# 1 BETWEEN NEOREALISM AND HUMANISM

## *Jago Hua Savera*

*JAGO HUA SAVERA* (A NEW DAY DAWNS, 1959, DIR. A. J. KARDAR) is the only prominent example of a neorealist Pakistani film from the long sixties. Its aesthetics are comparable to the art and parallel cinema of India, rather than to Pakistan's feature productions from that era, which were primarily commercially oriented melodramas and social films.[1] Despite adhering to the formative Italian conception of neorealism and drawing from contemporary Indian productions, *Jago Hua Savera*'s realism is marked by fractures in form, narrative, and address. Its formal fissures include many visible joints across its aesthetic assemblage: it deploys both color and black-and-white film stock, includes songs in an ostensibly neorealist narrative, and uses multiple linguistic registers that are not close to everyday language but are primarily an artifice. In its narrative, *Jago Hua Savera* shuttles between a humanist vision that envisioned traditional rural life as timeless and perennial and a progressive understanding of exploitation and poverty as having become unsustainable. The film's production team was diverse, and its elements included dialogue and songs drawn from diverse backgrounds. *Jago Hua Savera* makes a gambit or opening toward a larger alternative South Asian cinema after the Partition of 1947. However, its audiences were neither fully envisioned nor actualized, and this contributed to its initially disappointing reception.

*Jago Hua Savera* was the result of a collaboration of themes and personnel from within and beyond Pakistan. The film was directed by Akhtar Jung Kardar (1926–2002), younger brother of the established Bombay-based director Abdul Rashid Kardar (1904–89), and the lyrics and dialogue were written by leading progressive Urdu poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz (1911–84).[2] Faiz had loosely adapted the overall story from the famous Bengali realist novel *Padma nadir majhi* (The boatman on the river Padma, 1936) by Indian writer Manik Bandopadhyay (1908–56).[3] Zahir Raihan (1935–72), who served as an assistant director, subsequently emerged as a gifted and

committed filmmaker who made a number of important Urdu and Bengali films during the sixties and the documentary *Stop Genocide* in 1971.[4] Khan Ataur Rahman (1928–97), who plays the lead character Kasim, had been involved in emerging media and cultural productions in Karachi and in Europe during the 1950s. After *Jago Hua Savera*, he went on to have a significant career as an actor in Zahir Raihan's films and also as a director of Urdu and Bengali cinema.[5]

The team included Walter Lassally (1926–2017), a rising young German-British cinematographer who later became prominent for his work on *Zorba the Greek* (1965) and won an Oscar for it; he also worked on Jamil Dehlavi's *The Blood of Hussain* (1980).[6] Experienced Indian film personnel assumed key roles in the production of *Jago Hua Savera*. Shanti Kumar Chatterji, the other assistant director, had served as assistant director for Satyajit Ray's *Pather Panchali* (Song of the little road, 1955).[7] And Indian Bengali composer Timir Baran (1904–87) had composed the music for *Jago Hua Savera*.[8] Baran was the music composer for the iconic film *Devdas* (1935, dir. P. C. Barua) from India, as well as for the Pakistani Urdu films *Anokhi* (Singular, 1956, dir. Shah Nawaz), *Fankar* (Artist, 1956, dir. Mohammad Hassan), and later the Bengali film *Jog Biyog* (1970).[9] The lead actress of *Jago Hua Savera*, Tripti Mitra (1925–89) was also Indian. She had been involved with the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA), which was founded in 1943 as a leftist cultural organization and produced numerous realist plays across South Asia, many of which deployed songs, music, and performance in innovative ways.[10] Mitra had acted in Khwaja Ahmad Abbas's realist film *Dharti Ke Lal* (Children of the earth, 1946), as well as in many Indian Bengali-language films.[11] Participation of experienced international personnel in *Jago Hua Savera*'s production helped alleviate the marked lack of experience by the Pakistanis involved—director A. J. Kardar had never made a film, and the production was also a first for Faiz.[12] In enlisting a broad production team, the makers of *Jago Hua Savera* expanded the scope of progressive cultural production beyond national limits.

This broader context suggests that while *Jago Hua Savera* might be considered a "Pakistani" film, it cannot be understood without developments in India, to which Pakistani filmmakers would have had varying access during the fifties.[13] We can understand *Jago Hua Savera* in a wider South Asian context and as a contribution to and a manifestation toward what has been termed "global neorealism."[14] Realism in South Asian cinema has multiple lineages since the 1930s across diverse cultural forms, with "neorealism" notating a trajectory from 1952 onward that drew from the influential

Italian developments but sought also to develop, refine, incorporate, and partly repudiate popular cinematic codes and narrative tropes associated with the "studio *Social*" film.[15]

*Jago Hua Savera* was awarded a gold medal at the first Moscow Film Festival in 1959 and was also Pakistan's Oscar submission.[16] For decades, it had been lost and not available either nationally or internationally, yet it had acquired a mythical aura domestically. In his memoir, Walter Lassally observes that "by the time of my second visit to Pakistan in 1976 . . . [the film] had become a sort of *Birth of a Nation* of the Pakistani Film Industry, a film which, even though they hadn't necessarily seen it, was discussed by local film buffs in reverend tones."[17] Since its rediscovery and subsequent restoration, the film has been shown at numerous film festivals, such as the Three Continents Festival 2007, the New York Film Festival 2008, and the Festival de Cannes in 2016.[18] The version available now is apparently the one meant for foreign distribution. The local version included a song-and-dance sequence in color, whose incorporation raises important questions as to how highbrow leftist artistic projects understand their own social appeal in relation to the widespread allure of popular cinema in South Asia.

## PLOT SUMMARY

Set in the village of Shaitnol on the banks of the Meghna River some thirty miles from Dhaka, the film focuses on the everyday life of fishermen and their families. Mian is the main character. His family consists of his wife, Fatima, who is in poor health and has recently delivered a baby; their children; and an adopted orphaned young man named Kasim (who accompanies Mian as a fishing partner). Mala is Fatima's sister, a young woman who comes to reside in the Mian household in order to take care of her disabled sister and her new baby. Mala falls in love with Kasim over the course of the film (figure 1.1).

Ganju is another fisherman who lives with his paralyzed mother. Neither Mian nor Ganju own their own boats, and thus much of the earnings of their labor is handed over to the boat owner. They are also compelled to sell their catch to Lal Mian, a middleman of some means who is deeply involved with everyday matters of the village, at prices over which they have little say. In order to purchase their own boats, Mian and Ganju save part of their meager earnings after each expedition—this is also "banked" with the grasping but indispensable Lal Mian. Ganju has saved more but is in very poor health.

FIG. 1.1. Mala and Kasim fall in love. *Jago Hua Savera* (1959).


When a Pakistani government delegation comes to conduct an auction for the renewal of fishing rights, Lal Mian wins by outbidding other middlemen, and he uses this as a pretext to further squeeze the fishermen. Toward the end of the film, when Ganju has finally saved enough, Lal Mian delivers a vessel to him, having it dramatically hauled upland to his hut. But Ganju is now far too ill and collapses in a coughing fit. Lal Mian repossesses the boat, ostensibly to resell it in order to provide for Ganju's mother. Watching this, in desperation, Mian scrounges up the savings of all members of his household to add to his savings already banked with Lal Mian. But when Lal Mian's *munshi* (accountant) tallies up all of Mian's savings, they are tantalizingly close to Lal Mian's asking price but still insufficient and suspiciously lower than Mian's own reckoning of how much he has banked with Lal Mian. Mian and his family's hopes for achieving greater financial independence and taking ownership of the "means of production" are frustrated for now. These emotional events constitute a denouement in the film that is otherwise characterized by subdued drama throughout.

Similar to its beginning, the film ends with a lyrical sequence of boats launching at dusk, initiating another seemingly eternal cycle of events. But the cycle's previous iteration had sharpened social contradictions and created greater consciousness in some characters, suggesting that existing hierarchies are not fated to repeat endlessly. This is most evident in the

development of Kasim's character, marked by integrity, independence, and growing consciousness. Kasim accompanies Mian on the boats and is subject to the same forces of exploitation as other fishermen who do not own their own vessels. Unlike others, however, Kasim refuses to bank his savings with Lal Mian, and this quiet assertion of independence unpleasantly surprises the latter when he learns of this. Kasim is also aware of Lal Mian's pursuit of Mala and protects her from his advances. And when one of Mian's children has a broken leg that the faith healer brought in by Lal Mian is unable to fix, Kasim insists on taking the child to Dhaka for treatment in a modern hospital, accompanied by Mala. As an outsider to the family unit, Kasim is perhaps freer to breach social custom. In this interlude, the film depicts the bustling streets of Dhaka and its commercial and public spaces, suggesting that for the next generation, the small rural world of Shaitnol will no longer remain a self-enclosed one.

Remarkably, the film depicts virtually every character engaged in saving money. In addition to the fishermen Ganju, Kasim, and Mian, Mian's wife and their young son all are preoccupied with saving even small coins, in assiduously reckoning their sums, and in resorting to unusual stratagems to accomplish this. This depiction sharply contrasts with the probable reality of midcentury rural Bengal, where debt had long figured as a central problem plaguing its rural poor—the emphasis on saving in the film perhaps charts a fantasy of responsible rural life, an imaginative trajectory toward a transformed future.[19]

Exploitation is depicted as part of daily routine and is not excessively dramatized. Even Lal Mian is involved in acts of welfare, and his accumulative motivations are not depicted as being starkly evil. His actions are deeply intermingled in the everyday life of the community: he constitutes nothing less than "a part" of the village's "fate," according to the opening credits (figure 1.2).

By contrast, the state remains distant—the only event where the Pakistani government intervenes in the village is when its official, wearing a *sola topi*, arrives in a large boat flying the national flag, to auction off annual fishing rights. There is no trace of development activities in the village—no clinic, post office, bank, or school—suggesting that the state remains resolutely colonialist, an absentee landlord, interested primarily in the extraction of revenue via middlemen who are in turn deeply involved in everyday acts of exploitation and maintenance of the poor fisherfolk at a bare subsistence level.

FIG. 1.2. Lal Mian, the village middleman. *Jago Hua Savera* (1959). © Anjum Taseer, courtesy of Anjum Taseer.

## STYLE AND RECEPTION

The look or style of *Jago Hua Savera* is lyrically cinematic, deploying strong lighting contrasts and editing sequences that track the narrative, punctuated by strong graphic shots of the countryside and the water (figure 1.3).

The frame compositions are well conceived. The film was shot mostly on location, and the sense of realism of the everyday is heightened as the camera lingers on details of evidence and events.[20] The fisherfolk's desperation is portrayed with restraint. The narrative unfolds slowly but steadily—its pacing aligns with the gentle waves of water that the film's evidentiary focus highlights.

*Jago Hua Savera* is singular in its stark "realist" portrayal, as film historian Mushtaq Gazdar has noted in his landmark study, *Pakistan Cinema, 1947–1997*.[21] Gazdar equates the values of realism here with experimentalism. And part of its realist value is the "focus on the lives" of ordinary people, rather than on "dramatic events." These attributes set *Jago Hua Savera* against mainstream Pakistani cinema of the fifties, in which social concerns are largely subordinated to, or placed within, a melodramatic narrative. Gazdar is certainly correct in describing *Jago Hua Savera* as offering a new set of aesthetic and moral values to cinema produced in Pakistan. The film was released in two versions; the international release was black-and-white, while the domestic version included a color song-and-dance sequence

FIG. 1.3. Mian with son outdoors. *Jago Hua Savera* (1959). © Anjum Taseer, courtesy of Anjum Taseer.

precisely to broaden the film's popular appeal. The film's publicity booklet claims that it "marks the beginning of the avante guard [sic] movement in this country!"[22] But the film failed to find a receptive domestic audience and "was taken down from Karachi's Jubilee Cinema . . . in just three days."[23]

The political environment in Pakistan was not conducive to a film affiliated with progressive politics. The country had been allied with the United States from the early fifties and hostile to leftist cultural and political projects. The Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case of 1951 is an important landmark, in which members of the Communist Party of Pakistan were tried for conspiring to overthrow the government. Faiz was jailed for four years, between 1951 and 1955.[24] The All Pakistan Progressive Writers' Association and the Communist Party of Pakistan were also banned in 1954. These events had a repressive effect on cultural expression.[25] Ayub Khan's coup in 1958 put an end to political instability between 1951 and 1958, but right after seizing power, Ayub Khan exerted greater authoritarian control over journalism, criticism, and cultural policies, including his notorious takeover in 1959 of Progressive Papers, the publisher of *Pakistan Times*, the largest-circulation English-language daily, which Faiz had edited before his imprisonment in 1951, and *Imroze*, an important Urdu newspaper.[26] Ayub Khan was reportedly unhappy with *Jago Hua Savera* and attempted to thwart its release just three days prior to its screening.[27] The producer's son

Anjum Taseer recalls, "My father financed the entire production from his own resources, and although the project was risky, idealism and passion were two driving forces that he could not resist. . . . The film was shown in February 1959, but the reception was poor. Firstly, people were not ready for neo-realism, and also, I believe the distributors were pressured to cut short the viewings."[28]

The question of *Jago Hua Savera*'s audience and its reception must be further parsed in terms beyond ideological suppression. Was the film intended to circulate locally, and did the sites of circulation include Shaitnol? Dhaka? Karachi? Or was it intended also for, or perhaps even primarily for, the international film festival circuit, which had recently been very receptive to films from India?[29] This quest for international recognition was no anomaly—as even in India, despite its more cinematically literate public and state support, Satyajit Ray observed that his work was possible only via European film festival support.[30]

*Jago Hua Savera*'s devastating initial failure in the domestic market, coupled with the state's political and aesthetic conservatism of the late fifties, meant that *Jago Hua Savera* has remained largely a singular experiment in Pakistani cinema.[31] But if one extends the scope of analysis across South Asia, one can situate *Jago Hua Savera* in relation to other films being produced at the time. Moreover, its collaborative production process underscores that it also can be viewed as a broader move in South Asia toward an embrace and localization of neorealism during the fifties. *Jago Hua Savera* can be posited as attempting to create a progressive cultural form that had cross-regional address, not unlike earlier Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) productions, as well as meetings of the All-India Progressive Writers' Association during the forties that Faiz was intimately familiar with and participated in. Exchange of cinema between India and Pakistan since the midfifties was however in the process of attenuation, with national borders that were becoming increasingly harder to traverse and protests in Lahore in 1954 against the import of Indian cinema.[32]

## REALISM IN SOUTH ASIAN CINEMA BEFORE 1952

The move toward realism in the cinematic and performing arts of South Asia began from at least the late thirties. Apart from neorealist works from the midfifties, midcentury Indian cinema contains a variable register of aesthetic values and concerns, across which various manifestations of realism are marshaled. Thus, the social film of the forties is imbued with a kind of

Hollywood realism, and in many Indian productions the focus of themes and motivations relevant to society is coupled with the "heterogeneous attractions" of the commercial Indian film.[33] The embrace of realism in fifties Indian cinema was not simply due to exposure to Italian neorealism, but conditions were being prepared within the trajectories of Indian cinema during the forties for the neorealist turn to unfold in the fifties the way it did—long before the fateful 1952 first International Film Festival, which introduced Italian neorealist cinema widely to Indian filmmakers.[34]

Founded in 1936, the Progressive Writers' Association "sought to extend the progressive, rationalist trends in nationalist culture into a critical and socialist direction. Realism was conceived of as an ethic that could oversee this 'progress.'"[35] The subsequent founding of the IPTA in 1943 was extremely consequential for theater and cinema overall, producing a vibrant "movement that in the next ten years or so would directly or indirectly influence almost every important artist in the country."[36] In cinema, developments in realism that Moinak Biswas terms the "studio *Social*" had begun in 1940 with films such as *Aurat* (Woman), directed by Mehboob Khan. Furthermore, the Bengal Famine of 1943 created new artistic, photographic, and theatrical depictions of its grim reality.[37] Rustom Bharucha has stressed how audiences "discovered for the first time" in Bijon Bhattacharya's play *Nabanna* (New harvest), first performed in 1944, "the extraordinary impact of realism in the dialects and street cries of the actors, the minutiae of their gestures, movements, and responses, and the stark simplicity of the set and the costumes."[38] Notably, these influences were relayed into subsequent cinema.[39] Khwaja Ahmad Abbas's *Dharti Ke Lal* (Children of the earth, 1946) serves as a landmark realist film.[40] This was followed by another key film, the 1950 Bengali-language *Chinnamul* (The uprooted), directed by Nemai Ghosh. Both films were supported by IPTA and embraced codes of realism yet in many ways also remained tied to values associated with the "studio *Social*."[41]

Two international films also have relevance for the development of realism in South Asian cinema, and especially for understanding *Jago Hua Savera*. *La Terra Trema* (The earth trembles, 1948), directed by Luchino Visconti, focused on the exploited lives of a fishing village in Sicily.[42] *The River* (1951), directed by Jean Renoir and shot in India, has been widely recognized for its technical and artistic quality, with its "innovative use of technology, documentary sequences, and realist aesthetics."[43] It forms another significant reference, more so as the young Satyajit Ray, who had not yet ventured into filmmaking, assisted in its production. *The River*'s

emphasis on the cyclical nature of time marked by the river's flow serves to foreground the temporal dramas of the protagonists, with a "combination of smoothness and disruption" that is emphasized by its sophisticated and limpid cinematography and editing.[44] Renoir spliced the drama of the largely European characters together with documentary ethnographic vignettes, creating a kind of realist epic in which everyday events in the characters' lives were placed adjacent to the eternal cycle of life epitomized by the steady flow of the river and the performance of timeless Hindu rituals that acknowledge that birth and death are cyclical.[45] Film historian Sarah Cooper stresses that Renoir accomplishes this by "the use of dissolves, hastening the pace of time but in a languorous manner, suggesting connections rather than cuts from one moment to the next, and thus a form of continuity across the boundaries of difference."[46] And while *The River* has been criticized for its expatriate orientalist and rose-tinted view of India, which disregards social exploitation and risks trafficking in colonialist clichés, for our purposes, what is significant is how subtly it modulates the relationship between epic time and everyday actions and decisions of human actors.[47] *Jago Hua Savera* also calibrates cyclical time with everyday life, but unlike *The River*, it gestures instead toward the impossibility of the cycle of seasons playing out endlessly in the social life of its protagonists.

## NEOREALISM AFTER 1952

The most consequential context for experimental Indian cinema of the mid-fifties onward was its encounter with Italian neorealism. The embrace of an intensified realism more in keeping with Italian neorealist principles accelerated after 1952 even in mainstream cinema.[48] *Pather Panchali* was released in 1955, the first of the celebrated Apu Trilogy by Satyajit Ray, who acknowledged the decisive impact of this aesthetic after his viewing of Vittorio De Sica's *The Bicycle Thief* (1948): "I knew immediately that if I ever made *Pather Panchali*—and the idea had been at the back of my mind for some time—I would make it in the same way, using natural location and unknown actors."[49] The mid- to late 1950s thus emerged as a key period for the embrace of Indian cinema of a restrained realism. Biswas stresses that the film directors and writers—Bimal Roy, Prakash Arora, Zia Sarhadi, Amar Kumar, Raj Kapoor, and Khwaja Ahmad Abbas—focused on poverty and marginalization and that their aesthetic values embraced urban sites and dramatic lighting.[50] But if Hollywood productions and aspects of the earlier "studio *Social*" can also be labeled as realist, the question arises: What

characterizes a neorealist film in South Asia? And how do we situate films like *Pather Panchali* and *Jago Hua Savera* specifically as neorealist rather than broadly realist?[51] For Biswas, it is the crystallizing impact of Ray's contribution in finally equating serious realism firmly with neorealism: "*Pather Panchali* established as a fully formed aesthetic what was only partially operative in earlier Indian cinema, that is, the realist textual principle. The success of this aesthetic was measured in terms of its ability to free itself of impulses characteristic of traditional Indian cinema—textual heterogeneity, lack of individuation, non-secular narrative logic, and the predominance of spectacle over narrative. After *Pather Panchali*, these same impulses were associated with popular cinema."[52] The problem of what constituted serious realism was thus not simply cinematic but also literary, and, indeed, the neorealist turn was premised on imaginatively adapting literary forms into film.[53]

The bifurcation of Indian cinema into serious and commercial trajectories begins at this juncture. But while serious Indian cinema is often viewed in national terms, it was shot through with diverse subnational and transnational vectors. For Neepa Majumdar, the question of nationalism in realist cinema hinges on issues of state patronage and formal and technological constraints, set against a commercial industry that did not receive analogous legal and financial recognition by the government: "In its negotiations and compromises in grafting Italian neorealist aesthetics to an Indian studio-based realism, mainstream cinema lost the historical battle of neorealist status to state-supported filmmakers such as Ray."[54] Biswas has argued that while realism in Indian cinema is partly associated with Nehruvian nationalism, its full scope and diversity cannot be captured via a nationalist framework.[55] This "serious" aesthetic crucially also received legitimacy from recognition in international film festival circuits.[56] Satyajit Ray himself stressed the importance of foreign patronage in making his cinematic experiments possible.[57]

Moreover, in Indian cinema, realism was foregrounded as a facet of mainstream commercial cinema itself even after the genre division. Biswas notes, "A new popular film emerged around the same time that the new realist cinema arrived. It incorporated neorealist elements even as it launched an advanced dialogue with Hollywood—the 1950s films of Raj Kapoor and Guru Dutt are good examples."[58] And Manishita Dass observes that IPTA filmmakers, upon moving to work in Bombay cinema in the forties and fifties, "drew on the IPTA experiment to . . . fashion a mass cultural critique of the postcolonial nation-state's failure to extend the rights of social

citizenship to the vast majority of Indians."[59] This is also the case for West Pakistani cinema in Urdu of the fifties and sixties, where realist tropes and social critique of nationalism in commercial cinema include films directed by W. Z. Ahmed, Luqman, Hassan Tariq, Khalil Qaiser, and Riaz Shahid. Midcentury realism in South Asia thus cut across subnational (Bengali), national, and transnational orbits.

In sum, it is worth stressing not simply the divergent values of "serious" neorealist cinema from the commercially oriented social film but also their resonances—themes drawn from literary narratives and a shared focus on social issues. Nevertheless, the neorealist juncture of the fifties also created a dividing framework of production and reception that placed "serious" and "artistic" films *against* the mainstream popular cinema, even as the latter was partially realist as early as in 1940. This emergence of postwar realist cinema must also be seen in relation to the wider context of Cold War humanism globally.

## FORM AND STYLE IN ITALIAN NEOREALISM

The Italian background for the emergence of neorealism during and after the 1940s is that of a nation emerging from under fascist rule, with limited equipment and resources available to filmmakers after the end of the Second World War, and with continued extreme uneven development between the industrialized North and the impoverished South. For filmmakers working in South Asia in a context of linguistic and social heterogeneity and unevenness, also with limited technical and financial resources, but wanting to address serious topics such as poverty and exploitation, the ideas and aesthetics associated with Italian neorealism understandably had tremendous resonance.

Among the foundational theorizations of neorealism by Italian filmmakers and critics that remain salient to the South Asian context are key ideas of screenwriter and theorist Cesare Zavattini (1902–89), who, among his numerous contributions, wrote the screenplay for Vittorio De Sica's hugely influential film *The Bicycle Thief*.[60] In a manifesto published in English translation in 1953, Zavattini exhorts neorealism to avoid illusory narrative plots and stories in order to focus on the truth of everyday life. Since reality itself is "hugely rich," the filmmaker can create a film that will encourage people to "reflect . . . on the real things, exactly as they are." Zavattini marks a sharp distinction between Italian neorealism and American cinema, as in the latter, "reality is unnaturally filtered . . . lack of subjects

for films causes a crisis, but with us such a crisis is impossible. One cannot be short of themes while there is still plenty of reality."[61] He thus situates poverty itself as a plentiful resource for filmmakers, rather than rendering technical impediments as lacking. Zavattini accordingly repudiates congealed expectations of apparatus and infrastructure that attend to filmmaking as a capitalist artifact.[62]

This everyday reality can be apprehended by the neorealist filmmaker through "a minute, unrelenting, and patient search," which "must sustain the moral impulse . . . in an analytical documentary way."[63] The materials for the film must be brought together by exercising one's "poetic talents on location, we must leave our rooms and go, in body and mind, out to meet other people, to see and understand them."[64] This moral imperative has a technical and aesthetic dimension, in terms of the filmmaker's sensitivity and focus on seemingly minor sites, events, and characters, so that "when we have thought out a scene, we feel the need to 'remain' in it, because the single scene itself can contain so many echoes and reverberations, can even contain all the situations we may need."[65] He urges a turn away from a focus on individual heroism of characters and exhorts filmmakers to be sensitive to local linguistic expressions: "The best dialogue in films is always in dialect. Dialect is nearer to reality. In our literary and spoken language, the synthetic constructions and the words themselves are always a little false."[66] However, this focus on authentic and local linguistic expression will become a fraught issue for Visconti's *La Terra Trema* and also for *Jago Hua Savera*, as both films attempt to straddle fidelity to local authenticity with the problem of the film's implied audience and actual reception in metropolitan and global cine circuits.

## *JAGO HUA SAVERA* AND *LA TERRA TREMA*

*La Terra Trema* (The earth trembles, 1948) is an Italian neorealist film directed by Luchino Visconti. Although the film has been criticized for being didactic and stylistically unresolved,[67] it nevertheless remains a key milestone in the development of Italian neorealism and the subject of analysis by major film critics and theorists, such as André Bazin and Gilles Deleuze. A comparison between *La Terra Trema* and *Jago Hua Savera* elucidates the character of the latter. *La Terra Trema* focuses on the exploitation of fishermen in the Sicilian coastal village of Aci Trezza, considered remote, underdeveloped, and exotic to the inhabitants of cosmopolitan Rome. The film was sponsored by the Italian Communist Party and was

initially intended to be a documentary on the exploitation of the fisherfolk community. Visconti instead created a lengthy poetic and cinematic epic by adapting a late nineteenth-century novel by Giovanni Verga and using local, unprofessional actors. Bazin has observed that Visconti's camera deployed a deep depth of field both indoors and outdoors, so that all of the reality of Aci Trezza that came into the frame of the camera was always in-focus.[68] The mise-en-scène throughout the film remains resolutely situated in the inner and outdoor spaces of Aci Trezza, which produces the effect of oppression and claustrophobia in the viewer, in sympathy with the perceived worldview of the suffering villagers.[69]

One of the fascinations for Visconti in the site of Aci Trezza was that it had scarcely changed at all since Verga described it in his novel, sixty years earlier. The location has powerful mythical associations with the Homeric epics and with Ovid's *Metamorphosis* that are evoked in both the novel and in Visconti's film. In a detailed study of the site in Verga's novel and earlier photography that informed the making of *La Terra Trema*, Noa Steimatsky has noted that "Visconti's prospects for a Marxist" series of films that might suggest "an impending revolution" is "disrupted already in Verga by an enclosed, cyclical, rhythmic sense of time, a mythical order of fate."[70] Visconti departs from other neorealist film in that rather than repudiating myth, *La Terra Trema* instead embraces the epic mythical aura of the site and situates its natural setting and built form as a theatrical set for the ensuing drama enacted by the actors—who are not only individual and encompass the life of the village itself as a totality.[71]

By contrast, the fishing village of Shaitnol on the banks of the Meghna River is endowed with no such archaic myth but is instead imagined in *Jago Hua Savera* in the context of postwar humanism, which I discuss later in this chapter. Film critic Alamgir Kabir has compared the extended opening scene of *Jago Hua Savera* to that of *La Terra Trema*.[72] Both open with an extended lyrical take several minutes long, in which humble fishing boats slowly return back to the shore at twilight. In both films, this creates a mood of immersion in the lifeworlds of the locations, echoing Zavattini's call for "cinema's original and innate capacity for showing things that we believe worth showing, as they happen day by day—in . . . their longest and truest duration."[73] *Jago Hua Savera* maintains this mood of immersion in everyday life throughout the film, an aesthetic that was brilliantly deployed earlier by Satyajit Ray in *Pather Panchali*. In *Jago Hua Savera*, certain visual tropes are effectively repeated: the face of Ganju's paralyzed mother, the emphasis

FIG. 1.4. Fishing boats at Shaitnol. *Jago Hua Savera* (1959). © Anjum Taseer, courtesy of Anjum Taseer.

on the structure, silhouette, and architectonics of the boats, the preparation and eating of rice, the torn vests of the fishermen, and the lyrical riverine landscape (figure 1.4).

The picturesque rendering of the landscape in *Jago Hua Savera*, aspects of which one might also find in a documentary promoting tourism, is an aesthetic issue that neorealism faces at large. Torunn Haaland notes that for Zavattini, the neorealism film is a "lingering in the intersection between anthropological study and a poetic discovery," premised upon "the director's artistic autonomy and presence in the reality encountered." This vantage provides "subjectivity of selection and perspective," which are "decisively . . . creative acts. This essentially is what distinguishes the [neorealist] social documents from documentaries."[74] Bazin also stressed these ideas—for both thinkers, "realism appears to be a question of integral representation, to be achieved through uninterrupted long takes."[75] The experience of the viewer then becomes an immersive phenomenological encounter with the filmed event or object: "Zavattini defines [this] as *pedinamento* or the act of shadowing . . . that reveals the multifarious aspects and dimensions

of the studied object, decidedly emancipating the spectator from all *a priori* interpretations."[76] The lengthy opening shots of both *La Terra Trema* and *Jago Hua Savera* can thus be understood as orienting the viewer into an immersive experiential perception of the mise-en-scène, in order to prepare for the encounter with lifeworlds starkly different from those of the films' audiences. The long takes and depth of field in the films' cinematography immerse the viewer in-location, which is animated by actors whose characters are drawn from everyday life.

Both films primarily subject everyday life to their scrutiny and conclude on an expectation of the future horizon that is freighted with the possibility of change. While exploitation is present throughout social and temporal incidences and cannot be dislodged in a single transformative event, and while the cycle of time still retains its hold, there is the suggestion of "the unsustainable nature of these hitherto unchanging realities" in *La Terra Trema*, as well as in *Jago Hua Savera*.[77] In the latter, the film closes with Kasim being engaged to Mala, and with Mian and his family more united than ever. The family has been exposed to the healing power of modern medicine, which means that the future generation will not be afflicted by being disabled, unlike Mian's wife, who suffers daily. And they are now aware that their savings aggregated together is already close to meeting Lal Mian's asking price for a boat. The endless cycle of unremitting stasis and exploitation is thus not fated to continue forever. This sensibility is brought out subtly but powerfully in *Jago Hua Savera*.

## HUMANISM AND PROGRESSIVE CINEMA

The difference in worldviews between the lives of the characters and the lives of filmgoers is central to both films in their concern with authentic and exotic locale. While *La Terra Trema*'s site of Aci Trezza becomes resonant via Visconti's epic archaism, *Jago Hua Savera* draws on the trope of timeless continuity-in-adversity of Bengali riverine life, which was not only resorted to in Renoir's *The River* but also had a hold on West Pakistani conceptions of East Pakistan. Consider, for example, a photo essay titled "River Life in East Pakistan" by A. B. Rajput, published in the journal *Pakistan Quarterly* in 1964. In keeping with the journal's national developmentalist agenda and its celebration of diverse facets of Pakistani cultural life, the essay weaves statistical details about commerce on East Pakistani rivers with touristic observations. All the photographs accompanying the text are picturesque. The essay characteristically concludes on a lyrical note that

acknowledges hardship but subsumes it within aesthetic pleasure of human accommodation to the cycles of the natural order:

> The rivers of East Pakistan, thus, hum with unceasing activity, day and night, with boats carrying passengers and cargo, with men and womenfolk bathing, washing, fishing and filling the air with soft melodious music of flutes and sentimental songs. The day dawns with a beautiful breeze and the rays of the sun gradually turn the silvery water into liquid gold. The entire area around is full of green glory, providing a romantic background to the golden-brown hamlets. . . . Life goes on unabated, full of adventure and supreme satisfaction in these highly romantic yet extremely precarious conditions, and this has been going on since time immemorial.[78]

It bears stressing that this is not simply the specific colonialist view held by urbane West Pakistanis.[79] Zakir Hossain Raju has argued that two early Bengali-language films released from Dhaka in 1956 and 1960 portray the region as "a rural idyll . . . depicting the riverine landscape of the delta and its beauty."[80] Cyclical time had been arrayed earlier in *The River*. And in the post–Second World War context of the Cold War, human experience in traditional societies and its place in eternal cycles was widely disseminated by influential magazines such as *Life*, whose photo essays depicted life in traditional and rural locales around the world with precisely such tropes.[81] The celebrated exhibition *The Family of Man* (1955–ongoing), curated by Edward Steichen, which traveled globally over decades, also reiterated this sense of humanist realism; its mythological presumptions Roland Barthes has incisively critiqued.[82] The prominence of this midcentury Western documentary aesthetic must be viewed in the modernization theory context of the Cold War—in which social transformation would be achieved primarily by modernization directed from above, rather than by leftist, collective, or community mobilization from below. Unlike revolutionary or leftist depictions of workers, strikers, or peasants engaged in struggle against exploitation and transformation, Western postwar midcentury humanist realism also works as a prophylactic against the more radical claims that visual and performative realism could marshal via Marxist and leftist initiatives, some of which were prevalent in Bengal of the 1940s with the activities of IPTA and the work of artists like Chittoprasad (1915–78), who executed his politically charged expressionist figurative works in inexpensive prints in order to reach broad audiences.[83] Pakistan's alliance with the United States from the very beginning meant that in establishment publications such as

*Pakistan Quarterly*, traditional society was viewed in humanist terms as eternal and passive, with transformation to be bestowed upon it from statist, institutional, and capitalist developments.

Against this cultural and ideational landscape, *Jago Hua Savera* can be seen as a project caught between eternal humanism and a recognition of the need for change to arise from below. A clue is provided by the rhetoric employed in the film booklet: "East Pakistan is a land of rivers. . . . In such a land, there live many communities remote from the hubub [sic] of modern civilization. . . . This is a story of the people of the river: of those who spend their life, in dazzling sun and blinding rain, to hunt for fish that swarm the surrounding waters . . . of their little human weakness and strength . . . and deep down of their undaunted, undefeatable spirit."

As is evident, these tropes of ethnographic fascination with remote people whose lives are synchronized with natural cycles are no departure from those deployed by A. B. Rajput above and with Cold War humanism in general. One can, however, posit that *Jago Hua Savera* is both complicit in and critical of this view. In lyrically celebrating the unchanging rhythms of Bengal's riverine village life, *Jago Hua Savera* partakes in West Pakistani exoticism.[84] However, as a neorealist film, it also poetically dwells on the sensory and material character of the environment and attempts to inhabit the lifeworld of the protagonists. It proffers both continuity and change—the cycle will repeat again, but the present traversing of it has introduced a consciousness of exploitation and the promise of modernity in many of its characters. This is not a strongly revolutionary stance that proffers that conditions for dramatic transformation are immanent, but it's not fully a humanist one either.

The booklet's excited description of *Jago Hua Savera*'s pioneering cinematic accomplishment as a kind of conquest is therefore also in character with the tropes of exoticism.[85] The unsettling militarist metaphors in it notwithstanding, it is the case that conditions for filming were difficult and the infrastructure lacking—this is confirmed by the anecdotes narrated by cinematographer Walter Lassally in his memoir.[86] However, the booklet's claim of the pioneering inexperience of the filmmakers must be tempered with the proficiency and perspective the international team members brought to the project. Still, given the inexperience of the director and many of the key personnel involved and, far more significantly, the absence of critical discourse in Pakistan on cinema, we must evaluate *Jago Hua Savera* as a pioneering experiment, rather than the product of a thriving environment

in which such a film project would have emerged within established local precedents in critique and praxis.[87]

## ANALYSIS OF SONGS

Songs in *Jago Hua Savera* condense many of the issues discussed above and merit closer examination. The opening and closing sequences of the film with lyrical long takes are attended by the incantation of the poem "Bhor hū'ī ghar āo maṉjhī" (It's dawn, return home boatman), alongside plaintive melodious notes from a single flute, evoking a sense of extended temporality and relationship of human presence within the sensory materiality of nature.[88] The film opens with a long take, an extreme wide-angle shot that divides the screen in half, with the open sky above and water below, over which the titles and credits appear. In the distance, some twenty boats with fluttering white sails are visible. Swaying gently, the camera traverses the space, immersing the viewer in the journey across the water. The song bridges the journey's crepuscular atmosphere into a stilled darkness in which stationary boats with lowered sails and the fishermen are etched by strongly directional lantern light, a realm marked by extended waiting and sudden exertion. After hauling fish, as the fish gasp for air, Kasim and Mian struggle to catch their breath, presenting themselves as precarious and vulnerable beings also.

The next song, "Ab kyā dekheṉ rāh tumhārī" (Still waiting for your return), also plays extradiegetically, this time attending the sequence when Kasim first goes to fetch Mala. He stands up alone in a boat and maneuvers the vessel in waterways with a bamboo staff. The sequence is a combination of long shots and medium close-ups of the upper half of Kasim's laboring body and of his legs planted on the deck of the boat. Faiz's diction is simple in both poems and draws on Bhojpuri and registers of North Indian languages with folk associations. In both songs, lyrics are set to compositions that recall folk music. Lotte Hoek and Sanjukta Sunderason have noted that these songs are modeled after *bhatiali*, a folk form sung by boatmen especially in East Bengal—these were also deployed "in the Left's national-popular rhetoric in the 1940s."[89]

In her detailed study of music in IPTA productions, Sumangala Damodaran observes, "The use of the 'folk' idiom and the need to focus on it . . . was the subject of much discussion within the IPTA tradition . . . particularly in terms of its identification as 'truly people's music.'"[90] Indeed, IPTA's

1946 Annual Report accorded a special and elevated status to folk traditions in the Bengal, in relation to other regions of South Asia: "Where classical influence is least felt, folk art has its richest traditions. Having no big temples as in the South or big royal courts like those of the Mughals and Rajput princes as in the North, before the coming of the British, where classical dance and music grew to its full stature under the patronage of princes and priests, Bengal developed its folk forms of art almost to a perfection. Today among all the provinces it is perhaps the richest in folk music, dance and drama."[91] Damodaran notes that when artists use folk songs, usually the songs would be presented "as they were," in order to introduce them to urbanized audiences.[92] However, in IPTA, the fidelity of folk music motifs to their original form was also a subject of contentious debate, as Anuradha Roy points out.[93] It may be recalled that Tripti Mitra and Timir Baran had been associated with IPTA and would have been deeply familiar with this debate.[94]

A *bhatiali* song is included in the Smithsonian collection *Folk Music of Pakistan* (1951), which was compiled with the assistance of the Pakistani government.[95] Willem van Schendel observes that radio broadcasts in rural areas had popularized such folk songs across East Bengal.[96] A translation of a poem mentioning *bhatiali* was published in *Pakistan Quarterly* in 1954. The poet Jasimuddin published a six-page article in *Pakistan Quarterly* in 1956, explaining various styles of folk music in East Bengal that included *bhatiali*.[97] Kardar and Faiz's exposure to *bhatiali* is thus also no mystery. But in *Jago Hua Savera*, the songs have been rendered into a North Indian linguistic register. Can we posit that the two songs are transcreations when rendered in the linguistic registers of Bhojpuri and Purbi? And if so, can this move be situated with reference to the IPTA debates regarding how closely to adhere to folk forms when deploying them in a progressive framework?

The third song was markedly different. And as noted above, only the local version of the film included a song-and-dance sequence in color, with a selection of verses from Faiz's poem "Shīshoṉ kā masīḥa ko'ī nahīṉ" (The shattered glass has no savior), and are reproduced in the *Jago Hua Savera* booklet. Here, the diction is closer to Urdu, with more Persianized vocabulary: is this choice of diction an implied critique of West Pakistani linguistic and economic colonialism over East Pakistan?[98] The song was reportedly performed as playback in the film by noted *ghazal* singer Iqbal Bano, "whose melodious voice had a spellbinding effect on the listeners," writes Agha Nasir, former managing director of Pakistan Television. Nasir's

observations are valuable in providing us with a sense of the character of this lost song sequence:

> The film is in black and white, but the scenes with the dancer Rakhshi are in color. They show a large hall in a magnificent mansion, where a spirited party with a dancer is carrying on [*maḥfil-i raqs-o surūd barpā hai*], with big landlords, industrial tycoons, high government officers, and corrupt politicians in attendance. The door to the hall is closed. Outside the mansion in semi darkness, the poor faithful servants overhear what's transpiring inside. The cameraman shot these scenes with great skill and ingenuity, such that the shift between color and black and white clearly signified the stark difference between the exploiter and the exploited.[99]

In his memoirs, however, Lassally recalls only the difficulties in filming this sequence: "To complicate matters further, A. J. [Kardar] had inserted a short colour sequence in the film, a musical number intended to be included only in the version of the film to be released locally—in fact considered essential for obtaining a local release at all. But the shooting of this musical sequence caused us a lot of headaches, the first being the set—the only one to be built inside the stage—which represented the living room of a smart modern villa."[100]

Nasir's remarks underscore the importance of the song, but Lassally clearly does not accord much significance to it. While in Lassally's recollection, this song was yet another "complication," Nasir's remarks stress how the aesthetics of the song and the cinematography underscore the film's symbolic message. How to understand this sharply contrasting significance of the song? And what to make of the aesthetic disjuncture—between color employed only for this sequence and black-and-white for the entire remaining film? The song sequence has unfortunately not surfaced so far, but we can speculate on its role based on the two remarks above.

In South Asian cinematic lexicon, an "item number" is a sexualized song-and-dance sequence gratuitously inserted in a cinematic narrative in order to increase audiences, often where the female dancer has no other role in the film.[101] Indeed, in *Jago Hua Savera*, Rakhshi's screen presence is limited only to this sequence. Nevertheless, Nasir's remarks suggest that this sequence has importance beyond its "item number" status and greatly contributes to the film's meaning in the South Asian context by distilling the sense of social disparity in a heightened and concentrated affective register. Which audiences are being activated by this song? Does inclusion of this

possibly melodramatic picturization of "Shīshoṉ kā masīḥa ko'ī nahīṉ" only for *local* distribution cause *Jago Hua Savera* to vacillate between the neorealist and the social film genres but remain a "serious" film when seen abroad? Is this an instantiation of the Lahore effect discussed in the introduction, inserted in order to resonate with local audiences? We cannot definitively answer the latter question without viewing the lost song sequence, but Anna Morcom's gloss of the term *filmi* is suggestive: "the larger-than-life, showy, glittery, glamourous and overly dramatic film world, as opposed to the ordinary and mundane real world."[102] Do these breaches of form, between color and black-and-white footage, and the inclusion of a *filmi*, or commercial song and dance for a local audience in an otherwise austerely shot and scored film, suggest that we might understand this film's composition as a kind of pastiche, or an assemblage that flexes the Lahore effect? This quality of artifice is also underscored by the *bhatiali* songs that are not presented here "as they were" and as IPTA practitioners would have done but recast in Bhojpuri and Purbi and composed as extradiegetic aurality in an otherwise neorealist film.

## LANGUAGE AND THE LIMITS OF HUMANISM

*Jago Hua Savera* positions itself between the humanist focus on the observation of difference that is primordial and eternal, and offering a critique of economic and social exploitation and suggesting that existing conditions are unsustainable. The difficulties of this straddling are most evident on the question of linguistic aporia, across which subaltern voices are translated into dominant linguistic registers. In *La Terra Trema*, Visconti had followed a peculiar strategy of deploying Sicilian as the spoken language of the film, rather than Italian. The dialogue was first developed with the actors, "without a pre-established script, allowing the performers to form their characters and formulate the most authentic ways of expressing a given narrative situation or certain sentiments."[103] But once finalized, the dialogue was "endlessly rehearsed to ensure clarity," lending a sense of stilted unnaturalness to the final performance. Haaland stresses that "no other film encapsulates the oral quality of neorealism or its exclusion of standard Italian with such rigour and with such sacrifices."[104] And Ray has observed that the acting is "deliberate and stylized to the point of ballet."[105] The voiceover in Italian interferes with the call for phenomenological immersion that the visuals hearken toward. Haaland notes that this creates a sense of "estrangement" and disturbs the viewing experience, leading to the film's

poor reception, but "this anti-realistic effect may forge critical moments of self-awareness Visconti himself would have known in approaching the long-neglected South as a privileged Northerner."[106]

The role of language in *Jago Hua Savera* is in some ways opposite to that of *La Terra Trema*. In *Jago Hua Savera*, the dialogue is spare, and meaning is conveyed primarily by cinematic composition. And rather than rigorously using a local vernacular in its dialogue, *Jago Hua Savera* deploys mostly a kind of pidgin North Indian language register understandable to Hindi and Urdu speakers. At rare moments, female characters do speak very briefly in Bengali, but they do not speak much throughout the film.[107] The eccentric language in the film was "a peculiar mixture" of simplified Urdu and Bengali that was "easily understandable to neither communities," which contributed to its failure, according to Alamgir Kabir.[108] Naeem Mohaiemen has termed the film an "iconic, but ill-fated, hybrid (featuring an invented Urdu patois for East Bengal)."[109] Rather than seeing linguistic difference itself as an issue that the film might have addressed in narrative terms, the film instead posits a kind of synthetic resolution, using a form that emphasizes cinematic and visual compositions and editing, but spare dialogue, to strive toward broader intelligibility. And the larger framing of the project itself brings up issues of how subalternity is viewed from the vantage of gendered privilege—in this case with the additional twist that it was enjoyed by the largely West Pakistani team of filmmakers.

The film was not alone in this striving toward a shared intelligibility between Urdu and Bengali. For example, a 1959 essay in the establishment-oriented *Pakistan Quarterly* argued on the basis of linguistic evidence that dominant regional languages of North India and West Pakistan and including Urdu and Bengali were derived from a common "primitive Prakrit" origin.[110] Rather than evaluating the merits of the essay's argument, here I underscore the choice of the theme itself, which stresses a shared history that spans all the major regional languages of East and West Pakistan and includes Urdu in its capacious ambit. Moreover, the text of the essay is placed in a symbolic graphic layout, framed by letters of the Urdu and Bangla alphabets. The left column is composed of Urdu letters linked together with calligraphic flourishes, while the right column attempts the same with the Bangla alphabet. On the top, the calligraphed English title is comparatively small in size and placed in a dominant field of floating elements composed of the letters of the two alphabets and foliate patterns. The quest for linguistic breadth that would override the difference between Bengali and Urdu is thus enacted here through aesthetic form as well.

But by 1959, the year of *Jago Hua Savera*'s release and the publication of the article discussed above, this project of harmony was already freighted. The question of language differences between East and West Pakistan had emerged in 1948, right after the creation of Pakistan.[111] The 1952 language movement was suppressed violently; it became central to the consciousness of East Pakistanis in subsequent years, and it is commemorated by the Shaheed Minar located at the center of Dhaka, first erected in 1952 in a makeshift guerrilla act during curfew. (In its permanent form, it is perhaps Bangladesh's most iconic monument now.) And *Hamari Zaban* (Our language), a film produced in Karachi whose theme is reported to assert the position of Urdu against Bengali, had been released in 1955.[112] The issue of language would have been quite a central problem, especially for leftist intellectuals, who had already witnessed the traumatic effects of the Partition, in which the Hindi-Urdu divide was central.

The specific linguistic character of Faiz's contribution to the lyrics and the dialogue of *Jago Hua Savera* can perhaps be understood through Aamir Mufti's detailed analysis of a poem by Faiz written in 1965, right after the war between India and Pakistan. Mufti notes that in the poem "Sipāhī kā marṣiyā" (Soldier's elegy), Faiz eschews the Persianate diction of "high" Urdu and instead "turns to an idiom whose resonances are . . . 'Hindavi.'" Mufti further notes, "The poem opens up a window on the vast linguistic-literary vista—Braj, Avadhi, Bhojpuri, Dakhni, Maithli, Rajasthani, to name just a handful of the vernacular language forms that the northern region (and its southern outposts) have produced over the centuries—that has been occluded from view in the standardization of rival 'Hindi' and 'Urdu' registers. . . . [In the poem] the surface of modern language is peeled off to reveal submerged sounds and meanings."[113] One might therefore consider the experiment in the language of *Jago Hua Savera* analogously: as an attempt to bring the intimate stranger into an affective relation with the self. Nevertheless, one notes that Bengali remains absent in the linguistic register Mufti has identified above, falling outside intelligibility even by this expanded North Indian linguistic register. The problem of linguistic incommunicability in *Jago Hua Savera* thus could not be addressed by dialogic incorporation toward a greater synthesis.

On the other hand, it is also the case that progressive writers were concerned to focus on issues of social exploitation that would elicit wider solidarities, rather than focusing on ethnic and linguistic divisions that were fuel to the fires of communal divisions and violence that led to and attended the 1947 Partition. Moreover, an argument can be made that during the late

fifties, a film attempting to reach a wider audience in South Asia (including eastern Bengal) might deploy the widely legible and simplified Hindi-Urdu that Bombay cinema had broadly popularized. David Lunn and Madhumita Lahiri have independently argued that "Hindustani" emerged as a spoken composite idiom that developed in the commercial films from Bombay after the arrival of the talkies in 1931.[114] Lahiri notes,

> Unfolding in the Marathi speaking region of western India, with numerous Bengali, Punjabi and Urdu speakers in the mix, Hindustani, in the sense of a mixed, accessible argot becomes the *de facto* and *de jure* language of this commercial sound cinema known as Bollywood, which I use here to refer to a consolidated filmmaking idiom, not simply any film made in Bombay (now Mumbai). The language . . . is a flexible, miscible, endlessly expanding collage, using the syntactical structure common to Hindi and Urdu, but throwing in words from other languages at will: Persian, Sanskrit, Punjabi.[115]

Although commercial films' aesthetics have been endlessly disparaged by purists, this is an arena in which serious writers affiliated with the Progressive Writers' Association consciously participated. They had been committed to Hindustani as a language that could overcome regional and religious divides. And in a largely nonliterate South Asia of the mid-twentieth century, they understood film's vast potential to address audiences far beyond the reach of other mediums. It's worth stressing that many Hindi-Urdu films had been produced in Calcutta, including several in the mid-1930s by director Abdul Rashid Kardar (none other than the brother of A. J. Kardar). Bengal was thus no stranger to the production and circulation of Hindi-Urdu cinema. Indeed, the use of an idiom that Bombay and Lahore cinemas had helped forge was also prevalent in cinema in both East and West Pakistan, and Dhaka in the 1960s emerged as an important center for filmmaking in Urdu, with over fifty releases by 1971.[116] Moreover, exchange of film personnel between Lahore and Dhaka was not unusual, and Lotte Hoek has argued, "Between 1958 and 1971, the film industry of Pakistan straddled Lahore, Karachi, and Dhaka in a cross-wing love affair between stars and audiences, producers and profit, directors and fame, which could not always be assigned exclusively to either East or West, Urdu or Bengali."[117]

On the other hand, East Bengal's focus on Bengali-language cultural forms during the mid-twentieth century marked its departure from the

multiple porous layers of cultural forms in Calcutta and West Bengal. Willem van Schendel has stressed that emerging developments in East Bengal after 1947 were forging a new national cultural trajectory that diverged from both Calcutta and Lahore, one that was "not bilingual (Bengali–English or Bengali–Urdu)," and in which expression in Bengali language was central.[118] Consequently, the absence of Bengali-language materials or explanation, in *Jago Hua Savera*'s opening credits, as substantive dialogue, as song, as subtitle, or in the booklet, is telling—it marks the unawareness in West Pakistani intelligentsia of the specificity of the emerging public linguistic and cultural sphere in East Pakistan.

*Jago Hua Savera* is best seen as an experimental project and a kind of opening gambit, rather than a product of a mature ecology of serious, experimental filmmaking accompanied by a robust discursive reception that would subject such ventures to critical scrutiny in Pakistan. It might have been received as a serious film in a wider South Asian context, and as we have seen, its production and its theme emphatically invite such a reception. But political and cultural currents ran in the reverse direction. Growing tensions between India and Pakistan since the fifties led to the banning of new Indian films in Pakistan by 1962. The 1965 war between India and Pakistan put an end to all exchange of films across borders. Widespread racism among West Pakistanis toward the inhabitants of East Pakistan also foreclosed genuine critical possibilities for dialogic understanding across languages, ethnicities, and lifeworlds. In contrast to the parallel cinema that developed in India with government support, in Pakistan conditions of patronage and reception were not conducive to build upon the experiment in a sustained manner.[119] The project of leftist filmmaking in Lahore's cinema, however, continued in a commercial register in the films of Khalil Qaiser and Riaz Shahid of the late fifties and sixties that examine minor and subaltern lives under exploitative circumstances.

The project of *Jago Hua Savera* also had to confront impassable aporias: its relevance for local publics and its legibility in the film festival circuit abroad, its breach of neorealist aesthetics in its songs and dialogue, and the strangeness of its linguistic register as it sought to overcome divides that were to become intractable. Moreover, as primarily the vision of West Pakistanis, *Jago Hua Savera* was caught between a humanism that saw rural life in East Bengal as lyrical and timeless and a progressive stance that viewed these conditions as exploitative and unsustainable. Alamgir Kabir was sharply critical of the film precisely for its awkward language and for its exoticizing of the riverine landscape of East Bengal. Nevertheless, his

comment that *Jago Hua Savera* "still remains the only example of efficient film-making in Pakistan," published in his book as late as in 1969, suggests that Kabir also valued its cinematic approach, as well as the questions that it raised, as being important for subsequent serious cinema to grapple with.[120]

*Jago Hua Savera* moreover asks important questions about the relevance of an artistic form for its historical, social, and aesthetic significance. To what degree is fidelity to a genre like neorealism meaningful in a South Asia, where the commercial film has long reigned supreme? Who are the publics for a socially relevant cinema? How does a narrative artistic form overcome ethnicity, language, and other differences in its address without losing its locational specificity? A group of filmmakers associated with Khurshid Anwar, who addressed many of these questions in a lyric and romantic register, is examined in chapter 2. Their melodramatic films are suffused with pathos and melancholy, as they grapple with the sundering of local lifeworlds by a corrosive capitalist modernity and with the growing consolidation of an amnesiac nationalism in Pakistan in the wake of the Partition of 1947.