Shailendra's songs 'Yeh Chaman Humara Apna Hai, Is Desh Pe Apna Raaj Hai' from the film 'Ab Dilli Dur Nehi' and 'Nanne Munne Bacche Teri Mutthi Mein Kya Hai?' from the movie 'Boot Polish' showed the confidence of the new nation. Shailendra showed that the younger generation of our country would be able to make good fortune through hard work- 'Mutthi Mein Taqdeer Humari, Humne Kismat Ko Baas Me Kia Hai'. Thus, Shailendra hoped for a better future in which there would be no exploitation and starvation — 'Anewali Dunia Mein Sab Ke Saar Pe Taaj Ho, Na Bhukho Ki Bheer Hogi, Na Dukho Ka Raaj Ho.'

Akbar Ahmed points out that due to the influence of Nehru, the filmmakers and lyricists started championing the virtues of truth, love, unity.³⁶ These virtues found their reflection in the title song of the movie 'Jis Desh Mein Ganga Baheti Hai.' In the 'antara,' Shailendra asked his countrymen to live together peacefully as the song went on — 'Mil Jhul Ke raho Aur Pyar Karo, Ek Cheez Yahi Jo Rahete Hai'.

Another Mukesh-hit from the film '*Shree 420*', i.e., '*Mera Joota Hai Japanese*', symbolized the claim of an 'Indian identity in a globalized world', argues Anirudh Deshpande.³⁷ In spite of having a Japanese shoe, English trouser and Russian cap, the heart of Raj remained Indian. This also indicates the secular approach of the Nehruvian state which was ready to borrow several things from various cultures but at the same time maintained its 'essential Indianness'.³⁸ Moreover, this song also celebrated Indian democracy as the antara — '*Honge Raje Rajkumar, Hum Bigre Dil Shahezade, Hum Singhasan Paar Ja Baithe Jab Jab Kare Iraade*' — indicates that in the postcolonial India, even a vagabond could aspire to reach the highest stage in political arena. As India freed herself from the shackles of feudalism, now each and every citizen of the country, irrespective of their caste, class and religion had the right to take part in the administrative machinery of the state. Thus, while the other lyricists in their nationalist songs mainly glorified the country, Shailendra, because of his IPTA background, even in his patriotic songs raised his voice for the empowerment of the common people.

One of the greatest lyricists of the time Sahir Ludhianvi generally adopted a critical approach towards the limitations of the nation-building project. However, Sahir also glorified our country as a nation of 'brave martyrs' in his song '*Yeh Desh Hai Veer Jawano Ka*' written for Dilip Kumar's 'quintessentially Nehruvian film'³⁹ '*Naya Daur*' (1957). The song expressed a sense of pride in the developing nation.⁴⁰

In the early 1960s, lyricists like Prem Dhawan started following a similar patriotic stance. His songs like '*Ae Mere Pyare Watan*' (*Kabuliwala*) and the title song of '*Hum Hindustani*' became extremely popular.⁴¹ In the latter song, he also talked about a '*Naya Daur*' in which he urged the Indians to forget the '*purani*' (old) things in order to undertake a new beginning. He also put emphasis on the need of unity — '*Choro Kal Ki Baatein, Kal Ki Baat Purani, Naye Daur Mein Likhenge, Mil Kar Nayi Kahani*.' The following phrase '*Hum Hindustani*' was used as a chorus to express the unity. The picturization of this song indicated the financial as well as technological development of India, as the camera focused on dams, heavy machinery, modern communication system etc.

In the early 1960s, the Sino-Indian war also inspired the Indian filmmakers to portray the sacrifice of the Indian soldiers through their movies. Chetan Anand's '*Haqeeqat*' celebrated the bravery of the Indian army and thus, encouraged the growth of a nation-wide patriotic sentiment. This film received state patronage and media support.⁴² In his '*Ab Tumhare Hawale Watan Saathio*',⁴³ Kaifi Azmi provided examples from '*Ramayana*' and compared the soldiers with '*Rama*' and '*Laxmana*'. He compared the country with '*Sita*' and urged the army to

protect her from the aggression of the enemy — '*Kheench Do Apne Khun Se Zameen Pe Lakeer, Is Taraf Aane Paye Na Ravaan Koi, Tod do Agar Haat Uthne Lage, Chu Na Paye Na Sita Ke Damaan Koi*.'⁴⁴

Critical Response Towards the Limitations of Nation-Building Project:

Although the partition of India was marked by communal riots, refugee problems, financial crisis, at the same time, the developmental strategy of the postcolonial state, based on the principal of 'distributive justice', created an optimism among the citizens, that in the near future, India would be emancipated from the shackles of feudalism and financial condition of the common people would improve through a rapid industrialization process.⁴⁵ However, the Nehruvian government adopted a reformist stance and was only able to bring about some 'molecular' changes.⁴⁶ This failure of the state to fulfil these expectations created among the common people, a persistent feeling of betrayal.⁴⁷ Scarcity of employment aggravated the financial condition of the common people. Nehruvian nation-building project, in the words of Partha Chatterjee, became 'a purveyor of empty platitudes'.⁴⁸ The unfulfilled dreams of the citizens generated a sense of pessimism which had a huge impact on the cultural production of the Hindi film industry. Thus, after the first decade of independence, a sense of disillusionment came to be reflected in the Hindi film songs.

The lyricists of the Hindi film industry started writing songs relating the issue of financial inequality in the early 1940s. Some lyricists like S.P. Tripathi, A Shah Azeez, Ramesh Gupta continued to write about such themes even after independence. Pandit Indra's song '*Kamzoro Ki Nahi Hai Dunia, Mazdooro Ki Nahi Hai Duniya*' ('*Chin Le Azadi*'), Ameen Gilani's '*Jago Gareebo Jago, Dhanwano Ki Is Zulm Se Tum Jago*' ('*But Tarash*') were some examples of such songs, reflecting the misery of the poverty ridden common mass and oppressive nature of the affluent. However, in the immediate post-independence era, these songs were very few in number as the euphoria of freedom injected hopes about a better future where society would be freed from the 'evils of inequality'.⁴⁹

In the early 1950s, lyricists talked about the financial suffering of the common people in an indirect way. Shailendra's IPTA background enabled him to write many such songs portraying the plight of the poor people like '*Awara Hoon*', '*Dil Ka Haal Sune Dilwala*' etc.⁵⁰ The antara of the '*Shree 420*' Manna Dey song '*Dil Ka Haal Sune Dilwala*' showed the miserable life of a poor man who had suffered from starvation — '*Chote Se Ghar Mein Gareeb Ka Beta, Main Bhi Hoon Ma Ke Naseeb Ka Beta, Ranj-o-gham Bachpan Ki Sathi, Andhiyon Mein Jali Jeevan Bati*,

Bhook Ne Hai Bade Pyaar Se Pala. However, the tune of this song does not portray any grief. Rather than using pathos, the music director duo Shankar-Jaikishan used a delightful charming melody. This had an inherent message that, that particular person was not lamenting about his poverty, rather he had an optimistic view of life as he went on to sing — *'Manzil Mere Paas Khadi Hai'*. However, at the same time, the leftist lyricist pointed out the oppressive character of the rich people — *'Pao Mein Lekin Bedi Pada Hai, Taang Deta Hai Daulat Wala'*.

The title song of the film *'Awara'*, written by Shailendra, depicted the plight of a vagabond. But just like the previous song, *'Awara Hoon'* also had a catchy and rhythmic tune rather than one of pathos. Shailendra wrote that in spite of having a waste life, the vagabond still sang a song of happiness — *'Abad Nehi Barbad Sahi, Gata Hu Khushi Ke Geet Magar'*. He also painted the picture of an unkind urban life where nobody paid heed to the plight of the poor — *'Zakhmo Se Bhara Sina Hai Mera, Hasta Hai Magar Yeh Mast Nagar'*. The movie *'Awara'*, along with its title song, reflected the anxieties of the nation-building project.⁵¹

Such a picture of a heartless city also found an echo in other songs like *'Ae Dil Hai Mushkil Jeena Yaha'* from the movie C.I.D. The lyricist Majrooh Sultanpuri termed the city of Bombay as his 'heart' — *'Yeh Hai Bombay Meri Jaan'*. But he also accepted the harshness of the modern city life. The materialistic world of Bombay had no place for virtues like kindness, humanity etc. In the name of business, the capitalist urban 'life-world' exploited the downtrodden people.⁵² Sudipta Kaviraj finds a 'dual character' in these songs. Though these songs were written to support the narratives of the films, at the same time, many of them achieved 'a freestanding meaningfulness' by reverberating the contemporary socio-economic life of the common people.⁵³

One of the greatest lyricists of the Bombay film industry Sahir Ludhianvi refused to follow the norms of the profit-driven industry.⁵⁴ His progressive background inspired his literary endeavours as a lyricist. In his songs written for the films like *'Pyaasa'*, *'Woh Subha Kabhi To Ayegi'*, *'Naya Daur'*, *'Dhool Ka Phool'* etc., he gave voice to the downtrodden mass of the country and articulated their disillusionment with the nation-building project. He vehemently condemned any kind of oppressions and raised his voice for an egalitarian and just social order. While most of the lyricists still continued to celebrate the nation-making stance of the government, Sahir, on the contrary, urged for a world without feudal or capitalist exploitation- *'Samanti Sarkar Na Hogi, Poonjibaad Samaj Na Hoga'*. Thus, through his writings, he always called for uprooting the *'Taj'* or *'Takht'* — two symbols of monarchical and feudal order. His war against the world

of throne or crown found its manifestation in his songs like *'Ye Mehlo Ye Takht Ye Taajo Ki Dunia'* (*'Pyaasa'*)⁵⁵ *'Takht Na Hoga, Taaj Na Hoga, Kal Tha Lekin Aaj Na Hoga'* (*'Aaj Aur Kal'*)⁵⁶ etc. While he called for a revolution in order to burn this exploitative world down in his *Pyaasa* song — *'Jalado Ise Phoonk Dalo Yeh Dunia, Mere Samne Se Hatalo Yeh Dunia, Tumhari Hai Tumhi Samhalo Yeh Dunia'*, in the latter song he argued that in order to achieve *'Saccha Swaraj'* (real independence), an egalitarian society had to be established — *'Jisme Saab Adhikar Na Paye, Woh Saccha Swaraj Na Hoga.'* In the Delhi edition of the Hindustan Times (24 March, 1957), it was written that Sahir's song *'Ye Dunia Agar Mil Bhi Jaye To Kya Hai?'* had 'stirred the nation.'⁵⁷

Sahir pointed out the limitations of the Nehruvian government in its task of nation-building. In his song *'Jinhe Naaz Hai Hind Par Woh Kaha Hai?'* (*'Pyaasa'*), Sahir turned our attention to the suffering of the common people and condemned the political leaders who used to take pride in India. This particular song was taken from one of his poems published in *'Talkhiyan'*, named *'Chakley'* (Brothels).⁵⁸ In this poem, he raised the question — *'Sana-Khwaan-e-Taqdees-e-Mashriq Kahaan Hai?'* ('Where are they who take pride in the Eastern Purity?'). But in 1957, this poem was slightly reshaped for the purpose of the film narrative. Sahir simplified this line with his rebellious stance towards the failure of the Nehruvian nation-building project and raised the question- 'Where are they who take pride in India?'⁵⁹ Ali Mir points out that in 1957, Nehru delivered a speech in which he exclaimed that he was extremely proud of India. In this song, Sahir provided a critical response to the statement of the Prime Minister.⁶⁰ Thus, *'Pyaasa'* illustrated the role of a poet in the Nehruvian nation-state.⁶¹

The progressive poets undertook a complex stance towards the question of nationalism. In the colonial era, they were staunch supporters of the anti-colonial movements. However, they wanted to use their nationalist and patriotic feelings for the betterment of the common people. Thus, when after Independence, the national leaders started championing the cause of an elitist nationalism, some of the poets took up their pens for an egalitarian and just society in which poor people would not be exploited in the name of nation-building agenda. Sahir ridiculed such elitist nationalism in his song — *'Chin-O-Arab Humara, Hindustan Humara, Rahene Ko Ghar Nehi Hai, Sara Jahaan Humara.'* Sahir thus made a mockery of Nehru's vision of 'India's place in an international community' by reflecting the suffering of the homeless people.⁶² Sahir also showed the dark sides of the capitalist exploitation which was the main reason behind their suffering- *'Jitni Bhi Buildinge Thi, Setho Ne Baant Li Hai, Footpath Bombai Ke, Hai Aashiyani'*

Humara.⁶³ Thus, Sahir wanted to argue that in the name of nationalism, the capitalist class and the state continuously oppressed the poor downtrodden mass. Thus, this kind of elitist nationalism, where there was no room for the development of the common people, should be questioned.

Moreover, this song was a parody of Iqbal's '*Tarana-i-Milli*' where Iqbal talked about his pan-Islamic vision. The progressive poets always condemned religious fundamentalism. Even, after the partition, as film lyricists they continued their secular stance. Sahir always called for communal harmony. Refuting all kinds of religious majoritarianism, Sahir glorified the notion of universal brotherhood. His song '*Tu Hindu Banega Na Musalman Banega, Insaan Ke Aulad Hai, Insaan Banega*'⁶⁴ became one of the most famous songs of communal harmony by preaching the mantra of humanity.

Sahir had high optimism about a 'better future,' when a just and egalitarian society could be established. He believed in the power of the working class — '*Hum Mehnatwalo Ne Jab Bhi Milkar Kadam Baraye, Sagar Ne Rasta Chora, Parbat Ne shish Jhukaya*.'⁶⁵ Kaifi Azmi also championed the cause of the labouring class in the movie '*Apna Haat Jagannath*.' In the title song of the film '*Apne Hato ko Pehchan*' Kaifi pointed out the immense power of the labouring class as the song went on — '*Apne Hato Ko Pehchan, Murkh Isme Hai Bhagwan*.'⁶⁶ Sahir realized that in the postcolonial Indian society, the peasantry and the working-class people were deprived of their rights. But in the title track of the film '*Phir Subha Hogi*' (1958) he was waiting for 'that dawn' when the subaltern people would achieve their status in the society — '*Jis Subah Ke Khatir Jug Jug Se, Hum Saab Mar Mar Kar Jite Hai, Jis Subah Se Amrit Ki Dhun Mein Hum Zahar Ke Pyaale Pite Hai, In Bhookhi Pyaasi Ruhu Paar Ekdin To Karaam Farmayegi, Woh Subah Kabhi To Ayegi*.'⁶⁷ Sahir always pointed out the importance of solidarity of the downtrodden mass — '*Sathi Haat Barana, Ek Akela Thak Jayega, Milkar Bojh Uthan*.'⁶⁸

In the late colonial era, the British government wanted to control public opinion by using a harsh censorship policy. In the post-independent era, the Nehru government also adopted a strict censorship policy whenever the state found the content of the lyrics and the films to be unacceptable. Sahir's two songs from the film '*Phir Subha Hogi*', namely '*Asmaan Pe Hai Khuda*'⁶⁹ and '*Chin-O-Arab Humara*'⁷⁰ were banned by the Nehru government.⁷¹ Even, when Kavi Pradeep portrayed the dirty politics of the country, his song was also banned. Pradeep's songs were prohibited as he lamented that dirty politics made the countrymen beggars — '*Hai! Siyasat Kitni Gandi, Buri Hai Kitni Firaqbandi, Aj Ye Sab Ke Saab Nar-Nari, Ho Gaye Raste Ke Yeh Bhikhari*'.⁷² The line '*Paise Ka Raj Mita Dena*'

(end the rule of the affluent people) was also banned due to its anti-capitalist rebellious stance.

Conclusion:

Thus, we may argue that the nature and contents of the Hindi film songs experienced a qualitative transformation in the immediate post-independence era. Filmmakers like Mehboob Khan, Raj Kapoor internalized the vision of nation-building, propagated by Nehru, and started upholding the success of the post-colonial state. However, such euphoric notion was shattered within a decade with the ever-growing problems of economic inequality, poverty, unemployment, religious fundamentalism. These limitations of the infant state found manifestations in the cultural endeavours of some of the most promising lyricists of the age like Sahir Ludhianvi, Kaifi Azmi, who had initially been closely associated with the Progressive Writers' Movement before joining the film industry. With the advent of the progressive writers in the film arena, film songs started focusing on the plight of the common people.

However, during the time of partition, as they joined the film industry as lyricists to earn their living, they had to compromise their poetic entities according to the demands of the profit-driven Hindi film industry. Whereas, as independent poets they were free to portray the plight of the poor, the misery of the downtrodden and the oppressive nature of the capitalist society, after joining a capitalist industry, they could no longer strictly follow their literary conviction. Rather, their literary production came to be considered as commodities, the nature of which was to be determined by the market demand. As a result, in a capitalist world, these poets got alienated from their own creative cultural production and suffered from the crisis of commodification.

Thus, even the response of the progressive poets to the limitations of the Nehruvian state was by no means homogenous. While Majrooh Sultanpuri totally abandoned his revolutionary poetic style after joining the film industry, other lyricists like Sahir, Kaifi and Shailendra continued to influence the industry with their progressive outlook.

Notes

1. Pradip Krishen, 'Introduction,' *India International Centre Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No. 1, *Indian Popular Cinema: Myth, Meaning and Metaphor* (1981): 3-4.
2. Partha Chatterjee, 'Indian Cinema: Then and Now,' *India International Centre Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (2012): 45.
3. Brigitte Schulze, 'The Cinematic 'Discovery of India': Mehboob's Re-Invention of the Nation in *Mother India*,' *Social Scientist*, Vol. 30, No. 9/10 (2002): 72.

4. M. Madhava Prasad, *Ideology of the Hindi Film: A Historical Construction* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998).
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