

Paper No. 7

**SHOWINESS, EXHILARATION AND DESPAIR:  
ENTERTAINMENT IN HINDI FILM**

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**Paper 5:**

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**ABSTRACT**

Are the pleasures that come from mass entertainment universal? Does the commercial Hollywood film best exemplify these pleasures? Are the pleasures of the popular Hindi film derivative? I argue that the Hindi film has its own idea of entertainment. It centers on the idea of 'showiness'. The main pleasures of these films center on the idea of 'exhilaration' (and its opposite, 'despair'). I show that the use of these ideas can bring coherence and a finer-grained approach to the analysis of film practices involving the Hindi film without lapsing into cultural holism. (The exhilaration of a Hindi film partly consists in mastering or appropriating Western, primarily American styles.)

# Showiness, Exhilaration and Despair: Entertainment in the Hindi Film

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Unlike the written word, which communicates through cerebral mediation, cinema and other audio-visual media can communicate directly to the senses, only subsequently to emotions, and finally to the mind. When the attention span is short, communication has to be pitched to the senses. This is what cinema does, in order to be successful. Sensation, spectacle, sex and violence become staple fare.<sup>1</sup>

Personal pleasure, taken as the satisfaction of one's senses, was an aim of going to the cinema in India, as elsewhere, from very early on. It was central to the activity of 'entertainment', an activity that consisted of people absenting themselves temporarily from their work and other day-to-day responsibilities precisely in order to amuse themselves. Most ideas of the nation have involved some idea of patriotism, which calls for the giving up, moderating, postponing or even sacrificing the satisfaction of one's senses for the sake of some national goal or good. Because of the long-standing association of personal pleasure with the cinema, the link of the cinema with national values has, as a result, been problematic from

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<sup>1</sup>Shyam Benegal, 'Neither Saints nor Scissors', *Biblio* (September 1996), 24 (24-5).

the very beginning in the United States and in other polities.<sup>2</sup> The situation in India was complicated by colonialism. Many of the British considered that the pleasures to be had in the cinema hall watching mostly American films might undermine their authority. The first (and most thorough) commission to inquire into the film industry, recommended that the making and showing of films with more of a 'national' content should be encouraged though it did not, of course, want to encourage those national elements that would be disloyal to Britain for nationalist reasons. Censorship of India-made films would largely see to this.<sup>3</sup>

On this issue the Government of India had a major ally among the nationalists themselves. M. K. Gandhi argued that India would regain its independence only when it regained its moral leadership in the world. He was opposed to the unnecessary use of labor-saving machinery, which would lead to idleness, and he was opposed to activities such as drinking, gambling, and sexual titillation, which might fill this leisure time, because these led not to moral uplift but to dissipation. The idea of a 'mass' culture in India that would consist of mechanically reproduced forms of sensual 'gratification'—the 'gramophone' record, the 'wireless', or the film—was repugnant to him. The idea that a respectable, middle class 'public' culture would consist of these activities was unthinkable. Gandhi would also have considered the idea implicit in the term consumption, that it was a public duty and good to use up the commodities of an overproductive society based on mass machine manufacturing, not just wrong in itself, but doubly wrong for a poor country like India.<sup>4</sup>

There was, then, hardly any consensus around the idea that the cinema was or should be a vehicle for entertaining the nation, never mind the dissemination of morality or patriotism. Yet it was also the case that those involved with the cinema—studios, producers, directors, stars, financial backers, and spectators—were concerned with the nation in Hindi films.<sup>5</sup> Partly this has been due to the

<sup>2</sup>Many in the United States considered the nickelodeon and its association with burlesque and vaudeville as antithetical to the cultivation of national values: Daniel J. Czitrom, *Media and the American Mind from Morse to McLuhan* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), pp. 30–59.

<sup>3</sup>India. Indian Cinematograph Committee Report (Calcutta: Government of India Press, 1927–28), pp. 61, 110–11. Stephen P. Hughes discusses the position in south India: *Is There Anyone Out There? Exhibition and the Formulation of Silent Film Audiences in South India* (University of Chicago Ph. D. Dissertation, 1996), chapters 1–12.

<sup>4</sup>M. K. Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting) 88 (1947), 16–17.(14–18) (1958-1994) 100 vols.

<sup>5</sup>Some filmmakers tried to represent their films as morally uplifting rather than morally corrupting and as loyal to the Raj. Some committed themselves to the independence movement's goals.

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repeated attacks made on and criticisms made of the cinema in India and attempts to prove that people connected with film could be loyal to the nation, especially after Independence. There is, however, a deeper reason for the uneasy association of entertainment and its pleasures with the nation and consumption. This is the tendency among those who think of themselves as élite to equate the pleasures of mass entertainment, because they are visual and aural, with a personal sensual 'gratification' that is by definition amoral and unintellectual. Shyam Benegal, the 'middle cinema' director quoted in the epigraph, exemplifies this tendency.

I concentrate here on the problem question of entertainment. I will argue that entertainment in the Indian subcontinent and in the popular Hindi or Bombay film has its own specific forms even though it does overlap in many respects with notions elsewhere. We have, in other words, to look at entertainment as a historically situated complex of practices. The pleasures of entertainment are not, as is often assumed, reducible to some generic responses on the part of mass audiences to sense-stimuli (the secret formula for which is kept in Hollywood and New York). They are specific and subject to change.

Among the themes of the Hindi film that I discuss are those of erotic and familial love and heroism and sacrifice. I will also draw attention to two notions from the Hindi and Urdū speaking world that seem to be of great importance to filmmakers and their audiences in the Bombay cinema. These are terms which people use to define and order entertainment itself. One is the idea of a tumasha or 'show' (*tamāśā*). The other is the idea of 'exhilaration' (*mastī*), a special kind of pleasure that contrasts with its mutually defining opposite, despair.

I then go on to argue that the pleasures enjoyed in and through a Hindi popular film are, furthermore, multiple. They consist of people's satisfaction of their intellects and moral sensibilities as well as of the senses. I also argue that the notion of historically specific, multiple, pleasures has been and is integral to most of the Hindi films considered successes or hits.

The film I will use to exemplify my points, *Jeet (Victory of Love)*, belongs most generally to what film people have called the genre of 'social' films.<sup>6</sup> The

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After independence some joined the march to industrial development and modernity and allied with the government in fighting corruption and criminality inside the country and enemies, Pakistan and China, outside. Their representations have, however, always been caught in the midst of conflicting goals, those of pleasing central and state government leaders, evading the board of censors, making profits, attracting financiers, signing up stars, representing their own class to itself as both modern and true to Indian tradition, and appealing to the poorer 'masses' who want entertainment.

<sup>6</sup>This article is based on a talk given on Monday, 30 June, 1997 at the Kommunales Kino in the Deutschen Filmmuseum, before a showing of *Jeet*. I owe thanks to several people who have helped

social is a broad and shifting category roughly synonymous with what is modern or contemporary. Social films may be tragic or comic or a mixture of the two, may focus on three or four lives or the nation, may be set in a village or even outside India. Films called 'historical' usually deal with characters in the period of Mughal rule. Films dubbed 'mythological' deal with Hindu gods and heroes set in an indefinite past before Mughal (Muslim) rule. Over the past twenty-five years or so, critics and commentators in the film business have broadly distinguished two sorts of social films, 'romance' and 'action'. Use of these two terms has largely displaced use of the term 'social' itself. Their use is laden with class association—romance is supposed to appeal to a growing 'transnational' class of better-off Indian families while action is supposed to attract rowdy, unmarried men of the streets.<sup>7</sup> Industry people would definitely classify *Jeet* as an action film because Sunny Deol is its main star, though as will be clear in a moment, the romance component of the film is almost as large.

*Jeet* was sixth out of the 'top ten' Hindi films of 1996.<sup>8</sup> The narrative of *Jeet*,

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and encouraged me in preparing for this: Brigitte Schulze, Ravindra Khare, Sudha Khare, Steven Lindquist, Ludger Derenthal. I should also thank Indu Prakash Pandey, Indisches Kulturinstitut, and Vijay S. Kumar, Deutsch-indischer Filmverein, Frankfurt-am-Main, for their sponsorship.

<sup>7</sup>I deal with this problem elsewhere. Ronald Inden, 'Transnational Class, Erotic Arcadia and Commercial Utopia in Hindi Films' in *Image Journeys: Audio-Visual Media and Cultural Change in India*, eds. Christiane Brosius & Melissa Butcher (New Delhi: Sage, 1999), 41-66.

<sup>8</sup>Raj Kanwar, writer and director of *Jeet*, released on 23 August, 1996, was an assistant director of *Ghayal (Injured)*. He has directed five films so far: *Deewana (Lovesick)* (1992), which was the first hit film of one of the top new male stars, Shah Rukh Khan, *Laadla (Darling)* (1993), *Kartavya (Obligation)* (1995), *Jaan (Life)* (1996), and *Judaai (Separation)* (1997). Because all of these, save *Kartavya*, were hits, he has attracted considerable attention. His most recent film, *Itihaas (History)*, starring Ajay Devgan and Twinkle Khanna, the first film he has also produced, was released on 20 June, 1997 with rather poor box-office results. He says, '...I'm confident the film will succeed. I believe in *Karma*. My father and brother have taught me that if you work sincerely and with dedication success is bound to follow'. Asked about why recent films have failed, he replies: 'The problem with our films are that they all begin with one concept in mind. But during the making, the concept changes and by the end it turns out to be very different from the way it was conceived. There's no connection between the beginning and the end. I think one should stick by one's story': Aruna C. Kalarikal, 'Raj Kanwar: The Man with the Midas Touch', *Screen* (Mumbai) (May 16, 1997), 18.

From a film family, the producer, Sajid Nadiadwala, left accountancy and began his film career in 1989. His three earlier films were *Zulm Ki Hukumat (Oppressive Rule)* (Bharat Rangachary, 1992), *Waqt Hamara Hai (Time is Ours)* (Bharat Rangachary, 1993), and *Andolan (Agitation)* (Aziz Sajawal, 1994), and his latest, *Judwaa (Twins)* (David Dhawan, 1997). According to him, 'A producer is like the string which binds the director, the technicians and the artistes. So he has to be in complete control. I'm there for all story sittings and have a major role to play in the selection

its 'film-story' (*filmī kahānī*), centers, as in most Hindi films, on the antagonism of two circles of people. These circles come into connection with each other at first by accident and then through the erotic love of the main hero and heroine. Each of the circles in *Jeet* consists of two persons, a heroine and hero, played by major stars, and their relations (*riṣtedār*)—their friends, associates, and relatives. The heroine (*hīroin, nāyaki*) of *Jeet*, Kajal, and her relations—her father, Sidhant Sharma; her father's school friend, Ramakant Sahay, a non-resident Indian (NRI); his son, Raju, secondary hero of the film, who becomes Kajal's husband; and Sidhant's brother-in-law, Gajraj Chaudhary, Raju's mother's brother, the villain (*khalnāyak*) of the film, form one circle, that of Kajal (Karisma Kapoor) and Raju (Salman Khan).<sup>9</sup> The hero (*hīro, nāyak*) of the film, Karan, who does not know who his mother and father are; his gangster (*guṇḍā*) friends who live with him; Tulsi, the prostitute and dancer and secondary heroine, who is deeply infatuated with Karan; Piajee, the transvestite eunuch, Tulsi's confidant, and the bastard boy, Time Pass, whom Karan adopts as a son, constitute the other circle.<sup>10</sup>

of the artistes. After that, I don't interfere. I hand the reins to the director. I see to it that all his needs are met.

Once the film is complete I enter the picture again. I take a personal interest in the publicity and promotion of the film. I always make it a point to go to the theatre and check the quality of prints and sound. I believe in giving the audience their money's worth without resorting to violence and vulgarity. All my films are family entertainers'. *Jeet* is his first big hit: Preeti Menon-Nambuthri, 'Sajid Nadiadwala: From Finance to Films', *Screen* (Mumbai) (December 20, 1996), 9.

<sup>9</sup>Karisma Kapoor is the daughter of Babita and Randhir Kapoor and granddaughter of Raj Kapoor, great star of the postwar period. Karisma made her first film, *Prem Qaidi* (D. Rama Naidu, 1991). She was known mostly for her comedy roles with Govinda and spicy songs, 'Sexy Sexy' in *Khuddar (Self-respect)* (Iqbal Durrani, 1994) and 'Sarkaye Lo Khatiya' in *Raja Babu* (David Dhawan, 1994), and was considered too Western-looking to become a superstar. When she appeared with Aamir Khan in *Raja Hindustani*, the number one film of 1996, this changed and she won the *Filmfare* Best Actress award. *Jeet* is seen as marking the transition. Her other recent successes include *Coolie No. 1* (Dhawan, 1995), *Saajan Chale Sasural (Husband goes to his Father-in-Law's)* (Dhawan, 1996), and *Hero No. 1* (Dhawan, 1997), all with Govinda, and *Judwaa*, with Salman Khan: Ritu Saigal, 'Karishma Kapoor: The Sudden Impact', *Screen* (Mumbai) (November 29, 1996), 10–12.

Salman Khan (b. 1965) became one of the two or three top stars who act as lovers or suitors after his first film, *Maine Pyar Kiya (I Loved)* (Suraj Barjatya, 1989), with Bhagyashree, and was the male lead in the superhit *Hum Aapke Hain Koun...! (What Am I To You)* (Suraj Barjatya, 1994) with Madhuri Dixit. He has also starred with Karisma in *Judwaa*.

<sup>10</sup>Sunny Deol, who takes the role of Karan, is the eldest son of Dharmendra, star of the last generation. Sunny is sometimes called the Sylvester Stallone of India (as his clothing and manner, especially in scenes where he is beaten while restrained, suggest), though he says James Dean is his Hollywood role model. Sunny made his first film, *Betaab (Restless)*, in 1983, but only

The personal circles of Kajal and Karan are differently constituted. Kajal and her circle are respectable, middle-class, even rich people, icons of the social values of the modern India that came into existence with independence in 1947. Kajal herself is Western-educated. She knows English and uses it at various points in the film. Yet she has not left tradition behind either and succumbed to corrupt Western ways. She is a devoted daughter who has had to take on something of the position her mother occupied. She is also a devotee of the deities, shown several times at temples or on holidays carrying plates of offerings. Raju thinks of her as the ideal Indian wife.

Karan, the hitman, and his circle contrast with this. Unlike the people in Kajal's circle, he has no respectable family line (*khāndān*), for he is an abandoned child. He has no education in English. The prostitute whose salon he frequents is outside respectable society as well, though it is clear in the film that Tulsi (Tabu) is not an ordinary prostitute, but a courtesan of the old style who had aristocratic patrons. We may safely infer that her mother was also such a courtesan and that her father is also unknown.<sup>11</sup> Tulsi's companion, Piajee (Johnny Lever), a 'transvestite eunuch' (*hijrā*), is clearly incapable of good lineage. Time Pass (Master Mohsin), like Karan, is an abandoned child.

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gained recognition as a first-rate actor working with the new director, Rajkumar Santoshi. Their first film was *Ghayal (Wounded)* (1990), followed by *Damini (Lightning)* (1993), and *Andaz Apna Apna (Guesswork)* (1994), *Barsaat (Rainy Season)* (1995), and *Ghatak (Lethal)* (1996), the latest (released after *Jeet*, but completed before it), and also a hit. His *Ziddi (Persistent)* (Guddu Dhanoa, 1997) did very good business and *Border* (J. P. Dutta, 1997) was also a box-office success. Sunny's career, however, seemed to have stalled before his appearance in *Jeet*, partly because of a bad back and because he was concentrating on the career of his younger brother, Bobby. Sunny has two sons, the eldest, Karan, who Sunny says resembles him, and Rajveer, who resembles Bobby: Rauf Ahmed, 'Sunny Deol: A Matter of Guts', *Screen* (Mumbai) (June 6, 1997), 9–11; and Nilufer Qureshi, 'Sunny Blazes Again!', *Stardust* (March, 1997), 24–30. About *Jeet*, Sunny is reported to have said: 'I accepted the film because it offered me a chance to play a character whose personality changes not once but twice. I start off as a killer, become as harmless as a child and then circumstances give me a dangerous death wish. I enjoyed working with my director Raj Kanwar and Sajid (Nadiadwala) is a good producer—he pays well.' *Multichannel*, Internet.

<sup>11</sup>Tabu, Tabassum Hashmi, is niece of the star Shabana Azmi and a prominent figure in the Telugu cinema. She has also won a National Film Best Actress award for her role in *Maachis (Matches)* (Gulzar, 1996), with Chandrachur Singh. Her first hit film was *Saajan Chale Sasural* (David Dhawan, 1996), with Govinda. She stars with Sunny Deol in *Border* (J. P. Dutta, 1997) and with Anil Kapoor in *Virasat (Heritage)* (Priyadarshan, 1997). She and Sajid Nadiadwala admit to having a love relationship: Girija Sudheendran, 'Tabu Bloomtime', *Screen* (Mumbai) (May 23, 1997), 8–10.

### Film as Show (*Tamāśā*)

Film viewing in India (and South Asia generally) is, from the standpoint of Hindi/Urdu speakers, an example in a very general sense of a 'show', a tumasha (*tamāśā*) and the spectators of a play or film, and especially those addicted to shows, *tamāśāī* or *tamāśbīn*. The tumasha is a form of entertainment, but of a special sort, one that has curiosity or voyeurist value, one that has visual and aural sensations that will surprise and delight or even horrify one. Almost any event, planned or unplanned, that has these characteristics can qualify as a tumasha.<sup>12</sup> Especially important for film as tumasha is what Thomas and others have pointed to under the rubric of 'spectacle'—the mansions in which people live and the sitting rooms in which they socialize are all lavishly done up, fight scenes involve extraordinary movements and manouvers, contrasting scenes are juxtaposed, panoramic views of arcadian landscapes and close-ups of gesturing faces and eyes, gravity is defied, the impossible accomplished.<sup>13</sup> The people who watch Hindi films expect to experience showiness at any staged performance, whether of a play, a musical concert, or a film. Showiness is, however, especially important for film and it is what both producers and audiences think the deployment of cinematic technologies is all about. At the same time, however, a Bombay film is also not a tumasha, but its opposite, the occasion for serious contemplation, for coping with 'destiny' (*qismat, taqdīr, karm*), for showing the difficulties, the humiliations, failures, and losses, that can occur in people's lives.

The very opening of *Jeet*, seen while the introductory credits are displayed, is an example of tumasha, 'show', and the first song and dance of the film. We see Kajal and her companions doing a Kathak dance, but one that has been tightly choreographed in the Busby Berkeley manner (including an overhead shot of dancers moving in circular formation around the star. The first scene of the film story has

<sup>12</sup>This more general notion of tumasha is to be distinguished from the use of the term to designate Maharashtrian popular theatre: Tevia Abrams, 'Tamasha', in Farley P. Richmond, Darius L. Swann & Phillip B. Zarilli, *Indian Theatre: Traditions of Performance* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), pp. 275–304. I am referring here to popular usage and not the theatrical traditions on which the Bombay film has drawn, itself an important and complicated question.

<sup>13</sup>Thomas, 'Indian Cinema', 125 and Ashis Nandy, 'The Popular Hindi Film: Ideology and First Principles', in Pradip Krishen, ed. *India International Centre Quarterly: Special Issue, Indian Popular Cinema: Myth, Meaning and Metaphor* 8.1 (March 1980), 89–96. I prefer to distinguish tumasha from the notion of spectacle drawn from French theorists. This notion is itself part of the modernist construct of the twentieth-century world and a pejorative used against 'mass entertainment'. It presumes that élites get at the inner, psychic essences of the human world through non-representational art while the masses are content with the 'mere' play of the senses on surfaces.

the visual hyperbole of a show. Gajraj (Amrish Puri) wearing a white Nehru jacket, hennaed awn sprouting from his ears, gold teeth glinting in his mouth, and tends roses in a huge garden, watched over by armed guards against the backdrop of a modern apartment block.<sup>14</sup> Hyperbole permeates the scene not only visually but verbally. Gajraj describes himself as a descendant of Alexander the Great, presiding over a glittering empire of crime. Tumasha seems to me to have the quality of self-parody on the part of those presenting a show. Because of its emphasis on hyperbole, it can also easily prompt audiences into ridiculing somebody or some situation. Again, I would say that the opening scene of *Jeet* has just this quality. Amrish parodies Indian nationalism in his conversation with his associates while acting himself as a caricature of the Hindi film villain.

### Exhilaration (*mastī*) and Despair (*gam*)

Of what does personal pleasure in *Jeet* and other Hindi films consist? To answer this question, I would like to bring into the discussion another idea that seems to be integral to the Bollywood film, *mastī*, which I will render in its most general usage as 'exhilaration'. After many, many hours of film viewing and discussion, I would venture to say that it consists of a number of elated states and can be cultivated and encouraged in a variety of situations, including intoxication, arising from drinking, whether in a literal or metaphorical sense; drug-taking; and sexual excitement, both among people and animals (the elephant in rut being prototypical). *Mastī* is perhaps the highest or most intense excitement a person can feel that involves sensual satisfaction. Exhilaration can, in fact, be so great that the person experiencing it runs the risk of being overwhelmed by it.

I infer from its usage that this feeling of exhilaration can occur in everyday life, but is very likely to be realized or expressed in the course of a range of activities that includes entertainment or amusement of the mind (*manbahlāv*, *manorañjan*) in general and a tumasha in particular. The feeling that is supposed to arise on

<sup>14</sup>Amrish Puri, who plays Gajraj Chaudhary, began his career as a film villain in *Nishant* (Shyam Benegal, 1975), but his breakthrough in popular cinema came with *Hum Paanchi* (Bapu, 1980). He played the evil priest in *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* (Steven Spielberg, 1984) and is the highest paid villain of the Hindi cinema. He was in *Deewana* and *Jaan*, though he doesn't list any of his Kanwar roles as among his twenty most 'cherished'. His latest film, where he plays a heroic father, is *Virasat* (1997): Aruna C. Kalarikal, 'From One Hundred to One Crore: Amrish Puri Bashes His Way up the Ladder', *Screen* (Mumbai) (August 1, 1997), 9–11. He also played a father's role in the super-hit *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (*The Good-hearted Take the Brides*) (Aditya Chopra, 1995).

such occasions is (*mazā*), joy or delight. This, in turn, is a special instance of a still wider notion of *khusī* or *sukh*, pleasure as sensual cultivation and satisfaction, but also as satisfaction in other modes as well—moral, intellectual and utilitarian. Exhilaration, thus, seems to be a heightened form of joy or delight, itself a form of a more general pleasure. It is especially the form that personal pleasure takes both for characters and spectators on the occasion of a tumasha. The performers of a show are supposed to experience pleasure and those who watch and hear are supposed to participate in this. When they perform at their best, the performers experience not only pleasure, but exhilaration, and those attending also share in it. Indeed, to talk about some event or film as a tumasha carries with it the assumption that it is the occasion for exhilaration, for light-hearted, joyous, and humorous fun.

Erotic love and heroic sacrifice are, by almost any account, the activities that move the story of a Bombay film along. These two activities are also the occasions for the highest expressions of exhilaration. Indeed, these two types of activity seem to lie behind the tendency to divide films into romance and action films. Let me begin with the exhilaration that arises from erotic love. *Jeet* is a typical example. Erotic love or, to be more accurate, love in its erotic mode (*pyār*, *muhabbat*, *isq*), appears at different points on the part of different characters in *Jeet*. The hero, Karan, has gone to beat Kajal's father, Sidhant (Alok Nath) into silence after he had agreed to testify to Karan's mutilation of a journalist. Kajal intervenes and as soon as Karan gazes (*nazar*) on her, he is overcome by erotic passion. I say passion here, because Karan does not know what has happened to him, he cannot express it. Soon after this happens he and his pals go the prostitute's quarters that they are in the habit of visiting. There Tabu, the courtesan, makes it clear that she is in love with Karan, a love which he does not even recognize, let on reciprocate. Kajal is understandably revulsed by Karan and terrified of him in scenes where he stalks her. It is only after she sees that Karan has moral qualities that she first develops a friendship, which slowly melts into love.

There are many situations within the show of a film in which the characters display the exhilaration arising from erotic love. Most of all, however, we see the exhilaration of erotic love expressed in the song scenes, aurally in the words and music and visually in frolicking or cavorting about, which may also include dancing. If the Hindi film is a tumasha, then the song and its staging is itself often a tumasha within the tumasha, exhibiting the elements of surprise and visual trickery.

The songs are also crucial in another regard. I have said that exhilaration can overwhelm the person who experiences it. Singing helps restore a person's will because the song is a vehicle for expressing the complexity of the exhilaration one

feels, not simply by externalizing something that is already there inside one, but by giving conscious shape to a feeling that might otherwise remain inchoate and even threatening. The effect of the song on many in the audience may, however, be quite the opposite. The song may arouse or heighten their participation in the character's exhilaration.

'Yaara o Yaara (Lover O Lover)', one of the songs from *Jeet*, is an excellent example of the expression of exhilaration.<sup>15</sup> It has Karan and Kajal sing after they have become not only friends but lovers. The two of them romp around in the Alps as they sing. (Sunny Deol even tries to dance). Yet all is not well, for many if not most in the audience know that this love cannot last. The opening verse of the song begun by Karan (Vinod Rathod), even hints at this:

We come together as lovers, who knows what the results will be?  
Now, separated from you, for even a moment this heart [of mine] can't  
go on.<sup>16</sup>

Later in the film after their affair has broken up, Karan sings a 'sad' version of this verse: 'Everything indeed will be the result of our having an encounter.'<sup>17</sup>

The exhilaration of erotic love, Indian style, is continually called a form of madness and is at its tantalizing best when secret, kept apart from respectable society. Kajal (Alka Yagnik), in the next verse:

You're a bit crazy, a bit lovesick. Keep me in (your) heart, hide (me)  
in (your) eyes' images.  
Nobody knew of my relationship with you.<sup>18</sup>

The other verses, fairly typically, underline the pictorial representation of erotic love as an exhilaration expressed in an arcadia, an outdoor paradise, away from the normal social world:

**Karan:** The charm, the look, the smile you have,  
The impertinences of love, my heart becomes lovesick.  
What excitement, what beauty, what a parade of dreams.  
What more could anyone desire, I have paradise with me.

<sup>15</sup>The music directors of *Jeet* are Nadeem-Shravan, the lyricist, Sameer.

<sup>16</sup>yāra o yārā, milnā hamārā, jāneñ kyā rañg lāyegā (2)  
ab ek pal bhī, tum se bicarke, ye dil na rahā pāyegā

<sup>17</sup>yārā o yārā, milnā hamārā, he sabhī rañg lāyegā

<sup>18</sup>thoḍā sā tū pāgal, thoḍā sā dīwānā  
mujhe dil meñ rakhnā nazar meñ cupānā  
terā merā ristā kisīne na jānā

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**Kajal:** All these faults of yours are forgiven,  
My loyalties are for you.

**Karan:** I am your sky, you are my moon.  
Do you know, were made just for me.  
Life shaped up when you showed up before me.  
In the fire of sunshine, a delicate flower bud blossomed.

**Kajal:** Who knows how the heart is affected?  
Magic awakens and you are the magician.<sup>19</sup>

Exhilaration does not exist on its own in Bombay films. It is mutually defined by another feeling, that of despair. Hindi/Urdū has a rich vocabulary for the 'despair' (*gam*) that comes from life's 'difficulties' (*taqlīf, kaṣṭ*) and especially for the despair arising from lovers' separation.<sup>20</sup> The separation of Kajal and Karan is an important thread in the narrative of *Jeet*. Just as the songs in Bombay films are the foremost venue for the expressions of exhilaration, they are also the foremost venue for the expression of sadness or grief. Many of the Hindi films have songs of despair. These involve not dreams about the future but memories of the past and show the singer not dancing, but wandering aimlessly, sitting or lying still or accompanying him- or herself on an instrument (the piano being a favorite). Here, too, singing has, in the expectations of film experts, a double effect. It allows the character singing to come to terms with his or her despair by reiterating and expressing it while also heightening the audience's feeling participation in that despair.

Another song from *Jeet*, 'Dil Ka Kya Karen Saheb (What can I do about the heart, saheb)', takes place when Karan and his pals visit their favorite prostitute's quarters. The voyeurist element of *tumasha* is also here. We get to see not the

<sup>19</sup>yah adā, yah nazar, yah muskurānā terā  
śokhiyān pyār kī, dil hai dīwānā merā  
raṅg hai, rūp hai, khvāboñ kī barāt hai  
aur kyā cāhiye, jannat mere sāth hai  
haiñ māf sārī terī khatāyeñ  
tere lie haiñ, merī vafāeñ  
maiñ terā āsmān, tū hai merī cāndnī  
kyā tujhe hai patā, mere liye to banī  
zindagī ban gayī, tū jo mujhe mil gayī  
dhūpoñ kī āg meñ, nāzuk kali khil gayī  
na jāne dil pe, kaisā asar hai  
jādū jag āyā, tū jādūgar hai ye

<sup>20</sup>There is a collection (T Series) of three CD recordings of film songs entitled *Gham-E-Judaai* 'Anguish of Separation'.

tawdry scene that thousands of young men of the street in Mumbai see, but what they would, I suppose, like to see—a courtesan who, with her companions, both lavishly dressed, dances in a salon also lavishly decorated. We also get to see and hear Tulsi (Kavita Krishnamurthy sings, with chorus) reveal her unrequited love (with the use of a mirrored floor). Most Hindi film viewers will immediately also recognize this whole song as a representation drawing heavily upon the historical film genre. Indeed, at this point some viewers will begin to see that this film has parallels with an earlier hit film, *Muqaddar Ka Sikandar* (Prakash Mehra, 1978) in which Amitabh Bachchan watches Rekha dance in her salon. Finally, there is also a comic element in the dance brought to us by the comedian, Johnny Lever, who camps it up as Tulsi's transvestite companion.

Exhilaration is what we would expect to see and hear Tulsi experience in her song and dance and, indeed, some of the people in the audience are shown to have it, but the two main characters do not experience exhilaration. For them, the event is not a tumasha. Tulsi has an erotic love for Karan which, because it is unrealized does not result in exhilaration for her. Karan himself has been overcome by desire for Kajal and is desperate because he cannot have her. He drinks in this scene because he is frustrated and angry and not in order to induce the exhilaration that should accompany the vicarious and sublimated eros he wants to experience from watching Tulsi dance and listening to her sing. Indeed, Karan twice during the song sees Tulsi as Kajal. The song itself is, thus, the opposite of exhilarating, it is despairing. The lyrics of her song tell a sad story of Tulsi's woes as a prostitute. The exhilaration which Tulsi induces in her audience is, if we heed the lyrics, undermined by her own despair.

### **Familial Love and Heroic Sacrifice**

Love may 'make the world go round' in both Hollywood and Bollywood, but in the Hindi film world it is not *erotic* love that does this. Erotic love and parental or filial love are almost always played off against one another in a Hindi film and it is parental or filial love that characters represent as the most important. Or rather it is the continual reconciliation of erotic and parental or filial love, the continuous reversion of erotic love to parental or filial love, that brings order and prosperity, that allows people to realize their wishes and fulfill themselves. The inability to reconcile the two kinds of love, especially when the hero and heroine from antagonistic social circles, inevitably leads to a 'tragic' end. *Jeet* is rather typical here. What do we see in *Jeet*? The erotic love of Kajal and Raju arises out of familial love. Raju's major object in life is to be married to Kajal, an idea

which he got from his mother. So the two songs and dances that feature Kajal and Raju show us an erotic love that has arisen from familial love. It is not accidental that the first of these honeymoon scenes follows Karan's narration to his new bride of his dead mother's wish while the two stand reverentially in front of her picture. This is, nonetheless, as close as we are going to get to the erotic love of a Western couple. Even so, I would argue that because we are seeing the couple on a honeymoon in a foreign land, in the Swiss Alps, we are still witnessing erotic love as an activity that stands outside Indian social life. To be fair, as representatives of a changing, contemporary India, they continue to tease and cavort even after they take up residence in Raju's father's house.

One final comment about the relationship of the two loves in *Jeet*. As powerful as erotic love may be (in this implicitly conservative representation), familial love is even stronger, especially in its power to do good. We see this in the film. What is it that turns Kajal's revulsion for and fear of Karan into friendship and then love? It is Time Pass, the boy whom Karan, out of parental affection, adopts. If he had not been taking Time Pass to school, Karan's encounter with the rowdies who harassed Kajal and the other young women on the bus, would not have taken place. This encounter gets Kajal to thinking. While she is doing so on her bed, Time Pass appears in her window. His words and acts bring the two together.<sup>21</sup>

Certainly the putative audience of the film can take pleasure in the song and dance scenes of both couples, but it is not the quite the same pleasure. While people in the audience see Kajal and Karan sing and dance, they are also aware that this is a love that is not going to get very far. It is erotic love in its highest, most enjoyable form, outside society, momentarily free of its constraints.<sup>22</sup> The exhilaration expressed in these two songs is surrounded by danger and fear. I would venture to say that is all the more enjoyed by the audience just for that reason.

The exhilaration of the two songs and dances with Kajal and Raju is enjoyed in a somewhat different way because it seems to square the circle, to reconcile erotic love with familial love. People in the audience do not, however, expect this to last. The familial love to which erotic love in marriage is supposed to be subordinated takes the form of carrying out one's duties and enduring the sorrows

<sup>21</sup>I am impressed by how much film talk in the magazines revolves around representations of Bollywood stars as *both* erotic lovers and model parents, children, and friends. The song-and-dance staged at a celebration, especially a wedding, is often the scene where reconciliation or frustration is represented.

<sup>22</sup>It is precisely here in some notion of freedom or liberation, of union with an entity that transcends society, that the usages of erotic love and certain Sufi practices designed to bring about and celebrate or express union with a god intermingle.

and frustrations of daily life and, as the knowing viewers already suspect, Kajal and Raju are not going to live happily in erotic love ever after.

If filmmakers represent their characters as realizing themselves as human beings through efforts to reconcile erotic and familial love, they also do so by showing how they have engaged in heroic deeds for the sake of others. Heroism, courage or bravery (*bahādurī*, *vīrtā*) exercised in a good cause, is a crucial element in *Jeet*, as it is in most Hindi films I have seen. Much of the narrative in these films centers on the actions of a 'good man' or 'gentle', 'civilized man' (*sajjan*, *nek* or *acchā ādmī*) or woman (*nek* or *acchī aurat*) who upholds the appropriate values, who does the right thing. The recipient of a man's or woman's acts of moral heroism may be his or her 'lover' (*jān*, *āśīq*, *mahbūbā*, *yār*, etc.), 'friend' (*dost*), husband, wife, parents, the larger 'family' or 'lineage' (*khāndān*, *vañś*), 'village', 'city', 'country' (*vatan*, *deś*), or the 'nation' (*qaum*, *jāti*) as a whole.

Heroic acts and the situations to which they respond are not something simply to be *seen* in a popular Hindi film, an external spectacle. They are, as part of a *tumasha*, also to be *heard*. One might think that Hindi films, like their supposed Hollywood models, would be rather short on dialogue, but that is not usually the case. In fact, some have criticized the Hindi film for its excessive use of dialogue. *Jeet* is rich in dialogues.

Among the actions that figure prominently in *Jeet* is the maintaining of one's 'honor' or 'respect' (*izzat*) as a family or lineage (and implicitly also *jāti* 'caste'), whether as a man, or 'modesty' (*lāj*, *śarm*), as a woman, or the passing of an examination and the acquisition of a 'service' position (*naukrī*), whether as a lawyer, an army man, a medical doctor, a teacher, or a civil servant. Here we are talking about an ambiguously varying mixture of caste or family honor and 'modern' middle-class respectability concerned with passing examinations and acquiring a post in a profession. *Jeet*, like so many other Hindi films, presents its audience with situations in which people are threatened with disgrace, with a loss of their respect. Kajal thinks that Karan wants to rape (and disgrace) her and later her father tells her she wants to ruin their family honor. Kajal tells Karan his respect is based on force. A police inspector (Ashish Vidyarthi) makes much of the lack of honor that both Tulsi, a prostitute, and Karan, as an abandoned child, possess. For Raju, the question of respect for Kajal and Karan is vital. Raju's father is concerned not only with arranging his son's marriage, but with placing him in a business position, which his mother's brother helps him do, making him the head of the bogus shipping company he has set up.

A major elaboration on the theme of heroism is that of 'devotion to the country' (*deśbhakti*), patriotism. The opening scene of *Jeet* directs the audience's attention

to the theme of patriotism, making it possible to see much of the subsequent action from that point of view. Gajraj's associate says a journalist has accused him of being a traitor to the country because of his criminal activities. Gajraj replies sarcastically that he is a devotee of the country, a farmer who grows cannabis and hemp and earns so much foreign currency (a major state concern of Nehru's India) that he is able to supply Mother India with golden wings. Kajal's father represents true devotion to the country. He evokes the middle class values of Nehru's socialist India. That India called on its citizens to sacrifice for the sake of developing the country. Advocates of Nehru's socialism continually represented civil servants and men and women of the professions—medicine, law and education—as the bearers of this sacrificial citizenship. They represented businessmen in the cities (and 'feudal' landlords in the countryside) as threats to this New India. After the amputation (just off screen), ordered by Gajraj, of the writing arm of a journalist (Sashi Kiran), who had been making accusations against Gajraj, Kajal's father, a teacher, comes forward in public to testify against Karan. He can clearly be taken as a patriotic citizen in *Jeet*.

Patriotism is also a theme in many a Hollywood film as well. The difference is, that in Hollywood films one usually expresses one's patriotism *through* occupation, be it as a military man, detective, President, secret service agent, sheriff, or lawyer. In Hindi films, the hero or heroine usually expresses patriotism by stepping *outside* his or her everyday occupational role.<sup>23</sup> Karan, prompted by Kajal, gives up his job as a hitman in order to become a good man and gives it up again, this time to protect Raju and Kajal from the crime boss, Gajraj. Raju gives up his job as head of the Rajnath Shipping Corporation and then fights against the criminals he had worked with. Like many Bollywood films, *Jeet* thus features a conflict between the good man, the man or woman who is devoted to the country, and the criminal, the 'traitor to the country' (*deśdrohī*).

Acts of moral heroism may take the form of patient suffering or trickery. Often they takes the form of 'revenge' (*iñteqām*). The idiom in which moral heroism is probably most dramatically expressed in *Jeet* and most Hindi films is 'renunciation' (*tyāg*), 'sacrifice' (*balidān, qurbānī*) or even 'martyrdom' (*śahādat, balidān*). The renunciation of one's immediate wishes or of one's well-being for the sake of another are the ways to the long-term realization of one's wishes and the fulfillment of oneself as a human being in a Bollywood film. *Jeet* is the story of a conflict between 'selfishness' (*khudgarazī*) and of renunciation and sacrifice. Kajal can

<sup>23</sup>This occasionally happens in Hollywood films, too—the cop who turns in his badge to catch the criminal.

become friend and then lover of Karan after he gives in to her repeated urgings and renounces his life of 'force' (*tāqat*), of animals in a jungle. Kajal herself can be married to Raju only after she abandons her love for Karan and gives in to her father's wish for that marriage. The intensity of Kajal's renunciation is seen as Kajal cuts herself holding onto a kitchen knife while she tells Karan she wants nothing more to do with him. Raju can hang onto his dream of wedded life with Kajal and children by leaving his father, his father's company and home. Tulsi sets aside jealousy and agrees to dance at Karan's marriage and at the end agrees to his request to help Kajal deliver her baby by Raju. Karan ultimately sacrifices his life, becomes a 'martyr' (*śahīd*), in order to save Raju from the bullets which Gajraj, the embodiment of selfishness, fires at him. These are all also understandable as acts of patriotism.

Now, it could be argued that pleasure is nowhere to be found in these acts of heroic sacrifice or that they are there simply to provide excuses for violence—the fights and chases—meant to please the young men in the audience, and for melodrama—the gushes of tears—meant to please the women (which for some reason never given is pleasurable to women). It is possible that many in the film audience would take pleasure in these scenes apart from their placement in the film's narrative. I would, however, like to argue that pleasure does derive from vicariously experiencing the acts of sacrifice depicted, but that this pleasure is distinct from, if not opposed to, the erotic pleasure, of which exhilaration expressed through cavorting and dancing, is emblematic.

One can be 'pleased' (*khus̄, prasann, sukhī*) not only by way of the exhilaration one feels from the expression of sensual cultivations but also by way of the satisfaction one obtains from seeing a wrong redressed, from watching justice done through selfless action. The pleasure taken here is a moral as well as sensual pleasure. The moral issue may be over-simplified from the standpoint of those claiming to be sophisticated and some might disagree about what is right or wrong in a particular case, but that does not detract from my point. The renunciations and sacrifices of the popular Hindi film provide audiences with familial, social and national *moral* pleasures just as much as the scenes of erotic love, especially expressed in songs, provide audiences with personal *sensuous* pleasures.

The interplay of the emotions and the pleasures that the audience supposedly experiences from heroic acts of sacrifice and the working out of their destinies at the denouement of the film raise some questions of great importance at which I can only hint here: Karan, whose terrestrial father and mother are unknown, can quite plausibly be understood as a manifestation of a transcendent agent, come to save Kajal's personal circle. Now, this film is not a 'mythological' or 'historical'

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and its makers do not directly and unmistakably represent any of its actors either as avatars of Vishnu or as Muslim saints (*pīr*). Yet it is also difficult to escape the notion that we are dealing here with what I would call a 'national theology', one that draws on and, in certain respects, recuperates certain features of Indian theisms (both Hindu and Islamic).<sup>24</sup> The notions of devotion to the country (rather than to a conventional form of god) and of the country itself as Mother India are both explicit in the film. Karan rather diffusely resembles a traditional demon or Rākṣas, a class of elemental beings motivated by anger and causing fear and living outside the society of people and deities. Within him, however, is great compassion or parental affection and heroic valor, which he displays after he begins to realize that he cannot seize the foremost object of his desire, Kajal, by force, adopts the abandoned child, Time Pass, and gives up his life of force so in order to gain Kajal's affection. Eventually he sacrifices or martyrs himself in order to save the man he would otherwise most like to obliterate, Raju, Kajal's husband. Now, many if not most people in the audience would probably agree that to sacrifice one's own desires for a parent or child, a sibling, or spouse, is good and not to do so under appropriate circumstances, is bad. Kajal's sacrifice of her love for Karan in order to fulfill her father's wish for her to be married to Raju is a sacrifice of just this sort. This sort of sacrifice is not, however, what really stirs the Indian audience's heart. It is the sacrifice of one's desires for someone outside this most intimate circle that receives the highest praise. So, while appearing to be a demonic figure, Karan turns out to be more like a deity than any of the respectable middle-class people. Raju actually tells Karan this. Karan replies that it is easy to be like a deity in a world of stones, but more difficult to be a civilized man, as Raju has shown himself to be. So it is plausible to see Karan as a manifestation of the nation. He can be taken rather loosely as an avatar of Vishnu, as the outsider who intervenes to save the good people and, implicitly, the country.<sup>25</sup> More directly, he is one of the many instances of the martyr (*śahīd*) who dies for India in its national theology. Amitabh Bachchan made the figure of the outsider who dies in this way a commonplace of the 70s and 80s. The martyr, however, is also to be found in

<sup>24</sup>Far from being the unconscious resurgence of an age-old mythic tradition, this can be seen as a largely conscious reworking of theologies. One could point to parallels in Hollywood: Joel W. Martin & Conrad E. Oswald, Jr., eds. *Screening the Sacred: Religion, Myth, and Ideology in Popular American Film* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995). Bruce Willis in *Armageddon* (Michael Bay, 1998) is a recent example: Philip French, 'Films of the Week' *Guardian* (August 9, 1998).

<sup>25</sup>The connection is explicit in *Narasimha* (1991) where Sunny Deol plays a character named Narasimha, the Man-Lion, one of Vishnu's avatars. The film *Khal-Nayak* (Subhash Ghai, 1993), explicitly drawing parallels to the Rāmāyaṇ, calls its villains Rākṣas.

earlier films with the title *Shaheed*.<sup>26</sup> The transition to the last scene of the film shows Tabu falling down in the street when she sees Karan dead. As she shouts his name and Time Pass heaves a great sob, we hear a baby cry and zoom in on the dead Karan's face. We then see Kajal, beams of light shining down on her from above sit up in bed. She inquires, 'Karan?' Raju, holding their newly born boy baby with beams of light shining in from both sides, replies: 'Today indeed Karan is with us'. The feeling of exhaltation many in the audience might experience here is certainly sensual, but it is also moral and intellectual. Indeed this moment of metaphoric transmigration is itself a complex moment of pleasure that consciously (and probably also unconsciously) pulls the entire film together (even for those in the audience who don't like it).

I do not think it would be correct to characterize the feeling one could and should have at the climax of the film as exhilaration. As I have just said, the pleasure of that moment is too complex to be reducible to exhilaration. For one thing, the pleasure is not simply personal or primarily sensual, it is also to some degree social. There is something else at work here, too. The exhilaration that characters experience on screen has its counterpoint in the despair they also experience. The ending of *Jeet* is continuous with many of the earlier films. The grief or sadness that all have suffered is so great that nothing in their lives can compensate for it. So, as satisfying as the 'rebirth' of Karan may be, it cannot make up for his lost life or for the unrequited love Tulsi had for him. Nor can it really restore the relationship that Raju wanted in his marriage nor for the love between Kajal and Karan that she has lost. People certainly gain a pleasure, some sort of knowing satisfaction, from witnessing the sadness of such scenes. One might even venture to say that despair seems to be part of the national theology, but to argue that would require more research.

To conclude, I have argued that 'mass entertainment' is not the simplicity that the makers of the twentieth-century world have made it out to be. The pleasures of watching popular Hindi films are not generically and singularly sensual. There is, first, a strong Indian or South Asian component in these pleasures. People in India have their own ideas of entertainment and pleasure. I have tried to bring two of these out, tumasha, showiness, and exhilaration (and its opposite, despair), and tried to point to the connections these have with South Asian notions of erotic love and social values and with the themes of moral heroism and sacrifice. I have also

<sup>26</sup>The earlier, from 1948, was directed by Ramesh Saigal and starred Dilip Kumar as the martyr. The other was made and starred in by the late Manoj Kumar in 1965, who later became a figure in the Bharatiya Janata Party. He was well-known for his patriotic films.

argued that many of the pleasures derived from film watching are intellectual and moral as well as sensual, that there are complex ways in which these pleasures may be articulated with one another in the course of experiencing a Hindi film.

Overall, then, entertainment for *Jeet* as a Hindi film derives from the ways in which audiences respond to the sacrifices and other acts of heroism by which the antithesis of erotic love and familial love and the antagonism of social classes and moral stances are resolved. Entertainment does not in this film, thus, consist simply or even mostly of sensual 'gratification' in some generic form. To the extent that it does consist of sensual personal pleasures, those pleasures take particular forms which have a visual and verbal repertoire of their own, viz., the exhilaration of erotic love that characters express in songs and dances. Pleasure, however, also consists of the moral and intellectual pleasures.

The 'entertaining' moments are indeed all the funnier or sadder because they are set against and in these larger movements of the film's narrative. The thrills and drawn-out anxiety of the last scenes of *Jeet* acquire their charge not just because of the way, technically, in which they are executed, but precisely because of the moral issue that is at stake. Will the values of a changed and self-critical middle-class India, one implicitly dedicated to the welfare of the nation win out over the embodiment of what is wrong with India, Gajraj? We know that they must, but we want to have the vicarious experience of the victory. And we want to have it in ways that are intellectually, morally, and sensually pleasurable.