Spatial Insecurity, Troubled Nationalism, and the Urban Middle-class: Geopolitics of Select 1980s Hindi *Masala* Entertainers

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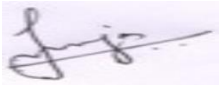
Pooja R: *Spatial Insecurity, Troubled Nationalism, and the Urban Middle-class: Geopolitics of Select 1980s Hindi Masala Entertainers*

Declaration of Originality

I hereby declare that the work which is being presented in the thesis entitled "**Spatial Insecurity, Troubled Nationalism, and the Urban Middle-class: Geopolitics of Select 1980s Hindi *Masala* Entertainers"** has been solely authored by me. It presents the result of my own independent investigation/research conducted during the time period from July 2019 to March 2024 under the supervision of Dr. Dibyakusum Ray, Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Ropar. To the best of my knowledge, it is an original work, both in terms of research content and narrative, and has not been submitted or accepted elsewhere, in part or in full, for the award of any degree, diploma, fellowship, associateship, or similar title of any university or institution. Further, due credit has been attributed to the relevant state-of-the-art and collaborations (if any) with appropriate citations and acknowledgments, in line with established ethical norms and practices. I also declare that any idea/data/fact/source stated in my thesis has not been fabricated/ falsified/ misrepresented. All the principles of academic honesty and integrity have been followed. I fully understand that if the thesis is found to be unoriginal, fabricated, or plagiarized, the Institute reserves the right to withdraw the thesis from its archive and revoke the associated Degree conferred. Additionally, the Institute also reserves the right to appraise all concerned sections of society of the matter for their information and necessary action (if any). If accepted, I hereby consent for my thesis to be available online in the Institute's Open Access repository, inter-library loan, and the title & abstract to be made available to outside organizations.

Signature: 

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Certificate

This is to certify that the thesis entitled "**Spatial Insecurity, Troubled Nationalism and the Urban Middle-class: Geopolitics of Select 1980s Hindi Masala Entertainers**" submitted by **POOJA R. (2019HSZ0002)** for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** of Indian Institute of Technology Ropar, is a record of bonafide research work carried out under my (our) guidance and supervision. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the work presented in this thesis is original and has not been submitted, either in part or full, for the award of any other degree, diploma, fellowship, associateship or similar title of any university or institution.

In my opinion, the thesis has reached the standard fulfilling the requirements of the regulations relating to the Degree.

Signature of the

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Lay Summary

The thesis locates the 1980s Hindi masala films within the ongoing issues of national identity crises in post-colonial India. The 1980s in India is analyzed as a period of several identity and right-based movements and reforms that challenged the existing forms of democracy and shaped a new national identity. Events like the rise of separatist nationalisms and sub-nationalisms, the rise of the subaltern and linguistic movements, rapid urbanization, and mass exodus into the cities that emerged in the 1980s have profound implications on contemporary society and politics. However, the period also marked the genesis of a new libertarian time with economic liberalization of India waiting at the doorsteps, bringing new opportunities and ambitions but also new cultural and moral anxieties. This study places an emerging community of urban middle-class within this insecure climate of the 1980s where a constant fear of being replaced and invaded by new identities permeates within both the private and public spheres. The Hindi *masala* films of the 1980s depict this middle-class going through a crucial stage of transition manifested through their domestic structure, depiction of external landscapes, and the city spaces. From fearing the encroachment of the home to integrating the national geography, at the end of the final chapter, the study concludes on how the new middle-class of the 1980s builds a self-confident entrepreneurial nationalism through technology and gadgetry to fight their internal fears and global impediments.

Abstract

The proposed project aims to study select *masala* Hindi films popular during the 1980s in India. The purpose is to analyze how the films of this genre negotiate with the impending threat to the existing national identity in the wake of the post-emergency politics of separatism, regionalism, and representation. Placed right before the 1990s neoliberal drive in the Indian economy, the 80s middle-class– hitherto a socialist and hermetic community– was paranoid by an 'invasive' global culture, permissiveness, politics of rights, and reform. This study shows that the cinematic resolution of this crisis is a grudgingly lenient orthodoxy negotiating with the limits of cultural inclusion, represented through the questions of agency, gender, class, caste, and ethnicity abounding in the middle-class domestic sphere, the city, and the national spectrum. The study posits that irrespective of the genre, the majority of the 1980s Hindi films can be considered as a microcosm of India's national identity going through a crucial transition manifested as a crisis of middle-class domesticity. Despite a latent narrative strain of begrudging mediation with the demands of a new and libertarian time, this meta-genre normalizes duty, fidelity, and caste/gender/racial archetypes in service of a traditional domestic hierarchy at their climax, and successfully foretells India's continuing struggle with modern liberalism, individual agency, identity conflicts, and inclusivity.

Keywords: Masala Hindi Films; 1980s; middle-class; Domesticity; Cultural inclusion; Paranoid.

List of Publications from Thesis

Journal Articles

1) Radhakrishnan, P. (2023). "Playing it the nation's way: tradition, cosmopolitanism, and the native-masculine of Hindi sports films." *Contemporary South Asia*. 31 (4), pp. 533-546. https://doi.org/10.1080/09584935.2023.2245345 . (with Dibyakusum Ray)

2) Radhakrishnan, P. (2024). "From Domestic Guardian to the National Militia: the Familial, the National and the Middle-class in 1980s Popular Hindi Film". *National Identities*. https://doi.org/10.1080/14608944.2023.2292689. (with Dibyakusum Ray)

Conference Presentation

1) 2023. Home [not so] Sweet Home: Crime, Fear and Domestic Space in Pandemic Malayalam Films. 6th World Conference on Social Sciences and Humanities (SHCONF), Zurich, Switzerland.

2) 2021. Narrative Goes the Cyber Way: The Case of 'India's Lockdown Film', *C U Soon, Interactive Film and Media Conference*. Hosted by Ryerson University (Canada), The Glasgow School of Art (Scotland), University of Sao Paulo (Brazil), The University of Texas at Dallas (USA).

Book chapter

1) Radhakrishnan, P. (2022). Theorising the Politics of Space in Cinema. In Pradip Basu (Ed.), *Theories Culture Politics* (pp. 262-281). Avenel Press.

2) Radhakrishnan, P. (2021). Ray, Ghatak, and Sen: Knowing the Pioneers of India's Parallel Cinema. In Debastuti Dasgupta and Priyanka Roy (Ed.), *Film Studies: A Beginner's Guide* (pp. 63-77). In-Depth Communication.

Forthcoming (Accepted)

3) Radhakrishnan, P. Horror in the Haveli: Ramsay Films in the Cusp of the Mandal Reforms and Global Exchanges. (proposed book on Horror Culturalism in Postcolonial India), University of Wales Press.

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction

This thesis aims to study the geo-politics of the *masala* Hindi films - a low-brow, "populist, spectacle-based film making" (Thomas, 16) popular during the late 1970s and the 80s in India. The purpose is to analyze how these films amidst their celebrated spectacularity and excessiveness act as a zone of contestation, where the anxieties of the Indian middle-class – in the wake of social reforms like the Mandal policy, the rise of separatist nationalisms, political assassinations, new visual and commodity culture (of TV, cassettes and VCRs) and growing urbanization of Indian cities – is cinematically settled. Poised right before the 1990s neoliberal drive in the Indian economy, the 80s middle-class – hitherto staid and hermetic – was rattled by an 'invasive' global culture, permissiveness, politics of representation, rights, and reform. All of these narrativized a period of several anxieties – personal, cultural, and national. I use the broad term "spatial insecurity" in the title to refer to this panic generated within the middle-class home, the city, public institutions, governing bodies and the national spectrum with the entry of certain historically marginalized entities (women, racial minorities, linguistic minorities, regional categories, etc.) into these well-protected spaces, as the arrival tends to dislodge the existing configuration of these spaces, and is a challenge to privilege and power. While the cartographic anxiety —– defined as a visual representation of "the anxiety surrounding the questions of national identity, survival" (Krishna, 1994, p. 501) and border security-- determines the overarching spatial insecurity mentioned in the title, it is defined more particularly in terms of middle-class home making, changing nature of natural geography and city structures, and introduction of novel technological space exclusively in the films of the 1980s in the thesis. This study shows that the cinematic resolution of this crisis is a grudgingly lenient orthodoxy negotiating with the limits of cultural inclusion, represented through the questions of agency, gender, class, caste, and ethnicity abounding in the middle-class domestic sphere, the city, and the national spectrum. It thereby explains the significant dynamics of how

globalization entered India and puts into context the continued sustenance of nationhood at a time of rapid national transformation: a time of liberal market policies, social changes, and the global influx of people and materials. The study thus tries to contribute to discussions on nationalism and the "enduring nature of national idea" which has transcended global impediments and continues to "offer the qualities of collective faith, dignity, and hope… with its promise of a territorial culture" and collectivity (Kaldor, 2004, p. 161). While the origin, development, and role of an emerging middle-class in the national transformation of India since the 1980s shall be central to this discussion, the study also examines the role of popular films, cultural geography, and space in discussions about the nation.

To understand how the middle-class features within the theories of nation, and to historicize the 1980s Hindi films within the larger questions of nation, nationalism and identity one needs to delve into questions about 'what is a nation' and how the nation-making project in post-colonial societies considerably varies from that of the West. The earliest writings on the nation, which began in the 19th century in the West were generally brief, highly nationalistic, and racist rhetorics, such as John Stuart Mill's "Considerations on the Representative Government" (1861) and Ernest Renan's "What is a Nation?" (1882) (Hobsbawm, 1990). These were followed by some significant writings by John Kautsky, Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin, Otto Bauer, etc. Post-First World War, academic study on nations and nationalisms increased. Some of the prominent writings were that of Carleton B. Hayes (*The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism* (1931) and Hans Kohn (*The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in its Origin and Background* (1944) – who wrote at a time when the map of Europe was being "redrawn according to the principles of nationality, and European nationalism came to be adopted by new movements of colonial liberation or third world assertion" (Hobsbawm, 1990, p. 3). In 1953, a writing by Karl Deutsch entitled "Nationalism and Social Communication: An inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality" (1953) stressed the role of communication in the formation

of nations. Perhaps, the largest number of writings in this area came between 1968 to 1988 which includes J Amunstrong's *Nations Before Nationalism* (1982), A.D. Smith's *Theories of Nationalism* (1983), Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983), Ernest's Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism* (1983), E.J. Hobsbawm and Ranger Terence's *The Invention of Tradition* (1983), Antony Giddens' *Nation State and Violence* (1985), Antony D Smith's *The Ethnic Origins of Nationalism* (1986) etc. Most of these works identify the nation as the primary way for social existence and individual identification of its members, or as "a product of a particular, inevitably localized or regional historical conjecture" (p. 5) which are based on criteria such as language, ethnicity or a combination of criteria like common history, cultural traits, etc. (p. 5). These theoretical postulations primarily derive three major approaches to understand nation formation in the West: a) the pre-modernist approach: which suggests that nations are intrinsic to human nature, it is a type of social organization that human beings need to form to survive in this world, they are timeless and could have existed before or in the modern times. Theorists like A. D. Smith and J. Armstrong are some of the major proponents of this idea (p. 10); b) is the Modernist approach: which places nations firmly in the modern era, as a product of print capitalism, mass education system, industrialization, etc. Ernest Gellner and Hobswman being the advocates of this theory question the historical method of investigating the nation and suggest that nations exist not only as functions of a particular kind of territorial state or aspirations to establish (like the citizen-state of the French Revolution) but also exist in the context of a particular stage of technological and economic development like the emergence of printing, mass literacy, and mass schooling, (pp. 10-11) and; c) is Ethno-Symbolism: combines the strength of both the above approaches and states that although nationalism is a modern ideology, successful nations are built upon pre-modern heritage and it is possible to recognize a nation before the onset of modernity. It is argued that the idea of the nation as a political community supplanted the 'cultural systems' of the religious community and dynastic realm

that preceded it. The process resulted in "a fundamental change…in modes of apprehending the world, which, more than anything else, made it possible to 'think' the nation" (Anderson, 1983, p. 22). In the West, the collaboration of "Protestantism and print-capitalism" (p. 40) made distinguishable changes in the formation of national communities on the basis of "interaction between a system of production and productive relations (capitalism), a technology of communications (print), and the fatality of human linguistic diversity" (p. 42-3). Such a coming together of diverse linguistic vocabularies into a print vocabulary can be described as follows:

> The innumerable and varied ideolects of preprint Europe were now 'assembled, within definite limits, into print-languages far fewer in number'. This was crucial for the emergence of national consciousness because print-languages created 'unified fields of exchange and communications' below Latin and above the spoken vernaculars, gave a new fixity to language, and created new kinds of 'languages-of-power' since some dialects were closer to the print-languages and dominated them while others remained dialects because they could not insist on their own printed form (Chatterjee, 1986, p. 19-20).

The above discussion highlights the possible timeframe and reasons behind the emergence of the national idea. Based on these observations, Partha Chatterjee suggests three distinct types or 'models' of nationalism that shall serve the successive discussion on nation-making in the colonized regions and the nature of the postcolonial state. The first model he suggests is the "'Creole nationalism' of the Americas which was built upon the ambitions of classes whose economic interests ranged against the metropolis. It also drew upon liberal and enlightened ideas from Europe which provided ideological criticisms of imperialism and ancient régimes" (Chatterjee, 1986, p. 20). Perhaps, this model of Creole nationalism is considered to be unfinished as it "lacked linguistic communality and its state form was both retrograde and

congruent with the arbitrary administrative boundaries of the imperial order" (p. 20). Another model "was that of the linguistic nationalisms of Europe" that was based on the "model of the independent national state" (p.20) which influenced several other later nationalisms. The third form is what Chatterjee regards as the "'official nationalism'—typically, Russia" (p. 20). This involved the imposition of cultural homogeneity from the top, through state action, also known as 'Russification' (p.21). These three formative models of nationalism are said to have influenced or were available to third-world nations in the 20th century. The reasons that favoured the emergence, rapid spread, and acquisition of popular roots of such a national consciousness were several as the 20th century witnessed the unprecedented intermingling of "'huge and variegated crowds' with enormous increases in physical mobility. Also, the "imperial 'Russification' programmes sponsored by the colonial state as well as by corporate capital, and the spread of modern-style education created a large bilingual section which could mediate linguistically between the metropolitan nation and the colonized people" (p. 20-21). Chatterjee emphasizes on this bilingual community and their intelligentsia that created a print literacy which "made possible the imagined community floating in homogeneous, empty time" (p. 21). Further, Benedict Anderson (as quoted in Ashcroft et al.) describes bilingualism and its significance in colonized societies as:

> Bilingualism meant access, through the European language-of-state, to modern Western culture in the broadest sense, and, in particular, to the models of nationalism, nationness, and nation-state produced elsewhere in the course of the nineteenth century' (Anderson 1983:107). Third-world nationalisms in the 20th century thus came to acquire a 'modular' character. They can, and do, draw on more than a century and a half of human experience and three earlier models of nationalism. Nationalist leaders are thus in a position consciously to deploy civil and military educational systems modelled on official nationalism's; elections, party organizations, and cultural

> celebrations modelled on the popular nationalisms of 19th century Europe; and the citizen-republican idea brought into the world by the Americas. (Ashcroft et al., 1995, p. 166).

Thus, the nationalist leaders and the middle-class English-educated intelligentsia became crucial factors in determining the nationalist orientation of postcolonial countries. Such assumptions are also reflected in McCully's *English Education and the Origins of Indian Nationalism* (1940) as it emphasizes English education as a crucial determinant in the formation of national consciousness in India. Randell Claudwell summarises McCully's theory and suggests that "government patronage, combined with missionary zeal and private enterprise, had helped to produce the educated class in India" (Caldwell, 2016, pp. 97-98) which were generally and "essentially an upper caste Hindu in composition, drawn from the middle and lower income groups residing in the presidency capitals and district towns, and sought employment in government and liberal professions [and].. it was the resentments and aspirations of this educated class that led to the germination of the seed of nationalism in India" (p. 98). Indian Marxist theorists like M.N. Roy, however, locate nation within a history of class struggle in India, and "at a certain stage of economic development when people in a given area were welded together into a national entity" (p. 94). Such a view also regards the bourgeoisie as a significant political category for the rise of nationalism as they play important roles in the development of a mode of production and distribution. From the author's Marxian perspective, "India did not inherit a bourgeoisie before the eighteenth century and as such the concept of nationhood was unknown at that time" (p. 95). However, he also claims that the earliest glimpse of such a class could be found during the rise of Maratha power in the seventeenth century which marked "the first stage of political nationalism in the history of India" (p. 95) which however "soon degenerated into 'medieval imperialism' propagating 'a reactionary cult' based on Hindu antagonism towards the Muslim" (p. 95). He suggests that "the Indian bourgeoisie

during the British rule were compounded by the falling income from land, shortage of productive land for exploitation and the overcrowding of the liberal professions [and]... a rich intelligentsia found its further economic development blocked on all sides. The British Government was seen to be the cause of all this, and there arose the necessity to fight against it" (p. 96). The Indian national movement hence is seen as an economic necessity that convoluted into a political struggle initiated by an intellectual bourgeoisie of the Indian National Congress who later attracted the masses to the same (p. 96). Perhaps, as evident from the above discussion, the process of nation formation in colonized regions varied from the Western theories of the nation in certain significant ways. In these regions, national consciousness emerged as a part of resistance or the anti-colonial movement against their colonizers spearheaded by a national bourgeois. Hence, the national culture that emerged in post-colonial societies like India was an effort to sustain this primacy of the nation by a national bourgeois who fought for its formation, to "justify and praise their action and keep itself in existence" (p. 155). Such a form of national consciousness thus has its own pitfalls. It explains the dangers of a national bourgeoisie using nationalism to maintain its power and develops a means of control, "a monocular and sometimes xenophobic view of identity and a coercive view of national commitment" (p. 151). In *Subaltern Studies* (Volume 1) (1982), Ranajit Guha states that such elitist historiographies have been shaping the nationalistic narratives in India. The author opines that such elitism (colonialist and neo-colonialist historiographies) credits "the British colonial rulers, administrators, policies, institutions and culture; in the nationalist and neo-nationalist writings [and]… Indian elite personalities, institutions, activities and ideas for the achievement of liberation and development of the nation-state" (Guha, 1982, p. 1-2). He further states:

> This represents nationalism as the sum of the activities and ideas by which the Indian elite responded to the institutions, opportunities, resources, etc. generated by

> colonialism. There are several versions of this historiography, but the central modality common to them is to describe Indian nationalism as a sort of 'learning process' through which the native elite became involved in politics by trying to negotiate the maze of institutions and the corresponding cultural complex introduced by the colonial authorities in order to govern the country. What made the elite go through this process was, according to this historiography, no lofty idealism addressed to the general good of the nation but simply the expectation of rewards in the form of a share in the wealth, power and prestige created by and associated with colonial rule; and it was the drive for such rewards with all its concomitant play of collaboration and competition between the ruling power and the native elite as well as between various elements among the latter themselves". (p. 1-2)

In terms of the cultural orientation of the elite class, Partha Chatterjee elaborates on the bourgeois national consciousness in India which is modeled on an inner and outer sphere of nationalism (*ghar/bahir*) where he regards the outer sphere as the domain of material which includes economy, statecraft, science, and technology, etc., where the West has proved its superiority, and the east has succumbed. The inner sphere is the spiritual domain, the home, and the cultural quotient which is not allowed to be corrupted by the materiality of the West (the *bahir*). Indian modernity, therefore, tries to find its exclusivity in the inner domain: which is often contested on the body of the woman (Chatterjee, 1993). However, such forms of nationalist models were contested in post-colonial India like its several other South Asian counterparts in the 1980s. The political condition in the late 1970s and 80s is described by Michael Mann (2015) as follows:

> "Despite some successes, but in disregard of the actual political situation, Indira Gandhi called for general elections in 1977 which she lost in a landslide victory for the

> opposition. For the first time the Indian-wide opposition parties joined forces under the banner of the Janata Party. This was a loose conglomeration of left and right regional parties that shared the common cause in their opposition to Indira Gandhi and a common objective in wanting to subject her to a bitter electoral defeat. However, within just a few years the common motivation of the cause was overshadowed by specific and regional interests of the various groups, allowing Indira Gandhi to be re-elected as Prime Minister in the elections of 1980. With even greater commitment she then continued to prevent the sectionalism in what she continued to propagate as "nation building". Indira Gandhi's intensified centralist policies seem to be the result of the serious problems in Assam, the Punjab and Kashmir. Sikh extremists in the Punjab, and from even as far afield as Canada, demanded the independent state of Khalistan. Regional and state terror culminated in June 1984 with the storming of the Golden Temple in Amritsar by the Indian Army which was then followed by the assassination of Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguard in October and the resulting anti-Sikh pogroms launched by Congress in Delhi and beyond in November of the same year. In the 1980s secular nationalism lost its attraction." (p. 109)

The rise of peripheral minorities (religious, linguistic, regional, or gendered identities) resulted in a violent partition/secession and the emergence of multiple ethno-nationalist identity-based movements in South Asian countries in the 1980s challenging the existing models of postcolonial national integration (Krishna, 1999).

In the above paragraphs, the role of the national bourgeois using nationalism in post-colonial societies to maintain their own power and their role in the production of national consciousness in India has been mentioned. In a given nation, the middle-class is usually determined by their financial capacities, purchasing power, educational levels, degree of social services, etc.

(Krishna and Bajpai, 2015). This study, however, approaches the middle-class as a cultural category, which is determined by the group's cultural perceptions, values, tastes, moralities, aspirations, and anxieties for themselves and for the nation at large, their ideas of progress and development, etc. Going by this dictum, the middle-class in India has played big roles in economic development, socio-political reformation, culture, and in democratic politics of India. As the identity of the middle-class has also been historically synonymous with that of the national citizen, the stability of the nation is essentially a part of, and largely co-related to the classes' own sectarian progress. They are also regarded as the harbingers of modernism, reforms, and social progress in the country with their excessive contact with the Westernized and modern ideals of freedom, equality, and democracy. This has allowed them to influence and control over public institutions and democratic structure in India. The middle-class in India is also an advocate of tradition and a class that actively represents and constructs local-level sectarian identities that influence the dominant forms of national consciousness (Jodhka and Prakash, 2016). It is noted by Jodhka and Prakash that prior to the 1980s, what constituted the middle-class was an unenterprising section devotedly dependent on the statist establishments, a professional and salaried class that was largely uninterested in commerce and business (p. 31). They received additional power and regulated the bureaucratic system depending upon their socio-political, financial, and territorial identity. The identity of the middle-class started drifting from a hermetic society to a community that sought ideological and spatial distancing from classes below them by the 1980s in India with their claims over the most desirable places in the city and changing habitational choices like the desire to live in gated communities. The emergence of this "new middle-class" (Fernandes, 2006, p. 14) can be located within the socio-political events of the 1980s, and who were later recognized as the harbingers of India's globalization in 1991, and a category that has been largely benefited by it. The 1980s Hindi films introduce these transitioning times through the portrayal of a new entrepreneurial class

interested in trade, commerce, and techno-scientific development, representing the changes that were to come in the next few decades in the country.

The middle-class values, aspirations, and moralities were also channeled through the social project of cinema in the country. Cinema in India is considered to be "the latest entrant on the cultural scene and was responsible for taking over, even eclipsing, earlier forms of cultural production" (Chakravarthy, 1993, p 5). Films in India have remained "both popular (in attracting vast audiences) and antipopular (preventing the actual participation of the vast majority in creating new cultural forms or maintaining the old ones)" (p. 5). Despite its ability to mobilize the masses, and active role in nationalist movements, the Indian nationalists, the cultural elite, and the adherents of classical and 'refined' art forms were generally skeptical about films and "labeled the commercial cinema [as] an impersonating, debased, and parasitic form, thereby seeking to maintain and police cultural boundaries" (p. 5). Through rigorous moral disciplining and censorship laws, the bourgeois imagination of the nation prevailed in the social project of cinema, establishing a convention of heterosexual love, and legitimacy in familial relationships (Deshpande, 2007) in the earliest of films made in India. As the middle-class carries the burden of national identity on its shoulders (Prasad, 2000), cinema and the postcolonial state in India were shaped by British institutions, structures of democracy, and the postcolonial bourgeoisie ideology (Dwyer, 2006). Cinema echoed the bourgeois morality that restricted exhibiting and channeling mass energies that exceeded the normative prescriptions of an elite modernity (Rajadhyaksha, 2016). Cinema's democratic tendencies were accepted but feared for corrupting the national body politic with the tastes of the unruly masses (Dass, 2016). As a consequence, Indian commercial cinema attained a historical status as a guilty pleasure, an unacknowledged cultural force in public life (Majumdar, 2009) since its inception. The state's bourgeois nationalist-reformist zeal for uplifting the rural and the urban underclass – the archetypical objects of development – also influenced the social and realist tradition of

filmmaking in the developmental years of the 1950s and 60s in India. The realist tradition and the studio aesthetics of these early films suited the concerns of middle-class respectability to an extent and led to the disappearance of the overtly loud action-stunt genre (popular among the masses) to largely the B and C circuits (Thomas, 2013). The stunt genre closely resembled "the American Zorro or Marvel man serials … or like Hong Kong action films" (Desai and Dudrah, 2008, p. 11). As reflected in the title, this study acknowledges the sporadic return of the excessiveness of the drama and action-stunt spectacles in the so-called masala films of the 1970s and 80s in India. The 1970s has been canonized by Hindi film researchers for its rift and disaffection with the Nehruvian state, heralding the arrival of the "angry young man" films (*Deewar* (1975), *Zanjeer* (1973), *Sholay* (1975), *Muqaddar Ka Sikandar* (1978)). However, the 1980s Hindi films, defined in the popular media circuits as the "dark ages of Hindi cinema where the audience, mostly young men, seemed to prefer action and loud gaudy melodramas" (Nayar, 2014, p. 15) are often critically ignored by Indian film scholars. In spite of being addressed as "bad" films (Perkins and Veravis, 2014) known for their pulpiness, melodrama, and unabashed moral orthodoxy, this study argues that these films hold historical and cultural value and raise important questions regarding their contemporary time, popular taste and political leanings. Perhaps, this feature is also attributed to much of Bombay cinema which according to a few critics ambiguously mixes up the Western and nationalist realist tradition with the realm of the mass culture – culminating in a hybrid postcolonial space of the *masala*. This is reflected in the element of discontinuity, exhibitionism, and indifference to linear narrative logic of popular films in India, making it a cinema of attractions (Vasudevan, 1995). Though there has been a characteristic difference between the diverse sub genres in the Bombay based Hindi films, like the historical, the family social, the gangster/underworld, and the courtesan, the *masala* formula has slowly come to represent the "uninformed commentaries on Indian and popular Hindi cinema" (Desai and Dudrah, 2008, p. 11). Cinema in India is therefore

a contact zone between the elite spaces and the realm of popular culture (Dass, 2016). The masala films or the trademark of "made in Bombay films" is a total space where "all genres merges into a kind of total spectacle to express the deeper preoccupations and ethos of Indian drama, comic interludes, musical sequences, religion, adventure, fights, socio-political considerations" (Nayar, 2014, p. 20). Hindi popular films also reflect "a continuation of the storytelling practice", imbibes from "epics like the Mahabharata and the Iliad and the African oral epics, other bardic tales and other Indian mythologies" (p. 20), resulting in fantasy, escapism, loose, stringy, digressive and episodic plots. They are characterized to respond "to a sensationalist theory of audience response, than to the demands of structural cohesiveness" (Mishra, 1992, p. 113). The *masala* formula of Hindi films has been especially popular among the urban working-class audience catering to their dreams and anxieties at a time of rapid and fast changes. Jigna Desai and Rajinder Dudrah (2008) write:

> "Masala films draw on all aspects of Indian popular culture for their formulae. In a loosely knit story one can see big city underworld crime, martial arts fights scenes with exaggerated hitting noises – 'dishum, dishum', car stunts, sexy cabaret, elaborate dance sequences with dozens of extras, comedy, romance and family melodrama. The appeal of these films is spectacle, melodrama and affect, and everything is designed to give maximum impact. The producers are challenged by the audience to continually think up something more spectacular, more imaginative, and sometimes even more bizarre, with which to assault the senses. At their worst Masala films are kitsch rubbish but at their best they are enthralling entertainment that has the audiences reeling with laughter and tears from one minute to the next" (p. 12).

The characteristic of *masala* films are the following and they have been emphasized for multiple purposes in this analysis: a) its characteristic departure from the realist tradition of

Nehruvian India marks the culmination of the utopian aspirations about the five-year plan, and socialist developmental model b) these confused and chaotic frameworks adequately represent the discontinuity and rupture that the nation was addressing with the emergence of new ethnoreligious and socio-political movements of the 1980s in India and c) it effectively subverts the Eurocentric epistemes and aesthetics of art and becomes an important tool to analyze the questions of identity and marginality in postcolonial societies, found to be inefficient using literary texts that cater only to a high culture zone. However, the 1980s was also a period where cinema as a form of popular entertainment was itself being replaced by new modes of modern technological interventions – with the advent of colour televisions (launched in 1980 as part of Congress's election promise) and VCRs, the commercialization of Doordarshan and the popularity of advertisements (Ganti, 2004; Punathambekar, 2013). This is estimated to have led to a substantial withdrawal of the middle-class audience from theaters that screened masala films (that dominated in the 1980s) to the 'respectable' television mythologies (Punathambekar, 2013). The essay suggests that the 1980s films responded to this rapidly transitioning nature of India's socio-cultural sphere by propounding the superiority of traditionalism and familial archetypes as shall be seen in the following section.

The analysis seeks to look into the 1980s in India through select highest-grossing Hindi films from 1980-90 (based on IMDb ranking) using a new historicist paradigm that allows the parallel reading of non-filmic events (like socio-cultural and historical conditions) that goes into the making of a cultural text. Such a framework allows to unravel the 'textuality of history and the historicity of texts', giving ample scope to understand history as both subjective and fictionalized and also allows to analyze films as historical products. Stephen Greenbalt's and Louis Montrose's doctrines on new historicism are thus effective in reading the 1980s Hindi films against the backdrop of the ideological and historical transformations of the decade. Such an analysis emphasizes the role of understanding historical events through popular visual

cultures as opposed to traditional historical studies – assigning films an important role as socio-historical archives. New historicism is preoccupied with the relation between literary/cultural text and history and postulates that any text is "both products and functional components of social and political formations" (Brannigan, 1998, p. 3). The new historicist assertion, unlike other critical approaches like new criticism (which considers literary and cultural texts to be ahistorical and apolitical), locates a cultural or literary text "as material products of specific historical conditions" (p.3). New historicism, also known as cultural materialism in American academia, looks into the context of a text and "the political ramifications of literary interpretation" (p. 3). This methodology provides sufficient ways of contextualizing the 1980s Hindi films within the politico-historical rupture that the nation was experiencing at this point. For the new historicist critics, literary and cultural texts overhaul traditional historical readings of events and therefore "mediate the fabric of social, political and cultural formations" (p. 3). History thus becomes a play of several narratives. In this case, the popular films narrate a history of fissure in the ambitious project of nation-building within India and a politics of fear (of being replaced). New historicism usually determines historical context through "an evaluation of…legal, medical and penal documents, anecdotes, travel writings, ethnological and anthropological narratives and, of course, literary texts" (p. 3), and thus allows a complex dialogue between history and other literary and cultural texts. However, the aspect of 'context' in new historicist analysis is not necessarily a background that determines the meaning within a text or neither is the context a set of facts different from the text, but instead "to a new historicist or cultural materialist critic, history is not objective knowledge which can be made to explain a literary text" (p. 3). This aspect of the new historicist reading is particularly important to the current analysis of the 1980s Hindi popular films in India as the reading tends to look at history not "as a secure knowledge" that a literary or cultural critic "can use to fix a text's meanings" (p. 3) since filmic or fictional texts are not "simply a medium for the

expression of historical knowledge" (p. 3). This study therefore investigates the Hindi films of the 1980s as "an active part of a particular historical moment,... an agent in constructing a culture's sense of reality" (p. 3).

New historicist reading also emphasizes the role of the historicity of personal and socio-cultural space in understanding a literary or cultural text. New historicist reading claims that matters of territoriality and nation are "busily replicated across a much wider social field, including the domestic and private space of the home" (Veeser, 1994, p.9). Foucault's genealogical interpretation of history which looks for absences in historical studies was key to the development of spatial criticism. In this analysis, spatial configurations in films have been used as a tool to look into the features of 1980s Hindi cinema and its role in determining the identity of an emerging middle class. Space related anxiety become defining in the analysis of the middle-class character of the 1980s. The analysis makes use of conceptual spaces, material spaces, and specific places to do so where the nature of the space influences the insecurities of displacement it generates. According to Foucault, history can be traced from the most "unpromising places" — which can be inanimate objects, or something abstract, and are often considered to be lacking a history— "in sentiments, love, conscience, instincts" (Foucault, 1978). Historical research into space offers opportunities to understanding

> "spatial dimensions of contemporary and historical societies, to the positioning of geography as the leading discipline for new socially critical scholarship on space…processes of producing and constructing spaces, looking more closely at spatial practices … observing localizations and spatializations of social relations, analyzing spatial self-representations and structures of order of groups and societies and tracing their effects, pointing to the spatiotemporal transformations of social processes" (Rau, 2019, pp. 3-4).

Thus, the thesis has employed spatial features in Hindi films of the 1980s like the domestic space, city, landscapes, and other topography to understand how these entities embed the historical and political processes of the time. The Foucauldian understanding that human activities are equally spatial has led to the genesis of the "Spatial turn" in humanities and culture, which has radically shifted the interest of researchers toward built environments, architecture, landscapes, cityscapes, and also mindscapes. Spatial criticism in recent years has acquired huge attention in academic discourses, due to rapid changes in the nature of human spatial experiences. The interdisciplinary nature of reading various spatial patterns provides new meanings to historical, cultural, social, and political processes. Space is now central to the understanding of the contemporary world marked by shrinking geographies, in the context of globalization, emergence of the "glocal", expansion of markets, mass exodus, capitalism, global migrations, growth of visual media cultures, racialism, and spatial exclusions. Spatial studies today have permeated to disciplines like philosophy, legal studies, cinema, history, culture, sociology, psychoanalysis, anthropology, literary criticism, and various others that do not possess any immediate relation with physical and geographical aspects of social life. The interest in spatial analysis has also impacted the field of geography, urban studies, architecture and planning in new ways. Cinema and Visual media in general play an important role in human spatial experiences today. Cinema has the potential of exploiting simultaneous spaces at the same or different times (Gessner, 1963, p. 1-5). Laura Chiesa provides an impactful detail on how space performs as storytellers, allowing us to imagine/re-imagine new possible worlds, and also challenging those that already exist in *Space as Storyteller: Spatial Jumps in Architecture, Critical Theory, and Literature* (Chiesa 2016, p. 1-2). This can be effectively applied to the realm of cinema since cinematic spaces play a major role in constructing stories of our times. From Jennifer M. Bean et al. edited, *Silent Cinema and the Politics of Space* (2014), one can find how cinematic spaces, beginning from the silent era (1910-1930s) had

tried to “explore the transnational crossings and exchanges”, surpassing the geographical and linguistic divisions, before the arrival of sound (Bean et al. 2014, p. 1-7). Henry Lefebvre was the earliest to make certain pertinent observations in his *Production of Space* (1991), regarding the new forms of spatial characteristics that have emerged, with the precedence of the ‘visual’ in our contemporary cultures (Lefebvre 1991, p. 139). He evokes his idea of the ‘mental spaces/ the abstract spaces’ to elaborate on the concept of spaces as representations, formulated in the human mind which in turn is influenced by our past experiences, and preconceived cultural, historical, and social beliefs (p. 104). Mental spaces, hence, are the most political dominions that shape our imagination and play a critical role in our understanding of the modern visual practices that construct and inform our ideas about places in the present, in important ways. This aspect of cinematic space has helped to explore the politics and historicity of home space, the cinematic landscape, regional geographies, urban ghettos, and the techscapes in select films in this thesis. While new historicism and spatial analysis is by now an established mode of engaging with films, the thesis has used them to determine the salient spatial features of the 1980s Hindi films, a representative set of films which lacks critical engagement hitherto. The analysis claims that these new spatial configurations in the select Hindi films of the 1980s can be effective ways of interpreting the socio-political transition of the time that birthed a new strain of Indian middle class.

A significant gap can be noted in the in-depth analysis of Hindi popular films in the period between 1980-90 and its spatial characteristics which the present study is attempting to fulfill. A spatial interpretation of the films of this decade can provide enormous possibilities for understanding the new patterns of domestic space, popular geographies, and cartographic expressions as used and introduced in/through these 80s films. These exclusive spatial tendencies where also a means through which these films responded and participated in shaping the national body politic. However, the project is only an addition to a number of other spatial

interpretation of Hindi popular film texts with its importance solely resting on identifying the new cinematic spatial conditions, practices, and spatial constructions within the transforming decade of the 1980s. A brief look into the existing studies on spatial analysis of Hindi films shall therefore help in isolating the focus of this project. Priya Jaikumar's *Where Histories Reside: India as Filmed Space* (2019) focuses on the location shooting and the Indian nation as a filmed space. This seminal work on film and space provides excellent insights on encounters between a camera and its environment. This work assigns the film space "a heterogeneous artifactual status as a framed and scaled visual image … that is also an ideological apparatus, economic commodity, technological platform, site of exhibition and consumption, fragment of memory, and geopolitical instrument". *Silent Cinema and the Politics of Space* (2014) by Anupama Kapse et al. focuses on silent film archives from around the world to show how these films freely crossed limitations of space to resist national borders and linguistic thresholds in ways that became far less possible after the emergence of sound. The collection addresses important questions about "the uneven forces–geographic, economic, political, psychological, textual, and experiential–that underscore a non-linear approach to film history". A number of other spatial analysis of Hindi films largely focus on the city and the urban space. Ranjani Majumdar in *Bombay Cinema: An Archive of the City* (2007), engages in a spatial analysis of the cinematic city of Bombay films using select cases from the 1950s, 60s, 70s and the 90s to establish the cinematic city as an unofficial archive of India's socio-political crises especially transforming during the 1970s emergency and the experience of globalization in the 1990s. Mazumdar takes a single case study of *Parinda* (1989) from the late 1980s to further her arguments on the dystopian urban subjectivity of the Bombay of the mid-1980s. In Madhav Prasad's historical analysis of ideology of Hindi cinema, spatial canvas becomes crucial in showing the ideological transformation of films as the cinematic location shifts from rural to the urban. A vast bibliography on city based spatial analysis of Indian cinema can be

found in Preben Kaarsholm edited *City Flicks: Indian Cinema and the Urban Experience* (2007) where authors like Ravi Vasudevan analyses the narrative form and film style of contemporary urban action films with a focus on *Parinda* (1989) among other films of different decades. This analysis invokes the material aspects of the urban underworld to contextualise the film within the post- textile strike and urban crisis of the 1980s Bombay. Jyotika Virdi's *The Cinematic ImagiNation: Indian Popular Films as Social History* (2003), analyses how Hindi popular films imagine a unified nation, as a mythical community—a family— that collapses under the weight of its own contradictions". Virdi invokes the 1980s film *Karma*, as the only example from the 1980s that engages in this national unifying project by integrating characters from different regions and religions of the country under the singular identity of an "Indian". This thesis finds its exclusivity in using multiple spatial parameters like cinematic home space, city space, maps, natural geography and techscapes to conduct vast research on the 1980s in India by using cinema as a site of contestation of various historical and political processes of the time. These spatial canvases of the 80s Hindi films are placed in comparison to the previous decades with respect to changes in physical and conceptual meaning of home, changes in cultural meaning of certain natural geographies, changing nature of urban planning, and novel placement of techscapes in films.

This study also becomes significant with respect to the analysis of critically ignored history of the 1980s commercial Hindi films and its response to the changing times. Hence a general outlook on past interventions especially with respect to temporal analysis of Hindi films is deemed necessary. This outlook shall be important in understanding the lack of adequate research on the historical and cultural parameters and contexts that shaped 1980s Hindi films and the identity of the 80s middle class on the diegetic space. The existing literature on the history of Hindi cinema has hitherto been successful in analyzing the Hindi film texts to be a metaphoric site of struggle between different temporal conceptions of a national-popular

culture. This methodology has been significant in conducting a decadal analysis by Manishita Dass' in *Outside the Lettered City: Cinema, Modernity, and the Public Sphere in Late Colonial India* (2016) where the author analyses the pre-colonial Indian cinema's rift with modernity, middle-class India's response to the rise of the cinema as a popular form of mass entertainment in early 20th century India, participation of cinema in nationalist mobilization, and how cinema posed troubling challenges to the cultural authority of Indian elites in the pre and early years after independence. Neepa Majumdar's *Wanted Cultured Ladies Only!: Female Stardom and Cinema in India, 1930s-1950s* (2009) pans out the early cinematic star culture in India from its emergence in the silent era to the decade after Indian independence in the mid-twentieth century. The author reads specific films and stars to analyse the historical and cultural contexts that gave rise to distinctly Indian notions of celebrity. An exclusive study on the 1970s Hindi films in India and its lasting influence on subsequent decades has been conducted by Priya Joshi and Rajinder Dudrah in *The 1970s and its Legacies in India's Cinemas* (2016) All these works conduct historical research on the early to 70s Hindi films. Bhaskar Sarkar's *Mourning the Nation* deals with the trauma of a nation-space threatened and divided by partition, its the shifting cultural expressions identified as acts of cultural mourning and its role in the evolving project of nation building. Though the work deals with the cultural anxiety of the nation it does make a decadal investigation of the politics and anxieties of the 1980s Hindi films in particular. Sumita S. Chakraborthy's *National Identity in Popular Cinema: 1947-1987* (1993) though identifies cinema as a impersonating and metaphoric site of national identity formation, a detail analysis of this tendency with respect to commercial films of the 1980s remain unexplored. unexplored. , Rosie Thomas' *Bombay before Bollywood: Film City Fantasies* (2013) etc. explores the masala form of Hindi films -- the fantasy, costume, and stunt films popular in the decades before and immediately after independence. She discusses the influence of "this other cinema on the big-budget masala films of the 1970s and 1980s, before "Bollywood" erupted

onto the world stage in the mid-1990s". Though this work has significantly influenced the thesis, Thomas focuses majorly on the film form of the masala and does not conduct a textual analysis of the 1980s popular films.

The lack of scholarship on the 1980s popular Hindi films and its influence on contemporary themes of social and political culture was recently acknowledged by South Asian History and culture. This thesis also tries to participate in such a project of archiving the visual history of the decade. Among the few available exclusive studies on the 1980s Hindi films, Ramsay horror films have been read as a formative medium for entering into the decade of the 1980s in India by several authors and film scholars. Some of them include D. Valančiūnas' "Indian Horror: The Western monstrosity and the Fears of the Nation in the Ramsay Brothers' Bandh Darwaza" (2011) which sees these horror films as apprehension of the neo-colonialism of the 1980s. Kartik Nair's **"**Taste, Taboo, Trash: The Story of the Ramsay Brothers" (2012) talks about the horror cult permeated through Ramsay films as a total disruption of the mainstream cultural values and cinematic respectability. Meraj Ahmed Mubarki's, *Filming Horror: Hindi Cinema, Ghosts and Ideologies* (2016) and Valentina Vitali's *The Hindi Horror Film: Notes on the Realism of a Marginal Genre* (2011) discuss the cultural dilemma with the rise of the traditional-cultural in opposition to the secular-rational modernity in the 1980s. Meheli Sen's *Haunting Bollywood: Gender, Genre, and the Supernatural in Hindi Commercial Cinema* (2017) sees the Ramsay films as an attack on the inefficiency of modern institutions of law in the post-Emergency period. A number of other works like Gregory D. Booth's "Preliminary thoughts on Hindi popular music and film production: India's 'culture industry(ies),1970–2000" (2011) and "Disco, Dancing, Globalization and Class in 1980s Hindi Cinema" (2022) discuss the arrival of the disco culture in the 1980s Hindi films defining the transitional characteristics of the period where new modes of modern technological interventions had started to dictate the mass pleasures, hinting at the impending project of globalization. Ajay

Gehlawat (2023) focuses on the musical oeuvre of the 1980s Hindi playback singer Nazia Hassan whose singing is placed within "the simultaneous advent of the disco phenomenon and the new woman in Hindi cinema" (p. 285) in his essay *Disco Nazia: disarticulating female playback and the heroine in early '80s Hindi cinema* (2023). Gehlawat maps the contemporary manifestation of her song where the erasure and supplanting of her voice "reformulates the attendant historiography of early '80s Hindi cinema" (p. 285). Pooja Radhakrishnan and Dibyakususm Ray (2023) look at the genesis of Hindi sports films in the 1980s and its evolutionary manifestation from a social-emancipatory athletic phenomenon of the pre-globalisation era to the "emergence of sporting cinema on athletic superheroes… nurtured within deeply insular, and ethno-religious gaming traditions of antiquity" (p. 1) in the recent years in the essay *Playing it the nation's way: tradition, cosmopolitanism, and the native-masculine of Hindi sports films* (2023). Isha Karki's "Scripting Resistance: Rape and the Avenging Woman in Hindi Cinema." (2019) and Debashrita Dey & Priyanka Tripathi's "Queen of Misery" Nirupa Roy: Re-reading the Filmic Mother of 1980s Through Alternate Care Dynamics" (2022) undertake a feminist reading of select 1980s films. Other significant literature emerging in recent times include Smita Banerjee's, "Om Puri in/and 1980s Hindi cinema: narrating the 'nation' and the 'subaltern protagonist." (2023) and Debarshi Prasad Nath & Swikrita Dowerah, "The Icons of Unadulterated Evil: Bollywood Villains of the 1980s", 2023. Tapan K. Ghosh's *Bollywood Baddies: Villains, Vamps, and Henchmen in Hindi Cinema* (2013) focuses on among others, the villains of select 1980s Hindi films. This study aims to conduct a detailed analysis of the popular films of the decade and tries to highlight the post-emergency politics of separatism, regionalism, representation, and its implications on popular formats like the masala films which though being claimants of subaltern aesthetics, still operate within the vestiges of the nationalist historiography as most of these films constitute a range of elements that get repeatedly reshuffled to offer "a mythical solution to restore a utopian world"

(Nayar, 2014, p. 43) for the urban bourgeoisie. The analysis looks into the cultural negotiation of the urban middle-class at a moment of socio-political assertions as meticulous efforts of preservation, integration, otherization, and vilification of cinematic spaces (the home, the city, landscapes, and other topographies) at both symbolic and material level. The thesis discusses the 1980s middle-class going through a crucial transformative phase – from the traditionalist, 'civil service-oriented salariat, short on money but long on institutional perks' (Mazzarella, 2004, p. 1) to cautiously welcoming the 'hitherto out-of-reach consumer goods, and technological progress' (Varma, 2007, p. 119) and the associated civil liberalism in a backdrop of intensive political strife.

Following this introduction, the thesis contains five other sections which include the three thematic chapters, a conclusion, and a reference section. The outline of the chapters is as follows:

Chapter 1: The Dissemination of the Bourgeois 'Home':

Chapter one contextualizes the "wreckage drama" within the bourgeois household – in the family/romance sub-genre of the Hindi masala films of the 1980s – in the wake of a new "encroachment" into the public sphere, the city, and the national spectrum. This chapter utilizes the theme of 'invasion' to read the urban middle-class domestic space in select family-centric popular Hindi films of the 1980s. It asserts that the urban middle-class in the 1980s was going through a bewildered social condition as a result of sporadic transformations in the nation with the rise of liberal social movements, reforms, ethno-linguistic nationalism, and commodification culture. The impact of which is read as a disturbance to the secure home space – identified as the symbolic nation. Through *Khubsoorat* (1980), *Judaai* (1980,), *Basera* (1981), *Arth* (1982), *Masoom* (1983), *Agar Tum na Hote* (1983), *Souten* (1983), *Aakhir Kyun?* (1985) and *Nazrana* (1986), the study maps how the sudden arrival of outsiders into the

domestic space causes a metaphorical wreckage and dilapidation of this home. This chapter begins with a discussion of the new socio-political conditions of the 1980s in India, otherwise regarded as a spatial reclamation by new identities in the cities, public bodies, workspaces, and the national spectrum. The larger questions of identity and territoriality are attended to through an understanding of the transformation of the domestic space in cinemas. Rattled by the sudden changes around, an emerging middle-class is visualized in the films who seek social and psychological cohesion within the home space. A detailed analysis of the concept of home and homemaking in sociological, economic, and urban contexts is done, followed by a discussion on the depiction of domesticity in Hindi films in the previous decades. The 1980s films introduce a new class of rich industrialists and businesspersons as protagonists with large homes, elaborate interiors, newly acquired wealth and comfort. The characters, however, experience loss aversion in relation to their secure home, as the latter is threatened by encroachers in the form of relatives, husband's beloved, or unwarranted guests. While it is the unity and order of the house that gets challenged in *Khubsoorat* and *Judaai*, characters meet with frequent hallucinations, anxiety, and deprivation in *Arth*, *Basera*, *Masoom,*and *Nazrana* where the outsider causes psychological disturbance within the domestic. The subversion of traditional order dictates the politics of *Agar Tum Na Hote* and *Souten* where gender and caste dynamics result in domestic trouble. The cultural and political deviance, the shock of the new, and the rampaging of national cohesion are thus effectively negotiated within these cinematic homes of the 1980s.

Chapter 2: Negotiating with Uneasy Topographies: Landscapes, Maps, and the City in the 1980s Hindi Films

The second chapter looks into how the bourgeois hegemonic nation appropriates certain disputed geographies through efforts of integration and 25therization of regions in films of the 80s. This chapter uses landscape, city, and other geographical metaphors to understand the

national paranoia resulting from the ascent of several regional nationalisms that were challenging territorial integrity within the nation. Through instances from *Karz* (1980), *Silsila* (1981), *Karma* (1986), *Parinda* (1989), and *Agneepath* (1990), this chapter focuses on the geo-political identity of places and how they have been used as tools of integration and 26therization of spaces to expedite a national consciousness. This analysis seeks to acknowledge the role of cinematic geographies "in shaping individual and societal perceptions of space and place" (Peckham, 2004, p. 420). In the initial few sections of this chapter, the discussion stresses the replacement of print culture by visual media and popular culture that establishes a sense of national collectivism in the contemporary era. Further, the role of cinematic topographies in the nation-making endeavor has been discussed in detail. From largely remaining an immobile fixity, a background or a setting against the ever-evolving nature of time in Humanities and its theoretical circuits till the nineteenth century, it has been argued that spatial denominators serve as political and ideological presence in films and informs one's geographic imagination. The ethnic, regional, and the linguistic tensions of the 1980s play an important role in reconstituting the national geography as natural environments are crucial in the establishment of a stable national identity. In the first case study *Silsila*, the natural landscape of Kashmir valley is interrupted through its reconfiguration from an ideal national space of the Hindi film's song and dance rituals to a space of ambiguous relation with the larger nation going through a moral crisis just like the characters in the film. In *Karma*, the valley through its symbolic representation in the maps becomes a tool for establishing the national solidarity amidst militaristic unrest. Further, the chapter analyses South Indian regions like Ootty in *Karz* where the landscape becomes a metaphor for primitivity under the national gaze amidst the lower-caste and linguistic uprisings in several South Indian states. In *Parinda* and *Agneepath*, the South Indian ghettos in Mumbai are located within the changing community relations in the city of Bombay with increasing ethnic clashes, criminality, and

gang wars. The phenomenological understanding of the urban spaces has been a major factor in the development of modern visual practices like cinema which has been closely representing the urban experience since its arrival.

Chapter 3: Reading Faraway Techscapes in the 1980s Hindi Films

Chapter three looks into the shrinking spaces of habitation and psycho-cultural anxieties of the middle-class in the urban metropolis and how films introduce locations of techno-scientific private recluse to cater to the global ambitions of this class. This chapter analyzes the ethnically and geographically alienated tech-savvy private worlds of the popular villains of the 1980s, like Shakaal (played by Kulbhushan Kharbanda), Mogambo (played by Amrish Puri), Dr. Dang (played by Anupam Kher), Kancha Cheena (played by Danny Denzongpa), and Shahani Seth (played by Amjad Khan). The topographies and tropes of border crossing, sea-fearing, and conquest of the alien landscape by middle-class heroes have been analyzed as an appropriation of the emerging middle-class desires of travel, conquest, and technological progress. This section of the thesis manifests the theme of domesticity on a much larger scale – national border, ethnic identity, and the terrorist 'other'. The chapter elaborates on the complex evolution of technology and science in India with a particular emphasis on the technological revolution in the 1980s in India. The techscape in the 1980s Hindi films is thus located within the changing middle-class dreams of entrepreneurship, technological modernity, and global interaction, which also helps them negotiate with anxieties of liberalization. In *Shaan* (1980), the geopolitically alien villain and his techscape is demolished using a self-confident middle-class nationalism where the middle-class heroes serve as vigilante nationalist in contrast to their 70s predecessors in films like *Deewar* where vigilantism is seen as an aberration to statist denominations. In *Mr. India* (1987) through mastery over indigenous gadgetry the alien technology of the villain is destroyed as the middle-class hero transports himself from a domestic protector to a national guardian. *Kaalia* (1981) again marks the arrival of a new

corporate villain in Hindi films (with the decline of the textile industry) who ploys his victims through modern gadgetry and technology. In *Agneepath,* the vigilante hero resists the neo-colonization of the new global villain by protecting the pristine village of Mandwa – a microcosm of the nation. The chapter thereby asserts that 1980s middle-class heroes pitch in a new self-confident nationalism by mastering the technological and global landscape of the alien villain and negotiate the moral anxieties that complement the socio-cultural changes of the 1980s in India.

The conclusion of the thesis hints towards the events leading to the economic restructuring of 1991 that establishes the urban middle-class consumers as the representative citizens of liberalizing India, finding an active recognition in popular cultures. The thesis identifies the growth of a new middle-class much before the official liberalization of the Indian economy and the political and moral crisis that shaped this class. This middle-class shall be located within the disruptive politics of the 1980s, the new surge for reforms and representations, and the ambitious economic and telecommunication revolution of the period. The study also concludes on how cinematic spaces can be effective tools in mapping the diverse role of popular geopolitics. Spatial features in the select films are used to identify the changing nature of national identity in India, the new politics of insecurity, and the new middle-class assumptions of modernity. The thesis emphasizes how despite being spectacle-based loud melodramatic films, the 1980s masala films are important depictions of historical and political processes through a new historicist reading of the same. The revival of the *masala* format in the contemporary filmmaking culture after its gradual decline in the 1990s, therefore helps in understanding the genre's continuity in new forms. However, the study does not include film traditions of the 1980s outside the Bombay film industry which has its own exclusive way of engaging with the national question. Also, the study is limited to some of the popular and highest-grossing films of the period under discussion. The study understands the possibility of

reading other non-canonical works that can generate diverse discussions and reserve them for the future. Also, this analysis does not include non-commercial/parallel/art films that overtly discuss the socio-political crisis of the 1980s. Fruitful discussions on such aspects could help in maintaining a democratic space for pluralist ethos, one that works towards a cultural synthesis.

Chapter Two: The Dissemination of the Bourgeois 'Home'

A whole history remains to be written of *spaces* – which would at the same time be the history of *powers*…– from the great strategies of geopolitics to the little tactics of the habitat.

(Foucault, 1980, p.149)

The 1980s was a period of unprecedented identity-based movements in India, with the initiation of social reforms like the Mandal policy[1], the strengthening of several new regional political parties and provincial identities, and the emergence of rights-based reforms. The period saw the rise of several separatist movements in Punjab, Jharkhand, Assam, Kashmir, Nagaland, etc., regional tensions in Andhra Pradesh, the rise of Dravidian politics in Tamil Nadu, demand for new linguistic and administrative states like Chhattisgarh, the outgrowth of Naxalite movement suppressed during the emergency, fresh mobilizations along the lines of ethnicity, strengthening of political groups like the Shiv Sena that appealed for nativism and regionalism, and other uprisings in various parts of the country which were challenging the unitarian projects hitherto undergone. This was followed by the weakening of the Indian National Congress' pan

[1] The mandal commission under B P Mandal was formed to recognise the socially or educationally backward classes of India and introduce reservation policy as a mode of addressing the inequalities and discriminations faced by the members of this section, along with seeking considerable representation of this class in the public and decision-making domain. The commission report was submitted to the President on 31st December 1980. However, the implementation of it happened only in 1989, under the V P Singh government, which led to massive protests by upper caste students nationwide.

India appeal, aggravated by the tragic assassination of Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister, in 1984. The rapidly urbanizing cities of the time, on the other hand, were resulting in overcrowded housing establishments and competition for space at several levels. The radical politics of the time had also rattled the Indian middle-class since this disruptive politics vehemently challenged their privileges, claims to positions of power, and dwellings in the cities. While the progressive economic reforms of the period, the telecommunication revolution and the resultant global and technological advancement were creating a hopeful future for the ambitious middle-class (Varma, 2007;Delong, 2012) the uniform life experiences it created amongst various hierarchies of socio-economic groups was a source of continuing anxiety among the urban middle-classes (Sibley, 1995; Baviskar and Ray, 2020). Studies on the Indian middle-classes have often emphasized the aspect of distancing as a predominant cultural marker of this class, especially after liberalization (Fernandes, 2006) through its consumption, habitational, and segregation patterns. Works focusing on the features of middle-class domesticity have largely emphasized the gendered structure of its household (Donner, 2012), the aspects of its well-ordered interiors and socio-spatial fragmentation of the residential area (Shaban & Aboli 2021), the functioning of class and other hierarchies within this private spatial structure (Dickey, 2008), etc. In this chapter, the urban middle-class domesticity as depicted through the 1980s Hindi films is placed within the tumultuous post-emergency politics of separatism, regionalism, representation, and urbanization. The invasive arrival of the traditionally marginalized identities (economic, regional, religious, sexual, racial, ethnic) into spaces of entitlement and the resultant insecurities it created within the middle-class domesticity shall be understood through features of its household, and the treatment of outsider elements.

In Anustup Basu's analysis of the filmic home in Hindi cinema, the middle-class home has been identified with nostalgia and pristine sentiments often equated with "the organic spirit of the nation" (Basu, 2010, p.223). This space, he says "is outside the urban circulation of bodies

and money" (p. 223) and the ultimate refuge as the comforts offered by the city gradually become unlivable. A similar view pertains in Priya Joshi and Rajendra Dudrah's (2016) exclusive study on the 1970s family romance genre. Closely aligning with this study, their work establishes the family romance genre as a manifestation of the national anxieties particularly through the genre's "most cherished social belief– the sanctity of motherhood" (p. 8-9). Middle-class domesticity reflects the secular public sphere in Sheena Malhotra & Tavishi Alagh's (2004) examination of the 1950-80s family films which transforms to a Hinduised national identity post-1990s (p. 22). A few commentators of Indian film studies opine that the politically unstable 1980s birthed films that were 'belabored, discontinuous, and poorly executed… [where] [p]owerful themes in contemporary politics are diffused' (Virdi, 2003, p. 105) in contrast to the politically germane 1970s. Through the filmic canon discussed in the following section, we argue that in spite of their pulpiness, melodrama, and unabashed moral orthodoxy, 1980s films still raise important questions regarding its contemporary time, popular taste, and political leanings. If they are 'bad' films, they reflect a 'bad' time, and they indeed provide commentary on the 'issues of knowledge and power, and so raise broader social and political questions' (Perkins and Verevis, 2014, p. 6) about the precipitous, transitional phase before neoliberalism, most clearly seen through the representation of the domestic sphere of the middle-class. This chapter, hence, undertakes a reading of the urban middle-class domestic space in some of the family-centric popular Hindi films of the 1980s, viz. *Khubsoorat*, *Judaai*, *Baseraa*, *Arth*, *Masoom*, *Agar Tum na Hote*, *Aakhir Kyun?* and *Nazrana* using the theme of 'invasion'. The study analyzes how the disruption to the secure domestic space by outsider elements in these films figuratively depicts the psycho-spatial anxieties of the urban middle-class in the 1980s in India in the wake of an impending "threat" to the nation. The middle-class home space in this chapter contributes to a larger understanding of the politics that dictated the period and the role of cinematic geographies in symbolically representing and responding to the widening spatial insecurities between classes. As the chapter

tracks the origin of the historical and political identity of the new middle-class in the family films of the 1980s through their habitational choices and perceptions of domestic security, it also reveals the middle-class agony of loss aversion, fear of differences, concepts of purity and danger which plays out symbolically within the domain of the domestic. The chapter therefore first discusses the urban sociology and habitational conditions in cities of the 1980s and determines the foundational characteristics of the middle-class that rest on deliberate segregation and politics of spatial anxiety. It further delves into a discussion on the emergence of this newly rich and ambitious middle-class in India growingly interested in privatization, business, and entrepreneurship with the advent of economic reforms in the 1980s. By analyzing how the progress of this class rests on the aspect of cohesion within their class as well as within the nation, the chapter discusses how the post-emergency society and politics were a cause of anxiety for this class. These anxieties are determined through the analysis of the house encroachment family dramas of the time.

The Middle-class and the City

Most Indian cities by the 1980s had become home to a massive populace of job seekers, migrants, swamp dwellers, slum habitants, and rural expats, resulting in educational unemployment, migrant crisis, large slums, and shrinking spaces of habitation in the cities (Datta, 2012; Mazumdar, 2007). The cities were witnessing a rapid urban exodus which by the mid-1980s made housing shortages the highest in India with a large crowd of landless population settling even in “bits of cardboard, tin and plastic on illegal land” (Nilekani, 2010, p. 279). The reader should note that the 1980s had significant changes in the real estate market and housing policies. The slum clearance programmes for the relocation of the urban poor into affordable housing complexes were hijacked by the higher to middle-income groups, making the division between expanding ghettos and gated communities even sharper (Tiwari and Rao, 2016). The failure of the land reform movement in India and urban infrastructure policies were

escalated further by the introduction of land ceilings and restrictions on building heights in the 1970s. Between 1980 and 1982 land prices more than doubled in the major metropolitan cities of the country due to the increasing demand. Building activities and suburbanization showed a historical increase (Varma, 2007, p.116). Along with this, with new shelter strategies introduced in the seventh plan in the early 1980s, the major share of house construction responsibility fell to the private sector, especially the household sector. The role of the state in housing activities was significantly reduced to that of an enhancer or enabler that now promotes an environment for such construction endeavors (Kundu, 1993 p. 2). The state, as per the new policy reforms facilitated "the access to developed land, building materials, finance, and technology" (p. 2). The housing sector thus became one of the desirable investment categories by the 1980s with private enterprises making significant inroads into this domain. In the cinemas of the time, middle-class urban housing started becoming a significant material construction within the new urban ecology. These homes played a pertinent role in containing the habitational insecurities of the urban middle-classes who were apprehensive of the city's mixed, overcrowded, and filthy population.

Cohabitation in big cities, along with a homogenous experience of life "in the course of reform movements and through engagement with institutions like the school, the legal system, the office, and urban infrastructure" (Donner, 2012, p. 2) were accelerating the commonality among a wide spectrum of population with limited differentiation. In an anecdotal reference by H Dandekar (1986, about the experience of walking through Bombay city in the 1980s, he describes the city's air smelling of the mills, and the beaches, "which are the lungs for congested Bombay… packed with the city's population strolling shoulder to shoulder" (p. 220). The yearning for a secluded life was thus one of the major identity markers of the emerging urban middle-class and therefore, "home emerged as the most important site of middle-class socialization and differentiation" (Jodhka and Prakash, 2016, p. 65). As we shall see through

the analysis of the films of this decade, the anxieties of homogeneity reverberated throughout the period. While the experience of the crowd, the city's dirt, and pollution were on the one hand, the conventional hierarchies of identity and the newly emerging ones played a crucial role in the middle-class segregation in the cities. Perhaps in stark opposition to the conventions of liberal hegemonic patterns of the West, where the identification with middle-class identity brought about a sense of common-ness and homogeneity, and expanded a democratic public sphere, the Indian middle-class is often marked by its celebrated distancing from classes below them (p. 51). Also, going by the given conditions of social identities and their convergence in India, the middle-classes exhibit a pattern of internal segregation within itself which is placed on the differences of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and caste. The prospect of mixing with traditionally inferior categories with the onset of economic changes and social reforms had a significant impact on the identity determination of the new progeny of the middle-classes. The want for secluded places of habitation was therefore in alignment with "clearly demarcated borders" (Brosius, 2012, p. 65) of social purity "between an 'inside' world, allegedly filled with order and peace, and an external world, allegedly infused with dirt and disorder" (p. 65).

Cities in India by the 1980s had also become sites of rapid ethnic and religious mobilization, like its other global counterparts, where evangelist and indigenous movements were gaining massive impetus with the support of a new media, television, internet, etc (Jayaram, 2010). The notion of the urban commune as a homogenous set of city dwellers was being replaced by differentiation based on identity and imagined commonalities practiced primarily through spatial segregation. The violent forms of such politics in India, for example, took the shape of agitations against the South Indians (derogatively termed as Madrasis) under the Shiv Sena (Subramanian, 2015; Jayaram, 2010), and later against the "Bhayiyas"-denigrating the migrants from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh under the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (Jayaram, 2010, p. 53). The Shiv Sena, from the 1960s, was largely distressed by the alleged

amassing of public offices and intellectual domains in Mumbai by English-educated employees from the Southern states of India (Lele, 1995 p. 1520). By the 1980s– characterized as the party's most turbulent years – the Sena had turned to be a militant force against the Muslims, Dalits and tribals, amidst other parallel riots in many parts of the country from 1980-84 (p. 1525). The various forms of subaltern militancy, and reports of conversion of Dalits into other religions, including Islam governed the fear within hegemonic Savarna groups in the country, resulting in expressions of a majoritarian and elite show of strength through vandalization, street processions (Chaudhuri, 2022, p.163), symbolic public rituals, etc, contributing to a changed urbanism. The distortion of traditional hierarchies as a result of new democratic social reforms reflected in the political front through the massive turmoil following the Mandal reforms at the close of the decade. The Mandal committee recommendation to introduce 27 percent job reservation for the members of the Other Backward Communities (OBCs) in India in the Central government and public sector undertaking led to further apprehensions about the changing time among the upper caste middle-class. Though the proposal was officiated only in 1989 by the then government under Vishwanath Pratap Singh, the recommendations of the committee headed by B P Mandal was a much-anticipated proposal from early in the decade considering its social and political volatility. Nagindas Sanghvai's article, "From Navnirman to the anti-Mandal riots: the political trajectory of Gujarat (1974–1985)" (2010), on the principle changes brought by the various social and political restructuring in India in the 1970s and 1980s, especially across caste based lines, notes how these events shaped and changed Indian socio-political scenario forever. The immediate reaction took the form of violent agitations in states like Gujarat in 1985, much before the official announcement of the implementation of the Mandal policies, and the frenzied upper caste protests broke out in several North Indian states following the declaration (p. 481). Urban centers of the country thus witnessed unprecedented modes of agitations which played a decisive role in the further

alienation among caste and class categories. Perhaps, in the environment of the urban, the diverse social, religious, racial, ethnic, regional, and gendered patterns of life also played a significant role in dictating the interpersonal relationships within the middle-classes, with the advent of reforms which guaranteed an upward social mobility for anyone with a meritorious background and skill.

These events had important repercussions in manifesting the new middle-class characteristics in the 80s, which became more prominent in the 90s, as an aftermath of the economic liberalization. However, as understood from the pattern of political undertakings in the country and its impact on the formation of new socio-political algorithms, the period of the 1980s saw rampant socio-political re-organization that sought to challenge hierarchies and privileges of the traditional order. As we will see in the following argument, there is a telling effect of all such socio-historical changes on the filmic narratives of this time, which can hardly be called coincidental. Reference to the new form of urban activism becomes important in our discussion of anxiety at filmic homes, as the latter is theoretically and metaphorically a domain where the immediate effects of these politics are felt and enacted. The rise of new socio-political identities in the 1980s therefore becomes a major governing factor in the discussions related to the new middle-class homes in the films of this decade, and its spatial politics. The Indian middle-class – despite internal variations within itself – has been a momentous political force throughout the colonial, post-colonial and contemporary neo-nationalist[2] phase in India. While their role in economic development, socio-political reformation, culture, and democratic politics of India has been a constant and compelling source of understanding the complexities

[2] Neo-nationalism is a political and ideological position that opposes the current trend of globalisation. It has taken the form of right-wing populism, nativism and protectionism in several countries across the world.

of and within this class (Jodhka and Prakash, 2016; Donner, 2012), the production of the identity of the middle-class, especially from the early 1980s in India is also linked to a politics of "spatial purification" which centers on middle-class claims over public spaces (Fernandes, 2006, p. 139). This "new middle-class" (p. 14) whom Leela Fernandes later identifies as the proponent of India's economic reforms of 1991, and also the sole benefactors of it, have been early on categorically represented as an ambitious, aspiring, entrepreneur class in the films of the 1980s especially through the star text of the likes of Shashi Kapoor, Rajesh Khanna, Rakesh Roshan, Raj Babbar, Rishi Kapoor, etc., presaging the changes that were to come in the next few decades in the country. Therefore, the specificities of the film texts that particularly concentrate on the aspect of the middle-class home space, the features of its domesticity, and the household shall be the major focus of this chapter. A retrospection on this new urban bourgeois community with business aspirations shall facilitate the understanding of the historical and political conditions for the emergence of such an aspirational middle-class in this period, its class characteristics, and desires. However, before a discussion on films a brief telling about the genesis of the new middle-class in the 1980s, the economic reforms which kindled new aspirations among this section, and the filmic intervention of these changes is indispensable.

New Middle-class Aspirations and Reforms in the 1980s:

The identity of the Indian middle-class has been historically synonymous with that of the national citizen, and the stability of the nation is essentially a part of, and largely correlated to the classes' own sectarian progress (Chakrabarti, 2010). Hindi films, a byproduct of such a nationalist vision (Ranjan, 2019) represent the urban bourgeois community with dual functions, of which one is oriented towards asserting the national role of the class while the other is committed to the construction of an exclusive space of class identity (Prasad, 2000, p. 160).

From the colonial era itself, the English-educated middle-class in India was successful in constructing a cultural hegemony through their close alliance with the British administration in India. They later dissociated with the colonial state to become an agent of the independence movement. This nationalist identity of the middle-class post-independence perhaps rested on spreading "the 'superior' Western culture, its message of modernity", and its ideas of democracy (Jodhka and Prakash, 2016, p. 16). The middle-class identity in India has been therefore identified as that of harbingers of modernism, reforms, and social progress in the country achieved through their engagement with Westernized and modern ideals of freedom, equality, and democracy. However, while the middle-class sentiments in India, followed a socialist pattern of life in some quarters which rested on the concepts of freedom and equality, Surinder Jhodka claims and identifies that another section of the middle-class concurrently has also been a champion of 'tradition', and as a class that "actively represented and constructed local level 'sectarian' identities" (p. 17), which "helps them perpetuate their position of privilege and power" (p. 17) and influences the dominant forms of national consciousness. This "politics of hegemony" under which the middle-classes function "attempts to coordinate the interests of the dominant classes and to forge internal unity within the highly diverse fragments of the middle-class" (Fernandes and Heller, 2006, p. 496). Also, the cohesiveness of the nation is closely tied to this class's steady development and fulfillment of hopes for themselves. However, the advocates of both the socialist and the nationalistic strain of the middle-class in India were generally distressed by the post-independent state and its failed promises (Chakrabarti, 2010) of social and economic upliftment. As an interest group largely dependent on the state, a traditionalist, salariat class till the 1980s, the middle-class sought to reorient itself in the 1980s by cautiously embracing the new consumerist lifestyle and through industrial and technological furtherance. The 1980s in India saw several changes in the economic front which determined the middle-class values that were still ambiguously

positioned amidst "the obduracy and resilience of tradition, and contradiction in their middle-class character" (p. 239), but equally lured by the impending commercial culture. J. Bradford DeLong suggests that "growth took off not in the 1990s, but in the 1980" (Panagariya, 2004, p. 3). He says that the reforms in the 1980s were crucial in structuring those in the 1990s, and the latter had only a smaller impact on India's long-run GDP growth[3] (p. 4). Several other aggregate growth data also confirm that the acceleration of economic growth began earlier, in the early or mid-1980s, long before the exchange crisis of 1991 (Delong, 2012). DeLong further speculates that "the change in official attitudes in the 1980s, towards encouraging entrepreneurial activities and integration into the world economy,... have had a bigger impact on growth than any specific policy reforms" (Panagariya, 2004, p.4). It has been noted that changes such as "devaluation, trade liberalization, and delicensing of investment to spur growth without disruption" played a significant role in building confidence amongst a new interest group of emerging businesspersons, policymakers and politicians alike (p. 5). Arvind Panagariya interprets that the economic reforms of the 1980s were "a precursor to those in the 1990s rather than a part of the isolated and sporadic liberalizing actions during the 1960s and 1970s, which were often reversed within a short period" (p. 5). Additionally, the period stabilized the hope for entrepreneurship with changes that gained impetus in the mid-1980s where the private entities were now increasingly participating in the telecommunication

[3] Arvind Panagariya refers to Bradford DeLong and Dani Rodrikto and suggests that "the growth rate crossed the 5 percent mark in the 1980s" (Panagariya, 2004, p.1). He further confirms that the growth rate in the trade and the industrial sector (p.6) was improving than the previous years, indicating that changes were "already underway during the 1980s and played a crucial role in stimulating growth during that decade" (p.1).

revolution, a sector that became a national priority in the seventh national plan (1985–90) (Subramanian, 2006), facilitating the educated class with fresh opportunities in technologically sophisticated fields in both public and private sector. The changes were quite favorable for the ambitious middle-class with a number of new programmes that initiated a dynamic industrial environment, limiting the entry barriers for multiple industries through lenient policies, enhancing the scope of decision making amongst corporate managers with less interference from the government, and also the minimum efficient scales aided the industries for competing in the foreign markets (Das, 2003, p.8). The era was hence significant in the development of business attitudes and promising especially for the English-educated urban job seekers aspiring for a better and more comfortable life.

The discussion about the economic and social attitudes of the 1980s as carried out in the above paragraphs becomes necessary to locate the Hindi films of the time as an important socio-cultural archive of the period. Moreover, these films while reflecting and negotiating with the socio-political and moral tensions of the time also contained a plethora of characters representing the brewing changes, be it the educated engineers and previous doctors turning into successful industrialists (*Judaai*), to businessmen with trade relations and imports from foreign countries (*Basera*), entrepreneurs making it big in competitive business fields (*Souten*), rich rural landlords migrating to cities to become businessmen (*Quayamat se Quayamet Tak* (1988)), young builders achieving a successful career and family (*Masoom*), previous servant class climbing the social ladder to become successful businessman (*Swarg* (1990)), and plots with feuds between industrialist families, involved in businesses like hotel construction (*Namak Halal* (1982)). This emerging class of elites, while a product of the reforms of the 1980s, later established themselves at the center of the country's socio-political, cultural, and economic events post-liberalization in the 1990s. A notable cultural marker of this upcoming class as mentioned earlier remained the strategies of housing that were highly city-centric and

sophisticated. This new class of characters distinguished themselves from the old middle-class (Donner, 2012, p. 2, Fernandes, 2006, p. 89) identified through their occupational status as doctors, teachers, government employees, lawyers, policemen, or clerks, vividly present in the cinemas of the previous decades. The former, on the other hand, can be determined as a new class of emerging industrialists and businesspersons with access to better material prospects like large homes with elaborate interiors, living in semi-isolated regions away from the humbugs of city life but at the same time relinquishing all its comfort. The 1980s middle-class family films therefore characterized this new class largely as a distinct spatial identity with secure homes in the most desired spaces of the city achieved through persistent hard work, a business mind, and good communication skills, and was less about the vocation itself. This shall be explained in the upcoming sections through a detailed analysis of some instances from the Hindi films of the 1980s that predominantly base themselves within family and domesticity among other things. The aspirations and anxieties that shaped the reforms of 1991 can be read through an analysis of the cultural texts that heralded these changes to understand history in episodic terms.

Domesticity and Hindi Films

An analysis of the domestic "not only lead [s] us to a deeper understanding of the individual and the inner self, but also to question traditional perceptions of historical periods, society, the public, and national ideologies and practices" (Briganti and Mezei, 2012, p. 3). Family films/ domestic dramas were not a prominent genre in the 1950s and 60s Hindi film industry– an era dominated by socials and romances. While the latter had a characteristic "affinity with the street" (Ahmed, 2015, p. 17), influenced by Soviet socialism and Chaplin's filmography, the lesser-known family dramas of the time expressed a desire for unity and consolidation within the diverse members of the family (*Parivaar* (1956) *Grahasti* (1963) *Hamara Ghar* (1964)).

Largely centered around the educated middle-class and upper caste members, these films sustained a hopeful vision for the young and newly independent nation, the wellness of its citizens, and were benevolent towards the 'lower' classes. The films occasionally perpetuated a sense of empowering women (*Bahurani* (1950), *Aurat* (1953)), defined the codes of the marital relationship (*Mr. and Mrs. 55* (1955)), and occasionally addressed the issues of class (*Babul* (1950), *Bewafa* (1952)). In the 1970s, alongside the heavily popular action and crime films (some of which were also centered on families), domestic dramas saw the influence of urban chaos, criminality, and corruption entering its premises (*Deewar, Ghar* (1978)). In contrast, a set of films also dealt with the urban middle-class's distancing from the political turmoils of the 70s, where the families entertained themselves with trivial recreations and enjoyed ample leisure time (*Chupke Chupke* (1975), *Gol Maal* (1979)). The domestic dramas in the 1950s and '60s, hence were recognizably tied to the state's bourgeois nationalist-reformist zeal, "focusing on social ills and generational or material conflicts within the Indian family to raise awareness through popular culture" (Malhotra & Alagh, 2004, p. 21-2). In the 70s, this genre underwent a thematic alteration to cater to the urban middle-classes and their interests. Madhav Prasad addresses this type of middle-class dramas made post-1970s and broadly divides them into two subtypes: a) films like *Anand* (1971), *Mere Apne* (1971), and *Namak Haram* (1973) that deal with the questions of middle-class involvement in questions of national reconciliation, and b) films like *Guddi* (1971), *Abhiman* (1973), *Rajanigandha* (1974), *Kora Kagaz* (1974), and *Aandhi* (1975) that talk about securing the middle-class identity form the attractions of urbanity. A few of the films like *Dastak* (1970), *Anubhav* (1971), and *Piya ka Ghar* (1972), he suggests also deal with matters of privacy and personal space in middle-class households (Prasad, 2000, p. 163-4).

A characteristic feature, however, included in these initial three decades of post-independence Hindi family films was its inclusivity of diverse identities within the imagined geography of

the nation (home, in this case). For instance, in the 1956 film, *Grahasti*, the 'other' (in the form of the husband's second wife) is depicted as a benevolent figure – as opposed to a homewrecker – whose sacrifices remain crucial for sustaining the cohesion within the household of the first wife. In the 70s, films like *Khatta Meetha* (1978) tried to strike a balance between families that had to live together by a matter of fate, where confusion finally paved the way towards unison and rejoicing in the film. In yet another family drama, *Bawarchi* (1972) centered around a house called 'Shanti Nivas', an outsider in the form of a house cook becomes agential in resolving the family disputes. In *Abhimaan*, family members become crucial in bringing together an estranged couple. A set of films also directly adhered to the aspect of political inclusivity, where a secular Indian identity became "an expression of national pride" (Malhotra and Alagh, 2004, p. 22). Films like *Amar Akbar Antony* (1977) through the multi-religious identity of the heroes situated the home within a secular public sphere, despite its hegemonic interests (p. 22). This "symbolic nation-as-family" (Joshi and Dudarh, 2016, p. 9) in films is a well-established method of understanding cinema as a site of figuratively representing national anxieties. In other words, family romances are fundamentally national allegories that continually act as a contact zone for the contesting ideologies within the nation (p. 10). Using this methodology as an entry point, this section on Hindi family films of the 1980s investigates the home as a space on the verge of seizure, where family members face a sudden displacement of power. A feature common to these films was also the invasive arrival of a guest, a known family member, an 'other' woman, or an outsider into this seemingly stable household, leading to sudden turmoil, dilapidation, and loss of home. Unlike the family romances discussed by Joshi and Dudrah – like *Deewar*, and *Trishul* (1978) – where the family goes through constant conflicts and negotiations with the state as a result of the National Emergency of 1975 and its impacts, the 1980s films tend to portray a characteristic of protection of boundaries and status quo while facing competitions from within and outside the nation. The period of 1980-90 has

hitherto received negligible scholarly attention in the realm of Indian film studies with little or no references available on how the films of this period responded to the country's post-emergency scenario, a period which has been decisive in several changes in the socio and political front of India with impacts still visible on contemporary Indian politics. As we proceed, it becomes evident that the aforementioned insecurities formed an important part of the middle-class identity of the 1980s.

The discussion so far has largely been around the discourses of middle-class anxiety in the public domain, the reciprocation of these insecurities through the realm of the domestic has not been conducted in studies on Hindi films of the 1980s yet. Ranjani Majumdar in *Bombay Cinema: An Archive of the City* (2007) has analyzed the transformation of the interior in family films post-liberalization to show the urban middle-class withdrawal to the aesthetic interiors as a resort to privacy, grandeur, the experience of consumption, and visual escapism from the chaotic city. Studies on the contemporary images of peaceful, secluded, and safe domestic lifestyles in urban India through real estate and housing advertisements indicating wellness have also been undertaken (Brosius, 2012). Amy Kaplan's reading ('Homeland Insecurities: Transformations of Language and Space' (2003)) on the home-based insecurities in Western literature and culture post 9/11 tries to understand home in relation to national anxieties and also acts as an entry point to my argument. However, the domestic in this study functions more as a social imaginary that symbolizes the middle-class fears of encroachment within cohesive spaces and is motivated by the politics of spatial reclamations by the peripheral minorities in the 1980s into the public institutions, affluent neighborhoods, and the national politics. The domestic in the cinematic texts of the 1980s is not an escapist space but a vulnerable domain whose cohesion must be continuously protected from external threats of various degrees and forms. The reading hence is closer to Alis Blunt and Robert Dowling's analysis of the domestic in *Home* (2006) where the home is conceptualized as a metaphor for the nation and a space for

the articulation and contestation of national and indigenous politics through material and imaginative geographies of the home. The following section shall analyze a few 1980s Hindi films where the cinematic homes shall unfold the important role such settings had in the film for reflecting a hopeful future for the ambitious middle-class, their psycho-social and spatial insecurities shown through the structuring of the middle-class household, the characteristics of its domestic life, and the treatment of the "outsider" elements that entered these guarded spaces.

Discarding the Outsider in *Khubsoorat* and *Judaai*

Khubsoorat, a middle-of-the-road family drama, deals with a well-to-do urban middle-class joint family settled in the city of Pune. The film placed at an interface of the old middle-class ideology and the new liberal values is a typical case of how the middle-class protects tradition within the guise of modern living, practiced especially through the position of women in the family. Though this is not the central concern of the discussion concerning this film, the aspect of tradition plays an important role in learning how the idea of middle-class respectability is centered around the role of women within the domestic (Fernandes, 2006, p. 13). The chapter, on the other hand, tries to understand home in relation to the nation, through theories of cultural xenophobia, exclusions, order, and control. Within this scheme, women's agency functions as the maintainer of this respectability and tradition within the home. The chapter reads middle-class domesticity interchangeably with that of the nation through its material construction, living patterns, and exclusionary politics. The film begins with a detailed introduction of a home space, the interiors, the well-ordered and tidy furnishings which is suddenly disrupted by strange, muddied footprints in the living room. The matriarch of the family, Nirmala Gupta (played by Dina Phatak) is introduced in the scene who is exceedingly enraged at this sight. She conducts a test to find whose activity was that and rebukes her husband (played by Ashok Kumar) for bringing it in. This particular scene from the film apparently foreplays the events

that are to intervene in the sanity of the well-maintained household, controlled by a central authoritarian figure. The dirt from outside seemingly disrupts the tidiness of this home and therefore must be warded off through rigorous cleaning everyday. The warding off of dirt plays an important role in "the determination of a border between the inside and the outside…according to the simple logic of excluding filth,... or the imperative of distancing from disgust", a phenomenon which "operates both on a societal or national level and, of course, at the level of everyday familiar experience" (Naficy, 2013, p. 161). The spaces of everyday living, the minute gestures of exclusions within the domestic in a way cater to the larger canvases of differentiation and othering while also contributing to the construction of self in the film.

The family in *Khubsoorat* is brought up under the strict rules of the mother, Nirmala Gupta. There is a daily routine that the family members are insisted to comply with, and is central to the maintenance of unity and discipline within the house. The mother maintains a respectable middle-class stature in the public domain with her engagement in welfare activities and charity. Her daughters-in-law are expected to follow her. In contrast to this family, is the family of her newly married second daughter-in-law, Anju (played by Aaradhana) which does not believe in such strict disciplining. However, Anju, easily adapts to the new environment of her husband's house as she believes there is enough love in the family despite these strict rules. The household is perfectly regulated until Anju's sister, Manju (played by Rekha) visits her sister for a brief duration. Manju's vivacious character, talkative nature, and unruly behavior startle the family members at first, but slowly each of them reveals their secret lives to her and their desire for personal freedom. Manju's unhygienic eating habits like having the unwashed apple, the noise that she brings home, her poor table manners, and the umpteen number of disturbances she brings with her to this 'perfect' household irks the family matriarch. Manju's arrival creates a disruption within the well-ordered household and enrages the mother after she finds the family

members engaged in dance, music, and drama in her absence, the performance vocal about disobeying and breaking strict rules– *Sare niyam chod do/ niyam pe chalna chod do* [Let go off all the rules/ Do not abide by any rules]. As chaos and disorder now start affecting the stability of the household, Nirmala gives a moving oration justifying her ways of regimentation which makes the family members feel guilty about their actions. Home in the film provides "a model for redistributive justice, sacrifice, and the common, collective good", encompassing "total predatory systems that exerted possibly tyrannous control over their members' minds, bodies and tongues in their search for solidarity" (Dawson and Rapport, 2021, p. 7). The family's way of disciplining and regimentation of its members is premised on the notions of separations "between clean and dirty, ordered and disordered, 'us' and 'them', that is, to expel the abject… creating feelings of anxiety because such separations can never be finally achieved" (Sibley, 1995, p. 8). The notion of cleanliness, hygiene, and disciplined health regimens becomes an important aspect of the film which must be maintained for the steady progress of the members of the family. Perhaps, Manju's selfless service during the father's sickness towards the climax changes Nirmala, and her perception about Manju, and she decides to be considerate towards her children's desires. However, in the final scene where the viewers see Manju as a daughter-in-law of the family (now married to Nirmala Gupta's third son), she is a changed woman who has cultivated responsibility, is guilty for her actions and somebody who sheds off her wayward nature to settle down as a daughter in law of the family.

Khubsoorat's underlying politics, however, is far more than the anxiety of disorder within the middle-class domesticity, the film metaphorically stages the disruption in the national politics with the split in the Congress party in 1979 and the amplification of several regional interests in Indian politics post this division. The concern for a loss of unity within the nation and the emergence of new voices of difference is expressed by Manju's father (played by David Abraham Cheulkar) as he reads the morning newspaper at the very beginning of the film.

Nirmala Gupta's conduct has prominent similarities to that of Indira Gandhi as she is believed to be holding the divisive factions together just like the former binds the diverse family members. As commented by one of the family friends who visits the house: "without Nirmala's strictness the unity of the house would be in a state of disarray and the four sons would have split to four directions". The rhetoric of order and unity plays an important role in the film and is closely tied to the desired stability of the nation since "nations are frequently figured through the iconography of familial and domestic space" (McClintock, 1993, p. 63). The convergence of the domestic space into the nation is perhaps not only tied to the solidity from within but is also understood through how the idea of the home must be realized "in relation to 'foreign' or 'unhomely' places and practices", and in that way, both "homes and nations are defined in the instances of confrontation with what is considered "not home", with the foreign, with distance'" (George, 1996, p. 4). The subjection of Manju to institutionalized practices therefore is a final resolution to negotiate such national anxiety pertaining to the greater visibility and disturbances caused by the peripheral identities and their entry into the mainstream institutions and the national spectrum. *Khubsoorat* visualizes a home space that is intrinsically tied to the "conceptualization of the nation" as a homogeneous space constructed through enforced solidarity among its members and the exclusion of foreign elements. The domestic in the film henceforth participate in creating a national space that is 'bountiful and fulfilling…secure, pleasing, and gratifying' (Blunt and Dowling, 2022, p. 162).

Judaai released in the same year narrates the story of the reunion of a separated couple who yearn for stability within their household. The film portrays a rich middle-class family of a retired judge living in a plush bungalow in a residential area of the Mumbai city. The central characters Dr. Shashikant (played by Jitendra) and Gauri (played by Rekha), though were not interested initially in the marriage, find a balance as they start their journey together, and in a short while, Gauri also gives birth to a son. Jitendra's infamous past with other women,

however, always worries Rekha, and she often suspects her husband's public life. Later, as a result of a misunderstanding between the couple, Gauri, pregnant for the second time, leaves the house, alleging Jitendra to have illicit relations with another woman. Jitendra, a doctor, who was in contact with his ex-beau on a medical purpose fails to make Gauri understand the situation and has to let her go off. However, he does not allow her to take their first son. The story then takes a leap where years later, Jitendra has become a businessman partnering with his old doctor friend, while Gauri lives in a village with her now grown-up son. The film then revolves around the two sons through whom the parents shall later reunite. The chapter perhaps focuses on this wreckage drama and the events that bring together the separated couple. Both Sasikant and Gauri long for stability and companionship with their "own" people when a number of disturbances dismantle the stability of their household, especially with the arrival of new members into the family. The couple's first son, Ravi Kant (played by Sachin Pilgaonkar) now married to a girl from a lower-middle-class family, brings home her family who are portrayed as ill-mannered and people with 'less civilized' backgrounds. The massive crowd that erupts the sanity of Shashikant's home, who now also usurp his position within the household, is a source of constant challenge, agony, and anxiety for the central character. In a similar fashion, Gauri finds the arrival of her new daughter-in-law and her elite mannerisms and sophistication as an attack on her middle-class values. These values are perhaps closely associated with the nationalist representations of the middle-class (largely constructed by the group themselves). However, by the end of the decade, the new forms of consumption and changing patterns of lifestyle stood in stark opposition to this adherence. Perhaps the films of this period were cautious of such a transition and the skepticism was preserved through distancing from Western mannerisms and etiquettes since the roots of middle-class nationalism were strongly based in terms of the creation of a private "inner" cultural sphere (Chatterjee, 1993) largely maintained within the domestic. The changes in economic patterns by the 1980s

were being adequately reflected through films like *Judaai* where a newly rich English-educated Umakanth (Gauri's second son) (played by Arun Govil) is eager to move into a better residential area. However, the transition in the ideals of middle-class nationalism in India which was formulated on the basis of differences between an outer world of materialism of the West and the inner spiritual domain of India or East in general was relinquished through embracing the traditional value system. Therefore, Manisha's (the second daughter-in-law) snobbish 'upper-class' behaviour was as much an 'other' as the 'lower-class' mannerisms of Monica's (Ravikanth's wife) family. However, the shift in the perception of material wealth and the accumulation of it was gradually changing in its filmic depictions through an emerging liberalized consumption-based middle-class, and their show of wealth by the late 1980s, while "in the 1960s and '70s this whole bit of accumulation of wealth was still suffering from a Gandhian hangover" (Fernandes, 2006, p. 29).

In *Judaai*, the removal of these invading outsider elements from the household can only pave the way to the union of the distanced couple. The continuous urge to be with one's "own" people is a refrain in the movie expressed through a melodramatic song towards the climax– *Apno ko jo thukrayega, Gairoon ki thokare khayega* [The one who abandons one's own people shall face dejection from others]. The final resolution in the movie where Gauri and Shashikant reunite and overpower the invasive factions surrounding them, we see the stability of the household being restored. The maintenance of distance from disgust (Nafficy, 2013, p. 161) operates both at "societal or national level and, of course, at the level of everyday familiar experience" (p. 162), hence defending one's territory from intruders, classified the major portion of the 80s Hindi films, like *Judaai*. Other family-centric films of the time also focused on the theme of wreckage within the home brought especially by close family members viz. *Ghar Ghar Ki Kahani* (1988), *Tohfa* (1984), *Ghar Ka Chirag* (1989), etc. or by inter-religious marriages (*Sansar* (1987)), inter-cultural relations (*Ek Duje Ke Liye* (1981)), etc.

Fighting the Home-wreckers in *Basera, Arth, Masoom* and *Souten*:

Basera, Arth, and *Masoom,* some of the next few family-oriented films in the list, deal with the question of legitimacy, and the dilapidation of one's secured home when new and 'illegitimate' claimants enter its dictated and well-defined boundaries. At the center of these films is an 'other' who reconfigures relationships, and integrity within the household. This section of the chapter tries to understand this trespassing in the larger context of the nationalist anxiety governing the middle-class politics of the 1980s rather than as local-level insecurities within the middle-class home. The 'other', the home, and the legitimate dwellers shall be conceived therefore in a purely metaphorical context. The overlapping of ideas about home, homemaking, access to home, etc. with that of the national homeland has been supported by theorists across disciplines. 'Home' plays a pivotal role in containing the minute fears of its inhabitants also due to its proximity with the idea of the nation as one's own home (Duyvendak, 2011, p. 22). Anthropologist Setha Low (2008) in her analysis writes:

> Residents' fear, worry, and anxiety is constructed out of a discourse that is salient at both local and national scales with home as a key metaphor for the nation/state. ... Residents' fear of outsiders and foreigners entering their homes and neighborhoods resonates with political discussions of the penetration of the nation and homeland by illegal immigrants, foreign nationals, and potential terrorists. The threatened security of home becomes a psychological substitute for the vulnerability of the nation/state at war, compounded by the menace of unknown terrorists. Thus, the powerful icon of home symbolically transforms the insecurity felt about the nation (p. 242).

Low's overlapping concept of home and national space shall be utilized in analyzing some of the key domestic dramas of the 1980s to understand how these films responded and negotiated with the burgeoning insecurities that dedicated the decade of rapid transition.

Yet another theoretical postulation that governs the understanding of the 1980s family films in

this section is the concept of the uncanny. The 'uncanny' forms part of various discussions across different theoretical and cultural discourses and is characterized as "a crisis of the proper…a critical disturbance…in a sense of homeliness uprooted, the revelation of something unhomely at the heart of hearth and home" (Royle, 2003, p. 1). The uncanny is also reflected in Karl Marx's concept of "spectre" which according to the thinker haunts the stately establishments of modern Europe. The idea of the uncanny is foundational to Freud's psychoanalysis and the idea of the 'un-heimlich' (unhomelike), formalist readings of Victor Scholvasky, Derrida's defamiliarization, Netzeiche's nihilism, Heidegger, and also Wittengenstein's conceptualization of desire for security and peace, along with 'estranged ordinariness' -- marked by an unfamiliarity in the familiar. Nicholas Royle in his work, *The Uncanny* (2003) describes the title "as a cluster of categories through which modernity articulated itself, in philosophy and social theory, and in art and literature" (p. 2). The uncanny, he suggests, also informs the categories of Hegel's 'estrangement' Marxian 'alienation', Simmel's 'stranger' (Das Fremde), Emile Durkheim's 'anomie' (1984), and Adorno and Lukas's 'reification' (Luka·cs 1971a; Adorno 1973) (p. 4-6). The historical nature of the encounter with otherness, with alterity, has been explored in multiple seminal works hitherto, several of them dictating the nature of exclusions within modern nation-states, the politics of ethnic cleansing, identity crises, security threats, national anxieties, etc. The uncanny readily determines the angst of wreckage within the domestic space in the 1980s Hindi films. In film after film, the arrival of the other reconfigures the existing design of the home to accommodate the new and unfamiliar.

Basera, a family drama deals with the life of two sisters Sharda (played by Rakhee Gulzar) and Purnima (played by Rekha), who get married to the same man, Balraj Kohli (played by Shashi Kapoor). After the elder sister is diagnosed with mental ailment and is shifted to an asylum for fourteen long years, the younger sister (a young widow at that point) is compelled under

circumstances to marry her then-brother-in-law, and also take care of her sister's child. The two have a fruitful and strong marriage until the elder sister recovers from her illness and returns home. However, as Sharda notices that everything has changed about the city in these years, on her way towards home, perhaps she does not realize that her home and its people, which she believes are her only solace, have also changed. Upon the news of Sharda's arrival, the rest of her family members get perplexed, as they cannot reveal the new changes to her since it might again draw her to insanity, and the family, as per their doctor's advice, pretend nothing has changed. Sharda's now grown-up son, Sagar (played by Raj Kiran) identifies Purnima as his mother, also, the latter now has a child with Sharda's husband. Purnima re-dresses as a widow, her child is sent to a women's hostel, where Sagar's fiancee, Sarita (Poonam Dhillon) lives, the arrangement of the house is changed, and anything symbolizing or related to her husband's marriage with her sister is removed. 'Basera', which otherwise means home itself, is a central material construction in the film, which stands for multiple things for the members of the household. Tim Edensor notes that the home is a place of comfort: "convenience, efficiency, leisure, ease, pleasure, domesticity, intimacy and privacy" (Edensor, 2002, p. 58). It represents cohesion, legitimacy, and security which has now been challenged by the return of events and individuals from the past. However, as Sharda slowly realizes and learns that she has lost her home, its comfort, and her husband to another woman, that her place and legitimacy have been long invaded, she is ripped apart by the reconfiguration of her most favorite relationships and possessions. As she realizes that even the material possessions within the household have been redetermined to adjust to the new, unable to bear the pain, Sharda fakes madness and returns to the asylum. She realizes her position in the house has been long overthrown.

Basera deals with the traumatic experiences and psycho-social insecurities that the legitimate owner of a space encounters with the redesigning of that space to accommodate the new, the

foreign, or an ‘other’, an aspect that aligns with the theories of encroachment of the national space as well or any form of spatial invasion. Writing on her study of American imperialism and national identity Amy Kaplan (2003) suggests that the term ‘domestic’ has a double meaning, referring both to the space of the nation and to the space of the household. Both of these meanings, in turn, are closely bound up with shifting ideas about the ‘foreign’ (p. 59). Terms such as ‘foreign’ and ‘domestic’ are not neutral but are rather “heavily weighted metaphors imbued with racialized and gendered associations of home and family, outsiders and insiders, subjects and citizens” (Kaplan, 2002, p. 3). The inclusive nature of the city and its cosmopolitanism, the increasing sense of diversity within public governed institutions (the shall be aggravated by the policies like the Mandal reformation), the insecurity of living within a growingly heterogeneous community, and multiple other forms of spatial reclamation was a politics that dictated the 1980s but has least permeated or motivated the readings of cinemas of the time. The family dramas, as one can understand from the above examples indulged in metaphorically negotiating with the new changes. The middle-class household in the films of the 1980s becomes a domain where these persistent fears and anxieties of negotiation with the new gets registered and symbolically represented. Nirmal Puwar (2004) writes, “In policy terms, diversity has overwhelmingly come to mean the inclusion of different bodies. It is assumed that, once we have more women and racialized minorities, or other groups, represented in the hierarchies of organizations (government, civil service, judiciary, police, universities, and the arts sector), especially in the élite positions of those hierarchies, then we shall have diversity” (p. 1). She further adds that the entry of such groups into “spaces they have been historically and conceptually excluded” (p. 1) bring distinct changes and differences to structures and policies within organizations, making them more open, inclusive, and diverse (p. 1). Such changes in hierarchy and the moment of encounter with the new becomes a crucial aspect in Puwar’s study of socio-political spaces and also theoretically governs the politics of

maladjustment within domestic spaces in films like *Basera*.

In a similar fashion, Mahesh Bhatt's *Arth* navigates through the life of two women who share a husband. As the film begins, one sees Pooja (played by Shabana Azmi) continuously cajoling her husband, Inder (played by Kulbhushan Kharbanda), for buying a home for them when she learns about the news of her husband losing his job and as a consequence will have to vacate the flat allotted to them by the company. The character laments about not having a house of their own after long years of marriage. She is later seen complaining about it to one of her friends, who lives a comfortable life in her own bungalow. There are conversations about desperate and failed attempts at house hunting among the two friends. Pooja fears being homeless because as she asserts, a home for her is a means to a legit and safe living. The most frequent conversations between the couple surround having a home of their own. To her surprise, when Inder gets it for her, we see an elated Pooja overwhelmed with joy and fulfillment for finally possessing a place that she can call her own. Her dreams are, however, not limited to just the home, but it's also about having a perfect family with her husband which she believes shall only be fulfilled with the arrival of a child. Home, therefore, has been rightly identified at the center of identity constructions which "partly testifies to the desire to achieve fixity amidst ceaseless flow, and metaphorically is used to proffer a unified, identifiable culture within a specified space, being 'drenched in the longing for wholeness, unity, integrity'" (Edensor, 2002, p. 57). The scenes where Pooja finally gets into the flat have been shot with additional detail as the space is laden with meanings that are beyond its materiality. Pooja gets extremely emotional as her husband reads the name of the owner of the house, enabling the space with a key role in navigating the desires and anxieties of the new middle-class of the 80s, As we see the central character dreaming of customizing her home, her possessiveness for the place and her husband, there is a tendency in the film that renders an abnormal attachment to places, and fulfillment in becoming its legitimate owners. This brings us to draw a few parallels

between homemaking and the construction of the nation, for which boundary maintenance and space-making are an integral aspect (p. 57). The idea of customization of one's own place has multiple meanings in terms of differentiating and distancing oneself from the growingly homogenizing spaces of the city and the democratic forms of politics shaped by the post-war and post-colonial world, challenging conventional power structures. 'Homemaking', thus, "pinpoints the ways in which we 'make ourselves at home' in the world according to social and aesthetic conventions about conviviality, domesticity and furnishing and decorating space" (p. 58). Homemaking in the film, *Arth*, forms an important aspect of Pooja's realization of self and identity which "includes the domestication of things and experiences from the external world, and of otherness, so that a kind of vernacular curation takes place whereby items are assigned to places in the home" (p. 58). The process of homemaking and designing its interior helps the character to mark out differences "and operates as a form of distinction...and such aesthetic codes gradually become normative and recognizable as dimensions of national homemaking" (p. 58). We see the character, Pooja, becoming extremely overprotective about her place, her flat, allowing no intrusion or disturbance. When Inder's friend, Harish mentions that they would need her house for shooting their next film, Pooja immediately warns him saying she will not allow any outsiders to even look at her house. The world outside the house is framed as polluted, a threat to the stability of the insider's world. As this reading focuses on the exclusionary politics of home in the 1980s cultural discourses in relation to the nation the films show that the home space on screen is presented as a domain vulnerable to threats "by the presence of otherness and in this sense is linked to national constructions of 'us' and 'them'" (p. 61).

Dreams play an important role in the film. Like Pooja's unending hopes of a stable domestic life, her husband, Inder hopes of being an independent filmmaker, encouraging private partnership, and is shown to be frustrated with his current job which he acknowledges to be a

kind of servitude. The house help in Pooja's new home, dreams of sending her daughter to an English medium school and hopes to climb the social ladder to escape conditions of abject poverty and achieve social security. (Pinches, 1999, p. 259) With scarce resources in place but an array of hopes, the lower middle-class of the time was therefore "confined to emulating middle-class consumption through the consumption of inferior copies" (p. 259). Global opportunities and economic mobility come through access to good education which is hardly beyond the means of the lower classes. On the other hand, traditional education and jobs have been replaced by an entrepreneurial vigour where educated ones are now finding opportunities for independent creative space. Pooja's singer friend, Raj whom she befriends after parting ways with Inder, believes in becoming a singing sensation using his own potential. Much of these conversations appear to be situated within the changing socio-economic milieu of the 1980s, its characteristics determined by earlier paragraphs in this section. The digression only helps to understand the key changes focusing on the middle-class aspirations of the decade among others, and how these dreams are closely tied to the middle-classes' culture of exclusivity and hopes for a secure nation.

In *Arth*, Pooja encounters her biggest fear of losing her own home and husband to another woman. It was shattering for her to know that the home that she was extremely obsessed with was a favour that her husband's beloved, Kavita (played by Smitha Patil) had bestowed upon her in return for all that she had. Kavitha is treated in the film as a home wrecker, as a form of the grotesque 'other', the encounter with whom the legit owner of a space fears the most. The underlying fear lurking within well-established societies is often the indeterminate arrival of the foreign, the uncanny, that re-determines its hegemonic constructions. The loss of ownership functions as a central concern in the film, and the home transcends its usual meaning to accommodate the larger dynamics of other forms of spatial encroachment which includes the national geography as well. In Tim Edesnor's analysis of the national space and its

multifaceted forms, he asserts that “the relationship between space and national identity is variegated and multi-scaled, producing a complex geography that is constituted by borders, symbolic areas and sites, constellations, pathways, dwelling places, and everyday fixtures. And the national is evident not only in widely recognized grand landscapes and famous sites, but also in the mundane spaces of everyday life” (Edensor, 2002, p. 45), “specifying the enclosed realm of the ‘private’ in contradistinction to the ‘public’, and the national as distinct from the space of the ‘other’” (p. 57-58). Reading *Arth* from a purely biographical or as a familial drama binding personal stories rips off the historicity of the film, and its socio-political relevance. While the arrival of the repressed cultural fears in the form of the grotesque has been a frequent way of classifying and analyzing the genre of horror, gothic literature, and well-established home invasion genre, especially in the post-apocalyptic cultural texts in the West (Pascuzzi and Waters, 2020 p. 251), the domestic dramas in Hindi have been scarcely studied using the theory of uncanny (Freud, 2003, p. 26-29) so far. In *Arth*, the burgeoning fears of the sudden arrival of the stranger are more psychic than material. The house does not at any point get invaded other than metaphorically or through the character’s mind. The prospect of sharing one’s intimate possessions in the everyday environment, and the fear of trespassing navigates the anxieties. Both Pooja and later Kavita experience the invasion of their respective spaces, which in the case of the latter terminates in a psychological breakdown. Contemplating Mary Douglas's concept of “geographies of exclusion”, Hamid Naficy writes “there is a long history of the production of imaginary geographies, in which the members of a society locate themselves at the center of the universe, at the spatial periphery of which there is a world of threatening monsters and grotesques” (Nafficy, 2013, 161). Motivated by a kind of security complex, Pooja is extremely protective of her possessions, especially her house. Later as Kavita narrates her experience of encountering the presence of an ‘other’ inside her house, within the privacy of her bedroom, a presence that does not allow her to reside in peace and breaches her

privacy, permeates to larger fears of encroachment that binds the personal with the national. In this paradigm, home, as Edesnor (2002) suggests, becomes one of the significant and powerful forms of national spatialization (p. 51).

The 1980s middle-class attempted to emerge as a soldered societal identity by the logic of delimitation and exclusion based on class, caste, eugenics, and gender filtrations. Interestingly, in the backdrop of a fast-expanding ethical horizon due to the exposure to global capital and culture (and allied social reformations like the Mandal commission, autonomous women's groups, etc. (Ghadially, 2007), the middle-class displays an ostensible adjustment with liberalism– seen majorly through themes of sacrifice, patronization and ethical subsumption. One such example is *Souten* [The Other Woman] which works on the anxiety of the 'inclusion' of the lower caste characters inside the nouveau riche household. Shyam (played by Rajesh Khanna) – the up-and-coming entrepreneur – is married to the rich brat Rukmani (played by Tina Ambani) who also happens to be the equal shareholder of her husband's shipping company. She, however, is portrayed as inept and hubristic as a businesswoman, her decisions almost breaking the marriage apart. Rukmani is also shown to be innately casteist in contrast to the egalitarian Shyam who is revered by the film's token untouchable duo – the accountant Gopal (played by Sheeram Lagoo) and his daughter Radha (Padmini Kolhapure). The film's attempt at providing a progressive statement (there are several dialogues of caste-patronisation, like when Shyam defends Gopal against Rukmani and equates him to a family member) is undercut by two subliminal biases. The (neo)liberal upper-caste characters are portrayed as deific enablers of every aspect of the purported caste emancipation, due to which the father-daughter duo is forever relegated to the moral surrogates of the film's championing of domesticity. "Films tend to portray a dominant caste/dominant Hindu society, offering subaltern subjects only a limited form of escapism" (Yengde, 2018, p. 4), writes Suraj Yengde, noting the inevitable subordination of caste agency to the invariably upper caste, Hindu

orthodox denouement of the Bombay film industry. For example, the 'caste-inferior' Radha is destined to sacrifice herself to uphold the stability of Shyam and Rukmani's marriage. The former commits suicide to absolve Shyam of the accusations of infidelity. The virtue of sacrifice upheld by the lower caste character in this film comes amidst a violent reassertion of caste-based identities in the post-independence history of India. The preservation of upper caste domesticity is coupled with an affirmation of the standardized trope in Hindi films where there was always an 'upper caste' hero, a well-wisher, or a casteless class hero to defend the rights or fight on behalf of the 'Harijans'" (Abraham & Barak, 2023, p. 227). The film confirms "upper-caste representations [as] the quintessential Indian marker. Savarna heroes are presented as the true subjects of modernity and nation-building who desire 'common good' and 'unity'" (p. 227). The Indian 'upper-caste' populace's displeasure (Balagopal 1990) with the Mandal Committee recommendations is negotiated within this domestic drama where the subordinate caste is compelled to compromise for the patronage and survival of the 'upper caste' family and the nation alike. The 'upper caste' hero in the film thus partially transforms into the approbated moral character of the nation at the cusp of anti-Mandal sentiments, open market policies, and neo-liberalization.

The portrayal of the Indian middle-class home as the emancipating and normalizing singularity that safeguards moral lapsity, enforces femininity and the degrees of social justice tokenism is repeated again in *Masoom*. More than caste, this film fixates on the overall eugenics-bias as the Delhi suburbanites Indu (played by Shabana Azmi) and DK (played by Naseeruddin Shah) deal with the invasion of the latter's illegitimate son, creating "a crisis of the proper…a critical disturbance…in a sense of homeliness uprooted, the revelation of something unhomely at the heart of hearth and home' (Royle, 2003, p. 1). In *Masoom*, the arrival of the husband's illegitimate son into one's household dismantles the fabric of a well-going marriage between Indu (played by Shabana Azmi) and DK (played by Naseeruddin Shah). Another perfect

looking household, Indu's family is the ideal nuclear middle-class space, located in a suburban area of Delhi city. The family consisting of a wife, a husband, and two daughters is depicted as a truly desirable bourgeois household. As the camera navigates through the minute details of the house, in the early few scenes of the film, one sees the home furnishings, the family photographs, the placement of things, all well customized. The family picture especially alienates the insiders of the home from anything unhomely. Daniel Miller (2001) argues that "the objects represent the fortuitous results of relationships such as gifts and souvenirs,... speak to a different logic of inclusion" (p. 116). The entry of a strange dog, in the very scene, and the breaking of the family photograph as the dog pounces over it, sets the tone for the arrival of the outsider. Indu is enraged as she finds the arrangement of the house disturbed and the dog that has stormed her place. She immediately bickers with her husband, who has bought the dog without her knowledge or permission. The arrival of the dog and the distant dog barks frequently heard in the backdrop of several crucial scenes in the film gives "a lurking sense of the uncanny or the dangerous in contrast to the safety of the home" (Edensor, 2002, p. 61), a feeling of the undue presence of "the stranger who comes too close, the wild beasts – pests and other people's pets – and invasive flora which can undo the domestic ordering of space" (p. 61). The well-ordered and cleansed everyday spaces in *Masoom* therefore, are not restricted to the warding off of material wastes but cater to a politics of purification that applies to people both at home and the national space. The styling of the house, and placement of objects inside the house in this film, as well as the other films discussed above, is an important aspect that is "incorporated to mark out differences and operates as a form of distinction. And such aesthetic codes gradually become normative and recognizable as dimensions of national homemaking… the modes of demarcating domestic territorial boundaries" (p. 58).

In both *Masoom* and *Arth* as discussed before, the experience of encroachment is mentally dictated and characters' experience widening insecurities that largely span from the fear of

sharing one's most cherished possessions and spaces with the other, the unfamiliar outsider. The news of DK's illicit sexual affair with another woman devastates Indu who adored her husband, for everything that he meant for her. The child, Rahul, born out of the relationship is a constant reminder of his betrayal, and his arrival at the house, after his mother's death, traumatizes her. Indu is repeatedly confronted with a strange presence in her most intimate surroundings. In the scene where she imagines Bhavna (Rahul's mother) replacing herself in a photograph of DK and hers, her most dreaded fears get materialized. As mentioned earlier, the material culture within the domestic plays a crucial role in personalizing spaces since the "decorative order may become a positive expression of relationships, or a sign of negotiation between couples" (Miller, 2001, p. 115). The reordering of the materials to accommodate the new therefore destabilizes this order, resulting in sudden turmoil. Rahul (played by Jugal Hansraj), the eponymous innocent bearing the sin of his father, is initially presented as the Freudian 'unhomelike' embodying the 1980s national discomfort of ethnic cleansing, identity crisis, security threat and moral turpitude, before the larger, overbearing normative dictum surfaces – imperative liberalism. The plot of *Masoom* is seemingly liberal and inclusive but with a deeper subtext of traditionalist emotional coercion. Indu's phobia of the 'bastardization' of the family legacy ("You are a guest in this family!", she petulantly reminds Rahul throughout the film) is finally transcended by her fidelity to motherhood, familial integration, and compulsive monogamy. By the end of the film, she *has to* accept that her husband's child is her child, his family is her family, and her moral outrage is secondary to the threat of breaking that family asunder. The climax of the film, designed as a pleasant surprise for the audience when DK discovers his three children playing in his car under Indu's supervision, is actually predetermined by patriarchal traditions: Rahul is his father's son, and that is enough to surpass the mother's misgivings. The essay calls it 'imperative liberalism', because of this agential subordination of the woman in an orthodox family structure. The middle-class of *Masoom* thus

grudgingly negotiates with inclusiveness by its own rigid terms – outsiders are welcome only if endorsed by patriarchy, dissent over agency and choice is labeled as conservative, and the subplots of discord will be hidden under the tropes of an egalitarian, happy ending. Taken together, the case studies discussed so far of this particular cinematic phase thus affirm the 1980s middle-class' consternation at the liminal phase between hermeticism and social altruism, frantically renegotiating the borders of its tangible and ideological habitations, and sometimes *allowing* liberal inclusion with patriarchal preconditions.

In each of the cases discussed, the middle-class home functions on the basis of both a culture of servitude and boundary maintenance, which makes it a crucial site for bridging "the private–public divide, bringing social relations of power (class, caste, race/ethnicity, gender) into the household, and mirroring and reproducing these relations within the domestic unit" (Baviskar and Ray, 2011, p. 249). Before concluding, a brief understanding of minorly scaled films of the decade is important. In these cases as well, home emerges as a zone of demarcation between purity and pollution. Movies like *Aakhir Kyun, Nazrana*, are other similar examples from this decade where the lasting presence of an external figure within one's household becomes traumatising and painful. The loss of the home is equated with loss of identity. In *Aakhir Kyun*, both Nisha (played by Smitha Patil) and her cousin, Indu (played by Tina Ambani), are in love with the same man, a rich businessman, Kabir Suri (played by Rakesh Roshan). Even though Nisha gets married to Kabir, Indu's lurking presence inside the house during Nisha's pregnancy and after, brings in a sense of a crowd within her marriage and home. Kabir's growing closeness with Indu, where the latter now shares everything that Nisha once owned, including her most favourite possessions like a shawl gifted by her husband, and later their bedroom, shatters Nisha's spirit. The realization of disownment and homelessness compels her to leave the house for a soul searching. Later, Indu travels through a guilt trip to take someone else's place. A wide range of cinemas of the time explored the spatial rift through the collision within the

domestic sphere. Another example would be the film *Nazrana*, where the husband's sexual relationship with the house help, Tulsi, (played by Sreedevi), and other external influences destroy a happily going marriage between Mukta (played by Smita Patil) and Rajat (played by Rajesh Khanna). A number of other minor films of the same ilk deal with psychological disturbances experienced by individuals that lead to damage to one's home, namely *Pighalta Aasman* (1985), *Naseeb Apna Apna* (1986), *Ijazat* (1987), *Pati, Patni Aur Tawaif* (1990) etc. With urbanization and policy changes, women's presence in the job fronts and higher education institutions was increasing rapidly by the 1980s in India resulting in sharing of opportunities between men and women. In the late 1970s, the UN appointed committee report on the status of women in India since independence prompted an unprecedented cynicism, leading to a gradual increase in activism centered on women's rights, especially among urban, educated, middle-class women (Ghadially, 2007, p. 15). According to reports, by 1985, the number of autonomous women's organizations had become close to fifty-five (p. 15). In films like *Agar Tum Na Hote*, the public life of a working woman creates misunderstandings in her marriage, where the husband suspects the nature of her job and the relationship she has with her employer. In the film, however, these moments of disruption are depicted as the destruction of the traditional domestic order and those endangering the predominantly masculine spaces. The paralyzed husband's sense of incapability in the film symbolizes the psycho-social and patriarchal insecurities at a time when women were being increasingly exposed to public places. This case study that clearly displays the 1980s endemic moral crisis in an urban bourgeois setting is *Agar Tum Na Hote,* which narrates an ethical reincarnation of the traditionalist wife of an industrialist. Ashok (played by Rajesh Khanna), a businessman, is shown to have the perfect housewife named Poornima (played by Rekha) who dies at childbirth, leaving Ashok as the sole caregiver to the daughter. Throughout the first half of the film, family and commercial professionalism come into direct conflict as Ashok struggles to

mentally connect to his business empire and mull over his 'incomplete' life without his spouse. A parallel strand of the plot shows the uppity photographer Bedi (played by Raj Babbar) who abandons his covetous, money-minded, and amorous lifestyle after marrying the model of a beauty product he was covering. The latter – erstwhile professional turned dutiful housewife Radha (played by Rekha) – initiates the third strand of the plot as she reluctantly has to seek financial subsistence after Bedi becomes paraplegic following an accident. The three branches of the narrative, and the recurrent crisis of domesticity and industrious sociability, collapse within each other when Radha serendipitously becomes the widower Ashok's daughter's governess. It is important to note how the domestication of the three major characters germinate a larger ethos of traditional familialism. Ashok is once again attracted to a normative family by falling in love with Radha (who reminds him of Poornima in every aspect) and dreams of restarting his normative domesticity. Bedi, although against the idea of a working wife ("I can't bear my wife doing a job instead of housekeeping", he says hurtfully around the one-hour mark into the film, "would have been better had I died in the accident"), now has to sit at home and bear witness to Radha's transcendence into an agential being. Radha, finally, grudgingly accepts her new agency and starts loving it because the job itself is a reconstruction of the domesticity she has always pursued – playing mother to Ashok's child.

In spite of the narrative's apparent upending of the traditional family structure (the conservative man is domesticated with the homemaker liberated), such thematic adventures are quickly subsumed into the enforced traditionalism of the 'happy ending'. Bedi's insecurity and abusive anger towards his wife for not being able to play the masculine role of a professional is resolved in the end with a re-domestication of Radha. Additionally, Ashok fulfills his fantasy to relegate Poornima/Radha again to the homemaker's status by transferring his daughter's custodianship to Radha and Bedi who represent the wholesome and normative parentage – the working husband and the homebound mother. The central crisis of the film thus becomes the conflict

between modernity and tradition, with the latter enfeebling the woman's professional agency in the typical neo-liberal fashion**.** Neoliberalism, as argued by Radhakrishnan and Solari (2015), and Cooper (2017), reimposed the domestication of women by 'subsuming the newly liberated labor of former housewives within an expanded market for domestic services' (p. 8), rendering gender emancipation as 'feminine and unskilled' (Radhakrishnan and Solari, 2015, p. 793) – relegating the very idea of professionally liberated women as a facile and untenable extension of the domestic homemaker. *Agar Tum Na Hote* works as an antithesis to the 1980s new woman trope which challenged conventional patterns of homemaking and its gendered outlook. The period marked the genesis of a new spatial identity for women as their presence increased within the public domain. These changes become evident in films like *Arth* where places like a working women's hostel feature and the central character Pooja finds success and settlement through her job and not marriage. Also in *Aakhir Kyun,* Nisha becomes a successful writer fighting for the cause of empowering women (an entire song is dedicated in the film to this cause), and a series of other heroic rape-revenge dramas like *Khoon Bhari Maang* (1988), and *Insaaf ka Tarazu* (1980), *Aurat* (1986), *Zakhmi Aurat* (1988), *Mazloom* (1986) shows the determination of a woman to fight her oppressors through wisdom and strength. The repercussions of these spatial reclamations by the conventionally marginalised groups is felt in multiple minorly scaled films of the time like *Red Rose* (1980) where a gynophobic psychopath kills women working in public life mercilessly. The new mode of habitation– modern and nuclear – especially in the urban centers and suburbs in the 80s was creating a unique overlap between landscape and gender psychology (Beuka, 2004, p. 110). Along with other fears that governed this decade, the future of conventional masculinity was a worrisome prospect as well. As one shall observe, the 1980s family films continue sabotaging the liberalization of the traditional family structure in a similar fashion, further displaying the Indian middle-class' anxiety over the coexistence of consumerist modernity and domestic orthodoxy.

Conclusion

By the 1980s in India, a new order was replacing the socialist patterns of life propagated in the country so far – a change that was influenced by multiple factions – spanning from the disintegration of the then pan-Indian political force, the Indian National Congress (INC), the impending economic liberalization, the increasing presence of new regional identities in the national politics, as well as the changing urban geopolitics, the various separatist movements, along with the Mandalisation of public institutions. The political and social turmoil in the 1980s in India was far more crucial as it paved the way for an unprecedented wave of politics in India, uprooting of traditional rights, and challenge to privileges. The metaphorical enactment of this encroachment crisis takes place effectively in cinemas discussed so far where the urban middle-class household aspires to be "a place liberated from fear and anxiety, a place supposedly untouched by social, political and natural processes, a place enjoying an autonomous and independent existence" (Sibley, 1995, p. 78) motivated by a practice of exclusion. The newly emerging middle-class homes in the films cater to an entire historical consciousness of dirt and disorder which must be -- expelled from the home, the locality, and the nation – that is considered to be symbolically pure – through rigid practices of expulsion and rituals of purification (p. 78-9). The filmic homes of the 1980s are, however, rattled by the sudden arrival of the spectre, which felt like an agglomeration of its personal spaces, revealing a spatial tension that the chapter argues characterized this decade. Home as a metaphor and an architecture, itself "imagined by the instruments of the nation-state", (Gautam, 2017) also fundamentally serves as a significant framework in this section to examine how identities feature within the body of the nation. The analysis emphasizes the fact that "projects of modernity are not limited to the public sphere and the institutions of education, politics and the economy but, crucially, reach the home as well" (Baviskar and Ray, 2011, p. 251). The domestic has been at the center of the political and modernisation process in India from the late

19th century onwards, where “social reform projects, initiated by both colonial authorities and Indians, targeted the ‘modernization’ of Indian society and particularly aimed for ‘improvement’ in the domestic sphere” (p. 251). As part of the process home has been regulated, reformed, and managed through “the passage of legislation regulating marriage and allowing widows to remarry and the establishment of fields of inquiry and teaching such as ‘home science’, attempted to introduce the so-called modern principles of management to the home” (p. 252). The disruptive politics of the 1980s, however, derange the language of the everyday, and home: one of the most coherent cultural artifacts suddenly becomes the site of the uncanny in the films discussed in this chapter. In *Khubsoorat* and *Judaai* warding away dirt and disorder brought by the invading outsiders is done through a conservative resolution which retains the sanctity of the home. In *Basera*, *Arth,* and *Masoom*, the lingering presence of an outsider within the privacy of the home results in psychological disturbance for the characters which is resolved again through upholding resolutions that are bent on traditional familial values. In *Agar Tum Na Hote*, the new woman trope and consumerist future is a worrisome prospect for the traditional patriarchal structure of the middle-class home, and it is resolved through domesticating and regulating women's public life. In *Souten*, the larger questions of identity and caste penetrates into the everyday language of the home. The film upholds the upper caste patronage at a time of unprecedented lower caste uprisings and reforms through hasty resolutions within the domestic. In each of the films, one can find how the aspect of invading the house prompts a discussion around the formation of various new socio-political identities in the 1980s in India, how such arrivals bring alterations in the existing status quo of the society, and how the fears are negotiated metaphorically and politically.

Chapter Three: Negotiating with Uneasy Topographies: Landscapes, Maps, and the City in the 1980s Hindi Films

"The linguistic provinces would come back to create as many nations as there are groups which would be proud of their race, their language and their literature.....No one could have envisaged such a situation with equipoise. It could lead to the disintegration of India"

(Ambedkar, 1979, p. 102)

Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, the post-emergency politics in India was marked by a general disillusionment with the ideals of Nehruvian socialism and democracy (Jodhka and Prakash, 2016, p. 35). This resulted in the rise of several new socio-political demands from various sections of the country in the 1980s. The period saw the emergence of separatist movements in Punjab, Jharkhand, Assam, Kashmir, Nagaland, regional tensions in Andhra Pradesh, rise of Dravidian politics in Tamil Nadu, demand for new linguistic and administrative states like Chhattisgarh, outgrowth of Naxalite movement suppressed during the emergency, and fresh mobilizations along the lines of ethnicity (Guha, 2007, p. 590). These political contestations sought for the region's autonomy, ethnic rights, and political share. The anxieties of these ethno-nationalist movements were registered in the 1980s films through two significant spatial practices. While the first uses geographical tropes like landscapes, and maps to understand how amidst a burgeoning fear of loss of integrity within the nation, the Hindi films of 1980-90 tried to consolidate a national solidarity, the other focuses on urban ghettos and city spaces to analyse the new ethno-spatial encounters in the 1980s cinematic city. . . Invocation of natural geographical borders, such as the impassable mountain ranges, vast

deserts, and deep oceans" has always been central to the national unification project in India. The anxiety of partition of India in 1947, otherwise called an amputation of the national body politic has perhaps inscribed a cartographic anxiety into the very genetic code of national imagination in India. The first half of this chapter traces the continuation of this anxiety in the 1980s Hindi films using the new ways of invocation of the natural frontiers. he chapter shall at first look at how these spatial features appropriated certain politically disruptive geographies, while also locating and re-locating them within the national landscape. Further, through instances from *Karz* (1980), *Silsila* (1981), *Karma* (1986), *Parinda* (1989), and *Agneepath* (1990), this chapter focuses on how spatial integration, militarisation, and otherisation of geographies becomes a recognisable practice in some of these highest grossing films of the time.

Analysis of cinematic landscapes is one of the acknowledged practices in cultural geography today, where such visual depictions attain "a political, economic and emotional value" (Anderson & Domosh et al., 2003, p. 228), making it a significant "object of argument" (p. 227). Regarded as one among the "transdisciplinary concerns of cultural geography" (p. 228), landscapes and cityscapes in this chapter are used to analyse how the ushering in of various sub-nationalisms, insurgencies and ethnic conflicts in India during the 1980s are culturally settled to restore a unified sense of nationhood in the popular films of the time. Cinema in India from the colonial period itself represented elite preferences and their cultural self-perceptions, resulting in a "screen codification of myth, history and nation under upper caste middle-class supervision" (Deshpande, 2007, p. 101). A convention that permeated into the post-independence filmmaking where the nation-making endeavour now had to convey to the masses the imbued dangers and political ambiguity within and outside the boundaries of the nation. Geographical features in films play an important role in such nation-building projects

where they tend to "sustain nationalisms'[4] through a "geographic common sense" (Radcliffe, 1996, p. 24) of belonging. The chapter, thus, first discusses space, geography, and nation in relation to popular cultures like films. This framework shall be further used to determine how the disruptive nature of new nationalisms, sub-nationalisms, separatist movements, and insurgencies in the 1980s India were cinematically negotiated through meticulous efforts of preservation, integration, militarisation, and otherisation of geographies in select films.

Nation and Geography

Landscapes, architectures, built environments, iconic sites, and natural environments play a key role in imaginatively placing the citizen subject within the mental map of the nation. The earliest studies on modern nations and nationalisms such as Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983) traces this awareness about geography as key to national imagination in postcolonial countries. Anderson cites the sociological landscape of colonial Mexico described in Joaquin Fernandez de Lizardi's novel and emphasizes how such printed works of literature have been crucial in fusing geography/landscape with the larger politics of the nation (Anderson, 1983, p. 29-30). Anderson's revised edition in 1991 focuses on the maps and their role in creating an emblematic icon of the nation by defining its geographical territory. However, geography receives scarce reference with respect to nationalism in these early works including that of Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm, and others. Reportedly, Antony D Smith's 1998 theoretical doctrines on nationalism and modernism assigns landscapes a place with heroic legends in crafting an "authentic popular ethno-history of the nations" (Smith, 1998, p.

[4] Nationalist projects make use of different mediums to propagate and maintain a certain type of nationalism through "the national novel, mass newsprint, and the media, and through education" (Radcliffe, 1996, p.38)

195). He propounds that modern nationalists take up the role of "political archaeologists" to provide "convincing narratives of historical continuity with a heroic, and preferably glorious, ethnic past" using "past legends and poetic landscapes" aiming "to provide cognitive 'maps' and public 'moralities' for the members of their nation-to-be" (p. 195). Perhaps landscapes appear as one among the significant metaphors of ethno-symbolic identity in Athena S. Leoussi and Steven Grosby's *Nationalism and Ethnosymbolism: History, Culture and Ethnicity* (2006) where the authors discuss how topographic features of individual nations play an integral role in establishing a political community based on commonalities. Thomas M. Lanken's *Imagining the Nation in Nature* (2004) tries to establish "an organic link between a people and its landscape" (p. 1). Discussing the symbolic meanings entwined in the 19th-century romantic tradition of Germany built around nature and landscapes, Lanken specifies how the romantic nationalists employed geography "to endow the nation with a sense of longevity and permanence" (p. 1-2). The author also talks about how the 1880s landscape preservation movement in Germany was a cultural nationalist articulation, where nature's aesthetic "disfigurement" (Verunstaltung) was seen as an erosion of Germany's distinctive national character and its population's moral decline" (p. 4). A geographic approach to the construction of national identities is a prevalent argument of the special edition of *National Identities* (2011) providing an excellent bibliography on the past and contemporary overlapping of the two domains. The entries discuss how the nationalist perceptions of landscapes turn them into national icons, the role of maps in determining the national identity, and how geography can be used as a subversive tool during the ushering in of various sub-national movements. Sanjay Srivastava (2004) analyses the cinema in India and its role in popularising a national culture through people's attachment to a definite natural and human-made geographies like "the Himalayas, hill-stations, the Ganges, the Taj Mahal, ruins of past 'civilisations', religious sites, and office buildings which constituted the representational iconography of the fledgling nation"

(p. 2020) — as if these sites are India. He further empahsises how geographical knowledge is fundamental to the consciousness of national feeling (p. 2020). The films discussed in this section can be placed within the larger nationalist projects of the time that attempted for national integration through establishing a geographic common sense among citizens, like the 1988 Lok Seva Sanchar Parishad initiative, supported by India's Ministry of Information, and telecasted by Doordarshan: “Ek Sur" [One Voice] or "Mile Sur Mera Tumhara". The song accompanied by visually enthralling locations from different federal states of India attempted to foster a national unison through constructing a homogenous national geography.

Nations, by and large, are the domains of complex heterogeneity resulting from varying socio-political differences and hence are always contested ‘zones of conflict’ (Hutchinson, 2005). In post-colonial societies, the arbitrary nature of the demarcation of territories have resulted in “continuous…struggles over ethnic designations…ongoing identity contestations, over-centralisation of the bureaucracy and monopolisation of the national resources” (Gogoi, 2016, p. 5). The relative success of the European nation-state system in mostly homogenous societies of the West did not fit well into the heterogeneous fabric of most post-colonial countries. Addressing this condition, Christopher Pinne and Rachel Dwyer (2001) suggest, “within South Asian history, subaltern studies emerged from the recognition that nationalist historiography reproduced colonial historiography in certain fundamental ways” (p. 4). As proposed by Rachel Dwyer in *Hindi Cinema as a Guide to Contemporary India* (2014), British institutions, structures of democracy and the postcolonial bourgeoisie have played a significant role in shaping the postcolonial state of India. Along similar lines, the popular visual media culture in India has been seminal in its role of homogenizing the diverse socio-cultural identities “through constructing a single national identity” (Gogoi, 2016, p. 5). Hindi cinemas of the 1980s reflect the tension that erupted in the nation due to widespread dissatisfaction towards such a centralized and colonial style planning of national development. Eric Kaufmann and Oliver

Zimmer (1998) state the importance of times of crisis (like the profound changes in cognitive and moral frameworks of the society) as an important condition reconfiguring the relationship between people and places (p. 484) and thereby explain how the natural environment becomes significant in the definitions of nationhood. The 80s in India saw the upsurgence of several cultural groups across different regions that sought for a renewed national identity, following a pattern similar to most post-colonial societies (Gogoi, 2016, p. 6). These uprisings concerning the rights of the minorities of ethnic and other cultural groups were largely region specific (Like the ethnolinguistic, religious, and caste-based movements in Assam, Tamil Nadu, and Kashmir among others) and hence a geographic analysis of the time through films can offer a broader understanding of the pitfalls of the post-colonial nation building process. The literature discussed hitherto establishes how landscapes, regions, landmarks, etc. function as natural monuments, emblematic of a stable national identity. The nationalist narrative thus constructed serves to manifest a national culture that is defined through geography. These findings shall be used as a predicament in analyzing the landscape and other topographies in the 1980s Hindi films that are in turn placed at a crucial convergence of ideologies on nation and nationhood in India.

Nation-making and the popular culture

In order to understand the role of popular geography in the formation of national identity one must also draw attention to how popular cultures like films have changed and replaced traditional cultural practices by creating a visual collectivism. As opposed to the classical works on modern nationhood, the contemporary theories (Appudurai, 1993; Edensor, 2002; Smith, 1998) acknowledge the importance of popular culture in establishing a collectivism that was once practiced through what Benedict Anderson (1983) calls the ‘print capitalism’. While spatial theorists like Arjun Appadurai (1993) realize the importance of the print media like

books, pamphlets, newspapers, maps, and other modern texts in asserting the collective experience of a nation, the growing importance of a citizenry/national society constructed through electronic capitalism such as cinema and television also forms part of his doctrines (p. 414). Appadurai asserts that "the modern nation-state…grows less out of natural facts-such as language, blood, soil, and race-but is a quintessential cultural product, a product of the collective imagination" (p. 414). Recognising the permeability of popular cultural text Anderson himself suggests that the "print has been supplemented, and then overtaken, by radio, cassette, film, and television, which can reach vast audiences unknown to the purveyors of pamphlets and novels" (As quoted in Smith, 1998, p. 139). Until the late 18th century, high cultures like art, literature, opera, and digest cultures were assumed to be of greater permanence than, say, pulp literature, popular music or films in literary and cultural circles (Burgess & Gold, 2017, p. 2-3). The importance of traditional media of song, dance, costume, ritual object, and artwork as a shared everyday experience however, was highlighted by Herder in comparison to the print media, which was, in turn, criticized for its confinement to elites and middle strata of the population (Smith, 1998, p. 139). However, with industrialization, urbanization, and technological advancements, popular cultures started establishing a sense of collectivity, a social homogenization that the tenants of high culture feared the most (Bennett, 1982, p. 32-33). Later with the capitalist orientation of society, by the twentieth century, popular cultures, driven by market forces, started getting largely influenced by a growing middle-class and their ideologies (Delaney, 2007). In *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life* (2002) Tim Edensor proposes that the dominant theories of the nation are obsessed with political economy and history and what transforms in them as national culture is the realm of high culture, 'invented traditions' and versions of folk culture. However, these "reified notions of culture" (p. 6), Edensor argues, masquerades "the more dynamic, ephemeral and grounded ways in which a nation is experienced and understood through popular culture"

(p. 6). These positions help to overcome the hesitation of human geographers towards considering filmic representations of places on par with the real locations. Antony D Smith further states that popular visual cultures have today incorporated landscapes, monuments, buildings, tomb-styles, and the more durable elements of collective cultures to establish "cultural authenticity and popular depth of the nation" (Smith, 1998, p. 139). In a collaborative study by Christina Kennedy and Christopher L Lukinbeal (1997) exclusively on geographic approaches towards films, the authors emphasize the significance of a geographic research on cinema. Such a framework, they claim, helps to understand cinematic geographies as cultural products or ideological representations of the dominant, and the capitalist society (p. 33-50). Also, Denis Cosgrove analyses the intermingling of geography and power by focusing on how dominant ideologies of the world, perpetuated through the visual medium, informs one's geographic imagination (2003, p. 249), in 'Landscape and the European Sense of Sight – Eyeing Nature' (2003). This postulation provides sufficient scope for analyzing the filmic geography of 1980s Hindi films in relation to the bourgeois hegemonic patterns of nation-building in India. Such inquiries help to acknowledge the role of popular geographies "in shaping individual and societal perceptions of space and place" (Peckham, 2004, p. 420). Sanjay Srivastava (2004) suggests that the early Indian films followed a modernist/realist vision of the nation by nationalizing natural geographies through its concretised representation of landscapes and places using detailing techniques. He says, pictures, in the modernist imagination of the nation, help in understanding the nation as a fixity, a territorialised concept in comparison to traditions like the Madhubani paintings and the Mughal miniatures where landscapes are used to replicate human emotions and not a specific (national) culture (p. 2020-2021). He therefore suggests the influence of modern Dwivedi poetry tradition on Indian films where the former was known for its detailed emphasis on landscape unlike its predecessor– the Braj poetry, where nature was usually relegated to the role of enhancing human feelings. This

trajectory of Indian films becomes important in my analysis of geographical terrains in the 80s Hindi films as the continued emphasis on geographic specificity results in granting authenticity to one place and debarring others. In Srivastava's essay the holistic view expressed in travelogues of Brahmin Vishnu Bhatt Godse that focuses on teeming with people, procedures, and transactions rather than the description of places thus, misses from the Indian films "where the heroes and heroines of Indian films come to meet, and sing and dance in these places which come to constitute Indian cultural and national spaces" (p. 2021).

Highlighting this peripheral status of media in a geographical inquiry, theorists like Burgess and Gold write that "the very ordinariness of television, radio, newspapers, fiction, film, and pop music perhaps masks their importance as part of people's geography" (Burgess and Gold, 2017, p. 1). Also stressing on the importance of analyzing popular geography, David Harvey (1984) propounds that they are the "more mundane enterprise… that confronts ideologies and prejudice as they really are, that faithfully mirrors the complex weave of competition, struggle, and cooperation within the shifting social and physical landscapes of the twentieth century" (p. 7). Such geographies, Harvey claims, are "the material manifestation of human hopes and fears mediated by powerful and conflicting processes of social reproduction" and therefore must "be threaded into the fabric of daily life with deep tap roots into the well-springs of popular consciousness" (p. 7). A similar attempt was made by Denis Cosgrove and Peter Jackson (1987) where the author discusses some of the important theoretical events that try to converge humanistic geographies with cultural geographies (p. 95-96) by emphasizing the need to critically analyse popular landscapes. Popular geography has been a relatively sidelined, but a major contributor to the collective homogeneity that the advent of mass media has brought upon the world. John Morgan underscores this conservative grammar, the lack of interest, and disdain in the field of humanist geography towards mass culture, that has resulted "in a marked reluctance to move beyond 'serious' topics and texts and a tendency to dismiss popular cultural

landscapes" (Morgan, 2001, p. 287). This postulation provides sufficient scope for analysing the filmic geography of 1980s Hindi films in relation to the bourgeois hegemonic patterns of nation building in India. In the following section, I shall discuss how in the film *Silsila*, regions like Kashmir, which once constituted the authentic national space of Hindi film's song and dance routine, underwent a slow transition in the 1980s as the political tensions in the valley disrupted the consistency of this symbolic landscape in films.

Crisis and the Kashmir Valley in *Silsila*:

The story of *Silsila* unravels in the backdrop of Kashmir, which simultaneously becomes a site of idyllic pleasures and expression of loss and remorse in the film. *Silsila* talks about the moral uncertainties of the male lead, Amit Malhotra (played by Amitabh Bachan), a poet, who had to forcibly get married to his brother Shekhar's (played by Shashi Kapoor) fiance, Shobha (played by Jaya Bachan), after Shekhar's death in a military coup. Amit, however, was previously engaged in a relationship with Chandni (played by Rekha), which he sacrifices to save Shobha from 'disgrace', as she was carrying his brother's child. Chandni, on the other hand, marries a doctor, Anand (played by Sanjeev Kumar), under her family's pressure. The crisis erupts, when by a chance of fate, Amit meets Chandni again, and their feelings for each other rejuvenate, affecting both their respective families. The couple decides to break away from their marital partners but are intervened by a shocking turn of events when Chandni's husband meets with a helicopter accident and Amit comes to know that Shobha is pregnant with his child. Both Amit and Chandni finally decide to go back to their families. While the story is predominantly a love triangle dealing with three individuals entangled in moral and emotional chaos, the scenic setting of the Kashmir valley can only be treated as a deliberate political presence in the film symbolizing the changing times. In India, the central control of Kashmir was always uncertain and therefore remained a constant danger that the state might split away. Kashmir

was radicalized through the 1970s, turning to strident ethno-religious mobilizations that began in the 1980s in the form of religious infiltrations and rise of fundamentalist forces and culminated in the 1989 insurgency, as a means of fragmenting the existing secular ideologies (Ud-Din, 1997, pp. 66-68). A historical lack of democracy and press freedom in Kashmir, and changing political mobilization posed new challenges to India's political leadership. These aspects contribute to a unique set of center-state tension that helps explain why Kashmir, unlike other crisis-hit Indian states in the 1980s and 90s, fell into a cycle of militancy and repression. This section claims that the 1980s was a period that saw the crucial transformation from the Nehruvian socialism to the rise of new ethnic identities in India's socio-political sphere and places like Kashmir are prominently used in *Silsila* to depict these ambiguities.

Hindi cinema's long Kashmir obsession has been readily addressed by Ananya Jahanara Kabir in her discussion on the pleasures and politics of the 1960s Kashmir films. This discussion provides some crucial details on how this obsession with the contested region changes from the voyeuristic gaze of the north Indian hero visiting the scenic landscape in the 1960s to a terrain of gory bloodshed, ravaged by 'anti-nationals' and 'terrorists', threatening the middle-class hero in the films of the 1990s. The 1960s Hindi films shot in the backdrop of Kashmir valley were emblematic of the formative years of Kashmir's integration into one of federal India's constituent units (Kabir, 2005, p. 6). This moment is characterized by the depiction of "the landscape of Kashmir in numerous films, with its lakes, snow-clad mountains, valleys and rivers, … certain discourses of the desire of the nation-state to retain control of Kashmir as a paradise that defines Indian nationhood" (Bhaumik, 2014, p. 206). Kabir's 2010 article on the new Kashmir films also mentions how in the 1960s "the space of Kashmir is moulded, through narrative, into a postcolonial playground for metropolitan Indians" (Kabir, 2010, p. 374) and how the decades following reduce the place to a visual backdrop for romantic song sequences until its rediscovery in the 1990s. This section argues that Kashmir in the Hindi films of the

1980s was caught in the midst of an ideological shift and had to negotiate with the episodes of separatism and loss of integration before it took a leap into the full-fledged display of ethnic and militant acts of violence in the valley in the 90s and after. Unlike the "cinematic lull" (p. 375) that distinguishes the 1980s in Kabir's essay, this period depicted the vestiges of the old nation represented by the 60s Kashmir film and the new middle-class anxieties related to separatism, new identities, and their political demands. The land of middle-class pastoral pleasures of the 60s does not fully vanish in the 80s films like *Bemisaal* (1982), where Kashmir still persists "as the eroticized landscape of the mind in the social imaginary" (Kabir, 2005, p. 3) of the Indian middle-classes traveling to the place for romance and conjugality. However, *Silsila* presaged the Kashmir crisis by detailing the places' moral ambiguity in the guise of a plot dealing with similar moral confusions stemming from an extramarital relationship.

The film presents some of the earliest instances of military presence in the valley and the induction of patriotic themes. With scenes from the valley where students in Kashmir sing *Sare Jahan Se Acha Hindustan Hamara* [Our Hindustan is the most beautiful in the world], military activities, and depiction of the life of the army community in the valley, that is risk taking, and ready to sacrifice for the nation, the film tries to meticulously use symbols and spectacles to accommodate Kashmir as an integral part of the Indian union. Such "militarization of regions precisely produces the abolition of the 'cinematic' within populations" (Bhaumik, 2014, p. 214). The shutting down of cinema halls in Kashmir as a result of the frequent militaristic activities has also dampened youthful pleasures in the region (p. 214). As mentioned earlier, *Silsila* is one among the early Hindi films that shows the deployment of the army in the valley, along with a few battle scenes. The martyrdom of Shekhar is the central tragedy in the film that ends the fantasies within the film. The scenes of happiness and merry making that prevailed in the movie hitherto disappeared, paving the way to the moral dilemma of what to choose. In the film, the tragedy of the young middle-class poet hero Amit is also symbolically the

disembarkation of the nation from the poesy and youthfulness that once channeled a distinguished youth culture of India – of mindless travel, exploration, and romance in Kashmir to a decade of uncertainty and ambiguity. As Bhaumik (2014) further suggests, "militarization is aimed against the fantasies of sensory freedoms" (p. 214), the abortion of love and pleasure in the movie also parallels the beginning of radical youth cultures in the valley. *Silsila*, thus, enacts the changing political relation of the Indian union with the place through the demise of pleasures in the valley. However, the disappearance of recreation from the lives of Kashmiri youth themselves is something that the Hindi films fail to depict. The disruption in the movie *Silsila* predates the end of pleasures that the North Indian youth once experienced in the valley which gets more articulate in the post-1990s Kashmir films. In Tejaswini Niranjana's (1994) reading of the early 1990s Kashmir films like *Roja* (1992), the middle-class hero, Rishi's complete identification with the nation is also speculated as a deliberate rejection of the Nehruvian state apparatuses, its socialism, and democracy. The film instead thrusts the individual, self-reliant, patriotic hero as the harbinger of change – representative of a middle-class that is hopeful about liberalization and the free market enterprise (p. 81).

In *Silsila*, the middle-class position in the battle of class, religion, and space within the nation is fused with the case of Kashmir to address the ongoing nationalist crisis. Anirudh Deshpande explains how the middle-class has been decisive since independence in establishing a convention of heterosexual love, and legitimacy in familial relationships, and how each of it is strongly tied to the nation-building project, which he calls "a bourgeois obsession in a former colony" (Deshpande, 2007, p.101). Such a concept, as discussed earlier, "brought the Indian bourgeois to power" (p. 101) with the support of mass media. This bourgeois imagination of the nation prevails in the social project of cinema. In *Silsila*, the bourgeois anxiety is settled through a reinstatement of the middle-class national consciousness represented through Shobha's legitimate claim over Amit. Shobha symbolizes the national/middle-class morals that

upholds the sanctity of marriage, incorruptible devotion to family and husband, and is the preserver of traditions and domesticity. Amit's final assertion of his identity as a husband and rejection of his lover/poetic self asserts his institutionalization into a state-familial moral constellation like the valley itself. The familial cohesion fused with national ambitions is strengthened by the presence of Amit's Sikh friend, Kuldeep (played by Kuldeep Anand), in the climax of the film – where Amit makes a choice between his wife and former lover – who becomes decisive in the unison of the middle-class Hindu family (the representative national citizens). Referring to such contexts of expression of loyalty demanded from the citizen subject, Ashish Nandy states, "The nation-state has always made heavy demands on its subjects, but now, as the spectre of terrorism —- by which is meant principally the secessionist movements in the Punjab, the North-East, and Kashmir — looms large, it demands an unflinching loyalty: … an unflinching commitment to the cultural and political integrity of the nation becomes the requirement" (Nandy, 1998, p. 250). This is achieved by the Sikh character's alignment with the national self, represented by Shobha in this film. Thus, fulfilling the new nationalist dreams of the middle-class where the disruptive politics of Punjab and Kashmir are cinematically settled.

Maps in *Karma* (1986)

The next case study, *Karma*, unlike *Silsila*, uses violent action sequences and sensationalist patriotism to pitch in the middle-class nationalist ambitions of an undivided Indian union. *Karma* features Rana Vishwa Pratap Singh (played by Dilip Kumar) a police chief, serving in a prison camp located in a borderland, and his ordeals of dealing with a terrorist operating from outside the borders. Known for his intelligence, and sincerity towards work, the protagonist also has to suffer personally to protect the nation. The film introduces, along with *Shaan* and *Mr. India*, one of the first few terrorist villains in Hindi films: Dr. Dang (played by Anupam

Kher), the supremo of a terrorist organization called Black Star (BSOA). Dr. Dang is introduced in the first song sequence in the film, where he is portrayed as the sole conspirator behind India's social, political, and economic crisis. As the movie begins he is arrested by Rana Pratap Singh but escapes the prison by staging a dramatic and hysteric shootout in the place, killing several police officials and inmates. Dang's henchmen also attack Rana Pratap's family, killing his two sons and grandchildren. His wife and a younger son are spared but the former loses her ability to speak as an outcome. Vishwapratap Singh resigns from his job but soon plans a retaliation with the support of the government officials. *Karma* senses the growing importance of the middle-class and private individuals in solving the national crisis where the state is now dismissed to the background but is also reluctant to abort it completely. However, unlike the 1990s film *Roja*, the state is not deemed inefficient nor responsible for the crisis. As evident from the theme song of the film, where the leaders of the Congress are placed alongside Gandhi, the narrative evokes an in-between scenario – one lamenting the passing of the state's patronage and the other ambiguous about a liberalised economy and culture. This in-betweenness is what makes the 80s Hindi films both transitional and fatidic. Vishwa Pratap employs three convicts from different parts of the country to support his mission. The convicts: Baiju (played by Jackie Shroff), Khairu (played by Naseeruddin Shah), and Johnny (played by Anil Kapoor), as evident from their names belong to different religions (a practice common in Hindi films till the 1980s). The three men are trained by the state machinery to perform some life-threatening adventures in return for a free life. Though initially skeptical about the intentions of Rana Pratap, the three convicts are finally inducted into the national mission, under the middle-class protagonist's supervision. The three men manage to enter Dang's precarious camp situated near the border to save Rana Pratap's wife and son, who are held as hostages in this place. With the help of some Indian prisoners in Dang's camp, the three men, and later Rana Pratap, attack the camp. After a massive tussle with one another, Rana Pratap

finally manages to demolish the villain's camp, alongside debilitating the fanatic villain. In the process, many of Rana Pratap's aides lose their lives, including Kheru who sacrifices himself while undertaking a risky task. The other two, Baiju and Johnny, find a place in Rana's family as his sons. Cinemas of the 1980s attempted to establish solidarity "by codifying and appealing to national identity" (Halev, 2008, 608) through a geographic assemblage of the national hinterland. Jyothika Virdi in her work, *Cinematic Imagination: Indian Popular Films as Social History* (2003), categorizes the 1980s as a decade of "belabored, discontinuous, and poorly executed" (p. 105) filmic narratives "with powerful themes in contemporary politics …diffused by vague allusions to the enemy, the "terrorist" or politician located in a nonspecific time and place" (p. 105). She uses *Karma* as an example to state it. While Virdi's reading of *Karma*, considers the mindless separatist terrorist as the nation's new enemy, the film also holds certain distinguished regional identities responsible for igniting violence within the nation. The local South Indian moneylender, Kittam Kittu who stays in this borderland village is the internal enemy in the film who extends his support to Dr. Dang and his men.

In *Karma*, Kashmir's Pahalgam, becomes the fictive representation of the idyllic nation, which must be safeguarded from the separatist terrorists to restore national unity. However, there are no mentions of specific places in the film, other than implications. As denoted by Jyothika Virdi (2003), the generalisation of places "preempt localized identification" (p. 112). In Virdi's analysis, these generalizations play an important role in uniforming the national territory using symbols and isolating the enemy amidst a growing fear of provincial nationalism. Though such specifications are absent in the film, Kashmir is cinematically and strategically used in the film to consolidate the divisive politics dictating the several regions of India, since "cinema has frequently been mobilized to bolster political power, performing explicit and implicit ideological functions" (Peckham, 2004, p. 422). The meadows, the alpine vegetation, and the lush mountains of Kashmir are ubiquitously maintained in the film to provide a sense of place

in question. *Karma* does not antagonize the place but tries to desperately integrate the region with the Indian union. Solidarity plays a crucial role in new and old democracies. In the absence of a monarchy that consolidates its subject's fear of survival, it becomes important for the nation-state to search for "source[s] of solidarity" (Halev, 2008, p. 608). In *Karma*, therefore, along with the multiple religious identities that unite to protect the nation, the convicts also come from different regions of India to accord with the geo-political solidarity that the film adheres to. The song, "dil diya hai jaan bhi denge, ae watan tere liye" [Have given our hearts, shall also give our lives, Oh! nation, for you!] sung by Rana Pratap's wife on the eve of the Republic day is a crucial tool used in the film to instigate patriotic sentiments within the citizens while also serving other purposes. The evocative timbre of the song sets the tone for the entire film. The song reverberates throughout the movie along with visual caricatures depicting the gruesome activities of the terrorist villain that is dividing the country. Scenes of suffering from different places in India are shown for the purpose of unification. However, the most pertinent among such a visualisation includes the several shots of a map. Throughout the film, maps play an important role in establishing a geographical sensibility among the viewer-citizen. Geographical education is a strategically used ideological apparatus to create and maintain the imagined sense of nationhood (Srivastava, 2004). In the introductory essay to the series on geographies and national identities, D.H. Kaplan and H.G. Herb suggest that "Nationalism is an intrinsically geographical doctrine in that it seeks to conjoin a self-identified group of people a 'nation' within a sovereign, bounded geographical area a 'state'. Because national identity cannot really be conceived without the presence of a nationalist territorial ideology, national identities must always contend with their geographic manifestations" (Kaplan and Herb, 2011, p. 349). Thus, in *Karma*, territorial integrity is manifested through the pictorial representation of the nation through maps, since "Geographic approaches to nationalism are difficult to conceive without maps" (p. 355). Maps as a significant form of spatial communication are

therefore frequently used in the film to materialize the middle-class nationalist fantasies. In the final scene of the movie where Dr Dang is incapacitated, Rana Pratap fires bullets circumscribing the villain in the shape of India's map, reassuring the audience with an image of undivided India. Reproduction "of the shape of the nation's territory over and over on maps creates an emblematic icon of the nation, in other words, 'the map- as-logo'" (p. 357). Such symbolisms become crucial "to visualize the nation, to make its territory tangible…show [ing] clear and unambiguous boundaries" (p. 356). Especially in countries with diverse ethno-national identities, "the map becomes important to determine the distribution of its members and to define the spatial extent of the homeland" (p. 356).

Before the new Kashmir films of the 1990s ceased romance from the valley, the use of geographical tools such as maps and landscapes, the repetitive use of songs, flags, and patriotic slogans in *Karma* strategically sought an assortment of the disputed land with the rest of India. Such symbolism was visibly absent from Bombay cinemas of the 60s and 70s. The attempt in the 80s films was however limited to negotiating the threats of separatism and secessionism, and preservation of the national arena. This changed in the 1990s and after, when the valley was foregrounded "as Muslim, engaged in a dialectic relationship with both Islam within India and the Indian nation-state" (Kabir, 2010, p. 375). *Karma*, on the other hand, hovers over the remnants of socialism, statism, and secularism, trying to consolidate a national solidarity through the construction of an inclusive space by establishing a homogenous geographic identity. Unlike *Roja*, *Karma* does not otherise the valley as an ethnic alterity. Instead, the villains, with ambiguous ethno-national origins, come from outside the geographic boundaries of the nation. With a lack of well-defined identification of the enemy, the lament for the loss of unity, and the gradual turn towards the middle-class enabler, *Karma* makes a perfect transitional cinema depicting the convergence of the old and the new nation. While Kashmir's scenic extravagances and North-Indian metropolises have been an integral part of Popular

Bombay-based Hindi cinemas, until the late 1980s, these films rarely stepped outside the city of Bombay. The following section analyses the distinct presence of other regional landscapes in Hindi films of the 1980s. Amidst the growing political tensions in several Dravidian states in the 1980s, Bombay films make few attempts of confronting its "spatial other", where the region's distinct ethnic identity is otherised through an enigmatic portrayal of its landscape.

The Mysterious Landscape of Ooty in *Karz* (1980)

Indian cinema prominently derives its substance from the two grand epics – the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, along with other Hindu mythological texts. The saga of the Aryan king, Rama, who travels towards the Dravidian region, encountering treacherous monsters, and finally defeating the demon king, Ravana, looms large in any travels made by the quintessential North Indian hero of Hindi cinema towards the historically monstrous South. The region and its geography have therefore over time become a spectre in the national imagination as a land that embodies violence and disruption to the idea of the homogenous nation. The existing mythological underpinnings, the lower-caste uprisings, and ethnocentric movements of the 1980s in South Indian states like Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu dictate the politics of the 1980s film *Karz*. The hero of the film, Monty (played by Rishi Kapoor), travels to the mysterious and exotic location of Tamilnadu's Ooty, where the central events of the film unravel and the place's dark history is revealed. Bombay cinema has been an industry that "has by and large retained the visual, emotional, and cultural iconography of a broad-based North Indian experience" (Mazumdar, 2007, 42), corroborated with upper-caste sentiments. Through *Karz*, the section sees how the industry tried to conceive these political uprisings and the dominance of caste-based regional politics of the 1980s in regions outside the usual city of Bombay. Though South Indian characters have been part of the fabric of Bombay's cosmopolitan filmmaking culture ever since its inception, a very few Bollywood movies in the past have attempted to explore the South as a region. Much like the negligence in studies of

South Indian films as an integral part of Indian cinema, the Southern regions are under-represented in Bollywood's cinematic landscape. Notwithstanding the dearth of academic publishing on this subject, the phenomena of stereotypical representation of South India as a bawdily homogeneous cultural sphere is prevalent in the history of Hindi cinema, resorting to 'Loud costumes, tipping towards garish thumping dance steps, voluptuous women, lusting men and exaggerated dialogues' (Etimes) while depicting any character from the vaguely connected South Indian cultures. Recently however, post a series of commercial debacles from Bollywood coupled with the unprecedented rise of politicisation of filmic narratives, films from the states of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka are fast rising to be recognized as 'national film' (Somashekar and Pinto, 2023, pp. 130-31; Siddegowda, 2022, p 1).

Karz opens up with a court scene where a land dispute is being resolved between Ravi Varma (played by Raj Kiran) and Sir Judah (played by Prem Nath), and the court verdict favours the former. As understood from the judgment, Sir Judah had illegally usurped Ravi's father's properties in Ooty (that includes a few tea plantations, a mansion and other landed properties) which was once handed over to him in a friendly pact. Sir Judah's ambiguous ethnic identity, as reflected in his name and physical features grants him the status of the mythological betrayer. To recapture what he has lost, Sir Judah plans to kill Ravi Verma through Kamini (played by Simi Garewal) whom Ravi loves without knowing her true identity. Kamini arranges a hasty marriage with Ravi to get a legal right over his properties. Upon the couple's travel from Mumbai to Ravi's ancestral mansion in Ooty, Kamini kills Ravi by hitting him off a cliff near a temple of goddess Kali. After a brief trivia from the past, the story returns to the present, where the narrative voice informs the viewers that Ravi Varma is reborn with the grace of goddess Kali as Monty in the city of Mumbai. Monty is a rich young singer who falls for a young and naive girl Tina (played by Tina Ambani) as the film progresses. Amidst one of his

stage shows, Monty accidentally plays a tune (which was once Ravi Verma's favourite) and soon gets hallucinations that contain rare visuals of a tea plantation, undulating landscapes, and a desolate mansion along with the scenes of Ravi Verma's murder by Kamini. Monty is medically diagnosed but the doctors are unable to find the source of his illness and recommend him to travel to Ooty for relaxation. Coincidentally, Monty's love interest Tina also lives there. Ooty however welcomes Monty with dreary visuals, enchanting experiences, and the revelation of a dark past that reverberates in the place. Monty's frequent hallucinations take him to those places, which he now realizes are cues from his past life. Monty gets to know how Kamini had ousted Ravi's mother and sister from the mansion and usurped all their properties. Later, Ravi also comes to know that his lover Tina was being taken care of by Kamini herself to fulfill a promise that the latter had given to Tina's uncle, Kabira (played by Pran), who had to spend many years of his life in jail because of Kamini. Kabira knew bits from Kamini's past which he had learned from Tina's father (through his dying statement), who was killed by Kamini's men while overhearing a conversation between her and Sir Judah. With the help of Kabira and his men, Monty plans to avenge his murder by terrifying Kamini. He also finds out about his sister and mother who were living a life of poverty after leaving the family mansion. In a final action sequence, most villains are killed. Kamini is chased to the same spot near the Kali temple, but this time it is she who gets killed. The film ends happily with Ravi Verma reuniting with his family, marrying Tina, and leaving for Kashmir for their honeymoon.

In *Karz*, the 'bizarre' landscape of Ooty is laden with secrets of death and cruelty over a North Indian hero and his family imposed by largely Christian characters, which constitutes the second largest religious community in the hill station following the tribals. The majority of the tribal inhabitants lament the tragedy caused to the Verma family who are remembered by the locals as benevolent and respectful. It also becomes evident that the Vermas had made important contributions to improving the lives of the tribals of the region through schooling

and welfare schemes. While films like *Karma* (in the previous section) channel the middle-class and upper-caste anxieties amidst a growing subaltern awakening in the country, *Karz* emphasizes the patronage of the 'upper-caste' family at a time of revolutionary upsurge of caste-based regional groups in South India, that began from the 1960s. With growing attention from the media and other forms of representation, by the 1980s, the dispossessed voices from these regions were now being amplified. The political uprisings in the Southern states of Tamilnadu and Andhra Pradesh were not a linguistic movement alone but a resurgence of lower caste politics that was diluted under the "rational-legal" constellation of the Nehruvian linguistic territorialization (Hansen, 2001, p. 202). In the 1980s, As Sunit Ganguly and Rahul Mukherji (2011) point out, these uprisings among the 'lower' caste and tribal communities were manifested in their voting behaviour that differed drastically from any previous assumptions, "altering the texture of Indian politics dramatically" (p. 2). Since then "instead of routinely turning to the once-dominant Congress Party, lower-caste voters have demonstrated muchgreater independence and have switched their loyalties to local, ethnic, and regional parties" (p. 1). Such a political shift was gradually questioning the 'upper caste' dominance of politics as well the perils of the language-based federal system that largely suited the agendas of the dominant caste from its very foundation. The ethnic movements in the 1980s, not just in the South but in the Northeastern regions, also followed a similar characteristic. These movements from the South Indian states, hence, shouldn't be mistaken as a pan-linguistic awakening in support of a universal cause like the anti-Hindi agitations of the 50s and 60s (Kohli, 2001, 88-89). Moreover, The rupture between the idea of the nation and the diverse ethnic identities had been fueled by the sociopolitical-religious movements of the 20th century itself. These movements sought socio-political justice for all the Dravidian cultures, "excluding the Brahmin jati groups who were identified as alien Aryans, and the goal was to establish religious and political boundaries against Brahmanical authority and north Indian political

hegemony" (Pandian, 1998, 8). The dispute regarding the theory of racial supremacy of Aryans over the Dravidians has been instrumental in the formation of various regional nationalisms challenging the macro project of the modern nation-state. The strengthening of such movements in the modern politics of India demanded cultural tools that supported the racial supremacy of characters from the Northern region of India as suggested in the film. *Karz* retracts the role of the upper caste hero, his patronage towards uplifting the tribal society of this Southern region amidst a rising socio-political awareness among marginalised caste categories of the region.

The wilderness of the hill station (Ooty) and the lurking sense of danger in the region regulates any form of romance in the film. Kabira instructs his henchmen to escort the lovers Tina and Monty everywhere they go, as their lives could be in danger in the vicious surroundings. Amidst the lush greenery of the spot, the protagonist experiences disturbing episodes threatening his life, depictions that also symbolise the primitivity of this region. The film shows a community that still depends on antique methods of treatment to cure illness, compared to the hero from Mumbai who was previously shown in the film to receive an advanced medical diagnosis from a super specialty hospital. The song and dance culture of the tribals depicted in one of the songs from the movie, titled "Kamaal hai" combining the grotesque with the tribal life, further highlights the contrasting nature of both the worlds. Sumit Guha in *Environment and Ethnicity in India: 1200-1991* writes, "To be linked with the wilderness, the jungle, was by definition pejorative from ancient times down to the nineteenth century…Forest folk *(jangli)* were the definitive others against whom civilized folk measured themselves" (Guha, 1999, p. 17). To explain further, Guha refers to Alfred Haddon's reading of the Vedic and Pauranic depictions of demons and ogres which claims that there is hardly any exaggeration of these characters in these texts as they might be well tallying with the modern interpretations of today's jungle tribe. There are other references in Guha which include the findings by Topinard

(evidently on the basis of Ramayana) which indicates, “that the first race to inhabit India as a short black people, 'similar to monkeys” (p. 18-19). Guha summarises these remarks and suggests that “indigenous alterity and Western anxiety combined to create a stereotype of the forest folk that was to have a powerful effect on society and politics in India down to the present” (p. 19). He further concludes that though a polemical picture was provided by G. S. Ghurye based on British census classifications fifty years ago, explaining the contradictions and misrepresentations of the forest tribe, “the archetype once formed outlasted the colonial regime and the racial anthropology that had generated it, and remains a powerful identity” (p. 19) till the present.

Encounter with alterity defines the politics of *Karz*. In *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, Thomas Erikson argued that “ethnic relations emerge and are made relevant through social situations and encounters, and through people’s ways of coping with the demands and challenges of life” (Eriksen, 1994, p. 1-2). Studies on ethnic encounters thus help in understanding individuals and groups about the perception about their own community and the salient characteristics of the other group and how “worldviews are being maintained, contested and transformed” (p. 2). In the film, “landscape offers metaphors for contextualizing cultural relationships and processes in space, time and place” (Howitt, 2002, p. 302). Experience of geographical alterity has been central to European travelogues and literature, where “exploration, discovery and settlement are the central tropes” (p. 302). Such encounters with ‘alien’ landscapes, however “exotic and bizarre”, were “capable of discovery, exploitation and subsumption to the European meta-narrative of conquest and accumulation” (p. 302) and were readily employed to define people and places as primordial. As written elsewhere in the chapter, European constructions of the jungle tribes and the predominance of the Aryan theory of racial supremacy in the Indian context have played crucial roles in constructing place myths. This framework intersects with the 80s lower caste uprisings in states like Tamil Nadu in the film *Karz* which uses landscape

metaphors to create a sense of eeriness to define these movements. The film tries to restore faith in the patronage of the individual upper-caste feudal hero who will reincarnate to bring justice. The mythological, colonial, and historical aspects sentimentalize the North Indian hero's cold-blooded murder in the region on one hand, and the rebirth of the upper caste North Indian hero envisages the upliftment of the poor and marginalised communities of the area. National consciousness in India was formed as an outcome of the British political hegemony. This brought greater freedom in asserting the matters of "political autonomy and statehood on the basis of linguistic and/or religious boundaries", linking ethnicity and nationalism (Pandian, 1998, p. 551) in the post-colonial politics of India. However, in former colonies or imperial provinces, like in India, "nation-building – the creation and consolidation of political cohesion and national identity – [was] high on the political agenda". This has led to geo-political conflicts in 'the faultlines' between 'civilizations' (Eriksen, 1994, p. 2). In the sections that follow, the discussion takes the idea of ethnic encounters in the city spaces – a spatial canvas that dominated the films of the 1980s and becomes important in the discussion related to the urban middle-class. Before further discussion on films, a quick outlook about Hindi cinema and city-based narratives is deemed necessary to understand the cinematic city and new forms of identity crisis within the city space in the 1980s.

Cinema and Ethnic Encounters in the City

Cinema, since its inception, has been closely and predominantly representing the urban experience (Gessner, 1963, 1-5). The city was part of Bombay cinema right from the 1950s, largely formalized through a deliberately theatrical set design shaped by a dream-world aesthetic", depicting "a proletarian identity,... through which the outsider-hero lays claim to the space of the city" (Dass, 2017, p. 103). These films were particularly known for their characteristic depiction of the street or the footpath, where the urban underclass experienced

both the nostalgic village life and the city's cosmopolitanism (Mazumdar, 2007, 10). The footpath relished the communitarian spirit of the newly independent nation intertwined with a socialist critique of the uneven urban development (*Awaara* (1951), *Shri 420* (1955)). This gradually changes into a "site of marginality" (p. 10) and frustration by the 1970s, turning the urban proletariat into an embodiment of protest against the state (*Deewar*). These 'cinetopias'[5], however, "delivered the city of Bombay to the public imagination as an emblematic space of India's postcolonial modernity, embodying a particular secular vision of India" (Dass, 2017, p. 103). In the 1980s, while a new urban middle-class was already relegating themselves to the select spaces of the city, the proletariat hero's tussle with the state had now given way to encounters with ethnic outsiders that were now populating the city. Though cities in India have always witnessed the ceaseless flow of migrants and political refugees right from the time of partition, the bourgeois nationalist fears were magnified with the ethno-linguistic caste movements along with a more inclusive representational politics taking shape in the 80s. The cities witnessed a large number of job seekers, migrants, and ethnic diversity. Ethnicity was thus becoming a crucial marker in India's post-colonial history. With new claimants in the city, the fear of the urban middle-class became more articulate through cinemas, since the "protection" of space and the economic opportunities that exist within [the city] are often central objectives of the local population" (Weiner, 1978, p. 3). The conflicts in this period, unlike the 70s, were not driven by class consciousness, but by ethnic mobilisations, ethnic

[5]Cinetopia refers to cinematic space that combines the concept of the imaginary utopia, and Michel Foucault's notion of "heterotopia" as a space that is simultaneously mythic and real (unlike utopia). It is a composite space that brings together several sites normally deemed incompatible (and that could include elements of both utopia and dystopia) — a space that is in conversation with, but also distinct from, real spaces.

diversity in the employment sector, and widening spatial insecurities in the city. How ethnicity and space create new dimensions of self and how the discourse of popular cinema achieves this is what this chapter shall see in the following paragraphs.

In the 1980s, the public sector was still the dominant employer in India, which led to growing competition among job seekers, and ethnic clashes between migrant employees and locals in the city. It is assumed by Myron Weiner (1978) that "most middle-class nativist movements in opposition to migrants tend to emerge in those communities where the local population has recently produced its own educated class that aspires to move into jobs held by migrants—in the civil service, as teachers in the local schools, as clerks, managers, and technicians" (p. 8). In this condition where the job sector ceases to expand in proportion to the number of new entrants into the city, "the local middle-class aspirants may view migrants as blocks to their mobility". The ethnic clashes between the local Marathi population and Tamil speakers were thus accelerating in big cities like Mumbai. There were also parallel agitations in South Indian cities like Bangalore, where the "sons-of-the-soil" campaign among Kannadigas against the Tamil migrants was resurfacing from the early 80s (Nair, 2000, p. 4143). A major reason was the anticipated "marginalisation of the public sector and its (usually left-wing) trade unions, and the increasing informalisation of the economy", resulting in geographies of violence in the cities (p. 4143). There were outcries among several sectors for domicile rule that protected the local population from educationally forward, culturally advanced, and skilled migrants of other ethnicities (Weiner, 1978, p. 345). Action-adventure *masala* films (which were also some of the highest-grossing Hindi films of this era (Vitali, 2008, p. 231)) best depicted the ethnic clashes through spatial circumstances like street violence, ghetto culture, etc. In Bombay, the unemployment crisis among youth was triggered by several factors that began in the early 1980s with the textile strike in the city leading to the rise of criminal activities among the youngsters. The decline of textile mills that employed around two-thirds of the city's industrial

workers led to the eighteen months-long protest in the year 1982-83. The textile strike is considered to be a crucial event that changed the spatial topography of the city, the nature of employment, and habitation. The post-strike city saw along with the rise of criminal activities, youth involvement in ethnoreligious mobilisations, especially with the sporadic popularity of Shiv Sena, ethnic clashes, gradual influence of the underworld, and resultant violence within the city (culminating in the infamous Bombay riots of 1993). A few accounts also reveal that the city's transformation into a global center from a manufacturing hub also follows from the events after the strike, which led to the expansion of the service sector economy in the city, leading to deprivation among local workers, changing the residential patterns, and urban landscape forever (Mazumdar, 2007, p. 154).The spatial re-ordering of Bombay city was also being influenced by the conventional race theories in the wake of growing urbanisation and immigrant crisis in the cities. Racial theory of Indian civilization, according to Thomas R Throtmann asserts "that India's civilization was produced by the clash and subsequent mixture of light-skinned civilizing invaders (the Aryans) and dark-skinned barbarian aborigines (often identified as Dravidians)" (Frawley, 2006), which he claims to be a colonial intervention of the history of race in India. Vedic passages, during the colonial times supporting the Aryan supremacy were rigorously revived that spoke "of their (Aryan's) enemies (mainly demons) as without nose (a-nasa) and were interpreted as a racial slur against the snub-nosed Dravidians" (Frawley, 2006). Time and again there have been attempts by cultural nationalists in India to legitimise the claim of Aryan's racial supremacy. Racial ethnography was thus being appropriated by the indigenous elites to justify indigenous hierarchy in the cities like Bombay. Bombay's urban modernity, thus, by the end of the 1980s was being exposed to the evil of the gang world, corruption, and communal politics more than ever. The films that are discussed next can be placed at the heart of these events.

The Southern Gangster in *Parinda* (1988)

Parinda (1988) is one among earliest gangster films that depicts the "city marked by violence, terror, claustrophobia, and the uncanny [where] Bombay becomes a gangland, a disenchanted city haunted by death, darkness, and ruin" (Mazumdar, 2007, p. 151). *Parinda* plays out the slow dissolution of the urban class conflict into violence inflicted upon the cityproper by elements operating from the fringes. *Parinda*'s menacing villain– a local don– Anna (played by Nana Patekar) is the cinematic reincarnation of one among the many gang heads that had become popular in the early 1980s in the Bombay city. Such gangs were involved in illegal liquor sale, extortion, and smuggling, and had a strong influence in politics – some of them being a perfect prototype of slumlords and gangster (Hansen, 2001, p. 189). The gangs occupied the city's dark and desolate areas, mostly the slums, and largely remained a "localised phenomenon" (p. 189) until they gave rise to violent gang wars, now penetrating into other public areas of the city. By the 1980s, as an aftermath of the decline of the manufacturing industry, these slums became centers of the city's notoriety and gave rise to the don culture in Bombay. Thomas Blom Hansen writes, "in a way these dons incarnated all that respectable citizens of Bombay considered evil and dangerous—Muslims, slums, South Indian criminals" (p. 189). There are accounts that validate the impact of the textile strike especially on the Muslim Mohalla – and such neighborhoods descending to criminality (Mazumdar, 2007, pp. 154-55). Readings on *Parinda* hitherto have focused on the nature of its gang wars, the city's uncanniness, and the paranoia felt by the usual city dwellers created by these catastrophes. The ethnic character of the film's main villain and his spatiality escapes these readings. Anna is not just the dangerous mafia that carves out the city's landscape as " a world of greed, fear, violence, and riots" (p. 149), neither is the film solely a "gangster cinema [that] provides a counternarrative to the designed interior city by drawing on the mythology of the underworld" (p. 149). *Parinda* is rooted in the politics of ethnicity that was rapidly changing the city's spatial map by the mid-1980s. It is situated within a Bombay that was being torn apart from its

cosmopolitan self to a Mumbai of nativist, segregational, and criminalised radical politics, following the textile strike (Ray, 2022, p. 129).

Parinda narrates the disruption to normalcy within the city, and the end of middle-class dreams of the Hindu protagonist Karan (played by Anil Kapoor) as the South Indian gangster invades both the public and private worlds of the central character. Ranjani Majumdar's reading of *Parinda* considers it as an evocation of the urban terror through what she regards as the "architectural uncanny" (Mazumdar, 2007, p. 161) -- where places, monuments, and other city spots that bind personal as well as collective memories of the city dwellers suddenly reflect ruin and terror. The present reading of *Parinda* focuses on the anxieties caused by the ethnic minorities and their habitats to the normal functioning of the city and its native Hindu families. The film is therefore placed amidst the linguistic movements, nativity politics, and the domination of 'the region' in the politics of the decade. In the film, Karan's brother Kishen (played by Jackie Shroff) is dragged into criminality through his association with Anna but the former is morally superior as he does it for his family's sustenance – that includes his only brother– Karan. He is placed in contrast to Anna who has burned his wife and child alive in a fit of madness and does not regret it. The middle-class values of truth and justice are continuously in opposition to Anna's barbaric conduct in scenes where Karan asserts his father's moral superiority and identity as a land-owning farmer in the village. The menacing South Indian villain is hence undeserving of any poetic justice. He is the disturbing presence that has circumscribed the entire city. The central event in the film includes the cold-blooded murder of Karan's childhood friend, an honest police officer who was working hard to put Anna behind the bars. Karan gradually realises the futility of the judicial system and joins Anna to later betray him and avenge the death of his friend. Karan takes the help of Anna's rival, Moosa, a Muslim gang head, for this. Later, Moosa also betrays Karan by revealing everything to Anna which ends in the gruesome murder of Karan and his wife Paro (played by Madhuri

Dixit) on their wedding night in a private yacht. The ethnic character of the murderers and villains is also carefully crafted in the film, as Prakash's killers (Anna's assistants) belong to communities that were turning into spectral presences in the city. This is validated by the ethnic identities of Prakash's killers, that include a Christian, Francis (played by Shiv Kumar Subramaniam), a Muslim, Abdul Salim (played by Suresh Oberoi), and a South Indian, Rama Reddy (played by Kamal Chopra). Anna is depicted as the archetypical Ravana with a boon that makes him invincible to any destructive forces. *Parinda*, thus, is not just "a mythology of the underworld" or "the gangland experience" (Mazumdar, 2007, p. 197) that disrupts the planned city but the slow dissolution of the city into exclusivist communities. The setting marks the initialisation of the new forms of urban community culture that operate on the basis of place myths, ethnic solidarities, and fear of otherness. Both Kishen and Karan have plans to escape the city and settle in a village, a romantic dream that is now unachievable for the characters. The nauseating presence of the monstrous South Indian gang leader has transformed the idyllic pleasures of the city into insane violence. Anna is depicted as that ghastly force that penetrates into the private spaces of the characters – the home, the yacht along with the iconic places of the city, the street, and also the temple premises. In Ravi Vasudevan's reading of *Parinda*, "the mise-en-scene of urban terror is the premise that characters are rarely able to conceal themselves from some overarching gaze" (Kaarsholm, 2007, p. 226) and characters experience "intimations of danger in the most sacrosanct of spaces" (p. 226). The setting of the movie implies the growing race prejudice in the cities that were now dictating "the relationship between groups and that it was caused by threats, real or imaginary, to an existing 'ecological pattern' of mutual adjustment" (Erikson, 1994, p. 21). The film downplays the marginalisation of Tamil immigrants, Muslims, and slum dwellers in cities like Bombay whose social mobility –downwards or upwards – as an ethnic and spatial group, was leading to tension in relation to the other groups (p. 21). *Parinda*, thus navigates between the urban anxieties of the 1980s

Bombay – which was witnessing a crisis for leftwing perspectives post-strike, the rise of ethnocentric and religious rallying, and also most importantly experiencing the dilemma of cohabitation with 'others' in a rapidly urbanizing city.

The Ghetto Spaces in *Agneepath* (1990)

Bombay cinema's rare encounter with Dravidian spaces within the city of Bombay invites some interesting insights into how cityscapes embody fear towards otherness. One such encounter takes place in the film *Agneepath* (1990) released at the closure of this decade. Alongside magnifying the Southerness of Krishnan Iyer M.A. (played by Mithun Chakraborthy) the stereotypical South Indian of Bollywood's imagination, *Agneepath* brings further damage through its racial slur against the places inhabited by South Indians within the city. In an intriguing scene, this film explores one of the most disturbing streets in the city. In the film, a local smuggler, Anna Shetty (played by Deepak Shirke), abducts the hero's sister into this South Indian ghetto, resembling the abduction plot from Ramayana. Bombay cinema's rendezvous with Dravidian geographies within the city has often ended up in an archetypical otherising of these spaces. As Ziya Us Salam states commenting upon villains in Bollywood, the cultural fabric of the nation, one which, despite advancing modernity, still lives by its age-old traditions and is bound by two vast epics that form part of its collective psyche. Beaming with a demon-like crowd, the entire region gets terrorized in the film, evoking fear out of these mysterious human beings. The violence enacted is aggravated by the crowd behaving like hooligans of a primitive descent. The barbarous outrage of the inhabitants at the police makes this outsider cult a threat to the Hindi-speaking community. On the other hand, the insider's Bombay holds peaceful Hindu rituals, unites around festivities, and is guarded by the Aryan God, Ganpathi. This is contrasted with the three horizontal *vibhuti* on the forehead of the villain, implying the ousted Aryan God, Lord Murugan (also known to be the chief god of

thieves and bandits), popular in South India. Articulated through spatial segregation of Dravidian identities, this xenophobia ends up in violence and chaos typifying the space. Park regards the city as an ecological system that contains "several distinct 'social worlds' based on class, 'race' or national origin" (Erikson, 1994, p. 35). In his analysis, such social worlds converge into distinctive physical neighbourhoods and are separated by unequal access to economic resources as well as ethnic differences – resulting in natural areas differentiating the inhabitants. *Agneepath*, therefore carefully vilifies these ethnicities and spaces as a lingering threat to the national self. The other, therefore, must be ridiculed, feared, and ousted from the spatial periphery of the 'proper world'. The film provides important details on the transformation of the city into an ethnically polarised spatiality by the late 1980s in India that was growing "strongly self-conscious of their ethnic identity under these circumstances of extensive contact with others" (p. 27). This interestingly disapproves the notions of several early to mid-twentieth-century social scientists and theorists like Max Weber who discarded 'ethnic community action' and "held that 'primordial phenomena' like ethnicity and nationalism would decrease in importance and eventually vanish as a result of modernisation, industrialisation and individualism" (p. 2). In fact, according to Thomas Erikson "ethnicity, nationalism and other forms of identity politics grew in political importance in the world after the Second World War, continuing into the twenty-first century" (p. 2). The 1980s in India spearheaded such forms of identity-based segregation as resonated in the films of the time. In film after film ethnic mapping led to certain standardized patterns of behaviour with outsiders from other regions, which could be joking relationships (*Coolie* (1983), hostile relationships (*Ek Duje ke liye* (1981), subservience and fearing relationships (*Nayakan* (1987), *Arth Satya* (1983), etc (p. 28).

Conclusion:

Cinematic spaces often encourage the theorisation of spaces, in terms of its creation,

arrangement, and generation in movies (Esher 2006, 308). A significant function of places in cinema is its performance as a storyteller stimulating imagination/reimagination of the existing, new, and possible worlds (Chiesa 2016, 1-2). Through an analysis of filmic texts of the 1980s Hindi films, this chapter has tried to understand how cinematic geographies, like the landscapes, cityscapes, and other spatialities played an important role in harbouring and negotiating the cultural/national fears of the middle-class generated by the new socio-political movements of the decade. The reading closely follows the geo-political uprisings in regions like Kashmir, Tamil Nadu, the awakening of regional caste sentiments in states, the proposal of Mandalisation of institutions giving opportunities to hitherto under-privileged communities into decision making positions, rapid urbanisation and immigrant crisis in the cities, followed by ethnic segregation of urban landscape. The decade was witnessing a brief moment of progressive reforms and rights-based movements challenging the pitfalls of post-colonial nationhood, while on the other side, growing equally conservative, motivated by the ethno-religious mobilisations. In this chapter, terrains like the Kashmir valley in *Silsila*, the maps in *Karma*, the mysterious hill station of Ooty in *Karz*, the urban enclaves of South Indian gangsters and criminals in *Parinda* and *Agneepath*, are read to understand how moments of disruption "invokes the constitutive boundaries of the imagination of the nation" (Puwar, 2004, p. 5).The meanings of landscapes and socio-political significations get altered as they now function to consolidate the unease generated with the arrival of the outsider. The chapter thus highlights the role of popular geography in theories of nation, its changing significance in the 1980s and after. The invocation of geography in the imagination of the nation has been a nationalist project ever since the formation of nations. The cinematic representation of geography visualises the characters as public figures attached to a particular natural or human topography which in turn helps in understanding the nation's culture "which represented it as linked to geographical places" (Srivastava, 2004, p. 2020). Some sites like the national

monuments, rivers, and public institutions thus become authentic national geographies. However, “the consistency of the play of national symbols, stories, and monuments is jarred by the impending arrival [of the new]. It threatens to dislodge the established configuration of the inter/national and history” (Puwar, 2004, p. 5). The filmic geographies discussed in this chapter tend to preserve the national integrity and vilify the disruptive terrains as spectral and bizarre.

Chapter Four: Reading Faraway Techscapes in the 1980s HindiFilms

> As we build today, so will be the tomorrow. Together we build for an India of the 21st century … How are we going to prepare the nation to meet the challenges of the next century, to meet the challenges of the latest technology, as it comes? Development has to mean absorption of the most modern techniques at the most basic levels in our society. – (Kumar, 2023, p. 138)

In the previous chapters, the Hindi films of the 1980s have been analyzed in the light of the new socio-political upheavals of the decade, rapid urbanization in the cities, and the anxieties of transgression it erupted on the middle-class families, its manifestation through natural geographies and the city spaces. As family – at least in its filmic manifestations – as an icon of national identity was being allegedly threatened by the encounter with alterity, the 80s film started to slowly project a fresh set of middle-class desire to evade this new cultural and psycho-social claustrophobia that comes with close contact with otherness. Through motifs of sea-fearing, border-crossing, and conquest of the faraway techscapes of the villains using the native hero's new techno-scientific grasp, the commercial films of the 80s tend to invent new modes of habitational or location strategies, and technological furtherance. Thus, the films of the 1980s invented a new prodigy of nationalism where technology, like never before, attains a crucial role in defining the national identity. What the thesis aims at here is to read the construction of techscapes, as a new spatial category in the films of the 1980s manifesting the changing aspirations of a new middle-class and the national polity for the next few decades. India's vision of modernity since independence has often evoked the philosophy of Nehruvian rationality, scientific temperament, and technological progress as an important aspect of the

national secular-socialist tradition. Moreover, science and technology from the colonial era itself "have been used as instruments of mapping, controlling and transforming Indian society" (Chopra, 2008, p. 2). The role of techno-science in colonial and post-colonial India shall be discussed in detail in the sections that follow.

The 1980s, additionally, stabilized the hope for entrepreneurship with changes that gained impetus in the mid-1980s where the private entities were now increasingly participating in the telecommunication revolution, a sector that became a national priority in the seventh national plan (1985–90) (Subramanian, 2006, p. 38), facilitating educated class with fresh opportunities in technologically sophisticated fields in both public and private sector. Alongside this, the 1980s was largely a decade of spatial unrest in India with new conditions of urbanity resulting in educational unemployment, migrant crisis, large slums, and shrinking spaces of habitation in the cities. The impact of this had precisely been felt on an educated urban middle-class that fostered global ambitions to escape these conditions (Mazumdar, 2007, p. 112). The hopes were escalated by the "young and techno-savvy" (Kumar, 2023, p. 138**)** Rajiv Gandhi government who pitched in the concept of a technological modernity to take the country forward. "He was probably the first to talk about the 21st century and India's place in it" (p. 138). In the process, he "fired the imagination of the nation and won a landslide victory in 1985" (p. 138**)**. A number of reforms like the telecom revolution could be seen taking shape in the same decade in India. The Hindi films of the 1980s introduce locations of a techno-scientific private recluse to cater to the global aspirations of this class much before the 1990s cinemas celebrated the prospects of economic liberalisation and privatisation. This chapter, therefore, analyses how the 80s' Hindi films presage the events leading to the economic restructuring of 1991, through a close reading of the middle-class hero's mastery over technologically sophisticated domains in the films. India in the 1980s was also witnessing the emergence of new nationalisms in the form of Hindu nationalism (operating along the lines of Hindu

revivalism and nativism) (Mazumdar, 2007, p. xxviii) which shaped and was being shaped by "globalisation, post-modernity, or late modernity" (Kaldor, 2004, 168) like its other global counterparts. As a result of the electronic revolution and advancement in mass communication the old and the new political factions were finding better opportunities for mobilising the public. The pre-Cold War era nationalisms were being replaced by more militant and ethnically centered nationalisms across countries as other tools of political appeal appeared to have been obliterated in the Cold War years (p. 168). Most films of the 1980s display similar conservative sensibilities. This appeal becomes palpable in films like *Karma* discussed in the previous chapter. In *Hero* (Ghai, 1983), the black marketeer villain Pasha (played by Amrish Puri) is presented in a tribal outfit, embodying primitivity that constantly challenges the civilized urban middle-class family of a police commissioner. In *Mard* [Man] (Desai, 1985), a historical setting of pre-independence India is drawn to narrate the contemporary political crises where the outsider forces (the Britishers in this case) are held responsible for internal separation represented by the disintegration of the hero's royal family. The case of *Mard* is even more interesting as a reflection of a deeper, off-screen racial bias. The villainous Britishers are occasionally played by fair-skinned Indian actors with heavy 'whiteface' makeup, thus establishing the ethnic otherisation manifested not only through the narrative but also through the casting choices. In *Tezaab* [Acid] (Chandra, 1988), a host of Muslim gangster villains destroy the well-to-do family of an aspirational middle-class youth, and the agent of the state – represented by the law bound Inspector – aids him in revenge. Later *Parinda* [The Birds of Peace] (Chopra, 1989), as also discussed in the previous chapter, narrates the disruption of normalcy within the city of Mumbai, precipitated by a South Indian – the under-represented/stereotyped ethnic faction in Hindi cinema until very recently – gangster invading

both the public and private worlds of the central, 'mainstream' character[6]. As discussed earlier, the domestic border (and the restructuring of it) functions in both the figurative and the literal sense, both congruent and conflictive to the official geopolitics.

The middle-class of the 1980s was clearly in a liminal state regarding the limits of its psycho-spatial belongings, fighting several battles on the moral and political front, appropriating/rejecting the demands of liberalism. The introduction of new techno-scientific reforms was rapidly changing the spatial structures across Indian cities and South Asia in general – creating new socio-political groups based on the new communication systems (Mann, 2015, p. 364). The decade also witnessed the science and technology-based developments increasingly causing the disparities between the urban rich and rural poor**.** In the urban centers, the formation of a new middle-class with new income categories resulted in new networks that depended on who could access the constant transformations in technological domains and who could not. Globalisation thus brought new spatial orders based on the circulation of people and information, which in turn determined the circulation of goods and capital. One could witness a time of reorganization and recreation of spaces resulting from sustained processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization or in general globalisation (p. 364). The techscape discussed in this chapter presents a mega spectacle of modern gadgetry, communication system, technological grandeur that can be adequately located within the shock of the new

[6] This is a cinematic reflection of the turbulent situation in Bombay from 1983-84, when closely following the great Bombay textile strike (1982) and the resultant wave of unemployment, the city was rife indigenous versus South Indian gang wars. 'In a way these dons incarnated all that respectable citizens of Bombay considered evil and dangerous — Muslims, slums, South Indian criminals' (p.189) writes Thomas Bloom Hansen (2001), discussing the trend of dissociation between the urban elite and the dispossessed goons.

world. Thus, in this chapter, I posit that the slow dissolution of older forms of nationalism was not just manifested in the films of the 1980-90 through the politics of national integration but a long-awaited middle-class ambition of global supremacy through technological breakthrough. Perhaps it can be assumed to be "an opportunistic alliance", where globalisation set ground for an aspiring middle-class to raise their affluence, for the business elites to find new markets, and party till recently at the margins of political life to expand their presence (Basu 59). This new nationalistic fervor drives the heroes of *Shaan* (1980), *Kaalia* (1981) *Mr. India* (1987), and *Agneepath* (1990). The futuristic techniques, surveillance machinery, and a grandiloquent private world of the geopolitically alien villain is hence usurped by the hero's newly gained knowledge of technology. Therefore, a close examination of the technological paradise of the popular villains of 1980-90, like Shakaal, Mogambo, Kancha Cheena, Shani Seth, etc., becomes necessary to see how or whether the 1980s is a transition period paving the way to the successive decade of technological development, private collectivism and global trends and how a relatively underrated decade of film making, the 80's masala entertainers, adequately represents the bourgeois socio-cultural anxieties, arising from the post-emergency politics.

Science, Technology, and the New Globality in the 1980s

The nationalist assumptions about technology have always had an ambiguous nature in India that mediated between an idea of being associated with the "modern" and of the "West" (Mann, 2015, p. 315), and on the other hand as an essential leverage of development and global dominance for a once colonized nation. This ambiguity is reflected in the earliest of films made in post-independent India, like Guru Dutt's *Kagaz Ke Phool* (1959), where the melancholic film director is caught between the technocratic and glamourous world of cinema but is equally critical of the illusions of that world. In the popular musical renditions of the 1950s called *Phir*

bhi dil hai Hindustani [But the Heart is Still Indian] from the film *Shri 420*, the protagonist is ready for a global interconnectedness (Mera Joota Hai Japani / Patloon Englishthani/ Sar pe Lal topi Rusi / [My shoes are Japanese / My trousers from England / On my head is a Russian cap) but even when the "traits of a postwar socialist internationalism combine[s] with the tempo of an optimistic Nehruvian socialist dream for the young republic, the heart should indeed remain Indian" (Phir Bhi Dil Hai Hindustani) (Basu, 2012, p. 70). This chapter places technology and global connectivity within the European discourses of materialism and commerce and thus has used it interchangeably to understand the reluctance of Nehruvian India for cultural modernization. It can be said that "the geo-televisual in classical Hindi cinema is, therefore, a cautious, graduated aesthetics of "exposure" (p. 70). It is a closely monitored construction of an India-in-India, in tandem with an India-in-the-world, a setting forth of the picture of the nation against a world of temptations and danger, both within it and abroad" (p. 70). Despite the anxieties of global and technological invasion there has also been a realization that the "possessors of technological skills have been vested with the authority to speak for the nation" (Chopra, 2008, p. 2) and therefore at some quarters "scientific and technological expertise have been authorized as attributes of modern Indian selfhood - as markers, at once, of a universality and an essential Indianness" (p. 2). With existing skepticism in the cultural discourses regarding science, technology and global modernity still prevailing, the "state and society have granted the holders of technological skills and qualifications economic opportunities, educational advantages, and social status" (p. 2). Especially, in the 1980s, a new national identity was being shaped by the emerging middle-class which saw technological progress and global networking as an important way to move forward. The 1980s Hindi films advocated for a technological modernity and global interconnectedness through a self-reliant nationalism that negotiated with the anxieties of liberalisation, new consumerism, and global interactions. Technology and science have often had a complex relationship with nationalism

in South Asian societies like India, with their own continuities and discontinuities. However, it has remained "fundamentally constitutive of Indian modernity" (p. 2) as "the term science often goes hand in hand with the attribute of "modern"" (Mann, 2015, p. 315). The development of science, technology and its relation with nationalist conception can be understood through how the British empire experimented with these concepts in the colonies and how the colonies reacted to it. In the Western perception, the term science "is used almost exclusively for a certain humanism and the explanation of specific sciences. The term entails that modernisation is understood as a process based on advanced technology and scientific spirit, rational attitude towards life, a secularised image of society, justice as a measure of public affairs and the idea of the nation-state" (p. 315). In the 1980s in India, the impending project of globalisation was accompanied by a technological advancement and consumerist fetishism amongst a newly forming middleclass, but at the same time contrasted by tribalism and sub-national conflicts within the nation (as discussed in the previous chapters). These binaries combine to create spatial metaphors like the distant techscapes of the villains. The techscapes reflect the middle-class dream of overseas expeditions and competing with a racial other through gadgetry and skills. As one could identify from the following lines, the possession of gadgets formed an important part of middle-class identity during this period.

> The 1980s experienced a substantial growth in sales of items such as TV sets, refrigerators, motor scooters and mopeds. For example, during 1981—90, TV sets increased from only 2 million to 23.4 million. In the following 2—3 years their sales were 6 million sets annually (Kulkarni 1993:45). The growth of the consumer goods market has not eluded the attention of foreign investors and the United Nations World. Investment Report predicts a likely 'boom' in foreign direct investment in the consumer goods sector in India (Shenoy 1995:3). However, the purchases of more expensive commodities, especially refrigerators, motor scooters and mopeds is concentrated

> amongst the middle-class. According to one report, the share of relatively low-income households (less than Rs 18,000 per year in 1992—3; representing 58.5 per cent of the population) was smaller for more valuable and expensive consumer durables such as TVs, VCRs, geysers, sewing machines, vacuum cleaners, refrigerators, motor scooters, mopeds and washing machines (Rao and Natarajan 1994:14 and 16) The exclusion of lower-income earners from wider ownership of more expensive commodities is highly significant in terms of identity. (Pinches, 1999, p. 258)

Going back to the history and evolution of techno culture and nation formation in other parts of the world, especially Europe, one would find that industrialisation gave expression to modern science and technology, which eventually led to the progress, societal formation, formation of national consciousness and nation-states. The origin of technology-based modernity in the European context has also led to a "'Western' research discourse" (Mann, 2015, p. 315) which supplements a monopoly on knowledge by the colonial powers from around five centuries ago. Such a monopolisation of knowledge has often led to technological colonisation of the non-European world, along with an "Ideological constructions of rational, technical and social superiority and the systematic exclusion" (p. 315). Colonialism, therefore, thrived on the technological inferiority of places where "the European colonies and their inhabitants served as laboratories in which sociopolitical, labour and racial considerations were experimentally conceptualised". Post-colonial discourses have been scarcely discussed as a means of subverting such colonial assumptions, while postcolonialism and cinema could be effectively used in imagining new understanding of non-Western societies. As prototypes of techno-scientific films in India, the 1980s action-adventure films discussed in this chapter can be read as some of the earliest attempts of using techno-scientific spectres to subvert colonial presuppositions, as well as methods of nationalist negotiations with "dangers" of globalization. Such films pave the ways to critically analyse the position of colonies in "rational-scientific

self-understanding" (p. 315). Such subversions become important as countries like India are assumed to have occupied a central role in the "formation of the European scientific landscape" (p. 315). It becomes evident that in the colonisation of India, the Western scientific discourse had a huge role to play. Some of the means through which they entered colonial India was through studies like natural history. Such methods were introduced as an exclusive study of plants, animals, minerals, and so on in the early colonial days" **(**Kumar, 2023, p. 10**)**. From the late 18th century onwards European surgeons, botanists, army engineers, and missionaries tried popularising these sciences in India, along with the Colonial government also facilitating the introduction of technologies such as the railways, and later electricity, telegraph, telephone etc. Western scientific knowledge thus became foundational to Indian modernity and the nation-state over the next 200 years. The middle-class, educated under these colonial discourses started to adopt them and "sought to locate modern scientific ideas and principles within Indian culture, and, by the end of the 19th century, for the economic regeneration of the country" (p. 10). Nationalist approaches towards techno-science rapidly changed during the 1980s in India along with the re-definition of the Indian middle-class which were gradually developing themselves into a knowledge economy from the traditionally feudalistic society. While doing so, the nationalists had to first reconcile with the existing notions about how modernity and techno-scientific knowledge developed in South Asia in general and India in particular. Out of several theories, the two prominent ones include the diffusion model which suggests that "the contemporary Indian sciences …[have]... gradually grown out of European influence from the former 'colonial sciences'" (p. 10). This colonial science has been identified to be mutated as the national science. Despite this "national science" being a hybrid postcolonial space has a Euro-centrism ingrained in it and therefore limits the colonised section "to the role of passive 'recipients'" (Mann, 2015, 315). Such an approach delimits the techno-scientific tradition embedded in South Asian regions in the pre-modern times as "South Asia was known for its

contributions to astronomy, medicine, and mathematics. Scientific and technological activity throughout the medieval period, as is evident from the number of contemporary manuscripts, was both continuous and vigorous" (Kumar, 2023, p. 10). Postcolonial literature, cultures, and films work along the lines of decolonizing such passivity asserted on lands by the European actors. While a second theoretical stance considers "sciences as an expression of the modern world to be observed on the basis of mutual perception, influence and exchange" (Mann, 2015, p. 315). This view also accommodates the fact that a largely synthetic techno-scientific tradition was in-built in South Asia which "was continuously evolving because of each politico-cultural interaction with the outside world and social change within the region" (Kumar, 2023, 10). Such a Syncretism allows better freedom for the former colonies to reformulate the colonial knowledge and face the challenges of the Western forms of sciences, self-critically questioning their own forms and thus advancing their own understanding of "modern" science and 'modernity'" (Mann, 2015, p. 315). From the above discussions, it becomes clear that the evolutionary history of science and technology in India and its relation with nation formation is a complex terrain. While some of the approaches "have seen science as a 'Western' or colonial construct imposed on India and used by the British to exploit her natural resources. Others have advanced a more nuanced articulation and assimilation of modern science within Indian society and culture" (Kumar, 2023, p. 10). The current study places itself within these existing debates around the role and formation of techno-scientific modernity in India and becomes important in analysing the transformative phase of technology in India in the 1980s. Through spatial metaphors like the techscapes, this analysis looks into the complex negotiation that the Indian middle-class undergoes with this outsider terrain, thus shedding light on "its changing contours, its complex civilizational journey, and, finally, the enormous impact it has had on our own life and time" (p. 10)**.**

The ideological shift from 1980-90

What exactly brought an interest towards the techno-scientific sector during the 1980s? For the Indira Gandhi government and later her son Rajiv Gandhi's government the techno-scientific sector sought solutions for economic and political problems within the nation and therefore areas like Information Technology played a central role in their new policies. This sector was advocated by the government massively "to prepare India for the twenty-first century" (Mann, 2015, p. 282). The hopes of the middle-classes of the 80s were also escalated especially by the newly elected government of Rajiv Gandhi in 1984, in whom this class saw a realization of their long-spun dreams (Varma, 2007, p. 118-119). The young, urbane, and 'modern' Prime minister in the popular bourgeois consciousness of the time – that was by now tired of the Nehruvian socialist model – stood "for technology as the pragmatic precondition for economic change" (p. 119). The middle-class anticipated through his leadership practical changes like "opening up of the economy, access to hitherto out-of-reach consumer goods, and technological progress" (p. 119). Several critical assessments also emerged in this decade which focussed on the pitfalls of the Nehruvian state "and the technology-based model of social development" (Kumar, 2023, p. 138). Thus, from the 80s began a readiness for the rejection of the Nehruvian socialist-reformist state, its "monopolistic public sector, over-regulated private enterprise…[that] discouraged foreign investment – thereby causing India to lose out on the benefits of both foreign technology and foreign competition" (Dass, 2006, p. 4). This included the ideological shift in the "long-standing distinctions and value hierarchies imposed on (assumed noble) public and (assumed venal) private interests" that were central to the Nehruvian political economy (Abraham, 2017, p. 679). The decade also showed signs of weakening of the enormous economic control brought during the five-year plans[7] which did

[7] Five year plans were brought by the planning commission of India to regulate and reform the national economy through a series of planned actions. The Nehruvian five year plan largely

not result in any growth in the long run. Steps to improve the condition were formulated in the 1980s for the first time with a number of economic reforms. The Rajiv Gandhi government "attempted to finalise the numerous licences, permits and assessments that the previous governments had started and which had earned them the nickname of the "license raj". Large parts of the economy were already deregulated in the 1980s" (Mann, 2015, p. 282). The new changes were prompted by reforms in the telecom industry and pragmatic approaches of the state's bureaucracy towards private sectors, making "technoscience… an instrument of state legitimacy" (Abraham, 2017, p. 679). The transition from the state dominated economic system to a more open economy that gave importance to the private sector, thus, is directly correlated to technological, telecommunication, biotechnological, and scientific advancements that began in the 1980s.

It becomes evident that the decade of the 1980s was shaping "a gradual but sure shift towards neoliberal policies" (Kumar, 2023, p. 138). The socialist environment that focussed on the distribution of wealth was slowly switching towards generating it. The National Education Policy was brought by the Rajiv Gandhi government in 1986, that focussed on diversifying the education system, making it more inclusive, and increasing the literacy rate. Another significant event of the decade was the ushering in of the computer revolution and a paradigm shift in telecommunications. The core focus of the policies related to economic and social life started centralizing technology and Technology missions which led to massive boosting of the economy, unlike any other previous policies of previous governments. One of the key improvements among several others was "the setting up of the Centre for Science for Development 139 Development of Telematics (C-DoT) and its success in telecom switching"

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focussed on the agriculture sector and its improvement and redeveloping the nation post-partition.

(Kumar, 2023, p. 138). This appeared to be also a huge leap towards self-reliance. Companies like Infosys and Reliance emerged in the 1980s as an environment for business was ripe during the period and a "stage was set for the forthcoming debates and initiatives on liberalization, privatization, and so forth" (p. 138).Infrastructure and oil industries started to acquire a huge market. Scientific missions and the new technology-based innovations initiated during the period used inputs from multiple agencies working in science and technology sectors "for meeting immediate needs in critical areas such as drinking water, literacy, pulses and edible oils, immunization, and rural Communication" (p. 137). As Nehruvian scientific temperament and Gandhian hermeticism were being replaced by a new knowledge economy and knowledge society **"**an unprecedented boom in information technology and allied service sectors was becoming visible" (p. 138). This sensibility was taken forward by successive governments leading to the prominence of a middle-class that was being actively benefitted by the changes. At the same time, these changes were creating further class distinctions and competitions.

Along with the IT sector, there were initiation of policies for the expansion of the consumer products industry and the automotive industry. As discussed previously, a domain that grew rapidly was the cable and satellite technology which resulted in an increase in the number of TV ownership and credit networks. (Mann, 2015, p. 282). With respect to TV alone, "between 1984 and 1990 numbers of televisions rose from 3.6 million to 27.8 million. In 1988, five TVs were said to be sold every minute and as many as 30 television brands tried to attract the buyer's attention" (p. 358). This sort of consumerism aided by technology was drastically changing India's postcolonial identity and was trying "to promote the nation on the technological front" (p.358). Events such as the successful conduct of the Asian Games in Delhi that exhibited India's business and technological capabilities under the management of Indira Gandhi, its nation-wide telecast through television, etc. played a critical role in surging the global and business ambitions of the middle-class. The games played a crucial role as it was set to make

the countrymen witness “a spectacular showcase of technology and nationalism” (p. 358). In South Asia’s Modern History, Michael Mann (2015) writes:

> The media spectacle was to unite the country through a common network. The nation was to be forged, among many other things, by technological modernity signified through TV broadcasting on a national scale which materialised on 15 August 1982 (significantly on Independence Day). In popular Indian memory the 1982 Asiad is remembered as a caesura marking media urbanism and the beginning of the national colour TV era. (p. 358)

However, the reforms saw not just an improvement in the economy but an overall change in the perception of national identity in India. Such a shift accompanied by the gradual liberalisation of the Indian economy also led to the emergence “of a highly critical press sector which had experienced something of a media revolution initiated by the Emergency Rule period (1975–7)”. This change could be witnessed in the “the number of press products between 1975 and 1995 increase from about 600 to almost 1,100 as well as the creation of a public sphere that became part of an emerging civil society” (p. 282). This emerging socio-political group, critical, and ambitious, came to be categorized as the new middle-class. A newly rich strain of the middle-class, at least from the late 70s, was already visibly enhancing their fortunes through self-made business careers and entrepreneurship through the gradual economic reforms happening parallelly. Among the traditionally non-elite, these changes were a ground for overcoming historical backwardness since the accumulation of wealth and amenities were the key features of the new middle-class identity. “An important indicator of the growth of the consumer goods market during the earlier phase of liberalization in the 1980s was the rise in yearly sales of packaged consumer items (besides goods like unpacked food and garments) which increased to 220 percent to reach US$2.2 billion in the period 1984—9”

(Pinches, 2005, p. 258). The expansion of wealth and changing conditions of lifestyle differentiated this class from the previously held 'service' sector category (Varma, 2007, p. 114). Summarizing the above changes, Pavan K Verma writes,

> The improvement in economic status was both gradual and dramatic. Some of those who travelled by bus had bought a scooter; those with a scooter had graduated to a car. The old Philips radio had given away to a Sony transistor; and the transistor to a black-and-white television. Savings, garnered with difficulty, had yielded dividends; an expanding economy, and bureaucracy, had provided an opportunity for both husband and wife to work. Ancestral properties, long neglected, had grown in value. A fan in summer had been replaced with a 'cooler'; a cooler, in the more well-to-do homes, with an air-conditioner; houses had been renovated to include modern fittings and sanitaryware. More houses had telephones. More people were travelling abroad, on leisure or 'excursion fares', or on employment, sending much of their savings home. Families went out to eat once in a while; children got their way oftener about the need for new clothing; and the young, only recently employed, began to think of what their fathers could not contemplate till close to retirement: investment in property. (p. 114-5)

The films under discussion in this chapter try to understand the formative nature of an entrepreneurial surge among the Indian middle-class through their socio-political concerns in the films, though such activities rapidly grew in the last two decades after 1991. It is to be noted that in these decades the middle-class expanded, especially after 1980, when economic reforms channeled the globalization process, the middle-class grew with a rise in economic growth. "After growing at an average rate of 3.5 percent a year from 1950 to 1980, India's economic growth rate increased to 5.6 percent in the decade of the eighties. It climbed further to 6.3

percent in the decade of the nineties. In these two decades, the middle-class more than tripled" (Ahmed and Reifeld, 2018, 194). This was resulting in drastic changes in the 1980s, leading to the emergence of a new kind of entrepreneur. Thus, the period made shifts in the conventional nature of work culture in India which functioned on caste-based hierarchies. The new knowledge economy and society was anticipated to provide equal opportunities to diverse communities and castes as opposed to traditional job acquisition where for example, only a person from the Bania caste would only engage in commerce-based activities. What exactly was the change? In India, despite its long history in commerce and trade, jobs were usually "doled out in a nepotistic fashion, first according to personal ties, second according to village ties, and finally caste affinity" (Jodhka and Newman, 2007, p. 4126). However, this centuries old tradition of transferring opportunities, and precious resources to one's kin drifted to a new situation. The idea that it has to be now willfully dodged to a "complete stranger - no matter how well qualified - represented a departure from traditional practice" (p. 4126). The period saw a complete transformation in the aspirations of the people, an aspect depicted throughout this thesis. The possession of commodities like owning a motor-scooter would define mobility from lower class status to the middle-class opposition, which by the end of the decade started to be symbolised by the possession of a motor car at least in the major metropolitan centers (Pinches, 1999, p. 259). Cinemas of the time, the ones discussed before and that shall be discussed in this chapter, transfer these aspirations to a largely working-class audience watching the *masala* films. In these films, they saw a better life, aspired to own the middle-class status through the acquisition of consumer goods, and dreamt of a better education for their children or even a far-fetched dream of overseas travel considered to be an 'ultimate symbol of distinction amongst the middle-class (p. 259). Despite their meager resources, the cinematic experience would help them indulge with the new middle-class prospects. While it is often assumed that the middle-class was now drifting towards more "respectable" television

circuits, and cinema halls catered to the working class aesthetics, this project places the masala films of the 80s equally navigating the middle-class ethos of the time to a majority of the lower middle-class audience who aspired for a better life.

Another significant change during the 1980s in India was that the insular nature of the country's economic and cultural exchanges gave way to increased foreign investments, massive privatization, and a huge flow of global capital (Punathambekar, 2013, p. 26) in the coming years. The age of technological modernization marked by the boom of satellite television, telecommunication networks, automobiles, and electronics, by the 1990s, gave way to accommodate new ways of consumerism that were influenced by global market forces (Pandharipande, 2011, p. 55). Anustup Basu's term of "informatic" or "advertised" modernization (Basu, 2010) would effectively describe this whole scenario after liberalisation, of popularising a new and global cultural merchandise among the Indian consumers, as well as to find new buyers for Indian products, overseas. However, the 1980s saw a number of policy changes, especially by Indira Gandhi's second government, that deregulated its earlier policies to allow "businesses to play a role in the growth of various economic sectors" (Patel and Parthasarathy et al., 2022, p. 1). Sujata Patel et al. state that though neoliberalism as a groundbreaking reform was officially launched in 1991 as a means of regenerating the Indian economy, its origin can be traced to the 1980s (p. 2). The presence of foreign companies in India is not a recent phenomenon. As a legacy of British colonization, many companies already operated in the country, and some stayed on after the independence in 1947. The governments, from that of Jawaharlal Nehru to Rajiv Gandhi, saw the launch of famous MNCs like Coca-Cola, IBM and Bio Merieux. However, amidst a growing anti- MNC rhetoric in the public, the state "regulated the capacities as well as the diversification of public and private companies (the Licence Raj)" (Belhoste and Grasset, 2008, p. 5). The public sector thereby took a more dominant place, "and by the end of the 1980s, it represented 20-25% of GDP and was a

significant employer. In 1960, 7 million people worked for the public sector. This figure then reached 21 million in 1970" (p. 5). The growing competition for jobs in the public sector eventually led to educational unemployment and migrant crisis. The emerging middle-classes in India was perhaps hopeful about the several techno-scientific and telecommunication reforms of the 1980s. The first results of these reforms were positive: between 1980 and 1991. However, "the inflation rate reached 13.9% in 1991. In 1988, India became the biggest debtor in all Asia, with a total debt of nearly US$ 60 billon" (p. 7). Thus, new economic policies were inaugurated by the newly elected government of Narasimha Rao, led by his Finance Minister, Manmohan Singh, in 1990. Since liberalization, the number of foreign companies in India has drastically increased. "This growth is partly due to investments made by Wal-Mart, which has started to enter the market, but also to investments by General Motors, IBM, Toyota, Nissan and Renault, which are expanding their presence in the country" (p. 9). The impact of liberalisation policies of the 1990s was profitable to the service sector, IT industry, telecommunication services, and software industries. The policies however, according to Leela Fernandes were highly beneficial to a class that she calls as the "new middle-class" (Fernandes, 2006, xiv). A term that she ascribes to a socio-cultural entity formed as a result of liberalisation and is different from "traditional approaches to the study of the Indian middle-classes. The new middle-classes, she says, "at a structural level, ... of the middle-class who are benefiting from new employment opportunities (particularly in private-sector employment)" (p. xviii). The films of the 1980s presuppose these changes much before the celebratory neo-liberal films of the 1990s and 2000s. These films supposedly cater to the new youth desires "which society sometimes fails to quench. The 1980s youth culture in India wanted to open up to liberal cultural ideas" (Bhaumik, 2014, p. 213).

The economic reforms in India were perhaps inaugurated in close conjecture with new politics discussed in the earlier chapters. The conjecture with the rise of regional politics and

majoritarianism at the same time makes the scenario under discussion a stage of continuing anxiety about security. This was also the time of the congealing 'Hindutva' sentiment led by the political right, along with internal separatism and religious upheavals like the Khalistan movement and the political assassination of Indira Gandhi (Mukherjee and Malone, 2011). The birthing of neoliberalism and globalization thus came at the price of assassinations, riots, and extremism, represented by the sectarian, aesthetically asinine, crudely chauvinistic and critically ignored 1980s action-adventure cinema. The perception of national security for the middle-class is closely tied to the group's personal progress. This includes the initiation to new economic opportunities, especially in the service and technological sectors, along with ambitions of English education, and access to the global community. The economic reforms and new socio-political climate were also decisive in shaping the desires of the minority communities and other marginalised sectors who saw privatisation as a means of the betterment of their aspirations, which has led to increasing competition and spatial insecurities among sections. For the Indian ruling classes, the substantial changes that were being brought by globalisation "created both new opportunities and new obstacles" (Chatterjee, 2008, p. 53). Partha Chatterjee states that "the old idea of a third world, sharing a common history of colonial oppression and backwardness, is no longer as persuasive as it was in the 1960s" (Chatterjee, 2008, p. 117). "The first considerations of economic reform, the rumbling of the two great tectonic plates of caste and religion, outreach to the United States and China, the perception of India as a regional power, and India's launch of nuclear weapon and missile programs can all be traced back to the 1980s" (Mohan, 2012, p. 108).

The Hindi films of the time offer a popular appeal for carefully welcoming the pleasures of a new consumerism in the mise-en-scene. There are new moral visions and libidinal energies that inform novelties and alluring objects. For example, *Arth* depicts a decidedly urban, neoliberal, bourgeois family of two that enjoys the creature comforts of an upmarket life (as put by Akbar

S. Ahmed (1992), “the drive to acquire VCRs, TVs, fridges, was hard and sustained” during the 1980s (p. 296)), but in search of the true familial bliss – their own home, a child and a ‘life’. At 6:30 seconds into the film, the central characters move into their new house as a token of the husband’s freshly started entrepreneurship. The plush apartment, looking over the skyline of upmarket Bombay and bathed in the diffused orange light of sunset, stands as a perfect zenith of the bourgeois aspirations of the young couple as they make love in the empty flat and softly speculate about furniture, gadgets, and curtains they will buy. The film thus starts with a celebration of a carefree, liberated, and commodity fetishised urbane life where each frame is “To say that social reality is pervasively commodified is to say that it is already ‘aesthetic’ – textured, packaged, fetishized, libidinized” (Eagleton, 1985 p. 62). And yet, this picture of modernity is frequently undercut by binding familiality. As cinematic entities, the films invent new bodies, objects, spaces, and new mappings of desire that shall later come into being.

Several genres of the 1980s Hindi films borrowed its material from this historically significant decade and the new discourses that made their way into the socio-political fabric of the nation in this period (Vitali, 2011). Readings on the such aspects of the films focus on the cultural hesitation that this generation of movies were addressing with the collapse of the ideological core of modern, secular India and its replacement by ethnic discourses. This in-betweenness also forms part of the spatial crisis discussed in chapters one and two. While the conditions in the home were turbulent politically and culturally, the middle-class saw opportunities of transgressing the national border. Cinema at this juncture of the transfer of ideologies became a crucial medium for imagining distant geographies and global contact. Along with desire came the efforts at mastering technology and science – conventionally known as the domain of the West (Chatterjee, 1986, 51) as discussed in the previous section. 80s films place the technological prowess of the middle-class citizen as an essential attribute of national selfhood in the wake of confidently walking towards an era of global competition and new desires. Thus,

in the films under discussion in this chapter, technology becomes an important device to further the class and nationalist goals of the emerging middle-class. The new situation emerging in the 1980s was paving the way to new forms of global competition, triggering anxieties at several levels. In films of the 1980s, the figure of the villain thus becomes the epitome of a new globality, whose technological prowess is to be defeated through a confident self-sufficient nationalism. The villain emerges as a spatially alienated, geo-political entity that poses a constant threat to the urban upper caste middle-class families and the nation alike in the 1980s films. In this chapter, the technoscape of this otherworldly figure is highlighted, along with the desire to conquer it.

Who are the Villains?

This chapter discusses at least five major examples from one of the most commercially viable cinematic models of the 1980s – the action-adventure genre and the presence of terrorist villains in them. These films discuss the theme of domesticity on a much larger scale – national border, ethnic identity, and the terrorist 'other'. It is to be noted that along with the domestic-ethical challenges of the middle-class, this decade was also formative for the national identity of India and a precursor of the shape it would take in the 1990s onward. In the initial three decades of India's independence (the 50s, 60s, and early 70s) the state was considered to be a benevolent authority, a provider, a saviour from the oppression of the ruling classes, "ensuring liberation from social inequity" (Ghosh, 2013, 5), despite limitations. During this period, the villainy, therefore, was attributed to the landed gentry, to the moneylenders, the *zamindars* and the *sahukars*, who were, at least in its cinematic depiction, held responsible for the agrarian crisis and rural indebtedness. The peasant struggles in rural areas of the country was thus addressed in some of the important films of the decade, like *Do Bigha Zamin* (1953), *Mother India* (1957) and *Naya Daur* (1957). In Tapan K Ghosh's (2013) exclusive study on the villains of this

decade the villains spanned from predominantly three contradictory sections of social life: the landlords, the industrialists from the cities and the others who were forced to criminality because of the unjust socio-political environment. Ghosh sees the socialist outcry of the decade upheld by the villains in films such as *Awaara* to map the marginality of the antagonist in such films. By the late 1950s and 1960s, the anxiety of rural poverty shifted to the cities where the rural population had now started to move in search of jobs, wages, and better life. In Dev Anand's films like *C.I.D* (1956), *Kala Bazar* (1960), and *Jewel Thief* (1967), a more sophisticated villain emerges with crime scenes largely taking place in the cities. However, in the 1970s the discontentment with the state and its unfulfilled promises of food supply, jobs and secure housing paved way to radical politics, frequent labour union protests and mass displeasure which was aggravated by the national emergency of 1975. As crime and criminality paves way to scenes of mass violence and chaos, the villains of the decade attain centrality in the plot. Thus, Gabbar Singh and Teja, the villains from *Sholay* (1975) and *Zanjeer* (1973) exert menacing pressure on the domestic and public life of the protagonists. As understood from the above descriptions, the towering presence of the villains has always been a challenge to the hero in popular Hindi films. With significant screen space and exceptional performances, the villains of Hindi popular films have managed to carve a niche for themselves in every decade. From the *zameendar* and moneylender villain of the 1950s to the rich smugglers, businessmen and exceptions like the rural dacoit villain in *Sholay* till the 1970s, the 1980s shook the screen with the menacing presence of the racially alienated terrorist villains, operating from transnational locations. This attempt is to understand the mode of operation of this omniscient villain from his technological paradise and underground dens and what are its significance in the films of the 1980s. The period also saw a number of mass scale devastation brought by the technology, tracing lack of "a compatibility between economic development and environmental sustainability" (Kumar, 2023,138**)**. These techno-scientific catastrophes

made spectral presence in films captivating a whole scenario of ambiguity where the new technocratic modernity was being cautiously welcomed. Though technology-based development had helped the nation previously with the green revolution from droughts and food shortages, its limitations had started to show up with time. Such 'top–down' approaches for a very long time were experiencing downfall, if not total failure (p.138**)**. With industries growing, a significant number of voices in the forms of environmentalist had also started to emerge who pleaded for a holistic understanding of the interconnectedness between different natural resources, their access and ownership, and popular participation in their management. One among the noted groups of concerns was the Dying Wisdom campaign **(**p. 138**)**. While such initiatives were fruitful, and there were attempts to protect forests, the tiger, and the Silent Valley, industrial growth was polluting the city and its neighbourhood and the larger environment. One such big industrial calamity culminated in the form of the Bhopal gas tragedy killing thousands (p. 138). Films made use of the technological and industrial disasters, along with the spectres of militant attacks on political leaderships to craft a techno-scientific panoramic space that has to be feared but also tackled with a new self-reliant nationalism and gadgetry.

Hindi cinema's prototypical global villains of the 1980s, introduce a new era of villainy, a new form of strangeness within the cityscapes of Bombay (Simmel, 14). These villains epitomized a new era of more professional gangsterism in cities like Bombay in the 1980s. Such newly formed gangs were often "armed with automatic weapons and cellular phones, as well as drug dealings linked to international cartels" (Hansen, 2001, p. 190). This villainy was built around the legend of Dawood[8], as a new, more brutal, more powerful, more sophisticated type of

[8]Dawood Ibrahim is a gangster from Mumbai who heads a crime-syndicate called D-Company. He was most active in the 1980s in India as per his crime records.

underworld don, only to be nurtured by Dawood's move to Dubai in 1985. His way of controlling his growing empire, "ranging from the police, from real estate to film, drugs, and gambling" (p. 190) went into the fabric of the 1980s action films. The standard picture of Dawood had become that of "a don dressed in a flashy white playboy outfit, sporting sunglasses, on a boat or at the race track, always with a cellular phone in his hand. The quintessential gangster had become a part of the wealthy, high-tech NRI Indian who emerged in the 1980s as the symbol of both modernity and India's backwardness" (p. 190). Thus, the new globality was heavily articulated through techno-scientific accessibility in films of the time. The emerging middle-class heroes of the films saw the grasp over the technoscape of the villains as a symbol of both individual and national development. In action films like Shaan (1980), *Kaalia* (1980), *Mr. India* (1987) and *Agneepath* (1990) the perception of national security is closely tied to the middle-classes' personal progress, familial cohesion, and well-being. While the terrorist villains of these films endanger the national sphere, the repercussions are felt directly at the middle-class home and the hero's journey progresses through seeking personal retaliation, to the role of a social emancipator, and later to a national guardian as depicted through the films analyzed in the following section. The first two case studies *Shaan* and *Mr. India* represent the re-molding of the salariat, Nehruvian middle-class into a uber-conservative, violently vigilante section that, along with cautiously guarding their domesticity, is eager to fantasize about protecting the idealized national border as well. Through these two major films, the study sees how the themes of domestic custodianship gradually change into a stringent ideal of national identity, technological overpowering, and majoritarianism. It shall be observed how the traces of the Nehruvian ideals like social egalitarianism and domestic concord – constantly challenged by this militaristic identitarian dogma – can still be traced after a close reading of the narrative. While *Shaan* has only the first traces of the extension of the conservative ideals from the home to the world, *Mr. India* aggressively manifests its domestic

orthodoxy by putting variant national identities into one puerile marker of patriotism, rendering the 'other' as a grotesque pastiche of conservative stereotypes. The nation, by the end of the 1980s, thus became the new 'home' for the new middle-class, ready to master technology but anxious to resist the liberalizing effects of globalization not only in their familial habitat but throughout the nation as well.

***Shaan* (1981)**

Shaan occurs at the very beginning of this strand of the argument not only because of its temporal vantage point but for pioneering a new era of tech-savvy villains in Hindi films. While it is undeniable that the film's outlandish aesthetics – the transnational villain, fictional gadgetry, and superhuman action sequences were all unique in its release year 1980 – set the bar for the similar genre films released in the following years of the decade, it also initiates the very significant transition from the 1970s 'angry young man' to the reformed subjects of the state banishing the evil out of the country. The film depicts a middle-class family of an honest police officer, Shiv Kumar (played by Sunil Dutt), living with his wife and daughter in the Mumbai city. He Has two brothers, Ravi (played by Shashi Kapoor) and Vijay (played by Amitabh Bachchan) (clearly referring to their characters in *Deewar* (Chopra, 1975)), who are both con men and cause trouble to their elder brother and his family through their wayward lives. Shiv Kumar, through his just way of dealing with crime in the city courts enmity with an international crime lord, Shakaal, and gets killed at Shakaal's faraway island. Ravi and Vijay suddenly find themselves at the center of several responsibilities, of the family and the larger perplexities of their brother's gruesome murder. The story follows Ravi and Vijay's initiation as moralistic subjects of the state, the aimless middle-class youths suddenly reformed after the death of their eldest brother. The initiation, however, is not just limited to these familial and statist responsibilities but to new forms of technology, a prerequisite to fight the new enemy's global and futuristic world. A major part of the film deals with Ravi and Vijay's escapades

with the help of Rakesh (a victim of Shakaal's crimes) as they fight Shakaal, where scenes like operating a helicopter and learning to vanquish Shakaal's life-threatening machinery gets highlighted. In *Ideology of the Hindi Films* (1998), Madhav Prasad has described how the recuperation of the commercial film industry from the crisis of the Emergency era (1975-77) required a reconstruction of popular Hindi films' overarching themes. The overt vigilante themes with a clear sympathy for the proletarian anti-hero fighting the smugglers and the corrupt elements of the state system gave way to the state's loyal forces serving the nationalist integration and the patriarchal family structure, the main enemy being some geo-politically alien terrorists who wanted to disrupt both. 'With the disaggregation of the socio-political order… (came the) disidentification with the "socialist" program in the national project' (p. 138) for the middle-class, writes Prasad (2000), hinting why the same actors (Amitabh Bachchan and Shashi Kapoor) playing vigilante antiheroes during the mid-1970s portrayed reformed middle-class moral custodians in *Shaan*. Madhava Prasad's seminal argument, now considered foundational in Indian cinema studies, has identified the early to mid-1970s as the era of the angry young man especially in films like *Zanjeer* (1973) and *Deewar* (1975). Made famous by Amitabh Bachchan, these films depicted the struggle and criminalization of the honest protagonist due to the failures of national policy and social strata. The police, judiciary, and administration are generally portrayed as facile, although even such films had a clear longing for the traditional Indian family values even when sympathizing with the rebellious anti-hero.

Visually and ontologically extremely similar to the famous character of Ernest Stavro Blofeld from the James Bond universe[9] Shakaal lacks a history in *Shaan*, is racially indistinguishable

[9] This similarity has been noted by researchers before, like Krzysztof Lipka-Chudzik (2011) and; Nath and Dowerah (2023).It is further argued that Shakaal parallels Blofeld not only in

with a shaved head and fair skin, is fluently bilingual with an attire vaguely recalling the SS uniform. 1980s Hindi films' ability to subsume the new consumerism and materialism within the larger framework of "a new form of modernity" (Dwyer, 2006 p. 156) that champions traditionalism is apparent in the introduction of the villain's lair. The scene depicts the henchmen flying in a chopper – the camera captures a green island in the middle of the turquoise bay, its secret elevators reaching into the underwater facility full of futuristic gadgets, CCTV cameras, and indecipherable backlit panels. Shakaal sits at the center of this paraphernalia, proudly flaunting his otherness till the loyal national subjects invade and destroy every bit of it. The familial wins over the alien as the nation neutralizes its threat. At the climax of the film, an initial clash between family and nation is witnessed when the heroes – having defeated Shakaal – argue about killing him off as an avengement of their slain countrymen due to the villain's shenanigans. They are countered by their widowed sister-in-law who pleads to them to uphold the archetypical values of sovereign law, and not succumb to vigilante justice[10]. Taking advantage of the momentary hesitation, Shakaal attempts to flee, prompting the heroes to shoot him down, giving the protagonists a free hand in delivering nationalist justice

aesthetics, but in his alienism and machanations as well, especially since Blofeld is from mixed ancestry, lives behind a shield of futuristic technology and precipitates international tension resulting in war-like situations.

[10] One may find parallels to the Derridean idea of law and justice. Derrida argued 'not to take the 'emancipatory battles' beyond the law, but to take the law… into every field in which there is an appeal to justice' (Glendinning, 2016, p. 189). The parallels, however, end abruptly in the very next scene the ethical quandary is simplified by forcefully equating both law and justice as the subservients of the abstract, vengeful nationalism eager to linearly expunge the otherworldly threat outside the nationalist consciousness.

whenever and however they see fit.While Kapoor and Bachchan embodied the audience's moral oscillation between juridico-legal supremacy and vigilante justice in the 1975 film, their 1980s counterparts abolish that dilemma by collapsing the first within the second. Shedding their anti-heroic, morally ambiguous, ruggedly masculine modes that were the pivot of *Deewar*, Vijay, and Ravi have to establish themselves as the de-facto national militia to resist Shakaal's threat over their family and, in association, the entire nation. The juxtaposition with *Deewar* becomes, even more, germane when we consider the earlier film's predilection with 'feudal oppression and… Robin Hood-style altruism' (Prasad, 2000, p. 152) vis-a-vis *Shaan*'s innate patriarchal familiality smoothly transitioning into nationalist guardianship. *Shaan* thus initiates the trend of the sharp demarcation between the home and the 'other' in a stark black-and-white ethical perspective, enabled by the finicky, assiduous middle-class characters promoted to state-sanctioned vigilantes, to be emulated by *Mr. India* and many more. prompting the heroes to shoot him down, thus definitively signaling the film's alteration of *Deewar*'s moral ambiguity.

***Mr. India* (1987)**

In spite of its overt similarity – especially with regard to the depiction of the terrorist villain archetype – to *Shaan*, *Mr. India*'s vigilante fantasy uniquely narrates the Indian middle-classappropriating one of the primary markers of neoliberalism – gadgets and technology. The entrepreneurial diasporic Indian community introduced a large array of technological commodities in the liberalising market, and technological skills as an essential attribute in the expanding professional horizon (Pinches, 1999) in the 1980s. India had reforms like the new computer policy (1984), export-oriented software development, policies of self-reliance, indigenous technology development (Subramanian, 2006), and the telecommunication revolution (a national priority in the seventh national plan (1985–90) (Nayak and Maclean,

2012; Subramanian, 2006): making 'technoscience… an instrument of state legitimacy' (Abraham, 2017, p. 679). Right from the time of Mrs. Gandhi, an enthusiasm for integrating science and technology into the Fifth Five-Year Plan was in place. In a statement as a part of this inclusion, she said, 'science and technology should not be looked upon as a separate subject or sector, but as powerful tools which permeate all aspects of our thinking and action' (Kumar, 2023, p. 137). These policy changes finally led to the propagation of self-reliant technologies like the "Technology Policy Statement in 1983 which aimed at 'the development of indigenous technology and efficient absorption and adaptation of imported technology appropriate to national priorities and resources'" (p. 137). *Mr. India* thus presents a nation seeking for "technological advancement not for prestige or aggrandizement but to solve our multifarious problems and to be able to safeguard our independence and our unity" (p. 137) through a vigilant middle-class hero. On the other hand, gadgetry and machine reliance were a trope of abject villainy (underwater lair, auto-sliding doors, inscrutable digital console, spinning chairs, torture devices, etc.) in *Shaan* and *Karma*, presented in stark visual contrast with the quiet, nondescript middle-class homes. The latter is repeated as a visual motif in the domestic periphery in *Mr. India,* which hosts a group of orphaned children in a large but spartan house, run by a benevolent middle-class youth, Arun Verma (played by Anil Kapoor), assisted by his Christian cook, Calendar (played by Satish Kaushik). This harmonious, low-tech domesticity falls prey to the vicious criminal nexus of an exotic, megalomaniac, psychopathic terrorist Mogambo (played by Amrish Puri), living in a secluded faraway island equipped with destructive futuristic gadgetry. Interestingly, hereon the middle-class hero's journey of recrimination is advocated through a mastery over the villain's technological prowess when the former uses an invisibility bracelet. Arun – to save the children of the nation – has to become a champion of both India's forthcoming techno/liberalization projects and national defense: also suggested by his name change from Arun Verma to Mr. *India*. This is manifested

through the bracelet – an indigenously devised technology by Arun's father – that serves in vanquishing the outlandish villain from the national arena. The theme of the middle-class appropriation of neoliberal gadgetry through the invocation of indigenous entrepreneurship is further cemented through Partha Chatterjee's (1993) elucidation of the two domains of anticolonial nationalism – the material and the spiritual. The former is categorized as the 'domain of the "outside"' (economy, state-craft, science, and technology), where the West had proved its superiority and the East had succumbed" (p. 6). Chatterjee places this against the inner spiritual domain that bears 'the essential marks of cultural identity' (p. 6). In *Mr. India*'s appropriation of 'alien' gadgetry and technocracy, a successful amalgamation of both is observed. In a wacky fight sequence, the invisible Arun uses the Hanuman (a Hindu God) idol – kept for sale by Mogambo's henchmen to a foreign smuggler – to deter the enemies. This episode in the film blends the middle-class hero's technological prowess with cultural symbols, remolding the doctrines of Chatterjee's anticolonial nationalism with a new indigenous self-confident nationalism that can beat the technological dominance of the West using the native's inner spiritual domain, which is perhaps Hindu-centric. *Mr India* is thus also placed within the shifting political ideologies of the late 1980s in India: the collapse of the ideological core of modern, secular India and its replacement by ethnic Hindu discourses (Vitali, 2011). This ethnic and middle-class identity of the protagonist is however camouflaged by the anonymity that the film beseeches upon him. In the film, the reformed vigilante national subject of the 80s is an everyman, whose real middle-class self gets hidden through his repeated assertion of his identity as an "aam Hindustani" [an ordinary Indian]. However, for the omniscient audience watching the film, the trope of invisibility becomes a guard through which the real class of the character becomes palpable, projecting a replica of their own middle-class desires, culminating in two separate goals within the film – traditionalist yet modern, patriotic yet tech-savvy. Thus, *Mr. India* poses as a perfect transitional cinema by setting the ground for the successive decade

of 'techno-financial modernization'[11], ethnonational collectivism, and global trends (Basu, 2010, p. 44).

The section on action-adventure films like *Shaan* (1980) and *Mr. India* (1987) similarly propagates the tension between a fast globalized geopolitics and orthodox, ethnocentric nationalism. The nation – an extension of the domestic familial – is shown to be under constant threat from racial others, armed with unfamiliar gizmos, directly influencing the middle-class' personal progress, familial cohesion, and well-being. The section thus warrants an immediate militaristic response from the middle-class, its role of the domestic guardian expanded to the national emancipator. The next case study, *Kaalia* (1981), shows some of the earliest traces of the slow dissolution of socialist principles and the emergence of a new villainy in the city in the form of an industrialist and business tycoon. Despite containing traces of the 70s films in the nature of the depiction of its villain, *Kaalia* is predominantly based in the new urbanity resulting from the worker's crisis in the 1980s Bombay, characterized by unemployment and deprivation. Unlike *Shaan* and *Mr. India*, the film's villain does not live in faraway islands and plans to threaten the nation, but ploys with the lives of poor workers to earn profit.

***Kaalia* (1981):**

[11] In his book, *Bollywood in the Age of New Media* (2010), Anustup Basu uses the term 'techno-financial modernisation' to reflect the post liberalization scenario in India 'that owes no allegiance to the multi-pronged, dialectical stories of an Indian modernity devoutly desired' (p.44). This new realm, the author asserts, is a 'visible realm of political publicity, …the valorization of a new technologically embellished, consumerist urbanism; spectacular achievements in avenues of nuclear militarization, space technology, or software' (p.44). He further says that in this period of globalization Hinduness is set up 'as a normative state of life itself' (p.44).

Similar to Vijay and Ravi in *Shaan*, Kallu (played by Amitabh Bachchan), the protagonist in *Kaalia*, undergoes reformation from his inexperienced and nonchalant life after his elder brother's death. Kallu's brother, Shamu (played by Kulbhushan Kharbanda) was a textile mill worker and the leader of the worker's union who recently had verbal conflicts with the mill owner. Things get difficult when Shamu gets injured and loses his arms while working at the mill. Kallu pleads for money to the mill owner, Shahani Seth, to treat his ailing brother, but gets insulted and thrown out of the owner's house. As Shamu's condition deteriorates, Kallu decides to steal the rightful compensation from Shahani Seth's house but gets arrested. Kallu's brother succumbs to his injuries and dies. Kallu emerges from the jail as a transformed individual, now known as Kaalia, with his only motive to destroy Shahani Seth. *Kaalia* undertakes illegal businesses to meet his ends, while also taking responsibility of his brother's family. Shahani Seth resembles a host of other industrialist villains of the 70s who are negligent towards the sufferings of the workers who serve them. The film precedes the turbulent situation in the Bombay city from 1983-84, which closely follows the great Bombay textile strike (1982) and the resultant wave of worker's protests and crises. In fact, *Kaalia* explicitly discusses the plight of the textile workers at several places in the film emerging from "the collapse of the textile industry and a beginning in the decline in manufacturing output" (D'Monte, 2002, 80). The decline of the manufacturing industries slowly paved the way for entrepreneurship, technology, and communication-based industries by the late 1980s in India. Shahani Seth, the antagonist of the film, is a case of the emergence of the tech-savvy villains of the 80s who do not need an assortment of henchmen to tackle their enemies but confuse the protagonist and test his intelligence using complex technological devices. Shani Seth is not portrayed as a geographically alien figure like Shakaal and Mogambo, but his physical detailing brands him very much as an outsider: fair skin, French whiskers, and Westernized outfits. In the climax of *Kaalia*, Shahani Seth abducts Kaalia's sister-in-law and her daughter and takes them to an

underground den equipped with advanced execution technology. Instead of physically fighting the enemy, Kaalia has to now prove his technological dexterity and confidence to fight and overpower the new enemy. Technological development has always been important to nations. *Kaalia*, placed at a critical crossroad of national ideological change in India projects and presages the "long-term struggles of societies to meet human hopes and needs within the confines of the nation-state structure and a contentious international order" (Krige & Wang, 2015, p. 16).

***Agneepath* (1990):**

As discussed in the above sections, a new globality entered the films of the 1980s through the modern, technologically equipped, and ethnically variant villain. In the final case study, *Agneepath*, placed at the closure this decade, the villain, unlike Shakaal and Mogambo's fictive techscapes, operates from more specific international locations, like Mauritius. From there, he plans to use desirable sites in India for illegal businesses. The hero, Vijay Deenanath Chavan (played by Amitabh Bachchan), and his family are a past victims of the villain, Kancha Cheena's (played by Danny Denzongpa) ploys. Chavan's father, an honest school teacher, was treacherously framed for molesting a woman, as the former was opposing Kancha Cheena's plans of occupying the village for conducting drug dealings. Vijay, his mother, and sister, who once lived a respectable life in the village are thrown out of the place after their father gets killed in a mob lynching. Vijay, who reaches the city, gets in touch with the Bombay underworld as a child and grows into a mafia don himself. Similar to Kallu in *Kaalia*, Vijay adorns the same business as that of Kancha Cheena to familiarise himself with the villain's world and compete with him. Though unknown about Vijay's past life, Kancha Cheena considers Vijay as a competitor in business and attempts to demolish him multiple times. In about more than one hour mark into the movie, Vijay flies to Mauritius to meet Kancha Cheena upon the latter's invitation, escaping the several murder plots that Cheena had planted

throughout Vijay's travel. *Agneepath* portrays some of the earliest visuals of international travel, foreign locations, visuals of sea fearing, air travel, and business transactions during this interval. *Agneepath*, however, stands at the crossroads of the feudal family structure (Prasad, 2000, p. 55) of the Hindi films which restricts and monitors the movement of the citizen in classic postwar Indian cinematic narratives of the 1950s and 1960s. According to Anustup Basu, "journeys across the nation in such films often encompass the length of the geographical territory, from the valleys and lakes of Kashmir to the temples, gardens, rivers, and beaches of the South" (Basu, 2010, p. 69). Such movements, the author suggests, allow a brief moment of privacy, especially in the romantic song sequences of Hindi films. "In such segments, tourist attractions like the Taj Mahal and the Vrindavan Gardens become spectacular, yet virtual zones of conjugal privacy…because they are magically emptied of paying visitors, state employees that protect its "public" status, as well as an otherwise omniscient, monitoring gaze of the national-feudal community" (p. 69). Till the late 1980s, "travel within the nation in such films is largely interiorized into a grand domestic conversation of the nation with itself. In such sequences, nascent middle-class desire for mobility and diversion from feudal dictates assemble with a cinematic depiction of national space and national heritage" (p. 69). Therefore in *Agneepath*, *Shaan*, and *Mr. India*, the nationalist heroes come back to the homeland after successfully and symbolically conquering the global. This tradition of feudal family romance changed in the 1990s.

In the first interaction with Vijay, Kancha Cheena expresses his anxiety and fear of people like Vijay who are ambitious to achieve success quickly in business. Vijay stands confidently before this new globalism, firmly extending his partnership in Cheena's business and revealing his interest in Mandwa (Vijay's old village that has been captured by Cheena). Kancha Cheena's invasion into the pristine village of Mandwa for business and Vijay's reassertion of his lost land and identity in the film foresees two significant dynamics of how globalisation entered

into India. One which subscribes to the Indian middle-class anxieties about the new consumerism and global influences that would penetrate into the inner spiritual sphere of Indian nationalist perception as Kancha Cheena's invasion of the village can be viewed in the context of neo-colonisation, an outcome of liberal market policies. The second which vehemently tries to protect the primacy of nation-ness at a time of transnational exchanges through a middle-class that is ambitious to reap the benefits of both these worlds. The decade of 1980-90, thus initiated the fracturing of the old Nehruvian nation state in favor of a future that still looked shapeless and conjectural since the attempt to cohere the national sentiment through 'normative epistemologies has come to an end' (Laclau and Mouffe, 2014, p. 3). The middle-class, in a race to adopt the social status of the 'new rich', dedicated itself to the markers of social affluence– 'a car, a TV, a music system, the entire range of "foreign goods"' (Varma, 2007, p. 114). It, however, also faced challenges to its hitherto hermetic, self-contained, exclusive social position. In *Agneepath*, the 70s angry young man trope, and the sanctity of the mother figure does not fully dissipate and there are yet apprehensions about the new changes stemming from a liberlised socio-economic structure. *Agneepath*, readily expresses the bewilderment of the nation caught between the remnants of socialist principles and hesitancy of embracing the globalised future.

Conclusion:

Large scientific establishments, high technology, and advanced weaponry have come to define nation-states and power post the Second World War. The cold war years (1947-1991) were significant for its emphasis on "atomic weapons, nuclear reactors, rockets, and satellites as quintessential markers of security, modernity, and national prowess" (Krige & Wang, 2015, p. 171). The Hindi films of 1980-90 employ technological spectacle to represent this global phenomenon, while also using them as a means of negotiating with the restructuring of the hermeticism entwined in the Indian nationalist conception. The Indian middle-class as the

proponent of this spiritual quotient of Indian nationalism is however perplexed and cautiously protecting its exclusivity: accepting, rejecting, and moderating with the materialist (science, technology, and consumerism) reorientation of the nation. The cinematic form of the 1980s, thus, does not completely forgo its feudal family structure, and the loyal national subjects return to their native land after vanquishing the global impediments, emblematic of the "peoples' own quest for self-determination, national liberation, and prosperity" (p. 171) that still helps sustain nation-ness at a time of rapid global interconnectedness.

Techno-scientific progress for nations has always been a major source "for destruction – and liberation that granted them new and heady access to the corridors of power at home and abroad" (p. 171). The villain's techscape in the Hindi films of the 1980s, therefore, has been analyzed as emblematic of the arrival of new and global opportunities, while also reassuring the Indian middle-class' confidence in the economic reforms within the nation which encouraged indigenous business, entrepreneurship, and global contact. The films, *Shaan, Mr. India, Kaalia,* and *Agneepath* safely establish the middle-class at the center of this national and global paraphernalia. The 1980s, thus, uses technological and global tropes to refashion the identities and trajectories of the nations turned "to fill out the contours of imagined futures…long-term struggles of societies to meet human hopes and needs within the confines of the nation-state structure and a contentious international order" (p. 171).

Conclusion

This study has employed spatial features like domestic space, the urban space, natural landscape, and a new cinematic topography of the 'techscape' to look into the 1980s in India. The study asserts that the Hindi films of this era embodies a middle-class domestic, moral, and political ethos under crisis, lured by the glamour and upward mobility of the consumerist life, yet demurring to adopt social-progressive measures. As stated in the introduction, as a New historicist interpretation of the 1980s Hindi films, the analysis has focused on a number of political and sociological events of the 1980s in India and has simultaneously interpreted the popular masala films through its spatial features, concluding it as an alternate way of engaging with this historical time. The study implies that a spatial unrest – motivated by several socio-cultural determinants like the battle for recognition, unwarranted competition with new identities, a fear of being superseded, and a hope for an ambitious future – characterizes the decade. The 'trashy, nonlinear and badly made' masala films of the 1980s with its overly done drama and action sequences narrate a period of ambiguity where a newly forming middle-class is found alternating between several world views. While the format of the masala entertainers deviated from the realist tradition of social films of the previous decades with new experiments in genre, music, dance, and style, thematically they displayed ambiguity in taste and values. While a part of it was hopefully welcoming materialistic pleasures of life and new opportunities that came with globalisation and liberal market policies, another part was paranoid by the turbulent identity-based assertions of linguistic, regional, caste, and gender-based identities. These events had a profound effect on India's national identity since 1980 – changing the country's "view of itself and the world, as well as the world's image of India" (Mohan, 2012, p. 108). We see in these filmic texts a new 'self-sufficient' middle-class emerging that could tackle the domestic, ethnic, and global impediments through an entrepreneurial nationalism at

the end of the final chapter. 'India's Foreign Policy Transformation' (2012) by C. Raja Mohanan places the 1980s as an important stage of national transformation in India and divides "the story of India since 1980 into four different domains: the changing nature of its engagement with the world, the restructuring of India's economy, the new patterns of domestic political mobilization, and the challenges to the idea of secularism amid the rise of Hindu nationalism" (p.108). The period saw a gradual replacement of the pan-India strength of the Indian National Congress by regional and sectarian sentiments, leading to the lower-caste uprisings in regions and various linguistic movements. The proposal of the Mandal committee enhancing the presence of the backward caste community in the public life and work sector, along with the visibility of women and regional diversity in public institutions and government bodies had led to socio-spatial insecurity and critical disturbance to the existing status quo. The study concludes that the low-brow, 'populist, spectacle-based' (Thomas, 2013, p. 16) canon of the 1980s represents the anxieties of the Indian middle-class in the wake of these new changes, and economic and social liberalization. These films amply display the cinematic manifestation of the middle-class negotiating with themes of agency, empowerment, gender, and ethnicity, depicted through their cautious protection of both the domestic sphere and national integrity respectively. Although expansive in the number of case studies and their variant plotlines, the study has attempted to regard the 1980s popular film canon placed at a historical conjecture of ideological shifts. The Hindi films of the time, negotiate with the limits of inclusion and finally reach a conservative denouement that will majorly influence the films of the coming decade.

This thesis has employed geographical features and spatial conditions in understanding the intermingling of geography and power by focusing on how dominant ideologies of the world, perpetuated through the visual medium inform one's spatial choices and geographical imagination (Anderson and Domosh et al., 2003, p. 249). Exclusive studies on geographic approaches towards films today claim that "popular media (including film) is important

because it mediates social knowledge, reinforces ideological constructions of the status quo and is an active agent of hegemony" (Kennedy and Lukinbeal, 1997, p. 33) and this has given better authenticity to geographic research on cinema. In this analysis, the domestic space in chapter one, the outer space of the city and the landscape in chapter two, and the techscape in chapter three has been employed to understand the interdisciplinary nature of reading various spatial patterns that provides new meanings to historical, cultural, social and political processes. Using some key findings of spatial theorists one can understand how a spatial interpretation can provide enormous possibilities for understanding different geographies, including the home, the city, the landscape, architecture, cyberspace, etc., and their role in constructing realities. The introduction to this study elaborates on the role of the middle-class in the nation-making project of India and how their anxieties are manifested through spatial conditions in films in India. Spatial studies today provide a diverse way of looking at the socio-political exploitation of the underprivileged, the migrants, the refugees, the swamp dwellers, women, and homosexuals. The spatial turn in visual culture creates new modes of representing space which often function as subversive tools to re-interpret historical marginalisations. But at the same time, certain analysis of cinematic spaces in relation to capitalism also conveys how cinemas, post-globalisation, has been promoting new consumption patterns. This study can be helpful in analysing the recent patterns of conceiving space in cinema through technological and cyber landscapes, also ensuring novel means of understanding spatial politics in visual media.

In the introduction section, the study tries to locate the 1980s Hindi films within the writings on post-colonial national culture and therefore provides an elaborate description of the theories of nation and nationalism. The section further discusses the role of film cultures like *masala* in post-colonial theories as an important subversive tool, a "writing back" pedagogy that effectively decolonises the Eurocentric aesthetics of art more effectively than high cultures like

the literary texts. The *masala* films have been also stated as a characteristic departure from the well-established elitist and realist formulas of popular Hindi films. In India, the emergence of cinema as a mass culture was held by the intellectual elite in the early twentieth century, with contempt, quite ignorant about its possibilities and the underlying politics in it that gets dismissed by the "mixed visual treat of editing, music, dialogue, scene, background, foreground and acting" (Deshpande 9). For the colonized part of the world, cinema acted as a means to overthrow the attempted official hegemony of the colonial master. However, Films in India were regulated from the colonial times itself to suit the middle-class moralities which continued in the post-independent era as well through a number of regulatory policies that led to the establishment of a statist moralistic control over films made in India. Interventions, like the FFC ensured that the films made in India maintained international standards, were modernist in terms of experimenting, but also rooted in the indigenous reality. The cinema of the masses, where the mass is often equated, from the vantage point of the elite, as a homogenous category devoid of specificities, was therefore to be reformed. This puritanical zeal of separating the official films of the state from the cinema of the masses was carried out through multiple state machinery. According to Mira Reym Binford (2007), the state promoted "the cinema by awarding annual prizes, holding international film festivals in India, and sending films abroad to festivals… encouraging film societies, and by sponsoring festivals, a training institute, an archive, and national awards" (p. 38). A state intervention seemed necessary, for those classes that were annoyed by the "corrupting influence" of commercial films on the Indian youth. The FFC became significant, therefore as a state intervention, to reform the existing conventions of filmmaking in India and replace the 'vulgarity' of it (commercial cinema) with films high on seriousness and content. This also ensured regulating the grey area of film financing in India, which had by the end of post-war period itself, become a depository of illegal war funds (Binford, 2007). With the increasing inrush of black money into film production from other

sectors, the producers sought new success formulas that ensured business. Which included star presence, songs, spectacles, and so on. This collided with a shift in the film's targeted audience from elite/educated viewers to the newly migrated workers in the city (Binford, 2007, p. 36). *Masala* films of the 1980s can be seen ambiguously wrestling between the statist tastes and taboos, and the pleasure principle of the masses.

The *masala* mode of filmmaking, however, went through a steady decline post-1990s with respect to the audience interest and financial performance. During this period, the romance films ((with the massive success of *Hum Aapke Hain Koun*? (1994) and *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge* (1995)) attracted a significant market while the full-blown action masala films were struggling to recover the production costs and boost profits. These films removed almost all the conflict and trauma from the narratives, instead focusing on the anxieties of achieving and fulfilling romantic couplings and the displays of ample consumption. The proliferation of the romance genre by the mid-90s indicated the growing influence of the new middle-class in the cultural spectrum. The viewers of the urban middle-class cinema in India were at this point accompanied by a global diaspora in large numbers. It is believed the romance genre could alter "the slump in attendance figures caused by competition from video and non- terrestrial media for middle-class viewers in particular" (p.12). In the post-liberalisation period, the excessiveness of *masala* films thus got replaced by "more rounded family entertainers, consisting of a more palatable blend of romance and consumption, and peppered with action only when required according to the script" (p. 12). The stunt, action, and high-end family dramas found new audiences in war films, sports films, and historicals that emerged as a space for the valorization of a Hinduised masculinity. The star text of action heroes also changed considerably in the 2000s. However, in the recent past, the masala formula has attracted the box-office collection with enormous success of pan-India films like *KGF* (2021), *Pushpa* (2022), *RRR* (2022), *Pathan* (2023), *Jawan* (2023) etc. The revival of the masala entertainers,

especially in the pandemic and post-pandemic film-making scenario shall be taken up in the future as an extension of this project. Such revivals also assert how along with being a transformative decade in terms of political ideology, economic and social reforms which radically challenged the existing notions of democracy in India and its manifestation through films, the 1980s filmic culture can also be used to map contemporary styles and themes in films.

Further, the study on popular films of the 1980s has attempted to archive the historical moment through an alternate vantage point. The new historicist framework often emphasizes interpreting cultural text where "the object of study is not the text and its context, not literature and its history, but rather literature in history. This is to see literature as a constitutive and inseparable part of history in the making, and therefore rife with the creative forces, disruptions and contradictions of history". With the emergence of the Indian visual media, since the beginning of the 20th century, cinema has, to its core, influenced the social and political consciousness of the Indian audience, living both in and out of the nation's geographic boundaries. Indeed, in the West, the film emerged as a vital source of information and social archive by the First World War. Though little known, cinema at this point, in its various forms was competing with newspapers as a source of popular information and knowledge. Robert A. Rosenstone in his work, *History on Film Film on History* (2012) writes:

> To see the past. To watch history unfold before our eyes. To have a machine that lets us view the deeds of our forebears and the major events that shaped our world. Such a desire no doubt precedes the invention by Louis and Auguste Lumiere of that most elegant and revolutionary piece of equipment, the cinematograph…Early on in the history of the new medium, a few people saw part of its promise as just this ability to make us see the past. A French drama critic in1908 described the aspirations of film as not only the ability to reproduce the contemporary world, but also to animate the past,

> to reconstruct the great events of history through the performance of the actor and the evocation of atmosphere and milieu (p. 13).

This analysis is therefore part of the 'return to history' movement and shares a Marxist concern for the historical and ideological conditions that produce films in relation to cultural mechanisms of social organization. The 1980s popular films are in a new historicist sense complicit in mediating historical, political, social, and cultural anxieties. These films provide new and meaningful interpretations of a time that would otherwise be looked upon only through written texts and conventional historical methods. Such a practice removes transparency and is always bound up with the historian's interpretative subjectivity. Moreover, new historicists promote the idea that history is not closed, or final, as traditional historians would claim, but is found in acts of interpretation that can negotiate new readings of the textual traces of the past. This study has allowed analysis of a period through different epistemes of knowledge and power, "since new historicism expends most of its energies on identifying and exposing these different historical epistemes, and the historical evolution of conceptions of the state, the individual, culture, family, etc.," (Brannigan, 1998, p. 8). By using and privileging textuality, language, and representation as the basis for historical analysis this study has used a new historicist method for analysing the history of the evolution of India's national identity since the 1980s

At the end, the primary goal of the study has been to interpret the idea of 'nation' from an interdisciplinary perspective. The analysis traces India's mode of political and economic development from an economics of self-reliance, socialism, secularism, nonalignment, and third worldism to recasting it under great stress in the years that followed the 1980s. It gradually determines the evolution of contemporary forms of xenophobia articulated through spatial segregation of different identities. In this thesis, the invasive arrival of the traditionally marginalized identities (economic, sexual and ethnic) and the resultant moral negotiations

within the middle-class household and the national spectrum have been looked at through the films of the 1980s. This encroachment crisis in the first chapter further delves into the larger questions of national integration and otherising, where landscapes are used as effective tools in containing the national anxieties. The invasion of the secure home by unwarranted agencies is today categorised as one among the established tropes of the home invasion dramas where the most coherent cultural artifacts suddenly become the site of the uncanny. Contemporary manifestation of such an encroachment crisis could be seen in a number of pandemic films made especially in regional film industries. Analysis of such movies shall be taken up in the near future. Further in the thesis, the cultural and national anxieties of the middle-class are resolved through a self-sufficent bourgeois nationalism which uses techno-scientific spectacles to appropriate a new globality. The 1980s India is thus repeatedly shown as revisionist and exclusivist, with cursory nods towards the social-progressive ideas neoliberalism ushered. And yet, there are hints of widening spatial insecurities and uneasy negotiations between classes, castes, ethnicities, and genders replete within such films. This study attempts to archive and analyze them in an attempt to foreshadow the economic restructuring of 1991 that establishes the middle-class as "the representative citizen of liberalizing India" (Fernandes, 2006, p. 15). In other words, the current national identity of India started to be structured by the middle-class of the 1980s. The popular films of that time are an effective portrayal of that. The filmic depiction of the middle-class' idea of the domestic sphere, the city, the landscapes and other topographies – closely preceding the neo-liberalisation of the Indian socio-economy during the 1990s – majorly embodies the ideological transition from an orthodox, traditionalist outlook to a consumerist and liberalized social milieu. The study posits that irrespective of the genre, the majority of the 1980s Hindi films can be considered as a microcosm of India's national identity going through a crucial transition manifested as a crisis of the middle-class domesticity. The popular films of that time are an effective portrayal of that. The study has addressed a

significant gap in the analysis of spatial characteristics of Hindi popular films in the period between 1980-90 and the academically ignored genre of *masala* films. In spite of a latent narrative strain of begrudging mediation with the demands of a new and libertarian time, this meta-genre normalizes duty, fidelity, and caste/gender/racial archetypes in service of a traditional domestic hierarchy at their climax, and successfully foretells India's continuing struggle with modern liberalism, individual agency, identity conflicts, and inclusivity.

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