

2 LYRIC ROMANTICISM

Khurshid Anwar's Music and Films

MUSIC, WRITING, AND DIRECTION IN THE FILMS OF KHURSHID Anwar (1912–84) weave centrally around the conflict between the “East” and the “West.”¹ While this is a stock theme in commercial Indian and Pakistani cinema, Anwar renders this tension distinctive by the role music plays in its invitation to heal the unbearable implications of this divide. His films notate tremendous ambiguities in the staging of the East-West rift and create a modality less defined by rigid polarities than by immersion in a fraught process of becoming. In a further twist, the “East” here has a prelapsarian evocation that harks back to a conception of India before its dismemberment by the trauma of the Partition in 1947. In this sense, this elegiac body of work is suffused with a melancholic romanticism and offers an implied address that is sharply at variance with the claims of Pakistani nationalism. Rather, post-1947 realities only amplify the deep psychic damage within the films’ sensitive and traumatized characters.

During the 1940s and early 1950s, Anwar had worked as a music director in Bombay and later continued this career in Pakistan. Renowned as a peerless music director in Lahore, he is also considered one of the most sophisticated directors of Pakistani cinema, as well as a writer and producer (figure 2.1). In his Lahore films, he worked closely with major cultural practitioners, including the director Masood Pervaiz (1918–2001), the author and playwright Imtiaz Ali Taj (1900–1970), poets Qateel Shifai (1919–2001) and Tanvir Naqvi (1919–72), the star actress and singer Noor Jehan (1926–2000), and the playback singers Naheed Niazi and Zubeida Khanum (1935–2013). His collaborations with Masood Pervaiz resulted in a small number of significant films—*Intezar* (The awaiting, 1956), *Zehr-e Ishq* (Poison of love, 1958), *Koel* (Nightingale, 1959), and *Heer Ranjha* (1970). Noted Urdu poet Qateel Shifai wrote *Zehr-e Ishq*’s lyrics, and famous playwright Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj provided the dialogue.

Taj has played a key role in the revival of Mughal historicals in Indian cinema—he had originally written the play *Anarkali* (1922), which ignited



FIG. 2.1. Khurshid Anwar (back toward camera) with musicians, c. 1957. Courtesy Khwaja Khurshid Anwar Trust.

the phenomenon of Anarkali revivalism that spanned decades, as discussed in the introduction.² As an Urdu playwright, Taj can be viewed as a successor to Agha Hashr Kashmiri (1879–1935), a most important playwright of Parsi theater during the early twentieth century.³ A significant genre of silent and early sound cinema relayed the presentation of spectacle, frontal orientation, and declamatory Urdu rhetoric characteristic of Parsi theater into cinema as late as the 1950s.⁴ Taj was also a key player in the Lahore literary arena.⁵ His remarkable career includes his prolific writings, his considerable organizational work in promoting Urdu literature, his deep involvement with theater, and his work with cinema in Bombay and Lahore.⁶

KHURSHID ANWAR'S EARLY YEARS

Khurshid Anwar began his career in cinema as a music director in 1940 and later directed several important films during the 1960s and 1970s. Anwar is a multifaceted persona. Born in 1912 in Mianwali in Punjab, he attended Government College in Lahore, from where he received a master's degree in philosophy in 1935. After working in Delhi at All India Radio for a year, he moved to Bombay in 1940 to begin work in the cinema as a music director. The last

Bombay film he was involved with was *Neelam Pari* (The sapphire fairy, 1952). His career in Lahore cinema commenced with his role as writer and music director for *Intezar* (1956), which is discussed later in this chapter. His involvement with Lahore cinema includes his work as a music director, as a screenplay writer, and as director for a series of important films for over a decade.

Anwar was music director for *Koel* (Nightingale, 1959), *Ayaz* (1960), *Haveli* (Mansion, 1964), *Sarhad* (Border, 1966), *Heer Ranjha* (1970), and *Salam e Mohabbat* (Salutations of love, 1971), among others. In addition, Anwar was music director, screenwriter, and producer for six key films: *Intezar* (The awaiting, 1956), *Zehr-e Ishq* (Poison of love, 1958), *Jhoomer* (The jeweled forehead pendant, 1959), *Ghoonghat* (The veil, 1962), *Chingari* (Spark, 1964), and *Hamraz* (The confidant, 1967). Anwar was also director of three of these: *Ghoonghat* (1962), *Chingari* (1964), and *Hamraz* (1967), while the earlier three—*Intezar* (1956), *Zehr-e Ishq* (1958), and *Jhoomer* (1959)—were directed by Masood Pervaiz. These, along with *Koel* (1959), also directed by Pervaiz, will be the general focus of this chapter, but I focus in depth on *Intezar* and *Ghoonghat*. The close association of Anwar and Pervaiz in writing, composing, producing, and directing this cluster of films offers a reiterative vision for the ambitions of this romanticist project, which unfolds across a decade, and in which they are joined by poets Qateel Shifai and Tanvir Naqvi and by the singer Noor Jehan.

Born in a prominent and well-off family, Anwar was exposed to music and theater from an early age.⁷ His father, a barrister by profession, is reported to have possessed a massive library of books and a gigantic collection of gramophone records, and he held regular musical gatherings in his home in which major exponents of Hindustani music would perform.⁸ Apart from this broad exposure to literature and music, Anwar mentions his study of music with Ustad Tawakkul Hussain Khan, whom even the renowned Hindustani classical singer Bade Ghulam Ali Khan considered to be a rival.⁹ Anwar also mentions writing poetry in his early years, successfully contributing to leading literary journals: “*Nairang-i-Khayal* was the top literary magazine of those days. I got one of my *ghazals* [lyric poems] published in it when I was merely a child studying in the 8th class. In Government College, Faiz and [poet] Noon Meer Rashid were my seniors by one and two years, respectively. We all wrote poetry and got it published here and there. [Poet] Akhtar Sherani once opined in his magazine *Rooman* . . . that out of these three, young poets Khurshid Anwar seemed to be the most promising. But that was when we were really young.”¹⁰

Anwar's father was also very keen on theater. Attending theatrical performances at a young age fired Anwar's imagination. "I used to sneak off to the theatre pretty regularly. Upon being caught once I was granted official permission by my father to attend whenever there was theatre around."¹¹ In memoirs published in the Urdu newspaper *Imroze* as fifteen serialized weekly interviews in 1983, Anwar recounts that from childhood he had an excellent grasp of acting and screenplay writing, which helped him in his later career in the cinema when preparing scripts and directing.¹² Anwar describes his early love for theater while he was still in school in class 6 or 7.¹³ He would frequently stay up late at night to attend theater performances to such a degree that he would fall asleep during school the next day.¹⁴ Anwar describes meeting in 1935 the playwright Rafi Peer, who had returned from Germany to Lahore and was living at the home of someone related to Anwar's family. Anwar, who was twenty-three years old, was deeply inspired by Peer's consuming commitment to the theater. Peer would work late hours engaged in solitary writing and in production with the actors. With Peer's encouragement, Anwar wrote his first play, which was broadcast by All India Radio in cities across India. In Lahore, the play was first produced by Rafi Peer and subsequently by Imtiaz Ali Taj.¹⁵

In 1935, Anwar passed his MA exams in philosophy from Government College. He came in as First Division, the only one to have achieved this distinction in some thirty years, and was awarded a gold medal. Subsequently, upon his father's insistence, he traveled to Delhi to take the Indian Civil Service (ICS) exams in 1936. According to Anwar, while he achieved high evaluations in all his written papers, he did poorly in the oral examinations, as the British authorities did not wish him to succeed due to his prior record and imprisonment for anti-British activity, which is discussed below.¹⁶

Anwar appears to have become increasingly involved with music after his ICS exams. He joined Lahore's newly formed radio station as a program producer, subsequently moving to Delhi circa 1939 to join All India Radio (AIR).¹⁷ The blog commentator Harjap Singh Aujla notes, "Patras Bukhari was a bigwig at All India Radio Delhi. Khurshid Anwar knew him. . . . There was no dearth of poets in India at that time. Thus, there was plenty of good poetry to make tunes. Khurshid Anwar loved his tryst in New Delhi with the art of music composition."¹⁸ At AIR Delhi, Anwar introduced a new program titled "Duets with Dialogues," in which a male and a female voice would alternately sing of their desire, in lyrics written by poet Behzad

Lakhnawi. Due to the popularity of this program, Anwar began to receive letters from filmmakers in Bombay, requesting him to compose for the cinema. Around 1940, the Lahore-born Bombay cinema director Abdul Rashid Kardar (brother of A. J. Kardar, director of *Jago Hua Savera*, discussed in chapter 1) finally persuaded him to relocate to Bombay, a move that launched Anwar's career in cinema.¹⁹

Exposure to this rich cultural background, which Anwar was immersed in since his childhood, has been seen by critics to have provided him with resources for his future work as a music director. His knowledge of music further developed during his stint as a music programmer for radio in Lahore from 1936 and in Delhi circa 1939–40.²⁰

KHURSHID ANWAR'S BOMBAY YEARS

Anwar was music director in eleven films made in Bombay between 1941 and 1952. The films whose music was well received by the public included *Pagdandi* (The path) and *Parwana* (The moth), both released in 1947. The latter film was extensively viewed during the Partition violence of 1947, observes Aujla, whose father was witness to developments in the Punjab and North India during the turbulent forties:

Parwana starring brilliant singer actor K. L. Saigal and Suraiya catapulted Khurshid Anwar into the galaxy of all time great music director. All songs of this movie became hit[s]. . . . 1947 was not a good year for the film industry, in spite of that *Parwana* did a roaring business, not only in the Ganges Basin states, but in the most disturbed Province of Punjab. Lahore and Amritsar were witnessing bloodbaths of the worst order, but [the] film *Parwana* was doing great among the Muslims of Lahore and Sikhs and Hindus of Amritsar. Both cities . . . were drawing packed houses.²¹

From this experience, Anwar would have likely become more aware of the role of music in creating an immersive healing sensorium that affectively enacted a romantic mythos beyond the fractures of life in a divided post-colonial modernity.²² Anwar's last film in Bombay was *Neelam Pari* (1952). He had already moved permanently back to Lahore, but he returned to Bombay for a few weeks to finish this assignment.²³ Anwar's status in the Bombay film industry needs to be contextualized in the broader traffic between Bombay and Lahore after the emergence of the talkies in India in 1931.²⁴

The writer Ashraf Aziz has situated the modernity of film music during the 1930s onward as having been impacted by the “rhythmic/percussive assertiveness” drawn from the sonic aesthetics of the Punjab, while film historian Ashish Rajadhyaksha has argued for a broader “Lahore effect” that flexed from the thirties onward in Bombay and Lahore cinema.²⁵

Anwar’s career in Bombay overlaps with currents that led to the transformation of film music in Bombay. Anwar worked with the important singers Kundan Lal Saigal and Noor Jehan, and his compositions from 1947 onward are held in critical regard.²⁶ Although musicologist Gregory Booth does not list him as among the six key persons who precipitated the transformations toward the mature film song of the fifties, Anwar worked in Bombay cinema from 1940 till 1952, crucial years for the film song coming to maturity in its aural and narrative significance in the golden-age melodramatic cinema of the fifties and sixties, with which he would have been intimately familiar.²⁷

KHURSHID ANWAR’S POLITICAL ACTIVISM

To understand Khurshid Anwar’s songs and films from his mature career in the long sixties, it is essential to account for his seemingly unrelated involvement with resistance movements against the British during the late 1920s and early 1930s. This was when Anwar was about seventeen or eighteen years old. There are two facets to his youthful political involvement. First there is his exposure to Bhagat Singh’s trial, then there is Anwar’s own involvement in a clandestine resistance cell and his subsequent arrest and imprisonment.

One of the most iconic figures in the revolutionary struggles against the British in North India in the late 1920s—a time of the radicalization of young people—was Bhagat Singh (1907–31), who was executed by the British when he was only twenty-three years old. Singh had studied in Lahore and became politically radicalized there in his teens. He was a strategic thinker and a voracious reader, well-informed about historical and political developments internationally, including Marxist thought and radical nationalist movements in Europe.²⁸ Sometime between 1924 and 1926, Singh had founded the Naujawan Bharat Sabha (NJBBS), a youth organization with a socialist and nationalist orientation.²⁹ He also became a member of the Hindustan Republican Association (HRA), which later became the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA) in 1928, partly modeled after the Irish Republican Army (IRA).³⁰ The HSRA members carried out

several spectacular attacks against symbols of British authority. In these actions, they were drawing upon earlier nationalist struggles, as well as on the precedents set by episodes in international anarchism, rather than on the pacifist course adopted in the 1920s by Gandhi and the Indian National Congress, which the HSRA members viewed as being insufficient to address colonialism.

Singh was a highly charismatic leader. He wrote extensively and exploited print media and magic lantern presentations to inspire others to support revolutionary anticolonialism. An avowed atheist, he was resolutely anti-communal, rendering his movement appealing to various publics.³¹ In early 1929, Singh and one of his associates were arrested after they threw smoke bombs and leaflets in the Central Legislative Assembly in Delhi. These actions, which were accompanied by the pair proclaiming the revolutionary slogan “*inqilāb zindabād*” (long live revolution), were not intended to kill anyone but meant to rally public opinion toward revolutionary struggle. Consequently, the pair did not attempt to escape the scene after their disruption, inviting arrest.

Singh and B. K. Dutt surrendered themselves to the police on April 8, 1929. Their trial for the bombing was held in Delhi, leading to their sentence to life imprisonment on June 12, 1929. They had embraced the proceedings as an opportunity to proclaim their cause publicly, “to let the imperialist exploiters know that by crushing individuals, they cannot kill ideas.”³² Singh and his associates were subsequently moved to Lahore to undergo another trial, the second Lahore Conspiracy Case, or simply the Lahore Conspiracy Case, whose “charge sheet included thirty-two revolutionaries, comprising the entire Central Committee as well as the HSRA’s junior members.”³³ The protracted trial at the Magistrate’s Court, which started on July 10, 1929, and lasted for more than a year, was marked by the accused theatrically breaching court decorum, their rebellious spirits reverberating in the crowd chanting slogans outside.³⁴ The imprisonment and trial of HSRA associates on charges of bomb making and prior subversive activities attracted widespread concern across India, forcing the leaders of the Congress to support their cause in public. Despite the defiant spirit of many of the accused, the authorities had turned seven of the thirty-two into approvers, or collaborators with the British, who “would be subject to intimidation and violence inside and outside the court” by the public and one of whom was shot and killed in February 1930.³⁵ The court announced its verdict against Bhagat Singh on October 7, 1930. He and two others were to be sentenced to death by hanging, and seven others received life sentences.³⁶

The three were executed on March 23, 1931, hanged in Lahore Jail, their bodies secretly cremated by jail authorities and their ashes immersed in the Sutlej River in order to forestall their growing status as heroes and martyrs.³⁷

The tribulations of Bhagat Singh and his associates, and nationalist revolutionary rhetoric, were amplified among the public in oral and written registers. In addition to posters with images, prose and verse abounding in rhetorical flourish, much of it suffused with poetic tropes from Urdu, was also widely circulating and much discussed. Ram Prasad Bismil (1897–1927), a founding member of the HRA who had been executed in 1927 for the Kakori train robbery in 1925, had composed memorable revolutionary poetry in Hindi and Urdu that had continued to circulate. And in Bhagat Singh's purported last letter, written from jail on March 3, 1931, he wrote down several couplets of Urdu poetry.³⁸ This rich iconology of martyrdom began to develop during the days of the trial itself. Images of the imprisoned youthful HSRA members began to proliferate in posters and leaflets distributed in markets and meetings.³⁹ Bhagat Singh and his associates have also been the subject of several hagiographical movies over the years. Of interest here is the imbrication of their revolutionary politics with romantic cultural tropes, expressed in Urdu poetry, iconicity, and the moving image. Even though Khurshid Anwar's films in Lahore during the long sixties never directly address politics, the political realm remains adjacent to seemingly private tribulations when evoked via these mediums and cultural registers.

Recent scholarship on Bhagat Singh and his associates has taken important critical turns, which reformulate the afterlife of the Bhagat Singh phenomenon in ways that do not easily settle into congealed history.⁴⁰ J. Daniel Elam has examined the reading practices and political thought of Bhagat Singh, seeing in them a radical and open-ended potential toward the fashioning of new political subjectivities. Elam observes how, in his notes and writings, Singh sought to encourage the reader to "practice self-cultivation without the demand to attain mastery," rather than providing formulaic answers to what constitutes proper revolutionary activity or its ends.⁴¹ It must be stressed that the crisis of "proper politics" was arguably exacerbated in Pakistan during the fifties and sixties, when political horizons had become circumscribed by nationalism on the one hand and leftist cultural politics on the other, and where no coherent opposition could be identified, unlike the case of Bhagat Singh and the British. I argue that Anwar's films from the long sixties also stress the significance of "self-cultivation" in an open-ended way, in order come to terms with the aporias of the present.

Another facet of new research on HSRA is in seeing what modalities for thinking and capacities for acting were available to these young people, given that they lived at a time when revolutionary thinking was inextricably shaped by numerous international resonances. Chris Moffat's study includes an examination of the effects of Bhagat Singh's spectral presence on the living, how it remains a force of "dissensus" that disturbs normative ideas of the political community in postcolonial South Asia: "This vision of a political community that draws together the living and the dead allows us to think differently about the force and effects of anti-colonial histories in a postcolonial present. . . . To acknowledge the work of the dead is to accept that the living may face the future but can be distracted, deterred or roused by their sense of obligation, duty or debt to the heroes or victims of struggles past."⁴²

Significantly, Moffat also examines how activists have invoked Bhagat Singh in contemporary Pakistan during the past three decades.⁴³ An analogous specter is evident in the films of Khurshid Anwar, of Indic worlds under erasure in Pakistan.

KHURSHID ANWAR'S POLITICAL AWAKENING

During his career and after his death, Khurshid Anwar has enjoyed a reputation as a highly intelligent, educated, and refined professional, whose knowledge of Hindustani music was unrivaled. However, his involvement with political activism during this time was a subject of speculation in later years. For instance, a recollection published in 2011 by Ustad Ghulam Haider Khan observes, "In his personal life, Khawaja Khurshid Anwar was a shy, reserved and unsocial person. . . . He avoided big gatherings and wasn't fond of sharing his personal affairs with others."⁴⁴ In an interview in English with Javed Usman, Anwar underscores that his melancholic outlook is the result of thwarted youthful love: "I can trace the pathos of my music to an early experience of mine which to this day has manifested itself in all that I have created. I fell madly in love with a girl when I was in my teens. . . . When I turned 16, she suddenly died. I was completely shattered. The scar has remained."⁴⁵ As to why Anwar is "shy and introverted," he replies, "There has been a streak in me, since her death, which prevents me from becoming outward and warm. But, definitely, with the passing of years I have increasingly withdrawn into myself because of the deterioration in the quality of the people I have had to face in my professional as well as general life."⁴⁶ However, as Ustad Ghulam Haider Khan

notes, another factor in the introverted Anwar persona may have been the rumored suspicion that he betrayed Bhagat Singh's cause: "The only stain on his character, as told by some old denizens of Lahore, was that he saved his skin and surrendered information concerning the whereabouts of the anti-imperialist rebel Bhagat Singh, who was later caught by the British and hanged."⁴⁷

Considerable ambiguity still surrounds the historical record of the HSRA and its activities. This is partly because many of their meetings and activities were conducted under the cloak of secrecy, as the British authorities at various levels, including the local police, were continuously involved in planting accomplices among anticolonial groups, turning those arrested into collaborators, and exerting pressure on suspects during trials to turn into an "approver" who "was both an informer and an accuser" and would testify against the others. The suspicion of being a collaborator during revolutionary activities, and of becoming a possible turncoat during trials, also created tensions and suspicions between small groups of members tasked with carrying out bomb making and other clandestine activities. Anyone tainted with being unreliable as a comrade, collaborator, or "approver" would bear this stigma in their future.⁴⁸

This burden of memory and the rumors of his alleged betrayal may well have weighed heavily on Khurshid Anwar: in 1983, shortly before he passed away, he gave an extended series of interviews to a journalist that was serialized over fifteen weeks in the Urdu newspaper *Imroze's* Sunday edition. The interviews are precise in many details, but some names, events, and organizations remain without specificity. Frail, but still possessed of a sharp memory, Anwar ranges widely in remembering facets and episodes of his life: friendship and rivalry with Faiz Ahmed Faiz, vacationing in Kashmir with Mulk Raj Anand, his early fascination with theater, involvement with All India Radio and later with Radio Pakistan, remembrance of the classical musicians, film music directors he knew and playback singers he had worked with, and the question of sectarian interpretation of music scholarship by Pandit Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande, a scholar who systematized the modern classification of Hindustani classical music.⁴⁹ In these interviews, Anwar discusses his work as a music director in Bombay films only in a single interview and does not discuss his work in Pakistani cinema at all.⁵⁰ The topic toward which he devotes the greatest attention is the period of his political involvement between 1929 and 1931, suggesting that this was a deeply formative experience and that suspicions and rumors regarding his role remained unsettling for him, even at the end of his life.

Khurshid Anwar was about seventeen years old in 1929, the year of Bhagat Singh's spectacular bombing in Delhi and his arrest. Bhagat Singh was an "ideal" and "hero" for him.⁵¹ Anwar was involved in demonstrations against the Simon Commission of 1928, along with the organizers from the NJBS.⁵² Anwar began attending the trial of Bhagat Singh, which brought him to the attention of other revolutionaries and the authorities: "After I had attended 10 or 12 sessions of the Bhagat Singh trial, one day a young man approached me at the Oval Grounds of the Government College. He had a briefcase with him. After speaking to me of patriotism and lauding me for being a freedom lover, since I was attending the trial that many others avoided [so as not to be noticed by the British authorities], he mentioned that the leadership of the 'Central Revolutionary Party' of India was impressed by my bravery and commitment."⁵³

That day, Anwar was recruited by this man, whose name was Rahim Baksh and who was an MA student of economics at the Government College. At that meeting, he stressed to Anwar that "you will need to risk your life, make bombs, and use firearms." He asked Anwar to select a pistol from the briefcase and suggested that he practice shooting with the firearm. Anwar subsequently met other recruits. The group became involved in bomb making and planned a bank robbery in the city of Gujarat, which they did not carry out.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, they were arrested, as one of the bomb makers, who was picked up on other charges, apparently turned state's witness.⁵⁵ Moreover, Rahim Baksh himself was later revealed to be a British collaborator.⁵⁶

According to his memoir, Anwar was arrested in 1929, for making bombs and spreading terror. After being jailed for four or five months, he was released, and he continued with his education.⁵⁷ During his arrest, he was under tremendous pressure by the police to turn state's witness, or "approver" in British India, someone specifically groomed to assist in prosecuting conspiracy trials during the twentieth century.⁵⁸ To shield his associates from this pressure and to avoid becoming an approver, Anwar devised a ruse: he agreed initially to become a witness, but on the condition that he would provide his testimony only the day before the trial.⁵⁹ Despite immense pressure applied on him right before the trial, including being shown the collaboration of Rahim Baksh with the police and a dramatic threat by Anwar's father that he would shoot himself if Anwar did not cooperate with the authorities, Anwar emphasizes that he flatly refused to provide testimony against his comrades.⁶⁰ Only Anwar was found guilty and given a jail sentence of two years, while all his partners were released.

In the meantime, higher authorities in the British government became aware that the police had manufactured this case. During the appeals process, the British judge himself advised Anwar's father to hire a noted lawyer, who managed to have Anwar acquitted.⁶¹ In total, Anwar had spent four to five months' time in prison. In his *Imroze* interviews, Anwar is especially at pains to clear his name from being called an approver or state witness in the Bhagat Singh trial:

It is necessary for me to absolutely clarify my involvement with Bhagat Singh. I saw him for the first time only at his trial. At that time, I was only 16 or 17 years old. During the trial, no one could meet Singh or his associates. None of his companions were Muslim, and in any case, I did not know any of them. It is therefore out of the question that I could have become a state witness against him. . . . I have never been a state witness in any trial . . . the case I was sentenced for was unrelated to the Bhagat Singh trial.⁶²

Moreover, it's difficult to accept the veracity of the rumors of Anwar becoming an approver, or else why would he have served any jail time if he had indeed been a British collaborator?

Nevertheless, this charged period arguably deeply shaped his later career. Ustad Ghulam Haider Khan observes that "Anwar lived a lonely and quiet life" and adds, "He must have been devastated by Bhagat Singh's death. Perhaps it was such a devastation that he brought to his music, which was full of subtle microtones and bold glides and always pervaded by a heartrending anguish."⁶³ In his interviews, Anwar clarifies his political leanings in many places. He situates himself against emerging leftist writers and intellectuals such as Faiz Ahmed Faiz, whose years studying at the Government College overlapped with Anwar's and with whom he had become close friends. Anwar repeatedly dissociates himself from Marxism and communism even during college days. For example, recounting a summer vacation to Kashmir with Faiz and two other writers from Lahore, he notes, "We met Mulk Raj Anand, who was a well-known communist. At that time, Faiz was totally unfamiliar with communism. . . . I had completed my MA in Philosophy, had already studied Hegel and Marx, and was very knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses of communism. That is why it never influenced me."⁶⁴ According to Anwar, Anand saw the world through a narrow Marxist lens, almost to comical effect: "When I would draw Mulk Raj Anand's attention to the colors of the sunset among

beautiful mountains and streams, he would remark, “These colors are reminiscent of the blood of the toiling Russian peasants.’ . . . Despite lengthy discussions, he was unable to influence me. The reason is that communism does not uphold any ultimate values.”⁶⁵ Anwar also understands Bhagat Singh as someone not primarily influenced by communism. Rather, he suggests that Bhagat Singh’s “ideal” was the Irish Republican Army, which was also fighting against the British.⁶⁶

My purpose here is neither to ascertain the young Faiz’s awareness of Marxism nor to determine Bhagat Singh’s ideological stance.⁶⁷ Anwar’s insistent retrospective disavowal of Marxism and communism is of interest here because this can help explain why his later film work, despite being deeply engaged with the affective burden of colonialism, is suffused with romantic melancholy, rather than, for example, allegories of political struggle against colonization, such as in the films of his younger contemporaries Khalil Qaiser and Riaz Shahid in the Lahore film world.

Anwar’s melancholic outlook is also evident in the reception of the “signature tune” he composed for Radio Pakistan upon independence, in 1947. In an interview, he notes that the tune, with “light rhythm,” was intended to evoke an “Oriental” feeling (*mashriqiyyat*): a composition with its main section deploying the clarinet and based on the sound of Qur’anic recitation (*qir’at*). The tune was first played on the radio on August 14, 1947, and continued to be played for the next six months. However, a senior classical musician, probably none other than Bade Ghulam Ali Khan himself, criticized it, claiming that it sounded like a “poetic lament suffused with pain [*kisi marṣiye ke dukh se ubhri ho*].”⁶⁸ It was consequently replaced by a tune composed by Bade Ghulam Ali Khan and Z. A. Bukhari, director of the newly established Radio Pakistan.⁶⁹ In addition to having his tune rejected, Anwar recounts that his persistent, ongoing criticism of Radio Pakistan’s leadership for their ignorance of music eventually led to his being black-listed from appearing on the radio.⁷⁰ Despite his unpleasant experiences with Radio Pakistan, he continued to tirelessly promote knowledge of classical music. According to some observers, Anwar’s greatest contribution to culture, even beyond his work as a renowned film music director and director of films, is his massive project *Ahang-e-Khusravi*: thirty long-playing albums that document Hindustani classical music. Ten albums demonstrate over ninety ragas, and another twenty albums record the distinctive musical styles of various lineages of hereditary musicians (*gharanas*). It is “a work that was unique in subcontinental music history at the time, and has perhaps no parallel to this date.”⁷¹

Given his avowed repudiation of Marxism, his prior affiliation with Bhagat Singh's anti-imperialist politics, and his deep interest in bridging the legacy of Hindustani classical music in a dialogue with modernity via the film song, Khurshid Anwar emerges as an exemplary figure among the Lahore Romantics. In his work for Lahore cinema from 1956 onward, he inhabits the capaciousness of the social film to mourn the Partition and to engage with a modernity that is endlessly seductive but dangerously fatal—necessary, yet impossible. He is especially well-placed to do so, with the song-and-dance sequence in the fifties social film having become the most symbolic site for narrative and affective charge. Melodramatic conventions such as missed encounters and emotive identifications are all used repeatedly and effectively in Anwar's films, as is genre crossing.⁷² Above all, the Partition's reverberative effects are evoked in Anwar's films of the long sixties, in doubled and misidentified characterization, Gothic specters, Indic "primitivist" myths, and ruined and traumatized lives.⁷³

Bhaskar Sarkar's observations in his substantial study of Indian cinema's engagement with the Partition are apposite for Anwar's projects. Sarkar notes that a "traumatic experience need not unfold at a lag: it can generate a temporality all its own, one that runs alongside and yet in out of sync with the present."⁷⁴ As in the film *Ghoonghat* (1962), the male lead character lives in a dream world whose thrall persists till the very end of the film. Doubling and misidentification is another trope repeatedly deployed in Anwar's films. In *Intezar* (1956), the lead character and his disreputable brother, played by the same actor, look identical and threaten confusion in the resolution of the love triangle between the brothers and the lead actress and singer, played by Noor Jehan. And in *Ghoonghat*, "figural sublimations and displacements" are central, based on "irrational" Hindu beliefs in reincarnation that the consolidation of Pakistan as a Muslim nation ought to have put to rest.⁷⁵ The present-day couple is haunted by the myth of an earlier pair of Hindu lovers, which confounds the male lead character, who becomes "enfeebled, hystericized, queer, and nearly insane," to quote Meheli Sen's characterization of the Gothic film from Bombay.⁷⁶ Indeed, doubling and repetition in a larger sense characterize Anwar's cinematic oeuvre itself. *Intezar* and *Koel* (1959) explore a narrative that is uncannily similar. *Jhoomer* (1959) and *Chingari* (1964) ostensibly narrate how westernization leads characters far beyond the bounds of accepted morality, but in doing so, both evoke an unsettling and conflicted affect in the viewer. And the actress Shamim Ara plays a double role as twin sisters in the Gothic mystery film *Hamraz* (1967), similar to the doubling of the male characters in *Intezar* (1956).

INTEZAR (1956)

Anwar's career in the Urdu cinema in Pakistan includes the work he did as music director and writer of dialogue in the films of the later fifties, which include *Intezar* (1956), *Zehr-e Ishq* (1958), *Jhoomer* (1959), and *Koel* (1959). *Intezar* and *Koel* have corresponding plots. Both films revolve around a story with a master classical musician living in an idyllic mountainous rural setting, whose daughter is also becoming a gifted singer under his tutelage. As a child, the daughter develops a deep friendship with a boy living nearby, who moves away, evoking a lasting sense of longing and heartache in both the girl and the boy that persists over years and decades, even after both have reached adulthood. The death or absence of the father figure creates difficult circumstances for the daughter, now a young woman, compelling her to accede to the machinations of unscrupulous men who wish to exploit her unrivaled musical talent as a nightclub singer in the city. Here, the purity of Indian classical music is staged against debased westernized music, which becomes emblematic of the moral quagmire in which the girl finds herself in a modernity that induces not only moral corruption but also psychic trauma in its sensitive characters.

This skeletal summary might convey the sense that both films follow a common narrative in South Asian cinema. Repetition of narrative tropes, however, is not a good indicator of the significance of artifacts of popular culture.⁷⁷ Rather, what distinguishes these productions from innumerable other films that stress the same basic divide between the prelapsarian "East" and the fallen "West" is the way Anwar's aural compositions and the film's dialogue work with the camera to stress specific effects. In the case of *Intezar*, intercinematic references pervade its dialogue and songs to create a sense of a knowing, referential, even ironic participation as a film that situates itself within the unfolding history of both South Asian and Hollywood musicals. By contrast, *Koel* conjures a phenomenological aura of being immersed in gyres, circular movements, and orbits that evoke a ceaseless energy that pervades life on screen. Even as both films ostensibly stage the contrast between the purity of Indian classical music and corrosive Western influences, the films' formal elements, dialogue, and the songs themselves are far more complex—conflicted, even duplicitous in how they address this binary.

Intezar was the first major film Anwar worked on in Lahore. Imtiaz Ali Taj contributed to its dialogue. As noted already, Taj's long association with cinema started with his celebrated play *Anarkali* (1922), which was adapted

on screen multiple times, and continued to his directing two films during the mid-1930s and *Gulnar* in 1953.⁷⁸ The two poets who contributed lyrics to *Gulnar* are Qateel Shifai and Tanvir Naqvi, who both subsequently worked with Anwar on numerous films. *Gulnar*'s music was composed by the legendary composer Master Ghulam Haider—this was Haider's last film.⁷⁹ In addition, as a writer, Taj participated in the Lahore-based Pancholi Studios film *Khandan* (Family, 1942, dir. Shaukat Hussain Rizvi), with music directed by Master Ghulam Haider, and the Bombay film *Pagdandi* (The path, 1947, dir. Ram Narayan Dave), with Anwar as the music director. Noor Jehan starred and sang in numerous films in which these individuals have been involved.⁸⁰

Thus, the careers of a group of poets, writers, directors, composers, singers, and actors who had been engaged with both Bombay cinema and Lahore cinema for several decades were already entangled in numerous productions before *Intezar*. In this sense, we need to situate *Intezar* and *Koel* both with reference to continuity with the legacies of Bombay and Lahore cinema but also to mark their distinctiveness in relation to the effects of the Partition, the drive toward modernization in Pakistan that was accelerating from the late fifties onward, and the reformulated ensemble of patronage, infrastructure, and expertise available to a Lahore that could no longer draw upon the much larger and more sophisticated ecology of the Bombay film industry. Despite this lack, "the film's photography and sound are good. For a newcomer, Nabi Ahmad's work behind the camera is commendable. Some of the outdoor shots are especially worth mentioning," the renowned journalist and human rights advocate I. A. Rehman's review of *Intezar* had noted.⁸¹

PLOT SUMMARY OF *INTEZAR*

Intezar's narrative is centered on the pair Nimmi and Salim. Nimmi resides with her father, a gifted classical musician, in a small house set in a beautiful mountainous region. They are attended to by the unscrupulous Lahoo and his daughter Cheemo, who is the same age as Nimmi. Across the valley is a bungalow in which Salim is staying with his mother. They are originally from Karachi but have been residing in the bungalow for some time. Salim, Nimmi, and Cheemo become fast friends, but due to their respectable upper-class status, Salim's mother dislikes him spending time with the two girls, especially when they sing and dance to accompany Nimmi's father's musical exercises. Nevertheless, Salim and Nimmi have become very

close. They signal to each other from across the valley at night, Salim with a flashlight and Nimmi with a lantern. When Salim and his mother depart for Karachi in an automobile, an emotionally overcome Nimmi insists on climbing a hill to see them leave. In anguish, she loses her balance and tumbles downhill, losing her eyesight as a result.

Fifteen years pass. Salim (played as an adult by Santosh Kumar) has become an emotionally disturbed person who cannot sleep at night, wakes up to repeatedly signal with a flashlight from his window in his Karachi home, and compulsively plays the sitar at odd hours. Recognizing the effects of childhood trauma, the doctor advises him to return to the mountain bungalow. We learn that Salim's father was a dissolute character, which is why his mother was insistent on keeping Salim away from performing entertainment in his childhood. However, Salim's brother, Naeem (also acted by Santosh Kumar in a double role), has followed the father's wayward path. Naeem is owner of the Rang Mahal theater, where risqué and tasteless musical and dance performances are held. A gambler and spendthrift, Naeem is constantly sponging on the saintly and troubled Salim, who always indulges him and even transfers half of his fortune to Naeem early in the film.

When the traumatized Salim (accompanied with his loyal elderly attendant) arrives at the mountain bungalow, chimney smoke and lights alert Cheemo that someone has returned. Although Nimmi (played as an adult by Noor Jehan) constantly keeps alive the hope that she will be eventually reunited with Salim, due to her blindness she is unable to see that the bungalow is now inhabited. Cheemo and her father, Lachoo, hatch a conspiracy, in which Cheemo pretends to be Nimmi and begins to meet Salim regularly. A difficulty soon presents itself—Cheemo can dance but cannot sing, yet Salim insists on hearing the soothing balm of Nimmi's singing voice to alleviate his trauma. Cheemo resolves this by forbidding Salim to visit Nimmi's home and requesting that Nimmi sing only at night, so that Salim in his bungalow can hear her soaring and floating voice across the valley but he cannot see the singer. Nimmi is also unable to see his flashlight signals due to her blindness. The pretense of Cheemo as Nimmi is thus maintained for Salim, even as he remains puzzled when meeting Cheemo about whether she could indeed possess such a mesmerizing voice. One night, Nimmi's father, whose health has been poor, passes away dramatically, collapsing on his veena during a swan-song practice session. Before dying, he has asked Nimmi to memorize Salim's Karachi address.

In the meantime, the Rang Mahal theater is facing difficulties. Music director D'Souza, a Goan Christian, is dismissive of Indian classical music



FIG. 2.2. The Latin-themed song orchestrated by D'Souza, "Javānī kī raten javānī ke din" (Days and nights of youthful passion), with Pepita accompanied by male and female performers, on the Rang Mahal stage. *Intezar* (1956).

and is interested only in music derived from Hollywood productions, especially jazz and Cuban-inflected compositions (figure 2.2).

However, Naeem wants the club to attract more customers and is looking at alternatives. Lachoo had written earlier to Naeem's club manager, Ghafoor, of Nimmi's singing talent and Cheemo's dancing abilities. Now Ghafoor also arrives in the mountains in order to recruit both as fresh talent for Rang Mahal. With Nimmi's father now deceased, this becomes possible, just as Lachoo had schemed. Lachoo convinces Nimmi to move to Karachi so that she can search for Salim and have her lost eyesight medically treated. The final song Nimmi sings in the valley before leaving is at night, at one end of a suspended footbridge that connects her side of the mountain to the one across the river, where Salim's bungalow is located. When a transfixed Salim arrives at the other end of the footbridge and begins to walk across, a horrified Cheemo witnesses Lachoo attacking him with an ax and throwing him into the river. Cheemo is a passive accomplice-witness in this dastardly plot.

With the arrival of Nimmi, Cheemo, and Lachoo in Karachi, on meeting Naeem (who looks exactly like Salim), Lachoo is panicked in thinking that it is Salim who survived the attack and will now recognize him as the attacker. Naeem eventually sets aside D'Souza's compositions, musicians,



FIG. 2.3. Naeem (right) selfishly tries to convince his look-alike brother Salim (left) that Naeem should remain misrecognized as Salim, so that Nimmi and Naeem can be together. *Intezar* (1956).

dancers, and singers. Instead, now Nimmi sings and Cheemo dances in new compositions ostensibly based on Indian classical music, creating great audience demand for Rang Mahal. Nimmi continues to seek Salim's whereabouts. One day, Salim, who has survived his attack and fall but lost one of his legs, walks into Rang Mahal on crutches and sees Cheemo dancing, while Nimmi sings from behind a curtain. Cheemo refuses to recognize him, but Nimmi overhears their conversation. As he leaves the empty theater, Nimmi sings the evocative song "O jāne wāle re, ṭhero zarā ruk jā'o" (Pause a bit, don't leave yet). Salim recognizes the familiar voice but remains puzzled and leaves without meeting Nimmi.

Nimmi continues to seek Salim and visits his home on Lytton Road in Karachi. Eventually, she begins living there. Meanwhile, because of Nimmi's beauty, voice, and character, Naeem also begins to fall in love with her. Finally, Nimmi's eyes are operated on, and she is able to see. Salim is overjoyed but now afraid that Nimmi will reject him because he is disabled. Naeem selfishly tries to convince Salim that he should remain unrecognized as Salim, so that Nimmi and Naeem can be together (figure 2.3).

Eventually, this triangle is resolved by Nimmi, who attends to the brothers' contrasting affiliations for music. She confirms this by pretending to lose her eyesight again and seeing that the brothers have sharply

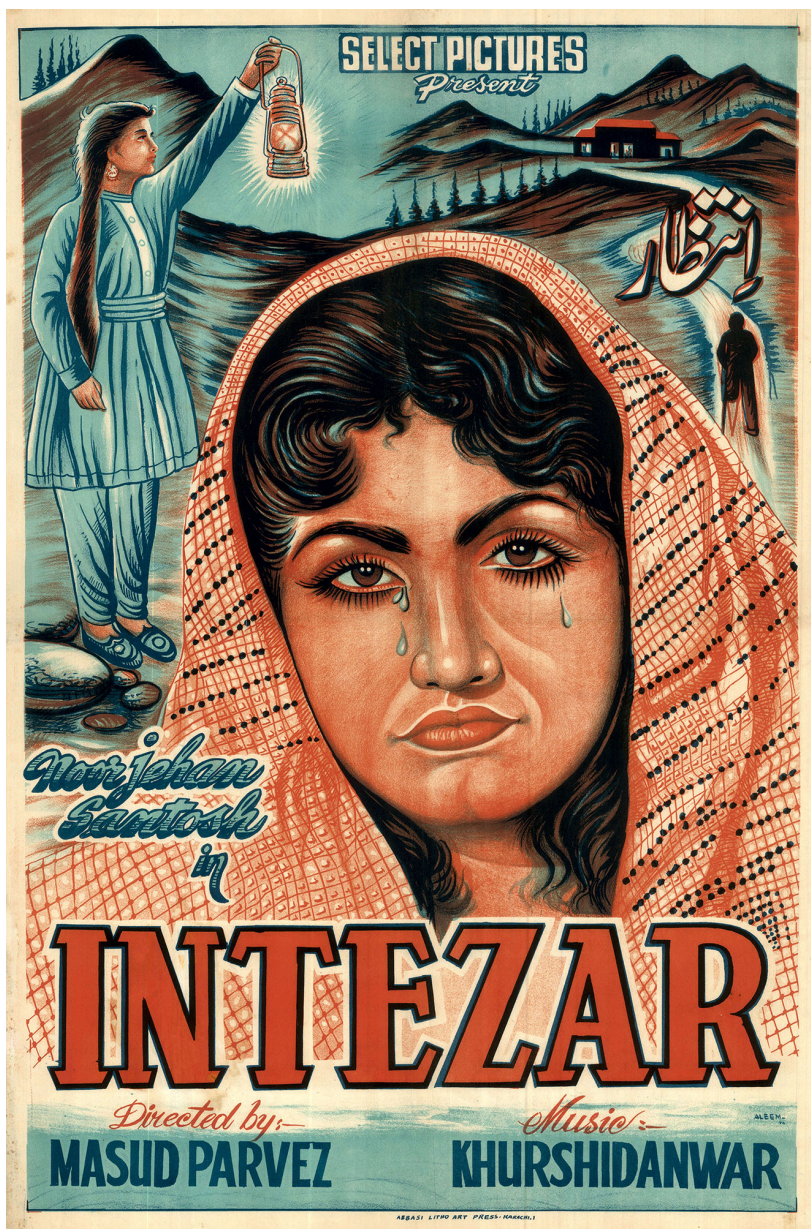


FIG. 2.4. Publicity poster of the film *Intezar* (1956), similar to the image advertising the new live show titled *Intezar* in Rang Mahal within the film.

divergent behavior: Salim is sensitive and generous, while Naeem is profligate and dissolute even as he now wants to reform himself for the sake of her love.

Without Nimmi singing at Rang Mahal every night, the theater founders, as Cheemo's dancing alone is not sufficient to draw big or appreciative audiences. When Nimmi returns in a pathos-laden triumph at the end, the program and publicity material in the lobby changes from the live show called *Aankh ka nasha* to a new live show titled *Intezar*. The latter's publicity image is analogous the actual poster of the film *Intezar* (figure 2.4), collapsing the distinction between the film itself and the theatrical show nested in it.

Lachoo and Cheemo fall out of favor and are thrown out of Rang Mahal. As revenge, they set fire to the theater. In the final and sole moral act of his entire life, Naeem sacrifices his life to help Nimmi escape the burning building so that she can be united with her true love, Salim.

CHARACTER REVELATION THROUGH PERFORMANCE

A romantic mythos of poiesis and musical affiliation, *Intezar*'s music and camerawork is focused and immersive. The East-West opposition is primarily staged as a contest between competing musical universes, which have inner moral and psychic dimensions. Sensitivity, generosity, inner reflection, and moral affiliation are contrasted against carefree dissolution, moral transgression, and destructive behavior. They assume a specific valence that is premised above all on the seeming competition between musical styles.⁸² Identity is affiliated with music and taste, which is expressive of psychic damage as well as outward bodily mutilation. However, the connotative stakes of the film are far more unsettling than the starkly binary denotative message.

Firstly, *Intezar* presents itself as a fabrication that emerges from the world of acting and performance. The film is laced throughout with knowing or "winking" references to the history of theater and cinema.⁸³ D'Souza, for example, typifies the presence of Goans in westernized South Asian cinema music: "In the film industry, the Indian-Western dichotomy had the potential to be enacted as a divide between Goan musicians (Western) and 'Indian' (that is, non-Goan) musicians," notes Booth on music in Bombay cinema.⁸⁴ Rang Mahal is located in Karachi, a port city that was part of the Bombay Presidency during the British colonial era and had a small yet

significant population of Goan Christians who had been involved in performing Western music in hotels and clubs.⁸⁵ In yet another interfilmic reference, *Intezar*'s D'Souza may refer to the "legendary Goanese music arranger Sebastian D'Souza" in Bombay.⁸⁶ "Sebastian D'Souza had been working in Lahore . . . playing in nightclubs and doing some work for music directors in that city; but in 1947, when Lahore became part of the new nation of Pakistan, many musicians, D'Souza among them, returned to India," notes Booth.⁸⁷ The memory of the actual Sebastian D'Souza's presence in Lahore might well have lingered in the city when *Intezar* was being conceived.

When Nimmi stops singing the forlorn "Chānd hanse duniyā base royay merā piyār" (The moon smiles, the world flourishes, but only my love weeps) outside her home, pacing slowly against a night sky illuminated by a full moon, her agitated father, in front of a small fireplace inside, begins playing the veena. The sounds of his frenzied playing float outside, and Nimmi, listening, moves toward the door. The sequence is composed of cross-cut editing of medium close-ups of Nimmi and her father, their music creating a sound bridge that ends with a single loud note of the veena that Nimmi hears. In the next shot, her father's body is collapsed on the top of the instrument, and the camera pans from right to left, accompanied by a sustained piano note, to frame the father and then the doorway where Nimmi enters. The camera tracks back, exits the front door, and focuses on the dark wall outside the house as Nimmi slowly crosses the threshold. The blankness of the screen and the short silence after the dying piano note are sharply punctuated by Nimmi's horrified scream as she sees her father's slumped figure. The temporal dilation of Nimmi's entry is thus bracketed by two musical notes, one "Indian" and the other "Western."⁸⁸

The death of the father, emblemized by the last note of the veena and immediately replaced by the piano exclamation, also marks the efforts of D'Souza to replace Indian with Western music. Thus, the very next establishing scene shows the interior of Rang Mahal, where D'Souza's band, with trumpets and maracas, bass, drums, and dancers dressed in striped Latin skirts, is practicing a jazzy composition, with D'Souza on the piano to the right. This is framed in a medium-long shot with Naeem in the foreground, quickly throwing up his hand and moving across the frame toward D'Souza. The next sequence is a shot/reverse shot composition of a face-to-face conversation between Naeem and D'Souza. Naeem exclaims in exasperation: "D'Souza, kuch jamā nahīn tumhārā music" (Your music has not come

together). Replies D'Souza jauntily in Bombay-inflected diction, "Hamārā music *zarūr* jame gā" (My music will surely come together). He goes on to state that he composed music for the film *Banjara* ("Ek dam [fully a] smash hit") and also the film *Navela* ("Aay-one!"). When Naeem objects that the first film had music composed by a Mahinder Kishan, the latter by a Bashir Zaidi, D'Souza counters him by saying that although their names are associated with the films, the work in both films was actually done by him. D'Souza's comment on the misattribution of music compositions in these two fictitious films may simply be the excuse of an incompetent music arranger like *Intezar*'s D'Souza. However, Booth has written on the *real* D'Souza, the arranger Sebastian D'Souza in Bombay films who "worked with a wide range of film composers . . . but because arrangers and assistants have been inconsistently listed in film credits, there is no way to know with certainty the actual number of film scores with which he was involved."⁸⁹ The unattributed labor and the exploitation in the South Asian cinema industry of assistants is also an ironic reference in *Intezar*.

Intezar's D'Souza's playful insistence on the value of his Western-oriented compositions, and the residue of Indian musical memory that the dancers still embody, marks a central paradox of the film and indeed of many of Anwar's other films. What popular musical form possesses the capacity to address the phenomenological and bodily capacities of an accelerating modernity? What is lost in this process? This is staged in Anwar's films above all on the plane of music. Despite Anwar's classicizing emphasis, the cultural logic of the commercial film industry requires a translation of both classical and folk forms into hybrid and experimental arrangements. The purity of form and the extended duration of classical compositions does not favor their mass reception in a mediatized form that he is working in. On the peripheral role of pure folk and local music in modernity, Biswarup Sen's observations are apposite: "Popular culture cannot, it seems, arise out of local forms; it requires the universalizing import of Hindi film songs. And though, according to some detractors, that music is 'a curious and somewhat bizarre blend of East and West,' which 'is not so much Indian as a form of commercial hybridization from various sources,' it is to *filmigit* [film song] we must turn to in order to understand the role of music in modern India."⁹⁰

Despite *Intezar*'s portrayal of D'Souza as a somewhat cartoonish and incapable musician unable to salvage anything worthwhile in Indian music for today, it is precisely in relation to the problem of "commercial hybridization" where D'Souza's insistence on Western instrumentation might be

understood, in a manner that differs in degree but not in essence from Anwar's position. This is despite the preference in official circles and among respectable classes in India and Pakistan for locally grounded musical development, which the Goan musicians were perceived as not adhering to.⁹¹ Film music foregrounds combination, translation, and adaptation over purity and authenticity for it to appeal to a wide audience. Anna Morcom, who has examined the role of Western music in Indian cinema at length, notes that "eclecticism was successful in Hindi film music [because] . . . it helped transcend regional/class/caste/ethnic/religious boundaries."⁹² Moreover, Western music as score has been adopted as a widely accepted convention in Bombay (and Lahore) cinema. It accompanies cinematic narrative modes associated with dynamism, action, and disturbances and is thus deployed to evoke these specific moods and effects: "Sections of action and plot progression usually involve Western techniques such as harmonic sequences and juxtaposition of orchestral timbre or style."⁹³ These situations are almost never accompanied by a raga-based composition.

D'Souza makes snide and disparaging remarks on Indian classical performing traditions throughout the film. He states that he has instructed the dancers to forget "Master Ghafoor's *taa thai taa thai*" (beats associated with Indian music), but the dancers were not able to do so. When meeting her for the first time, he quizzes Cheemo, Can you perform dances such as rumba, samba, and tango? In the next sequence, Ghafoor, dressed in a Nehru jacket and jodhpur trousers, with Cheemo and Lachoo on his left and Naeem on his right, describes Nimmi's dancing abilities, claiming that she can re-create the aura of *Indar Sabha's* legendary atelier: "Indar ke ahkārē kā samā' bāndh detī hai."⁹⁴ But her dance is "*ṣaqīl*" (difficult), which D'Souza, who enters the frame on the right, immediately understands as being classical and thus undesirable. Next, in a medium-length close-up, Ghafoor parodies dance moves, uttering the names of various styles of classical dance: "Kathakali, Manipuri, Bharatnatyam." At each utterance, the camera cuts to show D'Souza's mock-horrified gestures. In the next sequence, Naeem admonishes Ghafoor, saying he has no use for such dance in his theater: "Tell her to get an Indian passport instead!" suggesting that the Partition had led even commercial forms of entertainment to have become freighted with anxieties regarding cultural separatism. Consequently, in Pakistan's film and theater, Indian classical forms should no longer have any place.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, Ghafoor proclaims that the blind Nimmi has the voice of a *koel* (nightingale), and he convinces Naeem of his scheme of playback singing in the theater modeled on the film song.

Nimmi's voice will pervade the stage, while Cheemo will lip-synch and dance in front of the audience.⁹⁶

This "discovery" of the effectivity of playback singing in theater performance in *Intezar* is possibly also an intercinematic reference to the accidental "discovery" of playback singing and dialogue in the celebrated Hollywood musical comedy *Singin' in the Rain* (1952), a film set in 1927 that depicts the technical, aesthetic, and ethical issues that the arrival of the talkies that year posed for Hollywood studios and actors.⁹⁷ Lina Lamont (played by Jean Hagen) is a leading character in stock adventure and romance films of the silent era, but her shrill and heavily accented voice is completely unsuitable for the talkies. This problem is overcome by the accidental discovery by the hero's sidekick that the voice of Kathy Selden (Debbie Reynolds) can become the playback substitute for Lamont's. In the film, the falseness of Lamont's voice on screen indexes her fraudulent and manipulative character—voice thus becomes a marker indicating the state of inner morality.⁹⁸ The denouement of her base character happens not on celluloid but in a theatrical setting in front of a live audience when she insists on lip-synching and moving her body with the song—with Selden singing behind her, concealed by the stage curtain. During the performance, the curtain lifts to reveal the ruse of Lamont's false voice and her duplicitous character. It is thus the theater stage where aesthetic and moral truth become simultaneously audible and visible in *Singin' in the Rain*, *Intezar*, and *Koel*.

In *Intezar*, there is a medium master shot of a rehearsal, with musicians and dancers and Ghafoor belting out a coarse tune, seated on the left next to a seated and withdrawn Nimmi. When D'Souza objects to the singing, Ghafoor retorts with parodic moves and lyrics. D'Souza addresses Nimmi (played by Noor Jehan herself), "Yeh chokri samajhti kai hai apne ap ko? Lata Mangeshkar ya Noor Jehan?" (Who does this girl think she is? Lata Mangeshkar or Noor Jehan?), prompting a twitter of laughter from the dancers in the background.⁹⁹ Whether the laughter mocks the pretensions of Nimmi within the cinematic diegesis, or "winks" at the audience in a widely shared recognition of the star text of Noor Jehan, remains unresolved. The pretense is of Nimmi–Noor Jehan as a theater persona not being recognized as Noor Jehan, the leading film actor and singer—yet *everyone outside the film, and possibly even inside, knows otherwise*. The offhand "inside joke" of mentioning Noor Jehan and Lata Mangeshkar together also cites the importance of the overlapping trajectory of the two celebrated singers in Bombay cinema. Noor Jehan preceded Mangeshkar in achieving stardom in the 1940s in Bombay. She was both a star actor and a

singer. Mangeshkar remained solely a playback singer for more than five decades. Indeed, she is the foremost exemplar of a shift in the industry, in which playback singers became recognized as stars in their own right.¹⁰⁰ Noor Jehan's star text emerged at a time when the singing and the acting body was ideally invested in the same body.¹⁰¹ Mangeshkar's rise to being the most important playback singer came right after Noor Jehan's departure from Bombay to Lahore in 1947 due to the Partition.¹⁰² In Lahore, Noor Jehan continued to act and sing for films until *Baji* (Sister, 1963), after which she continued as a playback singer for dozens of Urdu and Punjabi films until 1996. In *Intezar*, these playful, parodic scenarios are thus instructive in situating the relation between theater and cinema and between the film's internal narrative and numerous outside references. *Intezar* is a film whose narrative follows the destiny of the hero (Salim) and heroine (Nimmi), but equally, the theater of Rang Mahal can be considered as an "industrial" actor in the narrative, whose tragic but morally satisfying end is death by immolation.

Throughout the film, D'Souza advocates for Western music with a kind of missionary zeal. Toward the end, as Naeem falls in love in Nimmi and poses in front of her as Salim, it is the character of music that reveals to Nimmi the true inner self of Naeem. Nimmi convinces Naeem that Rang Mahal should feature Indian music, reminding Naeem (posing as Salim) that when Salim had played the *malhār* raga on the sitar for her, it had evoked *sāvan* (the rainy season in North India) with its rich romantic associations and symbols—birds singing, clouds, breezes, rain, and yearning lovers.¹⁰³ The theater gets ready to put on a new program based on Nimmi's inspiration, but characteristically, D'Souza misinterprets Nimmi's wishes due to his cluelessness of the relevance of local traditions. Naeem telephones D'Souza and instructs him to prepare a new performance titled *Intezar*, to replace *Aankh ka nasha*. D'Souza remains unable to interpret such a fertile reference to Indian aesthetic lineages but understands it only as a prompt for a Hollywood-style musical that he conflates with *Singin' in the Rain* (1952): "*Intezar* . . . A-one idea! . . . Wonderful! Waiting . . . waiting in the rain . . . ek dam music jamā'e gā [I'll compose the music for it right away]," and he proceeds to compose a jazzy tune on the piano. The alacrity with which *Intezar*'s D'Souza works is reminiscent of the real Sebastian D'Souza, who reportedly worked with legendary speed.¹⁰⁴

This exchange is revelatory also for the links between theater and cinema. *Aankh ka nasha* (Intoxication for the eyes) was the title of a well-known play published in 1924 by the celebrated playwright Agha Hashr Kashmiri,

the predecessor of the playwright who is considered to be his successor, Imtiaz Ali Taj (who wrote *Intezar*'s dialogue). It was also the title of several Bombay films (1928, 1933, and 1956) and a 1957 Lahore film.¹⁰⁵ Given that *Intezar* was released in 1956, the play and its theme in cinema would have resonated with many viewers. Moreover, the new theatrical performance within the film is also called *Intezar*, conflating it with the film's title and, by extension, its cinematic narrative. Summarizing Agha Hashr Kashmiri's career with reference to the relation between theater and film, Kathryn Hansen notes:

The social had a long historical arc. In western and northern India, commercial theater in Gujarati, Urdu, and Hindi flourished even as a new industry—cinema—took birth. Social dramas were written anew, addressing changing conditions and an emerging national consciousness, and old material was reworked for its perennial appeal. . . . Above all, Urdu playwright Agha Hashr made a lasting impact. . . . He often turned his socials into screenplays: *Ankh ka Nasha* [Intoxication for the eyes] (1928), *Asir-e Hirs* [Prisoner of desire] (1931), *Khubsurat Bala* [Beautiful affliction] (1927). Through setting, costume, and language, especially use of the Urdu *ghazal* and Hindustani music, Hashr's distinctive approach anticipated Muslim social films of the 1940s and 1950s.¹⁰⁶

From another facet, this default dependence by D'Souza on the Hollywood musical demonstrates how Hollywood exerted its magnetic influence on Urdu and Hindi cinema during this era. One of the objectives of Anwar, Taj, and others in *Intezar*, *Koel*, and other films of the era is thus to ostensibly offer an alternative to the seductions of Hollywood film and music. However, by working within a commercial logic of cinema in Bombay and Lahore, which encourages the film of the era to include several songs in varied styles, moods, and orchestrations, what *Intezar* and similar films proffer instead is an ensemble of composite sonic and visual objects, whose attractions and charms are not premised on their being solely "Indian" or purely "Western." Rather, these diverse and hybrid compositions amplify sensorial modernity even while overtly decrying its corrosive effects.

In the next sequence, D'Souza comically misinterprets Nimmi's desire. A medium shot frames Naeem's back and three dancers dressed in slick raincoats twirl floral umbrellas as they perform dance steps that Naeem is orchestrating, accompanied by a swinging jazz tune. This composition is



FIG. 2.5. Nimmi addresses Naeem (who is posing as Salim), looking directly at the camera to exclaim, “Do you consider this a song? You call this a song? Salim, *you*?” *Intezar* (1956).

indebted to *Singin' in the Rain*'s opening scene and its publicity materials, and it emphasizes D'Souza being slavishly in thrall to the Western culture industries. The camera pans sharply left to frame Nimmi (whose eyesight is restored), dressed in a handsome black sari, sitting in an armchair in a resigned posture. As the camera moves closer to Nimmi, the next scene cuts to show Naeem at an angle in a medium close-up, gleefully moving his limbs in repetitive movements to orchestrate the music. The camera returns to Nimmi in a medium close-up, as she covers her ears and rises in disgust. A rapid sequence of edits flashes an image of Naeem, followed by D'Souza rising from the piano and moving toward the camera, while Nimmi exclaims, “For God's sake, stop this racket!” The camera pans to follow Nimmi as she walks quickly across the frame to address Naeem. She turns to face him, now looking directly at the camera to exclaim, “Do you consider this a song? You call this a song? Salim, *you*?” (figure 2.5).

The reverse shot shows a close-up of the bewildered Naeem. However, because Nimmi has addressed the camera with her direct gaze, the viewer is interpellated to assume the place of the befuddled Naeem. *Intezar* breaches the cinematic diegesis yet again, this time to address the external world via the gaze. As Nimmi departs and a dejected D'Souza finally gives up, he utters wistfully to Naeem as he leaves Rang Mahal forever, “Hamārā music



FIG. 2.6. Nimmi sings and leads dancers in the final song on Rang Mahal's stage, "Sāvan kī ghanghor ghatā'en" (Cloudy breezes of the rainy season). *Intezar* (1956).

jame gā . . . Spain meṇ jame gā, America meṇ jame gā, England meṇ jame gā . . . par idhar kabhī nahīṇ jame gā" (My music will surely flourish . . . in Spain, America, England, but never here).

This episode signals the supposed triumph of Hindustani classical legacies, which are shown to be ostensibly realized in the final song on Rang Mahal's stage, titled "Sāvan kī ghanghor ghatā'en" (Cloudy breezes of the rainy season), but the composition of the song is more complex and ambitious. The conceit here is that the truth of the sincere and morally upright character of Indian music cannot remain a private secret between Nimmi and Salim but must be performed publicly and theatrically for it to establish itself against morally and aesthetically corrupting Western music (figure 2.6).

Nimmi, who has suspected since the recovery of her eyesight that something is not right with Naeem posing as Salim, returns to Salim's house dejected, but is revived by hearing the sitar that is played by the real Salim in another room. Next, a crucial long take of Nimmi bears central meaning in *Intezar*'s denouement. Swaying and moving across the room joyfully with the sitar sound, Nimmi's figure dissolves into a superimposed sequence

of shots—the close-up of her face is overlaid with Salim playing the sitar, accompanied by its sound, and in the next scene the overlaid image cuts to Naeem moving like a wound-up mechanical toy as he orchestrates music in Rang Mahal. The extended take continues with a lingering framed close-up of Nimmi's face superimposed with various images of her encounters with Salim, Naeem, and objects that exemplify their personas. An awareness of the deeper reality of the two characters slowly filters into Nimmi's consciousness. Crucially, it is not through sight, but through music, that the truth of the duplicitous scenario is revealed to Nimmi. It is later simply confirmed by actual vision, when Nimmi feigns blindness again to stealthily observe the contrasting behavior of the two brothers.

FABLING IN *INTEZAR*

In *Intezar*, the unstable shuttling of references through knowing jokes and intercinematic correspondences suggests that although ostensibly providing a moral lesson, the film itself is a fable whose relation to the social reality outside can be extricated neither from the world of cinema and theater nor from Bombay cinema and Hollywood. Another cluster of references for the latter in *Intezar* focuses on the role of jazz, Latin, and Cuban music in South Asian cinema, whose champion is the redoubtable D'Souza. A key film that consolidated Latin influences in Bombay cinema is *Albela* (Stylish, 1951), whose breakthrough music was composed by the C. Ramchandra (1918–82), and which has been analyzed by Bradley Shope in his essay on jazz and Latin influences in midcentury Bombay cinema.¹⁰⁷ *Albela* clearly was on the mind of *Intezar*'s writers. In *Intezar*, D'Souza jauntily hums the 1951 *Albela* song “Meray dil ki ghadi kare tick tick tick” (The clock of my heart beats tick tick tick) in a scene with Pepita, the lead dancer. Shope notes that the song in *Albela* has an “implied three + two clave . . . emphasized by a rolling piano, which gives a Latin American feel, and is a technique prominently featured in some musical segments of [Carmen] Miranda's films *Copacabana* and *That Night in Rio*.” Pepita is keen on Naeem, although the latter disparages her by calling her “Carmen Miranda,” even as Pepita insists that her dance moves are so compelling that they are copied by the film industry.

The Latin-themed song in the film, “Javānī kī raten javānī ke din” (Days and nights of youthful passion), with Pepita accompanied by male and female performers, is performed early in *Intezar* on the Rang Mahal stage, before Nimmi arrives to level her critique of Western music and bring

her Indian classical singing abilities to Rang Mahal. But even after her arrival, Nimmi herself does playback singing for a “*behūda gānā*” (lewd song), “*Ānkh se ānkh milā le*” (Let your eyes meet mine), an inebriated club song in which Cheemo is the lead dancer, in a *mise-en-scène* of a bar setting, accompanied by dancers in long, striped skirts, whose outfits can be compared with the outfits in the “*Deewana yeh parwana*” (This intoxicated moth) song in *Albela*.¹⁰⁸ The seated audiences’ heads sway with “*Ānkh se ānkh milā le*,” suggesting the powerful aesthetic force of this “Western” song on Rang Mahal’s audience. The role of the female stars in the film and especially in this sequence recalls Manishita Dass’s observation on the fraught negotiation of modernity by the female body in late colonial-era cinema: “The cinema as a form of mass culture thus came to be seen as a strange Circe-like creature, seductive yet vulnerable, posing a threat to both the authority of the lettered city and the welfare of the mass public by exposing the latter to images of modernity, yet in thrall to the dangerous desires and crude tastes of the very mass public that it enthralled. Not surprisingly, the female film star often came to function as a metonymic figure representing the cinema in its duality, at once inviting the gaze of the mass public and being objectified by it.”¹⁰⁹

Intezar’s conception of the public and its receptive and critical abilities is accordingly circumscribed but suggestive, nevertheless. The audience can evidently consume only whatever they are presented with onstage in a straightforward manner. But even here, the film tries to have it both ways. Even before Nimmi and Cheemo’s arrival at Rang Mahal, the songs and dances orchestrated by D’Souza and led by Pepita appeared to draw full audiences. “Both schools of music and music-lovers have ample opportunity for showing their art,” noted I. A. Rehman in his review.¹¹⁰ Why then is there need for the “Hindustani” musical revolution that Nimmi will eventually enact there (see figure 2.6)?

These seeming crossings are a clue to the subtlety of Taj and Anwar’s conception of the work done in the aesthetic realm: they are deeply aware that the seeming binaries of indigenous and foreign, and representation and reality are above all tropes that possess plasticity and require a process of engagement both by filmmakers and audiences to yield a way forward. This is the wisdom behind the sleight of hand that *Intezar* and *Koel* proffer in their diegesis, where the audience can indeed have it both ways, valuing local music and performance practices while partaking of the new developments of modernity. Moreover, *Intezar* is a sustained meditation on the loss of memory and the destruction of the sensorial inhabitation enacted

in Pakistan in the wake of the Partition of 1947, a theme that *Ghoonghat* revisits and tackles more centrally.

GHOONGHAT (1962)

In the main narrative of *Intezar* and *Koel*, Khurshid Anwar shows abiding concern for the loss of Indian music from the consciousness of audiences. In *Ghoonghat* (The veil), Indian music itself becomes associated with a specter, subsumed under for the loss of the larger South Asian cosmos, whose sundering due to modernity was most brutally experienced and magnified in the wake of the Partition of 1947. An earlier film, *Zehr-e Ishq* (1958), also cowritten by Imtiaz Ali Taj and Anwar, with music by Anwar, and directed by Masood Pervaiz, marks the loss of a richly sensorial, primitivist Indic lifeworld by a rationalized bourgeois Pakistani modernity.¹¹¹ *Ghoonghat* recasts this trope by situating this tension between the past and the present as a spectral presence whose hold is powerful and pervasive, which a contemporary reviewer also stressed: “The substantial part of the picture . . . is the world of spirits, which appears to be more realistic than the matter-of-fact scenes of everyday life, which only serve as a backdrop, against which the main emotional experience is projected. This world of spirits is a dream world conjured up by the artistic genius of Khurshid Anwar by an exquisitely sensitive blending of ethereal patterns of melody with suggestive pictorial imagery.”¹¹²

Anwar composed the music, wrote the story and screenplay, and directed and produced the film.¹¹³ Dialogue is by a Naseer Anwar. The playback singers included Noor Jehan, Naheed Niazi, Naseem Begum, and the emerging *ghazal* singer Mehdi Hassan. The film is a significant achievement in the history of Pakistani cinema, for its sustained mood of Gothic suspense, its shimmering and fluid camerawork, its cogent editing, and the immersive picturization of its haunting songs. The film deploys narrative tropes characteristic of much of Khurshid Anwar’s work during the late fifties till the midsixties—a weak and indecisive male hero suffering from traumatic loss, and the capacity of indigenous music to conjure and transform the affective universe of the protagonists. *Ghoonghat* was a submission for the thirty-sixth Academy Awards for Best Foreign Language Film in 1963 but was not nominated. For Pakistani cinema, this was nevertheless a milestone: the previous Oscar submission was for *Jago Hua Savera* in 1959, but the next submission was after a long five decades, in 2013 for *Zinda Bhaag* (Run for life, 2013).

Ghoonghat is primarily a Gothic suspense in which Shahid (played by Santosh Kumar), a writer of fiction and a man disconnected from reality, becomes enamored of the spectral female figure of Usha Rani (played by Nayyar Sultana). There are four main sections of the film. The opening sequence on the train is marked by claustrophobia and dissonance; the second section plays out inside a bourgeois bungalow in Lahore haunted by uncanny revelations. The third section is the longest, set in the wooded hills of Purban and characterized by languorous atmospheric effects in which Shahid repeatedly encounters the Rani in a dreamlike state. Finally, the film's denouement, the resolution of a whodunit, is placed in compressed form at the end in the Dak Bungalow in Purban.

GHOONGHAT'S OPENING SEQUENCE

The opening sequence of the film, which lasts over seven minutes, is a consequential train journey, filmed and edited to enhance claustrophobia and unease. Interior and exterior scenes from the train are overlaid with the title images, written in elegant and bold Lahori *nasta'liq* calligraphic script, which periodically appear throughout the opening sequence. The tension between the newlywed bride, Naheed, who has not yet unveiled her face (or lifted the *ghūnghaṭ*) for Shahid is set up right at the onset of the sequence.

The film opens with a soundtrack of a traveling train. The screen is pitch-black except for a small and blinding headlight of the train's engine moving forward and the faint glint of reflected light from the two train tracks. The establishing sequence ends with a dissonant sonic note. The next scene is inside the carriage. Attended with *shehnai* music, the camera pans from a *sehra* (floral headdress and veil) hanging on the wall to a medium close-up shot of the seated bride's back. Naheed's elaborate gilt dress, the *sehra*, and the *shehnai* (wind instrument associated with Muslim weddings) telegraph her status as a newlywed. The next shot shows her from the front, her face completely veiled by an elaborately embroidered fabric. As the wind ruffles her dress, a reverse shoulder shot frames Shahid in medium close-up from low angle, dressed in a white kurta (loose shirt), fondling a necklace of white flowers. Her dark dress and seated profile contrast with his white standing form. "Ham do ajnabi ek ho ga'e, apni manzil ki janib ja rahe hain" (We are two strangers who have become one, heading toward our destination), he says softly. Naheed uncomfortably huddles as Shahid leans over her: "You must have read my stories." A reverse medium shot shows her swaying in assent, as he continues, "One day, when I asked my mother

about my bride, she laughed and replied, ‘Remember the story you wrote, *Purban kī Rānī* [The Rani of Purban]? Now imagine that I am bringing you *Purban kī Rānī* herself!’” Hearing this, the veiled Naheed is visibly agitated. The next shot frames both figures—Shahid looking in the distance, saying wistfully, “The Rani of Purban . . . I had seen her in my childhood, a faint and unfocused image [*dhundlī taṣvīr*], dressed in a white sari with a jasmine [*motia*] necklace, wafting fragrance and disappearing in the mist.” Shahid looks away and moves out of the frame as the camera swings right for a medium close-up of Naheed on her train berth, as loud, intrusive *shehnai* notes evoke a dissonant aura.

The camera returns to symmetrically frame Shahid frontally between two *sehras* hanging in the back, as he says, “It’s my lifelong dream to see her.” The camera frames Naheed’s back for a shoulder angle shot of Shahid as he comes closer, leaning over her head as he says, “Today I want to see my dream realized” (Āj main us kḥvāb kī ta’bīr dekhnā chāhtā hūn). He sits next to her, holding a jasmine necklace he says is “similar to one that she wore,” and asks her, “Lift your veil so that I can place this around your neck” (Ghūnghaṭ uṭhā’iye, use main āp ke gale meṇ ḍāl dun). She reaches out her hand to stop his hand, a close-up shot of two hands embracing with the garland, attended by the sound of clashing cymbals. “Mu’āf kijiye gā” (Please excuse me), he says, as a medium close-up shoulder shot depicts Shahid attempting to gently embrace Naheed, but her hennaed hand on his chest prevents this. He kisses her hand, and she waves her sari border uneasily, perhaps to circulate air in the stifling carriage. Cognizing that she is overheated, he states that he will return to his seat across from her but does not offer her any water to quench her thirst or to ease her journey. Oblivious to her needs, he instead pursues his obsession: “Lift your veil, aren’t you overheated? . . . in any case, when you reach home, you will have to lift it.” And as he reclines, he casually drops the bombshell, “The veil must reveal Usha Rani behind it . . . the Rani of Purban,” startling Naheed, whose profiled body jerks upward like a horror film character, attended by an ensemble of dissonant notes (figure 2.7).

This uncomfortable and claustrophobic encounter between two strangers has already been freighted with Shahid’s impossible desire to have his bride conform to a specter. In the next scene, the camera moves toward an earthenware water pot, and the scene dissolves in a graphic match to the train’s headlight hurtling through the night. The inside and outside train scenes continue to build on an uncanny aura, by focusing on isolated details of the train carriage, discordant diegetic sounds of banging doors and



FIG. 2.7. Opening train sequence in *Ghoonghat* (1962). Oblivious to Naheed's needs, Shahid pursues his obsession: "Lift your veil . . . it must reveal . . . the Rani of Purban."

rattle of the train tracks and the whistle, loud, dissonant extradiegetic notes, and unsettling strobe lighting from the windows of the moving train. Shahid wakes up to find Naheed missing, with only her jasmine necklace lying on her berth. He pulls the emergency chain to stop the moving train. Shahid's father, who has been in another carriage, comes to find out what is happening and suffers a fatal heart attack when he learns that Naheed has gone missing. A smashed water pot, a banging door, abandoned shoes, broken bangles, and the veil on the floor are all that are left of Naheed's former presence. The sequence ends in a fade to black of an aerial wide-angle shot of the train moving away from the camera into the dark night.

BOURGEOIS DOMESTICITY AND SHAHID'S TRAUMA

The opening sequence effectively sets up the premise and the mood of the film. Shahid, an impractical man half living in a dream world of his childhood that seeps into his fiction writing, is completely disconnected from his bride, whose face he has never seen. Her mysterious departure propels the plot forward, now to Lahore. In the next episode, set in Lahore, the establishing shot pans from a wide-angle shot of a luxurious Art Deco bungalow's manicured lawn, with children playing and laughing, to the

outside of Shahid's bungalow next door. Inside, Shahid's home is in crisis, in contrast to the happy familial life next door. Shahid, alone in his study, has retreated into the hermetic inner world of his room, where he drinks alcohol, plays the sitar, and stares into space. His mother, his elderly nanny, and his boisterous friend Jameel (played by Agha Talish) visit him there but cannot draw him out of his stupor.

Next, we see Naheed's father, a frail man elegantly dressed in a black *achkan* (Nehru jacket) and *qarāqul* (wool) cap, waiting inside the front door. He pleads with Shahid's mother to allow Naheed to become united with Shahid, but the mother will have none of it. She drives Naheed's father away with an impassioned dialogue in which she accuses Naheed of having not only caused the death of her husband but also propelled Shahid toward infantilism, and this is attended by a sonic field of Shahid's singing voice wafting through the bourgeois domestic space.

"Your friend Jameel says that you are no longer Shahid but have become Devdas," Shahid's mother slowly explains to Shahid after entering his room, evoking an interfilmic reference to the most famous tragic hero of Bombay cinema.¹¹⁴ Jameel enters next, with the greeting "Hello, Devdas the Great!" and is startled to see Shahid's mother in his room. "Is this a milk whiskey or whiskey milk?" he jokes, examining Shahid's glass. "Devdas became a drunkard, and finally died, but our Devdas will live!" he grandly declares, referring to the hero's tragic fate in the *Devdas* films. Apart from his alcohol addiction, Shahid has also been secretly purchasing toys and hiding them behind his books. With a flourish, Jameel dramatically rotates the bookshelf to reveal the giant stash of toys arranged as a collection, an amassing of multiple fetishes that nevertheless cannot compensate for Shahid's lost object of desire.

The next sequence shows the outside of a toy store. Shahid enters, attended by percussion music, buys two dolls, brings them home, but is startled to see his mother and nanny already in his room. In a shot/reverse shot sequence, the two women stand in front of his toy cabinet, while he holds the newly purchased dolls in both hands, with a woman's portrait by artist Abdur Rahman Chughtai (1894–1975) on the wall at his left.¹¹⁵ The Lahore-based Chughtai had developed a painting style drawn from Mughal art, Art Nouveau, and wash techniques from the Bengal School of Art in Calcutta.¹¹⁶ A key subject for the artist are portraits of women who are idealized toward unreality. As the poet Faiz has noted, Chughtai rendered the beloved in line and color in a more ravishing actualization (*‘ālam-i vujūd*)

than that of the *ghazal*'s imagined beloved (*'ālam-i taṣavvur*).¹¹⁷ Chughtai himself claimed that his impossibly idealized portraits nevertheless exerted vital influence over women's sense of self-presentation: "My pictures have influenced women to become more refined in their dress, makeup, and grooming. When a woman attends a gathering dressed and adorned in a manner reminiscent of my paintings, observers associate her with 'Chughtai Art.'" ¹¹⁸ The mise-en-scène of this shot/reverse shot sequence, which places the characters in a space dense with visual references to idealized female fetish figures, evokes Shahid's consciousness, which is already suspended between the worlds of reality and imagination, and which subsequent events in the film's narrative will serve to deepen and propel toward crisis.

THE GHOST AT PURBAN

In an effort to break out of the limbo at home, Shahid's mother informs him that it is the season when timber is being harvested for the family business, and that he needs to go to Purban to attend to it. The film's location now moves to the forested mountainous region where Purban is located and remains there for the rest of the film. In a clearing among the trees is a small, abandoned Hindu temple, which will play a crucial role in the subsequent narrative. Several activities are transpiring in Purban. The local residents are involved in subsistence livelihoods and work for Shahid's family business of timber harvesting. When Shahid arrives in Purban with Jameel, they unexpectedly find that they are not able to reside in his family home, *Sunder Nivas*, because it is temporarily occupied by a group of young college-educated women who are vacationing there. Instead, Shahid and Jameel stay at the *Dak Bungalow*, where they encounter a mysterious young woman who is also residing there. Farzana (played by Neelo; see figure I.2) often dresses in form-fitting Western clothes and is bold in her manners with strangers. She playfully brandishes a pistol. Although mistaken for a police officer by Jameel, she is later revealed to be a notorious smuggler who is on the run from the police and finds the area of Purban convenient, because it is situated near the border and there are caves in a hill nearby where she can stash smuggled shipments brought by convoys at night. Because the haunted temple is near the caves, no one ventures there, making it an ideal deposit. Farzana is a hard-boiled femme fatale who falls for Shahid. "Āp ke Devdas ne mere dil kī gahrā'iyon meṁ so'ī hū'ī 'aurat ko bedār kar diyā hai" (Your Devdas has awakened the woman asleep in the recesses of my heart), she

confesses to Jameel. But Shahid does not reciprocate her advances, as he is totally in thrall to the ghost of Usha Rani.

The local residents remember the haunting legend of Usha Rani from before the time of the Partition. According to this harrowing story, Usha Rani was the daughter of the temple priest who fell in love with Shyam, the son of a wealthy businessman from Lahore who was visiting from the city. Forbidden by his father to marry into Usha Rani's poverty-stricken family, Shyam was forced to return to the city and was coercively betrothed to another woman from a more suitable class background, whom he had never seen. In despair, Shyam committed suicide by drinking poison on his wedding night, before lifting the veil from his new bride. Usha Rani drowned herself in the lake in Purban, but her spirit continues to haunt the valley even today, in search of her lost beloved.

In character with Anwar's other films, songs play a central symbolic role in the film's narrative arc. *Ghoonghat's* songs were written by Tanvir Naqvi, prolific writer of film lyrics who specialized in writing the *gīt* rather than the *ghazal*.¹¹⁹ The songs are notable for their diction; many of them avoid a heavy use of Persianate vocabulary and high Urdu phrasing and instead deploy North Indian language registers of closer to Hindavi, Purbi, and Bhojpuri. One of the songs has the opening lyrics “Rāhoṅ meṅ ṭhārī main nāzareṅ jamā'e / janam janam ke ās lagā'e / ko'ī ā'e?” (With my gaze affixed on the road / overflowing with the desire of many past incarnated lives / when will he come?). This song comes right after a villager in Purban has narrated the haunted tale of Usha Rani to one of the college women. The song begins with a long shot of Sunder Nivas in mist, in front of which the four college women walk forward slowly. The camera then frames the temple in long shot, a landscape of hills, trees, and mist, lit by the raking light of early morning or before sunset, which creates a dramatic play of light and shade on the temple facade and the foreground. Bells ring, a chorus begins singing, and Usha Rani emerges from the temple swaying and dancing, a striking, statuesque figure in a white sari against the darker landscape. Her “hand and body movements on the line ‘*Kab 'āenge*’ [When will you arrive?] add to the mystery of the sinister atmosphere,” notes Amjad Parvez.¹²⁰ The theme of reincarnation and extended temporality is a leit-motif in the haunting lyrics and Usha Rani's movements: “Kitne zamāne bīte akhiyāṅ bichā'e” (How many eras have passed in front of my awaiting eyes). The song is effective in its narrative force—as soon as it ends, the car carrying Jameel and Shahid appears on the road.

In her analysis of midcentury Gothic cinema from Bombay, Meheli Sen has highlighted the narrative imperative for the specter to be gendered, which alone has the enthralling power exerted by the song: “The affective terrain of partnership and mutuality demanded by love duets [in other social films] is never animated in these songs; the power to enthrall, seduce, and render silent remains with the woman/ghost.”¹²¹ This is also the case in *Ghoonghat*. Shahid’s abject inability to sing back or sing along is therefore in keeping with this convention of the cinematic Gothic in South Asia, in which it is the female specter and voice that constantly haunts the male bourgeois character toward irrationality and a temporality that transcends modernity.

Given his infantile mental state, when Shahid returns to Purban, where he had gone in his childhood, he becomes completely enthralled with Usha Rani from the very beginning. Even as they drive to Purban, Jameel and Shahid encounter what appears to be the ghost of Usha Rani. She emerges in front of the car, a waltzing and bewitching presence in a white sari, waist-length hair, a *bindi* on her forehead, and adorned with a garland of white flowers. She asks for a ride from Shahid and Jameel in their car and is seated in the back. But when the car arrives at the Dak Bungalow in Purban, she has mysteriously vanished from the car, leaving behind only her garland.

Shahid becomes more and more enthralled with the spectral figure, whose presence is palpable across the sensorial realm, in sound, scent, and sight, but not through touch. Characteristically, when the abandoned temple’s bells mysteriously swing and ring without anyone present at the temple, they signal that Usha Rani will make her appearance. She meets Shahid among the trees, shrouded in a foggy and misty aura, a graceful figure moving effortlessly in the forest. The song “Chan chan chan merī pāyal kī dhun” (My ankle bracelets sing chan chan chan) is filmed on a meeting between Shahid and Usha Rani in the mist-laden woods. Its unusual musical composition pauses between verses when Usha Rani disappears in the woods, only to appear playfully and mysteriously in another spot behind him as he wanders among the trees looking for her. The pauses are punctuated by the sound of *ghungroo* (ankle bells) and birdsong. The song’s diction is in Hindi, and Usha Rani dances in a classical style and strews flowers in his path. At the end of the song, she appears as an apparition in the sky, framed centrally behind by the canopy of the trees, from which rays of vibrating light animate the surrounding mist, rendering her as a figure reminiscent of a goddess in a Hindu mythological film imparting *darshan* (beholding the deity) (figure 2.8).¹²²



FIG. 2.8. Usha Rani appears at the end of the song “Chan chan chan merī pāyal kī dhun” (My ankle bracelets sing chan chan chan) as an apparition, reminiscent of a Hindu goddess in a mythological film imparting *darshan* (beholding the deity). *Ghoonghat* (1962).

Usha Rani has forbidden Shahid to touch her, because she warns him that she is a cold specter that needs a body to become fully human again. She sings haunting songs and points out places in the forest where she and Shyam used to meet in their previous lives. She urges Shahid to remember his past life as Shyam, and she shows him two places where the names of Usha and Shyam have been inscribed on tree trunks in Hindi (Devanagari) script (figure 2.9).

Although he is unable to read Hindi or remember his supposed previous incarnation, nevertheless he is more and more infatuated with Usha Rani. The only way for them to be together, she eventually counsels him, is for him to bring his wife Naheed to Purban and to drown her in the lake. After her drowning, Usha Rani’s ghost will inhabit Naheed’s body, and they will finally be together in the present incarnation of their lives, a union they were unable to achieve in their previous lives. *Ghoonghat*’s characters doubled across time with a promise of union based on a reincarnation theme recalls the celebrated Bombay Gothic film *Mahal* (The mansion, 1949, dir. Kamal Amrohi). Sarah Waheed’s analysis of *Mahal* foregrounds the centrality of Partition’s trauma as its context: “*Mahal* asks questions that are working through the traumatic underpinnings of their moment, and take on an ethical hue: can one continue to love a woman who is dead? If not,



FIG. 2.9. Usha Rani shows Shahid the names of Usha and Shyam inscribed on tree trunks in Hindi (Devanagari) script. *Ghoonghat* (1962).

then what are the means one must pursue in order to forget? What happens if one discovers that the dead is not really dead after all?"¹²³ Analogous questions can be posed for *Ghoonghat*'s main characters.

The guileless Shahid is so deeply enthralled that he goes along with this macabre scheme in a half stupor. He arranges for Naheed—whom he has not met since she disappeared from the train—to come to Purban ostensibly for their long-delayed honeymoon. She arrives on a haunting night graced with a full moon. Bent forward with her head covered with her veil and her face not visible, Naheed follows him to the lake, and they ride on a small boat. The still water of the lake and the misty environment lit by moonlight evoke an otherworldly Gothic aura. In the boat, Naheed is seated in the same position as she was at the beginning of the film in the train carriage, dressed in the same embroidered bridal wear, with the veil covering her head. After Shahid rows the boat to the middle of the lake, he asks Naheed whether she is willing to make any sacrifice for her husband. "Can you give up your life for me?" he asks her, to which she replies, "My life is yours." She then gently asks him to throw her overboard with his own hands. Nevertheless, the indecisive Shahid hesitates to carry out Usha Rani's instructions, as conflicting voices are ringing inside his head—Usha Rani's urgings to drown Naheed and his own conscience about becoming a murderer—attended by tortured, dissonant music. A long shot frames both figures

standing on the opposite sides of the boat, a scream is heard, and Naheed falls in the still water unassisted by Shahid. The stunned Shahid rows the boat back to shore, passing silently by Naheed's veil floating on the lake. The police are waiting on the shore and promptly arrest Shahid for Naheed's murder.

DENOUEMENT AT SUNDER NIVAS

The film changes gear again and now moves toward the finale, which is akin to a denouement scene in a detective film.¹²⁴ Shahid is brought to the bungalow of Sunder Nivas, where a group is already assembled, consisting of the college-educated women, Shahid's mother and nanny, and Naheed's father. Shahid is lectured to, first by the genial police chief. The police chief tells the assembly that Naheed is indeed alive and was with his wife this morning, reading together the famous short story "The Rani of Purban" by the acclaimed writer Shahid. He berates Shahid for not living in the modern era: "Javāb nahīn hai āp kā. Bīsivīn šadī meṇ raihte haiṇ aur kahāniyāṇ āp Laila ke zamāne kī likhte haiṇ!" (You are really something. You live in the twentieth century but write stories from the time of Laila [Majnun])!). He informs Naheed's father that his daughter is "one in a million" (*lākhon meṇ ek*), a common phrase in Urdu. "You are a strange one, chasing after a shadow despite having been married to such a singular wife" (Aur āp bhī lākhon meṇ ek, keh aīsī bivī pā kar bhī sā'e ke pīche mare mare phirte rahe), he tells Shahid (figure 2.10).

Next, one of the assembled women grills Shahid for believing in wild fantasies about women. She accuses him of denying material needs and desires of real women, preferring instead to live in his otherworldly stories, where women are impossibly idealized. Pacing in front of and around the seated Shahid, she declaims, "Writers like you have elevated women on a pedestal, making them into goddesses and comparing them to the song of spring, starlight, the scent of flowers, birdsongs, and other such nonsense. You forget that she is human like you; her lips can smile, her eyes can shed tears, her steps can stumble, and she can have flaws. Then why do you still consider her as a goddess?"¹²⁵

She then gently counsels the seated Shahid that it's not too late, and that he needs to forget the imaginary goddess and embrace the actual woman who has become his partner in life. A medium close-up shows her waving a bottle of jasmine perfume behind him, as temple bells begin to ring in the distance. The camera cuts to show a full-size percussion pipe organ that



FIG. 2.10. Denouement at the Dak Bungalow. *Ghoonghat* (1962).

one of the college women is jauntily striking with a hammer, revealing the artifice behind the sonic and sensorial associations evoked by Usha Rani. Next, the front door opens to a cloudy horizon animated by a central visionary and vibrating light emanating from behind the moving clouds—Usha Rani is framed from a low angle entering through the doorway, very suggestive of the appearance of divinities in Hindu mythological films and similar to her previous appearance at the end of the “Chan chan chan merī pāyal kī dhun” song. Shahid exclaims, “Usha! My Usha!” while Naheed’s father calls out, “My daughter!” It turns out that the ghost of Usha Rani is indeed Naheed. At this precise moment, however, the figure of Usha Rani is fully interpellated with Naheed and is now doubled forever in Shahid’s imagination. The ghost has been corporealized into a living figure in an inextricable manner, suggesting that even the whodunit ending that is meant to create a bourgeois rational resolution remains fundamentally unstable and haunted. The lifeworlds prior to the Partition cannot be banished from the consciousness of modernity.

In a flashback, Naheed explains the events that transpired in the train carriage. After Shahid had freighted Naheed with the fantastic expectation that she ought to look just like the spectral Usha Rani after her veil was lifted, Naheed became apprehensive that this would be impossible. She also felt suffocated in the train carriage due to heat and thirst. As she recalls in a voiceover during the flashback, she desperately moved about in the carriage to try to pour water from the empty pot to quench her thirst

and to open the window shutters for air: "My veil had become my shroud. I felt that my life was ebbing from my body. My throat was parched. I needed a sip of water to survive. The train carriage had become overpoweringly claustrophobic and had become a grave. . . . This first night after the wedding ceremony . . . so frightening, so poisonous. . . . Better for me to die than to find out that my husband prefers to see someone else rather than me." In desperation, she spied a water stand at the next stop on the train platform and got off to have a drink but was unable to get back on the train in time. In order to save her marriage, Naheed, with the help of her college friends, planned out the elaborate ruse of playing Usha Rani, in order for her to enact Shahid's idealized fantasy and then to bring him back to reality. The film ends with the reconciliation of Shahid and Naheed, with a closing wide pan shot of the misty landscape of Purban that ends at the temple, attended by the sound of a chorus and the insistent ringing of the temple bells.

ANALYSIS OF *GHOONGHAT*

The film is rich and multilayered, carefully assembled from several genres, including the Gothic film, the detective film, the social film, and the musical, with elements drawn from the Hindu mythological film and horror cinema. Rather than fragmenting the audience's expectations, these elements create unexpected turns and compel the audience to remain enthralled by the mystery of Usha Rani—is she really a ghost, or is this all an elaborate ruse? There are, however, a few loose threads in the film that remain unresolved.¹²⁶ The plot hangs together by improbable coincidences, such as the return of Shahid to Purban, although this is not dissimilar to a film such as *Vertigo* (1958) by Alfred Hitchcock, which also deals with returning to the traumatic site with doubled and mistaken identifications. Although the appearance of the ghost of Usha Rani is finally revealed to be an elaborate subterfuge, the ghost is not yet laid to rest. Who did the young Shahid actually see at Purban years ago, or was it all a figment of his overstimulated imagination to begin with? In case of the latter, how to explain the long-standing local legend of Usha Rani? "*Ghoonghat* was an imaginative film, which the general public could not understand when they first viewed it. Gradually, however, the public began to comprehend it," notes Yasin Goriya.¹²⁷ Perhaps the initial difficulty in general understanding was due to *Ghoonghat's* unexpected genre crossing, as well as unresolved issues in its narrative.

The role of women in *Ghoonghat*'s social world is paradoxical. On the one hand, women are expected to make any sacrifice—even to embrace death—to fulfill their traditional roles in a marriage by conforming completely to their husbands' desires and suppressing their own. But we learn at the denouement that Naheed is highly accomplished in many fields. Not only was she a champion swimmer, but she also won first prize in college with her singing and dancing—abilities that enable her to play the ruse of Usha Rani with aplomb. Her friends from college also appear very capable and flawlessly execute the support Naheed needs to convincingly assume the role of Usha Rani. And Farzana, the head of an international smuggling operation and living alone in the Dak Bungalow, is clearly possessed of considerable agency and independence. By contrast, the male characters are largely duds. Jameel is amusing as a bon vivant, but the narrative does not reveal anything else about his abilities or character. Naheed's father has a marginal role, a figure of pathos eliciting compassion as he is unable to resolve the marital divide. Above all, apart from Shahid's status as a fiction writer—whose writing is ridiculed at the end of the film for being out of sync with the times—he is indecisive throughout the film, enthralled only by the vision of Usha Rani and the influence she (played by Naheed) exerts on him at Purban. How will a capable and strong-willed Naheed deal with a flunky dreamer like Shahid, after they are reconciled? A conservative and patriarchal view of women here is at odds with the persistent crisis of masculinity and the gender-liberating potential of modernization, and this is a highly productive tension throughout the film.¹²⁸ Anwar himself spoke about his film firmly in the context of Bombay cinema, underscoring its exploration of the crisis of masculinity in modernity. Javed Usman's interview question and Anwar's response merits quoting at length:

JAVED USMAN: "It appears to me that a number of . . . [your films] had stories of the type which contained mist engulfed hills and valleys, haunted villas, spirits, echoes and strange sounds and tinkling of far-off bells, and amidst all this otherworldly atmosphere was placed slightly deranged heroes talking of eternal love and so on. There was beauty in the music and the scenery, but the attitude behind all this heavy romantic imagery seems one of escapism to me. Would you care to comment?"

KHURSHID ANWAR: "[P. C.] Barua was one of our great pioneers. An incomparable scriptwriter, good director, and Leftist. His *Jawab* [Question, 1942] revolved round the character of an indecisive, weak,

and utterly wasteful young man. When the young man rises for breakfast, there has to be *sitar* playing before he can get into the right mood, for example. Two girls love him, but he is incapable of choosing between them. In the end they decide the issue among themselves. That is a rough idea of the plot. Baburao Patel in those days considered himself to be the leading film critic of India and he also owned a top magazine *Filmindia*. He too, by the way, was a Leftist. Patel tore Barua to pieces and criticized him for having made a film on an incredibly ridiculous situation. Patel thought the character was too unnatural to make any sense. Barua in his rejoinder destroyed Patel's criticism by simply pointing out that the young man in fact was a symbol of the contemporary middle class which, in his opinion, was devoid of all will to make decisions for itself and . . . others decided its fate while it sat smug in its petty comforts. In the same way my approach toward *Ghoonghat*'s main character was extremely critical, one who is shown to be living in a world which is a figment of his imagination. He wanders in the valleys in search of her [sic] dead beloved. His wife poses as a spirit to win him back and jolt him into realizing that he has been acting stupidly."¹²⁹

Ability and decisiveness as normatively being in the possession of men is a leitmotif in a whole ensemble of films from the early days of Indian cinema. Its crisis is also a central motif in several others, the most celebrated manifestation being *Devdas*, originally a novel in Bengali by Sarat Chandra Chatterjee published in 1917, which was repeatedly made into film in multiple languages, including in 1928 in the silent era (directed by Naresh Mitra), in Hindi in 1935 (directed by P. C. Barua) and again in 1955 (directed by Bimal Roy). Recall that Jameel jokingly refers to Shahid in his infantile state as a Devdas. *Ghoonghat* partakes of this "Devdasian" crisis of masculinity, in Shahid's inability to distinguish between material needs and fantasy and his incapacity to inhabit the chronotope of modernity. But *Ghoonghat* goes further.

ALLEGORY OF THE PARTITION

Above all, *Ghoonghat* is a deeply reflective film about the latent and delayed consequences of the Partition of 1947 on memory and subjectivity. The hauntings it evokes all draws from a past that shared with Hindu life and that has been in a process of being irrevocably lost with the consolidation

of Pakistan as a Muslim-majority nation. Usha Rani urges Shahid to remember his previous incarnation as Shyam, which he is of course unable to do, but the force of the exhortation needs to be underscored. Similarly, Shahid cannot read the Hindi names on the trees, as the Devanagari script was no longer in common use in Pakistan after 1947. The graffiti-like Hindi writing can also be compared with the beautifully calligraphed film titles in *nasta'liq* script, suggesting aesthetic tension in an effort of affective overcoming of an unwelcome past. The Hindu temple is abandoned and forlorn, appearing as an archaeological relic from a distant past rather than a devotional space in active use as recently as 1947.

And yet the ghosts remain revenant. Usha Rani's legend is narrated by the local residents, the temple bells insistently ring, and the incomprehensible Devanagari script returns. But these returns are discrepant, at an angle. Usha Rani cannot be touched, the heart accompanying the Hindi graffiti is upside down in one of the inscriptions, and the names are also slightly misspelled.¹³⁰ Above all, it is the non-Islamic, "irrational" Hindu conception of reincarnation that is central to the film's narrative and propels it forward. "No universal modernity can fully subsume the desires and fantasies driving Indian subjectivities, or supplant the granular nature of local lifeworlds," Bhaskar Sarkar has noted in his study of Indian cinema's relation to the Partition.¹³¹ The loss of the past has psychic effects that cannot be fully redeemed or overcome by rationality, despite the exhortations of the police chief and Naheed's friend at the end of the movie.

The romantic reckoning with the Partition that is imbricated with the corrosive effects of modernity is a central theme of many of Anwar's films from the midfifties to the midsixties, including *Intezar* and *Ghoonghat* as discussed above, but also in *Zehr-e Ishq* (1958), for which he wrote the screenplay, as well as *Chingari* (1964), which he directed in addition to writing the screenplay and story.¹³² Indeed, linking modernity with the irrevocable loss of a sense of a wholeness of being, separation from Indic and local lifeworlds, and the resulting trauma evokes a crisis of nationalism and patriarchy that cannot be overcome, despite endings in these films that attempt to rehabilitate bourgeois domesticity but, as we have discussed, do so in a highly implausible register. Bhaskar Sarkar's important study on the Partition has focused on Indian cinema.¹³³ By understanding how Lahore-based filmmakers responded to the Partition, a fuller and more nuanced picture emerges of the reverberative effects of the destructive emergence of modern nationalism, a most consequential development in modern South Asian history.

The spectral and uncanny return of ghosts of the past in Anwar's films can be thought alongside Chris Moffat's reflections on the afterlife of Bhagat Singh and the obligations owed by the living toward the memory of exemplary figures. As Moffat notes, "My aim is not to attribute a ghostly agency to the dead but rather to question the presumption that the living stand confidently in an emancipated present, able to draw selectively from the past but remaining in no way bound to it."¹³⁴ Rather, the past makes insistent and affective claims that cannot be neatly compartmentalized. While Moffat's study focuses on the work of activist cultural politics, Anwar's cinema remembers the past in a melancholy register. Does this also evoke an engagement with Bhagat Singh's memory, especially since Singh's steadfast call toward liberation beyond communal divisions was such a formative experience for the young Khurshid Anwar and since Anwar continued to hold him in the greatest esteem until the end of his life? Anwar's cinema insistently urges its audience to remember a recent past not defined by the selective amnesia of the nation-state and suggests affective potentialities of cultural forms that might heal colonial modernity's fractures of the self. Anwar's cinema moves away from overt cultural politics to offer a profound reflection on the divided ego, inhabiting these fissures in an affective and open-ended manner.