



THE BAZAAR BETWEEN
WILD/HISTORIES
AND CITY/LIFE

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Oriental bazaars are marked by the whirlwind movement of nomads sweeping in the world into localities in the wake of their conquests. The much-vaunted 'frontality' of shop displays in our bazaars has nothing to do with the 'frontal' practices of icon worship in our temples. It has instead to do with laying out objects in rows that open up frontally, mimicking the line-up of noblemen at the thresholds of palaces to welcome the triumphal arrival of the turbulent horseman. Such a welcome must allow a fanning outwards of the double line of those who welcome, allow for a gradual and step-by-step absorption of the gale-force of the wind thrown up by the glorious movement of the horse across territories conquered. It must start with a wide opening, then gradually funnel the force of the turbulent approach into the innards of the court by way of welcoming lines that narrow inwards. And so the objects in a bazaar shop are arranged, to recall the double line of noblemen welcoming the world-conquering, horse-riding hero of yore. The goods fan out from the quiet interiors of the shop to welcome us in gradually, to absorb the danger our nomadic desires pose for the stable built space. And so we are, like the nomadic hero, being welcomed with care into the somber and quiet 'local' when we face the display of a shop in the bazaars of a city like Bombay – or whatever is left of them today.

We could instead say that our temples begin as mobile shrines with itinerant bards, shrines that open their doors to sweep off a fan-like space before them in a welcoming gesture to their audiences, shrines in search of nomadic warrior patrons who shall be transformed into world-conquering heroes through their frontal encounter with divinity in the wilderness. The frontality of the shrine is first and foremost created to welcome the warrior into its sacral innards. To the warrior, divinity promises a universe of bazaar goods as sign of imperial glory; divinity is a purveyor of goods – rains, crops, lush forests, wealth of flora and fauna, human beauty and fertility and aesthetic excellence. Divinity too is a seller at the bazaar – he or she sells empires to the hero willing to take on the task. And for that reason, the shrine/temple must be exposed to the world in an opened-out manner to spell expansive courtesy that allows the potential client's desire, just emerged from the wilderness, to undergo a degree of dilution. The icon in a shrine or a temple is therefore not a divinity to be worshipped or feared but a shopkeeper to be haggled with over the price of empire.

The approach of goods into a bazaar is like that of horsemen of the Apocalypse. And, for that reason, the lay-out of bazaar goods in shops standing as a metaphor for the line-up of noblemen welcoming the horse-riding hero at the portals of the palace is an apt one. The blowing in of exotic and precious winds upsets the staid, psychic balance of the 'local', introducing the 'foreign' into a 'host' society. Bazaar goods are like mercenary stormtroopers of armies seeking to conquer us from afar, minions of an unseen sorcerer or mad scientist sent in exotic disguise to charm and lure us away from our present lives to do his or her bidding. They could include exotic-aesthetic textures, a religious idea, the beauty of a woman, the charisma of a poet or actor. They work through those rebellious, greedy 'traitors' in the 'local' who are already feeling restless in the static doldrums of a settled society; through those who seek exotic enjoyments and speeds not purveyed in the village shop. Bazaars are encampments for such 'foreign' mercenaries operating between the global and the local.

It is thus that bazaars tend to collect 'useless' goods over generations of accumulation, simply because the society around is conservative to their speeds.

They are altogether speedier than the slow temporalities of Braudelian histories that anchor reality in the time-codes of peasant foodgrain production. People don't buy to the speeds of desire that bazaar goods code in their aesthetic textures and numbers. Thus they lie around in heaps, in dumps – like the garbage-heaps of potshards that archaeologists discover, much to their delight. To them one would say that such finds do not tell us what a society was actually doing; rather, a garbage-dump of Roman amphorae would tell us what that society could not do, what it feared would destabilize the regimes of attention that kept it 'stable'. Rather than telling us about what society was thinking or feeling, it tells us more about the 'unthinkable' in such a society – about feelings that might destabilize thought altogether.

Such an accumulation of goods over generations of non-use shapes the labyrinthine logic of bazaar architectonics. Buildings join up through outlier constructions as generations of sellers accumulate in the space, hoping to sell goods a few centuries old. Over time, the fair-like beginnings of the bazaar proliferate to include mass-scale production of goods occasioned by historical stasis in sales. Storerooms of products to sell and products produced merge into one another, as do social relationships. Cities and bazaars are both deposits of the historical unconscious that grow side by side in uneven reciprocal relationships, and are therefore excessive to one another. Miscegenation across all categories of life becomes the rule of the bazaar waiting for the world to catch up with it.

The original sellers at bazaars were of only one kind: pastoralists cast off from society by the operation of the politics of clan-size. They comprised hapless cousins and surplus progeny who could not be fitted into the passage of patrimony, owing mainly to the fact that the clan had become too big for an equitable yet functional division of properties. Finding place to settle down in, they first sold what they produced – then, as they got linked to the larger chains of society, they began production at larger scales to grow wealthier and prosperous. But the jump into the global bazaar is something that has always eluded these bazaar seller–producers. The surplus time of the original bazaar seller, beyond the time of production and sales that would have gone into management of animals and their produce, is now utilized for mass-scale goods production, as well as in the wait to dispose of what can't be sold off in simpler supply–demand logics that an earlier bazaar knew intimately through the lived experience of producer–sellers within the worlds of buyers. Thus production, in the time freed up from loss of pastoral duties, is now used to produce goods for peoples one has no lived experience of. One overproduces in the bazaar as well as overorders from production sites abroad. But as a sign of the uneven fit between Indic bazaar lives and what is produced and sold there, we have the cows that freely roam the streets of India; they are a testimony to what the sellers in the bazaar would ideally want to do in their free time – milk the cows.

To modify the picture, then, of the overtly disruptive presence of the bazaar to the textures of history, one may state that the Indic bazaar – such as we see in a city like Bombay – is made up of three layers: the fair-like, 'primitive–tribal' bazaar and the exotic 'global' bazaar at two poles, with the modern, daily-goods bazaar serving local urban needs wedged between like a Trishanku, mixing the primitive–tribal and the global equally. However, as we know, the exotic dimensions of the bazaar have taken over from the foundational, 'primitive–tribal' simplicity of this space of the times of

Mumbadevi; and cultural troubles in the Indic bazaar that have marked its history from the period of the Islamic Sultanates have today reached an all-time high under the rubric of defining what 'Indian tradition' is, in the face of the nomadic assault of the exotic. Or, rather, the exotic today mediates the gentrification of the 'primitive-tribal' straight into the global, bypassing its earlier passage through civil society. Independent India seems to have produced too vast a populace awaiting the jump from 'primitive' to cosmopolitan for the sluggish ways of the Indian state's reformism. And, indeed, much of the overproduction in the bazaar proliferates in the greedy gleam and pull of the exotic which promises glittering sales but in reality delivers very little in a society that is aesthetically still conservative in its fundamentals. This differential of speeds between countryside and bazaar, which is inevitably read as a moral theology, ensures that the bazaar remains a space somewhat internally divided in its psyches. It knows the dangers it poses to settled societies, and that it is prone to continuous suspicion and surveillance from the point-of-view of settled society and the state.

WHEN IT ALL BEGAN...

Historically the productive capacities of today's bazaars are set in the eighteenth century, when there was an all-time rise in the capacities of Indian productivity to meet world demands in cloth and internal demands for all kinds of goods arising out of the continuous and intense fratricidal wars between various religious sects. It also needs to be mentioned, in the context of these all-encompassing wars, that the mobilization of animals and animal produce reached an all-time high in pre-modern India. The history of the sweetmeat shops that structure Indic bazaars needs to be read back to this period; the *qasba* towns of northern India so famous for their sweets were garrison towns for soldiery during the wars of the eighteenth century and became what we know them as at that time. Soldiery had a short lifespan, and the encampments of mercenaries now fighting on this warring side were sites of excess – liquor, fatty foods, sweets and female flesh flowed in abundance through every town and city of Hindustan. Not surprisingly, given the massive mobilization of cattle and kine during the wars, the first cow-protection *tabelas* came up in Kutch immediately after the defeat of this regime of production at the hands of the British in 1857–58.

With the advent of colonialism and the shifts in market structure to which Indian production now had to respond, both areas of productivity underwent a drastic abbreviation. Reading eighteenth-century historical texts, one gets the feeling that something momentous in scales of production of sensory experience in the Indic was abruptly nipped in the bud, at the highest point of ecstasy, by the protestant puritanism of capital. The expanded capacity of the bazaar remained in tune with war-time demands both in terms of quantity and in terms of the shining glory of the Apocalyptic wars that bazaar goods had to code in their texture. Displacements occasioned by wars gave the consumption of goods a hallucinatory, excessive dimension, and the markets an expanded capaciousness that arises from the confusion of senses in wayward mobility during times of random Apocalyptic violence. But the end of the wars occasioned an irrational employment of productive forces in ritualism and nonsense production of goods in order to ward off social catastrophe at the hands of the forces of production launched. The surrealist joys of Indic bazaar production come from this totally irrational filling-

in of time by producing random objects, or objects produced in random numbers, to the beat of a martial super-ego created by wars that no longer exist but still haunt the lives of our bazaars. This produces a strange tendency in the bazaars towards 'conversion' en masse to the latest fad blowing in from any point in the universe, powered by the unreal hope that such a good will sublimate the tricky conundrum of relating production and use to ways that match the capacity and desires of the bazaar.

The exotic, as it is, is a destabilizing presence in any cultural context; but the exotic that answers to such irrational demands to sublimate production and sales to the energies of all-encompassing, bloody, Apocalyptic wars can only spell Armageddon each time a new good arrives on the scene. The problem of overproduction definitive of capitalist markets magically proliferates when driven by the ghostly rider of war demanding vast scales of production of shiny objects to meet his/her hunger. It is this split between the exotic as the answer to the historical needs of the Indic bazaar alongside the fear of this exotic destroying the moral fabric of society, especially when desired as an Apocalyptic solution to history's contradictions, that defines the passage of all that we call the modern through our dear bazaar spaces. The Apocalyptic wars of the eighteenth century only heightened this sense that the bazaar has of itself, as being inherently split between reckless adventure and social stasis. As the contradictions between the desires of the bazaar and the consumerist conservatism of Indic societies intensify, so the cow – the talismanic animal of the bazaar, the original surplus of bazaar time – excluded by modernity, becomes holier by the day.

And it is this larger context of the mapping of historical specificities on to general tendencies of life and growth of bazaars as such that should be kept in mind when studying the operations of cinema in the Indic bazaar through the twentieth century. To loop back to earlier definitions of the nature of the inner life of the bazaar, the 'conversionary' zeal with which bazaars welcome the nomadic assault of the exotic lies at the heart of the rather split response Bombay cinema has had towards the exotic – veering between wide-eyed fascination and exhilaration, and psychotic fear.

CINEMA, BOMBAY AND BAZAAR

How Bombay came to be northern India's centre of cinema production can be understood if we consider the escape of bazaar energies from this region to a relatively safe haven away from local wars. The western region had always lain outside the pale of caste-Hindu imaginations – Sorath and Anarta (Saurashtra and northern Kathiawar) were listed as lands of the *mlechha*, outside the mainstream of Indic histories, in pre-Islamic texts and inscriptions. Escape to areas beyond the centre of historical action, to a region relatively free of the heat of war, brought cow protection to Kutch in the aftermath of 1857 as it did the bazaar to Bombay. The collapse of Muslim power in the north meant that the fulcrum of Indian Islam too shifted to Bombay. The city had already set itself up as a bastion of trade on the western coast of Hindustan after the collapse of Surat, and become a part of the pan-Islamic Indian Ocean areas impelled by longstanding trading links. The events of 1857 merely intensified these tendencies and took Indic commerce in new directions once its central energies came to settle down in Bombay. Bombay became the *un-bazaar* encompassing the energies of all bazaars of northern India and, over time, of almost every region of colonial India.

Being outside the clutches of caste politics to a certain extent, the western region also afforded a freer traffic in goods, ideas and bodies that was essential for India's entry into international commerce. Bombay, from the very beginning, has remained a predominantly non-brahmanical city. The bazaars of Bombay became increasingly porous to human contact as the nineteenth century wore on and by the early years of the twentieth century the city's bazaars provided a panorama of a hectic, interactive commercial space with little consideration for somatic or religious identities, at least on the shop-fronts of its bazaar spaces.

Other factors such as the relatively lax colonial governance of the city as well as the absence of moral policing by reformist or nationalist forces in the early decades of the twentieth century meant that aesthetic and creative play with the passage of exotic goods through Bombay's bazaars was free-flowing, anarchic, open-ended. The marvellous histories of the pageantries of the Parsi theatre or early Bombay cinema can only be explained by the lack of caste politics, colonial surveillance or nationalist orthodoxy in the sensorially adventurous spaces that defined the identity of Bombay at the turn of the twentieth century. The city was an intensely creative centre of cultural production, based on a mindless yet exhilaratingly promiscuous churning out of a variety of cultural material it had the fortune to provide passage for – something made possible by Bombay's status as a leading port-city for global trade. Calcutta was blighted by religious and political caste wars between brahmans and Christians, and its stifling bureaucratic order of things. Delhi had fallen to the wars, while Madras provided a relatively quiet frontier for Indic trade. The history of Parsi theatre can only be understood in terms of the 'freeze' colonialism placed on Hindustan's bazaars, on the epic confrontations between various territorial and material ambitions of indigenes of the subcontinent. Those anarchic energies fled into the more formulated figuration of theatrical narrative as gentrification was enforced on the countryside by colonial rule. The battle-lines remained subterranean, partially open-mouthed and ready to utter the war-cry (maybe only to go on being settled post-1947).

Through the nineteenth century public theatre and entertainment became the main channels through which the secret histories of Hindustanis were played out behind the thin veil of colonial governance. Disguises abound ... soldiers become sweetmeat sellers, sweetmeat sellers become merchants, merchants become kings, wrestlers become actors, actors become singers and singers become stars ... almost everyone can become a religious leader or a patron of courtesans ... almost everyone can become a courtesan and every courtesan can become queen or star. Maybe it is something protean about the nomadic artisan (articulated in Tantra/Sufism) that allows magical substitution of forms of action from metal-making to horsemanship to emperor-hood, and from emperor-hood to gardener, weaver, musician, cook, etc., on the upward and downward curves of historical mobility respectively. Indic wars were good for slipping the rigours of caste and identity. In Parsi theatre history had to be read into the costuming of characters, the historical backdrop against which the play was patronized and the histories of the performers on stage, not in the stereotypical story being acted out. It had a special relationship with centres of Indic power pre-1857, and especially with the centres of revolution – and it was in these centres that derivatives of the Parsi theatre like *nautanki* developed in the nineteenth century.

Post-1857, it was Bombay that drew in the energies of the subcontinent-wide

displacement of populations and businesses, and ran with them. It drew on the energies of a time when, to quote a writer writing about nineteenth-century France, the enjoyment of luxury had got absorbed into a bloody nomadism. Cinema arrived as an anonymous toy in the bazaars of Bombay and was taken up for frenetic experimentation in wildly unforeseen ways, in keeping with the general character of the city's cultural ways, leading to accusations of senseless excess, 'inauthenticity' and so on from the somber and sober elements of middle-class society. Only a caste-less city like Bombay, married to the strongest wave of the modern sweeping into India, could allow for experimental proliferation of a medium as exuberant and transgressive as cinema. That Bombay became the centre for the energies of historical displacements after the wars of the eighteenth century were brought to a close in 1857 goes a long way to explain why, in the long run, it became the centre for a cinema that incessantly spoke of yearning between subjects from a position of being partially opened up to the world by the forces of history – why the song of longing across social taboo-lines came to define this cinema first and foremost. The eighteenth century was an era when older boundaries between communities and regions were blasted open by the explosions of war, setting the foundations for modern India, defined by traffic of populations between regions and a public sphere where individuals began to recognize each other through a common historic fate: I am an escapee from the wars between the Rajputs and the Marathas, from the wars between the Marathas and the Mughals, and so on. A few very powerful warlords were the exploiters of vast swathes of populations, and by the end of the eighteenth century every Indic people knew the names of all of them to create the baseline for the consciousness that we now call India.

To this was added the cascading histories of displacement of people, ideas, production and money that would intensify through the colonial period, through the partition of India, and through all the destruction that modern India's developmentalism wreaked on its populations, that all came to focus, for one reason or another, most powerfully on the life of Bombay. Much of the random anarchy of Bombay's film culture, its fascination with absurd rituals of social life, was symptomatic of the terrors of displacement working themselves out in indiscriminate miscegenation of cultural values and textures. Subjects of Bombay cinema are partially opened up to the world by the terror of displacement. This state of being in-between, inside–outside, which terror creates makes the Bombay bazaars peculiarly prone to 'conversion' to the exotic – a mentality defined by Apocalyptic hope for redemption by the stranger yet terrified of crossing the line, pulled back by hauntings of earlier communal lives and practices. From the vantage-point of such a split between the exotic and hauntings of the past, the hectic traffic in aesthetic textures that one must confront in the bazaar turns into a phantasmagoria of forbidden couplings, too intense and too carnal to countenance. And yet the hope for sustenance and stasis lies in representing this chaos and figuring out what stabilities can be discovered at the heart of it, since there is no reality to the bazaar beyond this chaos. Bombay cinema becomes the screen on which this sensory and aesthetic chaos of the bazaar can be projected, studied and brought under control; where the nomadic force of the exotic can be welcomed in the good old bazaar style of greeting the triumphal prince, taking in the full force of the whirlwind, and then training it to more stable and humane ways by funnelling the energies of the advent into the more ordered hierarchies of Indic households. Cinema

has been frontal in facing up to the Benjaminian storm of the nomadic exotic blowing in the face of the displaced of Hindustan, its content as present outside the frame as inside it in order to express the hallucinatory conditions of life in the bazaar which blur the boundaries between inside and outside in the most terrifying ways. Bombay cinema turned 3D in the manner in which the sounds of body-blows of the mortal combats that defined the cinema of the 1970s were projected through hallucinatory amplification of the soundtrack into the very viscera of the spectator.

It is only a framing logic of displacement underlying the semi-opened-up nature of the Indic self to the world in the bazaar that can explain the helplessness against the force of the goods of the bazaar, the need to accept the full force of the destabilizing effects of the mercenary exotic and then patiently churn such content to figure out the speeds amenable to virtue. The displaced are left to fend for themselves once the basic minimum of shelter and wage-labour sustenance has been provided to them by the minions of the Indian state. What they do with life around them is no one's concern. And it is the displaced who are more prone to conversion than the settled. In bazaars people get converted to the cult of musical notes, to the beauty of actresses, to the stardom of actors, to the fantasies of swift movement and princely heroism and so on. Love for Bombay cinema is more a form of 'possession' (which might explain why dance forms such an important element of its working) by the excesses of an audiovisual spectacle produced by the 'possessed'.

CINEMA, BOMBAY, NATION AND BAZAAR

Thus the larger picture of Indic lives has remained one of chaotic excess following from never-ending displacement by agendas of the powerful. Within this chaos nestles the fragile and foolhardy ways of the calculus of the modern nation-state, rendered absurd by the impossibly anarchic energies unleashed by displacement. The austere Gandhian agendas of the reformist–puritan Indian state sit uneasily with the realities of the sensory delirium of the nation's people, forever in transition between frames of lives imposed from the outside. The bazaar has the true disruptive force of the mercenary stormtrooper of modernity battering the ramparts of the Indic social, when measured against the gradualist reformist agendas that the Indian state hopes its citizens will follow in matters consumerist. The controlled and R&D-driven production and sales agendas of the state pale in comparison with the hallucinatory capaciousness of markets that the delirium of displacement produces, as well as the random ways in which social ritualism proliferates – and goods get produced and consumed to meet the irrational sensory demands of the innards of a perpetually unstable populace. Entering the portals of a government-run 'folk'-products emporium reminds one of the staid ways of a *munimji*-run feudal estate in some locality of Hindustan, as compared to the frenetic energies of the bazaar, which is the ground reality of modern India.

For this reason alone, this differential between the creative energies of the bazaar and the conservative state–society nexus, the history of Bombay cinema post-1947 has been marked by 'encounters' with the exotic that have produced masterpieces of anarchic creativity, followed by lull periods when production has been lifeless and lackadaisical, feeble copies of the classics produced in the 'encounters'. Films lie in heaps in the bazaar waiting for their transgressive energies to be redeemed in mass

consumption of such values. Over time, the bazaar experiences a palpable sense of restlessness in the doldrums of cultural impasse; adventurism proliferates in boredom; and, finally, some kind of mass-unconscious consensus is reached, signalling the entry of a new charge of the exotic to awaken the dulled sensorium. And so on...

However reform has had its effect slowly and steadily, through the decades following independence, as the dust of the historical turbulence inaugurated in the eighteenth century has finally settled in phases. That this has been no single arrow of teleological certitude that has brought us to the threshold of an overall gentrified Bombay, bazaar and India at the turn of the twenty-first century, is apparent from the wildly contradictory nature of Bombay cinema's filmic content within the frame of single films, as well as from the reversals of social and cultural values defining Bombay's filmic universe that production regimes have displayed, more than once, from the 1930s onwards – swinging from *sattvik* reformism to brutal violence and sensory excess. A period of spiritual reformist cinema at the advent of the talkies quickly gave way to a regime of action and social reform films by the 1940s. The reform films of the 1950s became progressively violent and ended on a high note of sensory excess in the 1960s, which was then followed by an all-encompassing genre that threw up all that was excessive and materially exotic about the modern in some of the most graphically brutal cinema produced anywhere in the world in the history of cinema. Things got only more risqué and blasé in registers of excess through the 1980s, to settle down, from around the mid-1990s, into an industrialized and mechanized regime of spectacle production that managed to reel in the violent speeds of the exotic into the smoothness of a well-oiled cinema machine. The energies of this cinema always threatened to take it beyond state and religion or any form of morality, making it an internal terroristic presence within the nation-state.

Within films, too, one finds the unpredictable split quality of the bazaar's struggle with morality; its attempt to reconcile its disruptive forces with the need for calm, stability and order, with explicit displays of sexuality amidst tales extolling the virtues of staid tradition and morality. The first shot was fired by the expressionistic excesses of *Devdas*, starring K.L. Saigal, where the conflict in the bazaar psyche between a wanton and devotee-like appreciation of female sexuality and a need to abjure all contact with the feminine-sexual is played to absurdist melodramatic scales. Not only this, the majority of Bombay films made in the talkie period display the cunning that such existentially onerous situations create in subjects – that of slipping in the profane in the most veiled yet most explicit ways, adding to the *frisson* of the voyeuristic charms of display of the forbidden. Thus the vamp-figure as a symptom of the excesses of modernity very often became a celebration of the sexual excesses that the bazaar was defined by. Nation-building or societal consolidation of the ways in which middle-class reformism prescribed the foundation to the modern nation-state could happen through ninety per cent of a film, but the rest of it could be dedicated to showing what this ninety per cent was up against. Most observers came out shaking their heads in disbelief, realizing that such strong pleasures had little chance of being reformed by the effigies and silhouettes of Gandhi with which they had littered the public space, in naïve hope of the magical exorcising the powers of such amulets. The bazaar is more prone to conversion to the allure of the milky-white thighs of the vamp than to the cult of the Father of the Nation. Thus it is in the vastly lopsided fame of female singers

of the Hindi film song that we find the clearest enunciation of the Indian populace's devotion to the feminine principle, heightened of course by the puritan prohibition of sexuality. It is also symptomatic of a pastoral yearning for nature in the feminine. One has to only remember the many mountainous valleys across which Lata Mangeshkar's voice has placed a glass-pane of frozen desire worthy of a Bergman film.

There were of course some filmmakers who saw the inherently joyous dimensions of the anarchic, promiscuous and heterodox bazaar space, the inventor of Bollywood – Raj Khosla, the Anand brothers, Mehboob Khan or Bimal Roy, or the films featuring Kishore Kumar, or more contemporary filmmakers like Ramesh Sippy and Mansoor Khan – but such balanced, lyrical uses of bazaar madness were rather exceptions to the rule. What these directors pointed towards was the reform of India in materialism, in the pleasures of consumerism, free from middle-class discourses of reform through discipline and spiritualism. A proper enjoyment of the material, in depth and lyricism – something that Bombay cinema alone, of the popular cinemas of the world, celebrates with such aesthetic felicity – also 'reforms' character towards a creative focus on the self. Indeed, it might be argued, that it is in these cinematic discourses of sensory freedoms, of a free access to the world and the material pleasures of the modern, that the true history of reform of Hindustan lies: a history located in the bazaar, not in the enumeration of religious or political discipline, or in the effects of the spread of modern education. And it is to the legacy of this cinema we must turn to draw up a genealogy of techniques by which the nation came to terms with the bazaar through its cinema, by not questioning its energies but by allowing for speeds that can generate harmony and lyricism in heterogeneity. Something of that kind happened in the aftermath of liberalization and globalization that saw the generation of creative speeds of *son + image* that could do justice to the energies of the Indic bazaar. Such techniques are a rare gift to creative energies – and the ills of Bombay cinema and, by extension, of the Indian nation have been an inability to train its citizens to invent speeds that can harness the energies of the bazaar in sublime ways. Our still-puritan, Victorian pedagogy has no chance of creating such an understanding.

CINEMA, BOMBAY, INDIA, BAZAAR AND THE WORLD

Looking at the *longue-durée* global history of Indic bazaars that underpins the history of a city like Bombay, one realizes that the real tragedy of the global location lies in the sheer inability of the accounting machines invented by a puritan and resource-poor west to tackle the enormous productivity of Indic production regimes. That the Indian state's counting machines belong to an even more archaic and feudal imagination, goes without saying. Industrial production around the world based on the Taylorism of factory-line production was a turn towards the agrarian harvesting model of managing industrial production (thus an agrarian genre of music, the blues, could become the representational musical medium for urban industrial life in America). But the agrarian productivity underlying the production of India's modernity was of a scale altogether unbelievable by western standards. One feels the same was true of most third world and communist agrarian nations that entered modernity in the tremendous high of energies unleashed by displacements of populations of modernity. The west had the additional burden of keeping productivity in line with the moral dimensions of puritan

society, the disciplining regimes of social and private lives that it employed alongside industrial production. The rest of the world was burdened by no such onus. Accounting mechanisms borrowed from the west thus were titrated to relatively orderly and docile modes of production which could do no justice to the scales of production in a Hindustan where Apocalyptic wars of the eighteenth century and successive waves of displacement raised the tenor of bazaar productivity to unforeseen intensities and scales (and one could argue that much of Indic histories post-independence, as well as the content of Bombay cinema, have been about settling the lines of conflict raised in the eighteenth century). In communist nations, monumental statuary of revolutionary heroes matched the scale and grandeur of collective agrarian enterprise now turned towards industry and commodity production, behemoths threatening to overrun the globe with their productive energies (much as *Mayawati* emulates such a model of symbol-making to denote the scale of dalit insurgency).

In India, much of this scale of anarchy in commodity production regimes was caught by Bombay cinema in its epic-scale presentation of film material. The film song became the ideal vehicle to express the absolute excess of the excitement of hyper-productivity in mass dispersals of vast populations, over the staid pace of bourgeois film melodrama borrowed from Hollywood. Music indeed became the most elaborated, fabricated artistic object in the bazaar that caught the lyrical density of crisscrossing and mutually disruptive lines of music, emerging as the longings of all kinds of communities seeking sublimation in history from the chores of a displaced condition. If Bakhtinian heteroglossia marking the Indian modernist has to be sought, it has to be sought in the complexities of the bazaar Bombay film song that codes the desires of multiple communities residing in the bazaar space, all awaiting conversion by the exotic (as it must also be in the film songs of other film industries). The song-tracks of a film like *Madhumati* construct a ghostly nation-in-the-making in the dialogue between musical styles in Hindi film songs, a broadly aniconic process happening behind the scenes of the façade of iconic representation of this intercultural dialogue between musical and dance forms from across the subcontinent in, say, the *jhankis* of the Republic Day parade. Similarly, away from music this time, the violence of the 1970s' cinema of *masala*, in the death of its heroes, invokes a subaltern register of becoming martyr to the nation in the *sufic* mode, yet again veering towards the aniconic backroom drama of real nation-building happening in the chaotic violence of the bazaar.

The bazaar, centralizing the energies of the massive agrarian productivities of India's industrial and organic lives, is where the drama was happening on the edge of accountability – where what could be counted by the slow machines of computation of the modern nation-state gave way to excess and delirium. Bombay as a city might have attracted populations for being the most efficient site for the accounting of India's productive energies, but a close perusal of its bazaars and the tenor of cultural life within them (of which all other Indian bazaars are metonymies) reveals only excess, waste and garbage. Thanks to the anarchic energies of the bazaar, it too has, like all of Hindustan, remained on the edge of the accountable – like the cinema it has produced.

It is with the coming of the faster digital machines of our times that finally global standards of counting and accounting become capable of handling bazaar speeds. And indeed, the cinema of the Bombay bazaar has shown a definite comfort with fitting into the global energies of the digital accounting machine. The digital allows for a

frenetically absurd play of material values across binaries of perception prescribed by the social, but also, more crucially, at very high speeds – which match the intensity of the beat of desire in the bazaar. The pressure of liberalization predicated on the power of the digital has meant that for the first time in Indic histories the bazaar is on the edge of definition by pure material values. Its erstwhile tutelage under religious cults is clearly under threat as huge swathes of Indian populations now work towards spectacular productivity cutting across class and caste lines. The religious wars of India are thus mediated through the larger crisis of 'religion' as a category of social life losing its force as a principal player in the life of the bazaar. While those not yet fully competent to play the game of global cosmopolitanism pour vast largesse on to consumerist, bazaar-ified religion, we also see huge population-banks working across erstwhile taboo-lines being able to harness the energies of the bazaar, making things and taking advantage of faster counting machines to become prosperous very quickly as well as in globally cosmopolitan ways. Thus, as of now, things stand at a balance between the sublimation of bazaar speeds in material labour in the exotic, and the conservatism of Indic societies still given to ponderous religious ritualism.

A swing in favour of the exotic appears in the form of a new global historical situation: for the first time, India is being egged on to lead the world into a new economic order. The true genius of the Indian bazaar lies in its expertise in sublimating ritualistic, micro-tasks labour schedules dedicated to work across differences of aesthetic textures – something an ever-more neurotic middle-class global is turning towards. The digital is a producer of ritual *par excellence*, given to absurdly high levels of obsession with detail and difference. A culture that has for centuries made fine distinctions in defining the myriad complexities of caste would of course be the ideal candidate to lead a world devoted to such neurotic labour – especially so when Indic bazaars have also maintained a modicum of cosmopolitanism in world historical standards (a cosmopolitanism best seen in bazaar cinema).

However, a true sublimation of Indic bazaars in the exotic and the energies it contains can only be possible when Indic societies make a leap of faith into material cosmopolitanism on a global scale, accepting the world freely in sensorially intimate ways. It goes without saying that this will be possible only when Indian societies can embrace the different within Hindustan itself. The passage through all this will be a difficult one, marked by the speeds of the faster counting machines throwing up older fault-lines of cultural conflict at higher intensities as hopes of liberation intensify on all fronts. Everyone wants a piece of consumerist glory. Traditional forms of greed fall into archaic forms of greed in the sweatshops of globalization. But through all this the battle-lines of confrontation intensify in unforeseen and nuanced ways. Over time, anything standing in the way – nation, state, society, family, gender – will be mobilized in narratives of centuries-old exploitation that need to be overthrown to achieve consumerist glitter. Only the vastly open-minded will be capable of sublimating such conflicts in becoming one with the world, or even in understanding that the bazaar demands, if only as a life-stance, a negation of all difference into an extreme one-ness – as intense as the one-ness the couples of Bombay cinema have desired. Only to such mercenary passages through the exotic, the different, in the totality of the cultural terrain will be awarded the *khilat* of the sultan, the world conqueror, by the ghost in the accounting machine.