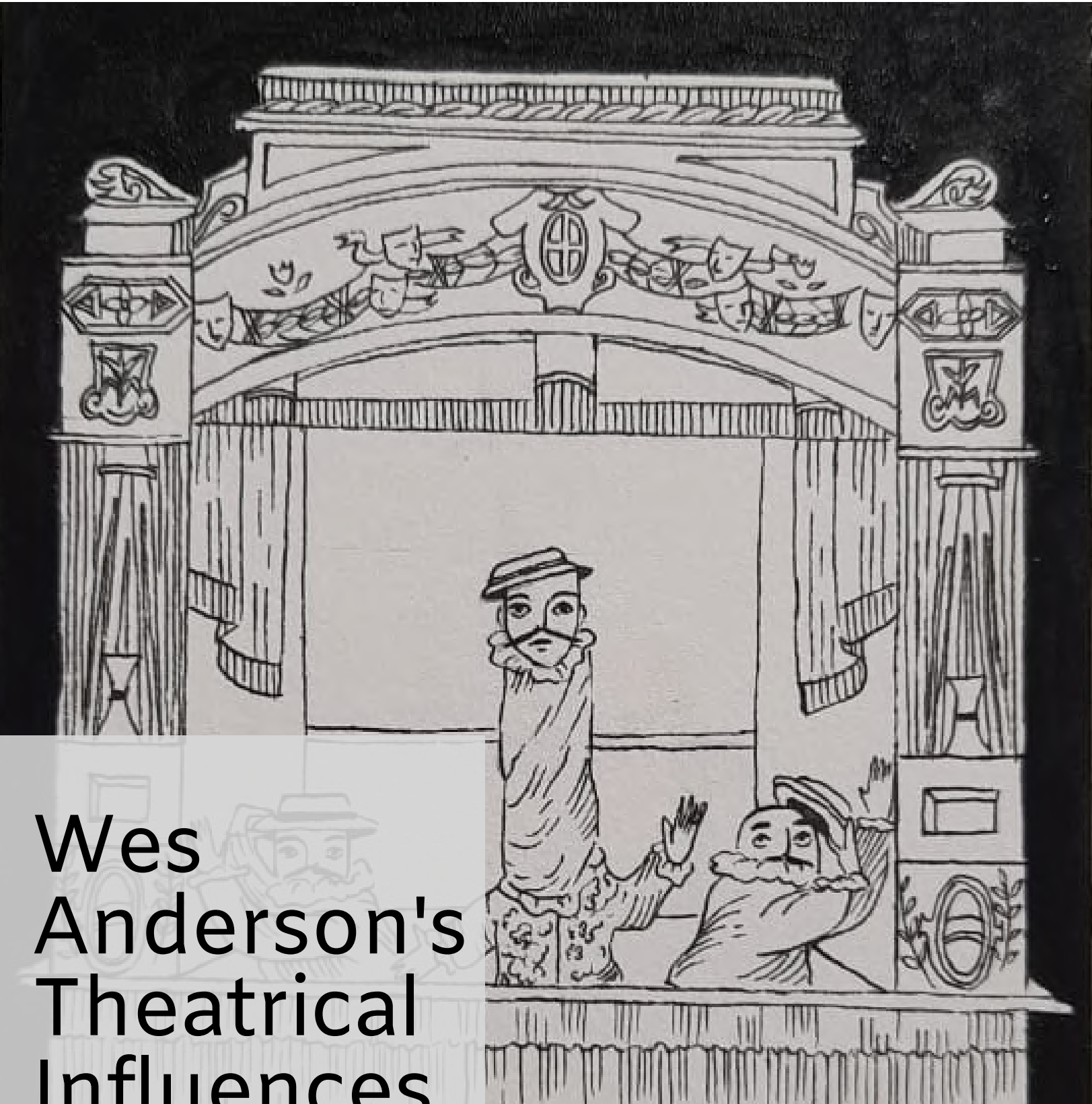


# MONOGRAPH

VOL. 3 | DECEMBER 2020



## Wes Anderson's Theatrical Influences

AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW  
WITH BODHISATTWA GHOSH

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# Editor's Note

*Anuraag Das Sarma*

As this year closes to an end, I can't help but breathe a sigh of relief. I believe I speak for all of us when I say that 2020, you won't be missed. There's the door, shut it on your way out. I don't want to see your face ever again. But, and this is a pretty selfish 'but', we owe much to 2020, for if people had better things to do, maybe they'd have never read our magazine. Seriously though, we can't thank you enough for putting in your time to read this little venture of ours.

"The most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or touched, they are felt with the heart."

- Antoine De Saint-Exupery

It is this quote that the magazine lives by -you can't touch cinema, you can't touch words but when you read a Kamala Das poem out loud you feel something change deep inside your heart.

So, allow me to help you sail through murky riverbed's of prose and poetry. Allow me to point at little artsy islands that lie 10 nautical miles away. Allow me to introduce you to a new continent filled with wonders of the past and sit down and watch with me the stereoscopic visions of our future.

Ladies and gentlemen, I present to you the Third Volume of Monograph.



A woman with long brown hair, wearing a bright yellow dress, is sitting in a chair and reading a book. She is positioned in front of a large window with white curtains. To her right, there is a bookshelf filled with books. The room has a warm, slightly vintage aesthetic.

# Wes Anderson's Theatrical Influences

Anuraag Das Sarma

The New World Charm of cinema is completely exclusive to it; mostly because this genre of art is in its infancy (the shift from film to digital recalls the transition from rocks to papyrus).

Film is an amateur form of art - the scrappy little prodigy born out of a chance-encounter between theatre and technology . Aah! theatre - an aging beauty, who spends her days waltzing with the elite and the nights drinking herself to death. This old world charm of Theatre is brilliantly contrasted with her son's charme du nouveau monde. Now, I know that using French words in an article is extremely pastiche, but that's what makes the placement of this elitist language fitting. You see, cinema as a genre is pastiche - it's a weird amalgamation of ideas that borrow heavily from all other artistic mediums - be it literature, music, or art. But, he steals the most from his blood mother.

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Much like Hamlet, Cinema has a weird love/hate relationship with his mother - bickering often to claim intellectual and artistic superiority. However, cinema isn't as goth as the dark, brooding prince of Elsinore( a glaring fault in my opinion). And, this is my segue to the one and only Wes Anderson (whose work stands in stark contrast to Hamlet)- a brilliant filmmaker; the textbook definition of non-pareil. Also who some might call a "thief", "A no-good crook", and a whole other assortment of family-friendly, PG-13 insults (Monograph is fun for the whole family and hence does not believe in the inclusion of innuendos - Freudian double entendre or otherwise).

Now, you might ask, "Who in their right mind would call the lord and savior of artistic films a thief, a no-good crook, a grave-robbing bandit?" and the answer is: me. I believe that Mr. Anderson is all of those things and more - but I don't mean them as insults. Believe it or not, I love Wes Anderson - completely and utterly. His films are beautiful and I won't hear otherwise.





His films are also very unique. At this point you might go, "Anuraag you bumbling idiot. Go drown yourself in absinthe. You literally just called him a thief." Well, yes but actually no. He steals, that's true, but he doesn't steal from other filmmakers - oh no! He has integrity. He steals from the mother of all cinema (No, not Citizen Kane) - theatre. He does rip off a few scenes from Hitchcock, but that's perfectly alright - that's just a rite of passage. However, before diving into the ocean that is Wes Anderson's filmography, one needs to understand the importance of theatre and get acquainted with its history.

Film is relatively new to the eccentric family of artistic pursuits, but it shares a deep connection with one of the oldest members of it. Theatre, or rather western theatre, originated in ancient Greece (like everything else) and once Athens developed the Athenian tragedy, there was no going back. A lot of plays from this era still exist and are still performed and their influence on modern storytelling is unparalleled. Greek drama had three main genres - tragedy, comedy and the much more demanding satyr play - an absurd take by the playwright on Greek mythos. Greek plays are considered by many to be the pinnacle of human achievement, and it is pretty easy to see why. As a collective human race, mankind has been to the moon and back, it has made beautiful paintings and penned wonderful stories, but it did so based on what others did before them.

The last generation broke down the walls and the next generation reaped the benefits. However, in over 2000 years, mankind has been unable to replicate, or even come close to Athenian Drama. Shakespeare was a master of his craft but I'd pick Oresteia or Medea over Macbeth, any day of the week.

Sanskrit theatre found its place in the Indian society and became a part of life for the Aryan settlers around 200 BCE, with Bharat Muni writing the Natyasastra. The Natyasastra is the most complete work of dramaturgy in the ancient world consisting of 6000 poetic verses. The Natyasastra also provides us with the rasa theory, and here is where we see a few similarities with the Greek plays. The rasa theory claimed that entertainment was a desired secondary goal, but the primary goal of theatre was to transfer the audience into a parallel reality full of wonder where he would experience the essence of his own consciousness and reflect on spiritual and moral questions. And while the Greek Plays were vastly different from Indian plays, even they laid stress on the importance of self-reflection (case in point: Oedipus Rex). One could even argue that Greece being the birthplace of Western Philosophy should be credited to it's flourishing theatre culture.





I don't have much to say about Roman theatre, mostly because all that they did was copy the Greeks (What's new? Just read a few by Plautus and you'd be set). Oriental theatre provides us with a much more unique perspective on the art form, and I'd like to take a second to introduce you to the art of the Noh. The Noh play emerged in 14th Century Japan and is performed to this day (Thanks to the wonderful Yukio Mishima who brought it into the modern era). Noh weaves supernatural beings with natural storytelling to reach newfound heights of literary meritocracy. Everything that separates the Noh from its western counterpart - masks, staggered movement and highly stylized physical emotions (Kurosawa-like) establishes the form as an Oriental tour-de-force.

The modern playwrights - from Beckett and Camus' theatre of the absurd to Dennis Kelly's dark and character driven dramas have experimented a lot by breaking out of meta-narratives, but their works, however amazing may they be, are not really important for our article - as film made its first appearance in 1895.





Now, it was Melies who popularized Cinema, because what he did through special effects could never ever be replicated on the stage - effectively sounding the death knell on live acting (At Least in a commercial form). Now, let's skip a century ahead to Wes Anderson - who with his inimitable style (until FCP introduced the Moonrise Kingdom preset) has not only contributed to the evolution of art house cinema, but also manages to pay homage to the mother of his craft - theatre.

You see, old films borrowed a lot of techniques from the stage. If one were to analyze them, the similarities would be nothing less than striking- the brisk pacing of movement, the wide angle shots filmed with an immovable camera, and exaggerated acting. All these techniques were integral to the stage - both because of limited means, and artistic choices. It took a while for filmmakers to innovate the modern techniques we take for granted - largely due to auteurs like Orson Welles, Sergei Eisenstein and Carl Dreyer ( who could forget the striking visuals of *The Passion of Joan of Arc*).



As cinema paved its own path through the then-shrouded realm of history, its connection to theatre slowly but surely was lost. I'd like to call back to a scene in Satyajit Ray's "Nayak" where Uttam Kumar's Arindam Mukherjee reminisces over his first day of shooting, and how he replaced the theatre-great Mukunda Lahiri (played by Bireswar Sen). While Ray meant this scene to represent the ephemerality of the film industry, one could also look at this as film forming its own ground and shedding the remnants of theatre off its body.

Thus, film became its own art form, and by the early 60s it had rid itself off the last vestiges of the theatre industry. Enter Wes Anderson. A lanky American from Houston, Texas, with hair that resembles the mane of a lion (only grander) and a brain that could rival the cinematic greats. He started off with *Bottle Rocket* in 1996, and by the time his second feature film came along (*Rushmore*, circa .98) he was a critical darling. He then made a string of successful quirky comedy-dramas - namely *The Royal Tenenbaums*, *The Aquatic Life of Steve Zissou* and *The Darjeeling Limited* (which was dedicated to none other than our very own Satyajit Ray).

However, it is not his filmography that we are here to talk about but rather his cinematic technique. Anderson's use of sets and locations in his film, and even the way it is edited in post-production, gives the location an artificial, yet realistic look - which is hugely reminiscent of a well-made set for a play. Anderson, also relies heavily on colour to accentuate not only his characters, but also the overall story-arc - and this is hugely evident in films like Moonrise Kingdom and The Grand Budapest Hotel. This technique is nothing extraordinary in cinema (The Three colour Rule being prominent in most films, be it Joker or even Her). However what makes Wes Anderson's usage of colour unique is that it is very striking to the eye. While you might never notice the Three Colour rule being used in other films, you'd have to be blind to not spot it's implementation in Anderson's work. This makes the scenes look more staged, rehearsed and nuanced - something that feels more theatrical and fantastical. Also, while most films often use different colours for different scenes, Anderson follows the same three colours throughout, giving the film a sense of inter-connectivity often seen on stage, where limitations often force the artists to stick to a single colour palette.



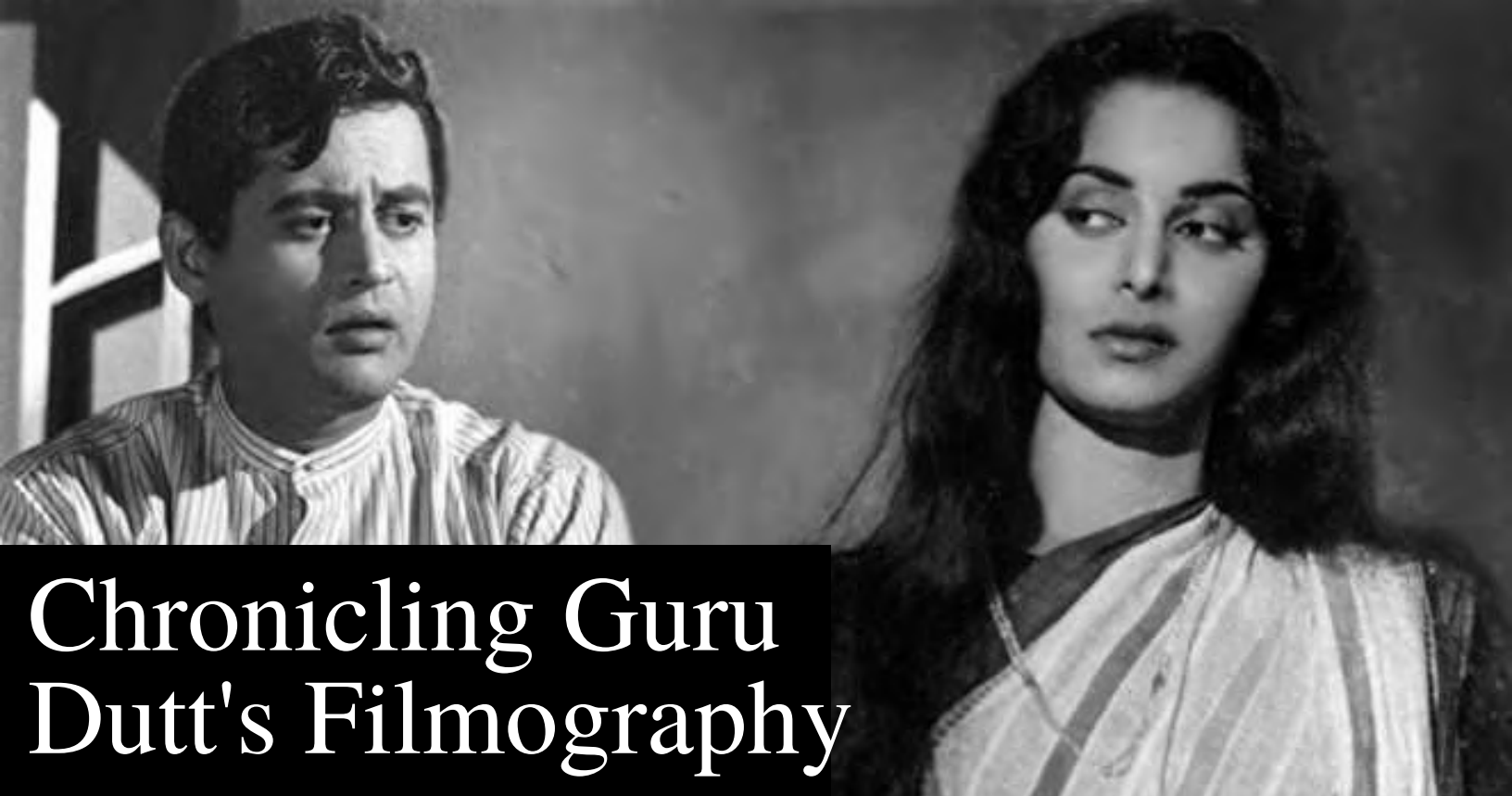


Another Wes Anderson technique, or rather a Robert Yeoman (his cinematographer) technique is the use of wide angle shots. Wes Anderson films have limited camera movement - only focusing on the basic tilts and pans. The scenes are also shot mostly using wide shots, hence treating us as the viewers of a play (Even the title sequence of *The Royal Tenenbaums* features a stage, complete with curtains and candles). Another technical aspect, and the last one for I fear that this article has already exceeded an already large word count, that Wes Anderson shares with the theatre is his use of costumes. Much like theatre, to convey the characteristics of a character, Anderson assigns them a "character uniform" ( a term often used by Godard). This allows the viewer to associate a constant look with a certain character, and hence a dramatic shift in clothing would often signify a great change. This technique has been used in countless plays and also in a number of Wes Anderson movies ( Case in point: the difference between the elderly Zero Moustafa and the young Moustafa, signifying his monetary gains if nothing else).

Thus, one can safely conclude that Anderson owes a lot to theatre, and so does the cinematic art form. Now, you might be inclined to ask about the real-world significance of such an article, and in all honesty, there are none.

However, if I have managed to spark curiosity in you about cinema and theatre, and if this article influences your art in the least, I'll consider this article to be a worthwhile effort. Wes Anderson's homage to theatre is beautiful because it connects two distinct art forms. It's like a Reinhardt song paired with a Van Gogh painting, and its importance lies in its sheer beauty.





# Chronicling Guru Dutt's Filmography

Aindrila Ray

Having chanced upon an article about Guru Dutt (born Vasanth Kumar Shivashankar Padukone) and his contribution to 50s and 60s Bollywood on the legend's 94th birthday last year, I came to the decision that not knowing about this man and his work could be counted as a personal loss, and since then I have watched all his films (where he has acted, directed and produced) and lapped up whatever content was available about him online. Although the process has been quite time-consuming and the genius of the man pretty overwhelming from time to time, I have very willingly decided to write about the legend and some of his finest works, most of which, I believe no lover of cinema should be missing out on.

Guru Dutt's entry into the film industry was rather an accident, when a relative of his got him the job of a choreographer at Prabhat Film Company after he fled to Mumbai after leaving his job as a telephone operator at Lever Brothers in Calcutta. Here, he acted, assistant directed and choreographed dances.

After the end of his contract, he freelanced with Baburao Pai and also wrote regularly in The Illustrated Weekly of India.

In 1951, Dutt was offered the position of a director at Navketan, Dev Anand's new film company, and the Dutt-Anand pair went on to make two films, 'Baazi' (which was Guru Dutt's first directorial venture) and 'Jaal'. 'Baazi' was an instant box-office hit, however 'Jaal' failed to perform well at the theatres. Although, it did introduce Badruddin Jamaluddin Kazi (popularly known as, Johnny Walker) into the Hindi film industry, who was brilliantly mentored by none other than Dutt himself.

His 1954 release 'Aar Paar', a noir-comedy film about an ambitious taxi-driver (portrayed by the maestro himself) who is stuck in a destructive love triangle, seemed to grab everyone's attention and paved the way to his short yet successful career as a filmmaker in Bollywood.





The 1955 romantic comedy, 'Mr. and Mrs. '55', written by Abrar Alvi and starring Guru Dutt, Madhubala and Johnny Walker in lead characters was both a commercial and critical success, which was followed by another box office hit, the Dev Anand starrer, CID which also garnered considerable fame and critical acclaim.

However, it was Dutt's 1957 release 'Pyaasa', which also features in the Times' list of '100 Greatest Films of All Time', that did justice to his potential, according to me. 'Pyaasa', written by Abrar Alvi, is a poignant tale of a desolate, deprived and lovelorn poet, Vijay (Guru Dutt), who is constantly struggling to survive in a hypocritical society. Vijay is a symbolic representation of the educated yet unemployed and exploited youth in post-colonial India, who is rejected by his love (Mala Sinha) and his family, but finds acceptance in Gulabo (Waheeda Rehman), a prostitute who is moved by the power of his poetry. The society at large finds Gulabo despicable for her choice of profession, and she is deprived of all forms of basic decency and respect by one and all. On the other hand, our protagonist, the romantic poet, is harassed by the rich and the powerful at every available opportunity for his lack of material wealth and his talent is constantly disregarded and exploited.



Highlighting the complexities of the human mind, this intense story of two hapless souls finding comfort and acceptance in each other, resonates with Dostoevsky's 'Notes from Underground' and is believed to be inspired from the failed romance between the movie's lyricist, Sahir Ludhianvi and the acclaimed poet, Amrita Pritam. The movie's cinematography is equally commendable, and VK Murthy's work here is often compared with the cinematography of 'Citizen Kane'.

With the release of 'Pyaasa', the line between commercial and art films was significantly blurred, and a new way of filmmaking was developed, with Guru Dutt leading from the front. If Guru Dutt's timeline is studied, we find that while his earlier releases were mostly in the rom-com genre, his later works dealt with ideas of philosophy, aimed at initiating conversations about the stereotypical and flawed mindsets of the Indian society, while still managing to keep it entertaining and attractive for the masses.



However, a pattern can be established in his entire filmography, that is, all his protagonists were struggling to establish themselves in a money-minded world, and were dealing with a lot of pain and emotional stress, mainly caused by rejection, failure, betrayal and deprivation.

However, what is surprising is, for a man who had worked so much with the concept of rejection and its consequences, and dealt with it so artistically on-screen, failed to deal with the fact that his biographical venture 'Kagaaz ke Phool' (1959) failed to awe the audience and produce the result that he had hoped for, which led him to permanently withdraw as a director from the industry.

He continued to work as an actor, and 'Sahib Bibi Aur Ghulam' which was directed by his protégé Abrar Alvi, and starred Waheeda Rehman, Meena Kumari and himself went on to win the Filmfare Award for Best Director. His last film was Hrishikesh Mukherjee directed 'Sanjh aur Savera' (1964), opposite Meena Kumari, following which the legend passed away, at the age of 39.



**Guru Dutt's bold and formidable style of cinema was much ahead of its time and has continued to inspire generations of filmmakers till now.**

**His films remain equally relevant at present, and his charm both behind and in front of the lens seems unreal and outer-worldly.**



# The Martian

Riddhiraj Mukhherjee

Ridley Scott's 'The Martian' transports its audience to a rather Lovecraftian future where a hapless astronaut is left stranded on Mars. The film, at heart, is a shipwreck story which just happens to take the form of a science fiction adventure. Matt Damon's Mark Whitney is shown as a wisecracking botanist and astronomer. This 2015 film might feel similar to Robinson Crusoe-esque sagas like "Cast Away" and "Robinson Crusoe in Mars", but in terms of tone and feel, it certainly feels new.

In the 21st Century, people who have a knack for watching a lot of movies must have figured out by now that the protagonist is likely to survive and that star productions would be unlikely to pay for an epic where the protagonist would end up biting the prodigal bullet.





People might have also figured out that at the end, NASA has to be successful in the mission- perhaps as an attempt to save it's reputation. The tropes might be cliched but it still remains effective.

The movie, instead of questioning what to do next , questions how. The how's are however answered in a ensnaring manner.

The protagonist, who is a botanist faces a bunch of challenges, such as the possibility of the face plate of the helmet breaking, or the types of food he can consume. The answer however is by applying duct tape and growing potatoes on a greenhouse fertilised by solid leftovers of the other crew members. The movie, apart from the protagonist Matt Damon, on whom the majority of the visual play is centred upon also casts Oscar nominee Jessica Chastain, Jeff Daniels and Kristen Carroll Wig as the mains.

The result? A science fiction film with no surprises but instead a new detailed feel and the warmest amongst similar films such as Gravity and Alien. The most fascinating thing about the film is how it leans into predictability rather than fighting for it and thus in the process comes up with a tone which I don't believe anyone has summoned in this particular genre and certainly not in it's budget of 10.8 crore of the US dollar.

The film however goes on to earn a whopping 63.02 crores in US Dollars, winning various prestigious awards such as the Golden Globe award for best picture, Hugo award for best dramatic presentation and of course Matt Damon grabs the Golden Globe award for best actor and Empire award for best actor.

Certain moments have been well emphasized with the help of songs such as Love Train by Fania Fani and the dialogues do give the film a comic relief. One of the iconic scenes in the movie finds Mindy Park interpreting Mark's typed response to a radical scheme to rescue him: "Are you f\*\*\*g kidding me?"

Although Mark Watney is left behind on Mars due to his fellow crew members' misunderstanding Scott and Goddard beautifully screenplay the human will to adapt and survive and of course, mankind's progress.

The movie has been one of my very favourites ever since its release in India back in 2015 on the 2nd of October. This film has certainly surpassed my 4.5/5 rating on Interstellar and has done well to deserve a rating of 5/5 from me.



# The Lowland



**Kinjal Chandra**  
@love\_among\_the\_bookshelves

Before I begin with the review, I must confess that I'm simply smitten by Lahiri's writing style. It is lyrical yet lucid, rich and replete with brilliant imagery, metaphors and vocabulary. However, its *pièce de résistance* lies in its subtlety, and the mundanity of the situations has volumes to communicate.

The Lowland is a tale of love, loss and longing that is primarily set in the Calcutta of the 1940s. Lahiri manoeuvres the story through the entire lifetime of the characters, locations across the globe, different characters as pivots in different chapters and an expansive timeline.

Subhash and Udayan, are brothers who were born fifteen months apart. They grow up together in the same house with the same values, education and upbringing but they are still as different as chalk and cheese. Life has different plans for them as one finds solace in politics and becomes an active member of the Naxalite movement and the other drifts to a distant Rhode Island in America to pursue research in marine oceanography. Soon things take a horrid turn and that's when the book picks up pace.

Quite surprisingly neither of these brothers make it to be the most impactful and endearing personality. The character that sticks with you and makes you ruminate upon the piece is that of Gauri (Udayan's wife). You cannot not be bewitched by her dynamism and effervescence.

The author effortlessly interweaves the explosive politics of the Naxalite movement with the engaging storyline. An astute contrast between India and America is also played out in the book. References to real time places in Calcutta and the understanding of the Bengali sensibility is truly commendable. There are also the underlying themes of Communism, Marxism and Racism which are incorporated conscientiously into the storyline and do not feel out of place. The book rides high on emotions and a lot is expressed when nothing is being said.

The book is simply exceptional in the first three quarters, but the narrative quality plummets dangerously in the last quarter. It feels hurried and does not live up to the spirit of the entire book. Nevertheless, the book offers so much emotion and has you completely invested. There are just a handful of authors who are capable of creating such magic with their writing! Go ahead with this book with zero qualms!

Available at all leading bookstores and e-commerce service providers for Rs 399.





# The Scarlet Pimpernel



Riddhiraj Mukherjee

Many classics claim the title of "The first vampire novel" or "The first science fiction novel" and so on, but *The Scarlet Pimpernel* may very well be the first ever superhero novel. There probably are earlier novels in which heroes go out and do heroic deeds in secret, but *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, penned down by Baroness Orczy, has all the trappings of the modern superhero genre: a rich playboy who maintains a shallow public persona to conceal his secret identity - that of a masked hero who leaves a calling card to mock his enemies. Sir Percy Blakeney aka *The Scarlet Pimpernel* has amazing stealth, disguise, combat, gadgetry and not to mention, he's extraordinarily handsome, married to the most beautiful woman and is the richest man in England.

The horrors of the French Revolution were certainly devastating and the Author tries to make an attempt to nullify the devastation and ensnare the readers into the life of Sir Percy who leads a band of fellow adventurers who sneak into France to rescue French aristocrats who have been condemned to end their lives by the Revolutionary Committee of Public Safety. The French Revolution, the herald of modern democracy with its exuberant demand for - "liberty, equality and fraternity" has certainly been glorified by historians and authors of fiction alike.

The common man rising up against the oppressive aristocracy has a certain appeal but as is often the case, one forgets that their enemies are living human beings as well. Orczy wonderfully champions the cause of these aristocrats who were suddenly fighting for their survival in a world that seemed no longer friendly to them. We thus ponder over the dichotomy of good and evil. What is good? What is evil? Is there anything such as 'absolute' good or evil? Orczy's tale seems to suggest a gray area.

The Scarlet Pimpernel is greater fun, in tradition of the pulp novels that followed it, but do not consider it to be high literature. Orczy wrote a great adventure story, with almost plausible twists and turns, relying less on coincidence and improbable *Deus ex machina* than many later writers who followed in her footsteps.

Critics have however pointed out the glaring flaws in the book. However the read has all the ingredients for a successful YA (Young adult) novel these days: action, adventure, passion, romance and a bunch of sequels to milk the franchise and Orczy did it better over a hundred years ago thus, making it one of my favourite reads.



Yes, one can surely critically say that Orczy's English did suffer and the author has been a victim of repetitiveness in places in the book such as constantly reminding us that Marguerite Blakeney is the cleverest woman in Europe . She has used this no less than over five times in the novel. However criticizing her by comparing to Dickens is not justified. The Scarlet Pimpernel is a novel which could have used better editing but nonetheless it deserves its reputation as a classic adventure novel and it's a worthier read than much of what's on the shelves today, especially the YA shelves. I compare the book to a YA novel because while it certainly wasn't written for a juvenile audience, and its main characters are too old for it to be considered one, it has the right tone and style and amount of depth for that market and I think most young readers would really enjoy it. The book , published in 1905 by Greening, captivated me and transported me to a a dimension of heroism and humanity in times of inhuman activities. A 4/5 on my behalf is well deserved and is certainly a must read.



# The Art of Hurting

Our society has translated Plato's "Madness is a gift from the Gods" to "Artists are bound to feel too much," as if thousands of years of empathic development in psychology is reserved only for the creatively non-inclined.

Time and time again, artists have been put up on a pedestal as harbingers of some great essence of life not known to the common man. They have been worshipped, enjoyed, ridiculed or hated, depending on the perspective of the recipient but they have always been placed on a far spectrum of the human race, completely absolved of the mortalities that comes with it. The 'beauty in madness' phrase is only poetic till you open your eyes to see a man suffering from an illness that humanity requires medication to survive, while he is urged to 'use his imagination'.

Pragya Roy Barman



Edward Allen Poe. Edvard Munch.  
Michael Madhusudhan Dutta.  
Thomas Kinkade. Zelda Fitzgerald.  
Sylvia Plath. Marylin Munroe.  
Chester Bennington. Anthony  
Bourdain. Kurt Cobain. Robin  
Williams. And so many many more.  
All are artists that felt too much but  
were helped very very little.

Mental illness was not a fuel to their  
creative fire. It didn't serve as  
inspiration, but since all that artists  
know is to express themselves  
through their chosen medium of art,  
these disorders were etched into  
their creations, barely subdued.  
Most, in their creative delirium,  
took to substance abuse as self-  
medication. Alcohol and drugs are  
not artist fodder as habits of nature  
but through centuries of normalising  
'artistical madness'.



These justifications of emotional instability also gave birth to a culture of romanticising mental health issues - something that continues to date.

Towards the end of the 18th century, in the era of Romanticism, this was at its peak. Francisco Goya painted himself as the subject in *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters*, representing his crippling self-worth due to depression and hypochondria. This was widely received as the humane side of humanity while people, yet again failed to capture the artist residing in it. Theodore Gericault made it a point to capture patients of mental health, like his father and grandfather and provide them a more graceful platform, like his *Portraits of the Insane*. These sort of depictions were, and still are more common than professional diagnoses.

Vincent Van Gogh, the infamous post-impressionist, is often referred to as a traumatised artist under alcoholic influence whose pain paved way for the art that is so appraised.





This is true to an extent till he got diagnosed with depression and anxiety and continued living under psychological treatment for the rest of his life. Professionals have theorised that his Sunflowers was a product of the drug he was prescribed, digitalis, which tinted one's vision with yellow. Most importantly, he had been known to state that he felt his art peak during his sobriety and credited his doctors for saving his life.

Art was never supposed to surpass the flesh and blood of our mortality. Artists were never above the human race, drenching in emotions. It's a passion, a way of life, or sometimes a career, but it cannot be self-therapy with no professional help. And it's not fair that when as the world continues to progress, it refuses to include artists. It's not fair that community entertainment and pleasure be at the cost of someone's sanity. It's not fair that artists are the modernised sacrifices at the altar of society.

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# What You Could Have Done

Nimrat Kaur

Peaches at the windowsill  
I paint them everyday  
When they are green and raw  
And yellow and sour  
And red and sweet  
And brown and rotten  
Until they wither away.  
From my bed I can see them  
My easel is tilted at my elbows  
And every day I paint them  
Until they wither away.  
The white robe comes in every day  
A little beret on its top  
And it injects paint inside me everyday  
And sucks out liquid gold.  
I will not need my paints no more  
I colour with my fingers  
And when I will stain the bedsheets  
The easel begs to stay.  
Oh, but why will I keep it  
They threw me away,  
When I too had begged them  
And asked them to treat me  
Like they do their peaches.





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Wash me tender, I said  
Dry me in the sun  
What use will I be then  
When I am withered and gone?  
Couldn't you have cut me up  
And dried me in the hearth  
Made me a dried tendril  
Adorning your walls?  
You could have done so much  
And I, more  
For I only had begged you to keep  
me  
In return I would have slaved.  
But you threw me out  
And left me with the white robe  
and beret  
Who injects paint every day?  
In return sucks out the liquid gold  
With which I will now paint  
My peaches every day.

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# কলকাতা ॥

Atri Deb Chowdhury

তোমার শহর, গোটানো হাতা  
ভিড়ের স্বভাবে অন্ধ ট্রেন,  
আমার শহর, বগলে ছাতা  
স্নানে মগ্ন বন্ধ লেন।

তোমার শহর, বিদ্রোহী সুর  
সুকান্ত, চারু, শক্তি, সুমন,  
আমার শহর, স্নেহের দুপুর  
Where have all the flowers gone?

তোমার শহর, নগর বটে  
ট্যাক্সি, অফিস, শব্দদূষণ  
আমার শহর, অরণ্য পটে  
ভেঁপুর সুরে বিভূতিভূষণ।

তোমার শহর, ডিলান শোনে  
স্বপ্ন দেখে পশ্চিম ফিরে  
আমার শহর, লালন মানে  
একতারা হাতে তিস্তার তীরে।

তোমার শহরে, রক্তের নেশা  
Floyd বনাম Zeppelin লড়ে  
আমার শহরে, মহীনের ভাষা  
খাতার ভাঁজে রোদ্দুর কাড়ে।



তোমার শহরে, ক্লাস্তি শস্তা  
Rum এর গ্লাসে ছল্কায় রাত  
আমার শহরে, একলা রাস্তা  
ভিজে ফিল্টার পাল্টায় হাত।

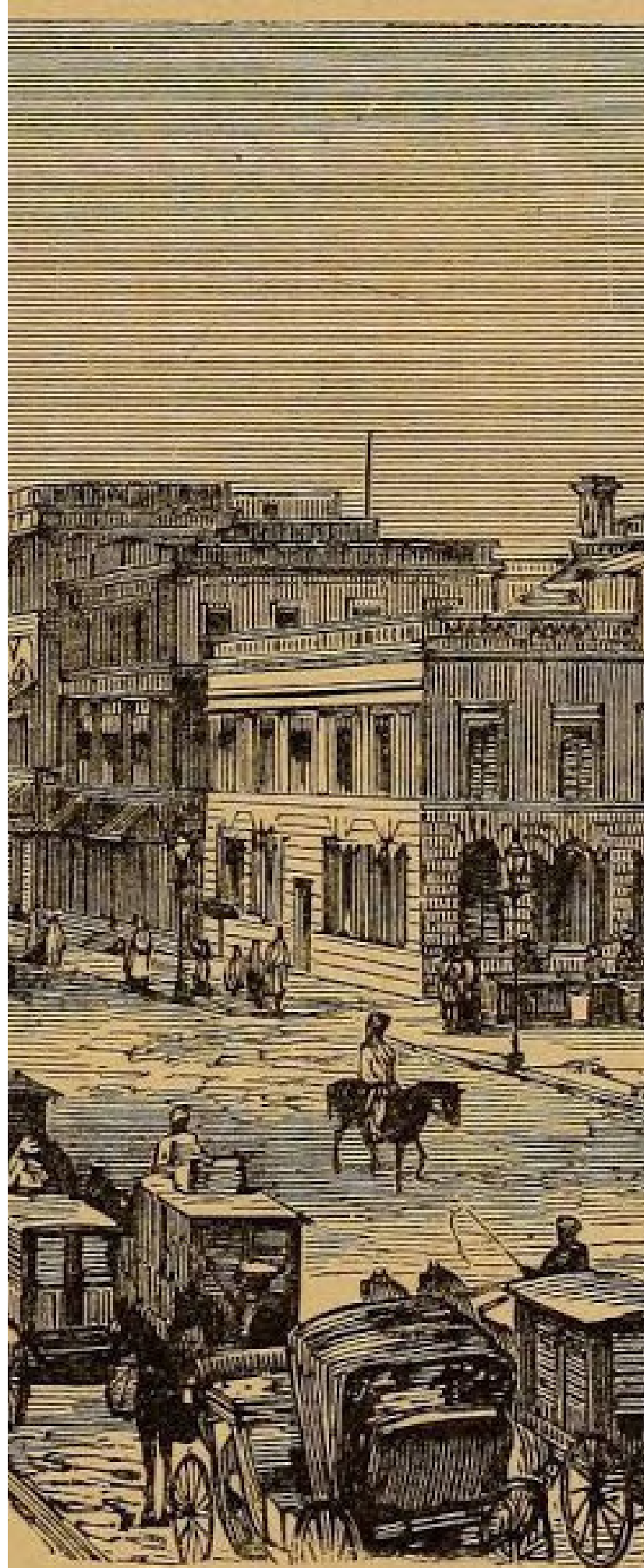
তোমার শহর, রক্তিম তালে  
বোনে কাস্তে হাতুড়ি তারা  
আমার শহর, স্মৃতির আড়ালে  
শোনে রাতের কড়া নাড়া।

তোমার শহর, ফিদেল গ্রাসে  
গেরিলা গল্প বলে  
আমার শহর, সুকুমারে ভাসে  
চন্ডী খুড়োর কলে।

তোমার শহর, দর্শন-বুলি  
ঘটক, মৃগাল, বুনুয়েলে কাতর  
আমার শহর, ঋতুর তুলি  
মেঘ পিওনের ব্যাগের ভেতর।

তোমার শহরে, আনকোরা কবি  
দেরিদা-নেরুদা শব্দ-বাঁধে  
আমার শহরে, বৃষ্টির ছবি  
গানওয়ালা চলে গীটার কাঁধে।

তোমার শহরে, ভূতের প্রজা  
ক্ষমতা কাঁপায় স্লোগান-ঝড়ে  
আমার শহরে, ভূতের রাজা,  
আকাশ থেকে মিষ্টি পড়ে।



CALCUTTA ; EUROPEAN QU

~

তুমি বলবে আমার বেনিয়াপুকুর,  
তোমার বেহালা  
তবু আকাশ দেখতে লিখতে  
থাকে একটি-ই জানালা  
তিস্তা-তোষা মেশে একটি  
ভিক্টোরিয়া ফ্রেমে  
ডিসেম্বরের শহরে বীরেন ভদ্র  
আসুক নেমে।

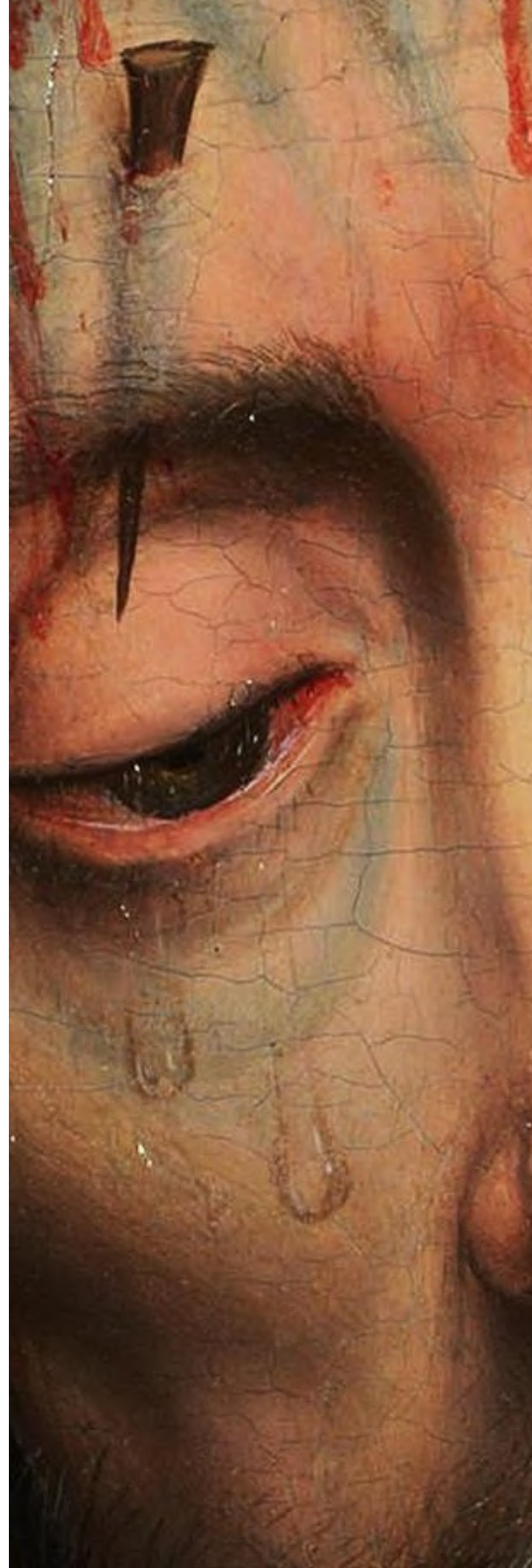
"আজ হোক না রং ফ্যাকাশে  
তোমার আমার আকাশে  
চাঁদের হাসি যতই হোক না ক্লান্ত  
বৃষ্টি নামুক নাই বা নামুক  
ঝড় উঠুক নাই বা উঠুক  
ফুল ফুটুক নাই বা ফুটুক  
আজই বসন্ত।"



# Isolation

Munjarita Mondal

The fall comes as swift as October rain;  
Bitter and cruel  
Piss-yellow from a lamppost across the street  
filters through your foggy window  
and leaks into you.  
The drowsy remnants of your episodic  
nightmare dissolved into white salt lines.  
The new AC works fine,  
You set it to a chilly-fifteen and pretend that  
you're dead.  
It's the only way you can fall asleep  
nowadays,  
Hating yourself to sleep doesn't work  
anymore.  
  
'It's okay', you call out to no one in  
particular,  
It's probably okay,  
'to die to sleep, to sleep; perchance to  
dream',  
It's the only line you remember from that  
damned soliloquy  
Classes used to be fun, remember?  
You almost tricked yourself into liking  
Hamlet somewhat,  
This is different.



You've starved yourself for seventeen hours  
trying to stuff a jelly-filled donut down your  
throat

You hate strawberry, but it will do  
Sugar isn't worth it unless it's dripping down your  
chin in sluggish gooey slime  
Sugar isn't worth it until you bite your tongue and  
taste the blood tangy and sweet.  
Pandemic has taught you to act grateful for little  
things.

The new AC was a birthday gift from papa  
You hate it.  
He hit you and you caught yourself falling  
Or Maybe he didn't  
Maybe he just raised his hands and you flinched  
and fell,  
As swift as October rain  
You hope it will leave a scar  
Warrior-like. Ugly and brave.

You waited for the crack in your voice and it  
never came.  
Falling apart in your lavender-scented bathroom is  
a luxury you can afford;  
The solace and tragedy of a dripping faucet and  
muffled screams,  
Worthy of fifty-seven hearts and twelve story  
mentions.  
Going through the motions in a dreadful serenity  
that bleeds you dry:  
Moisturize, Love  
Lemongrass suits you well



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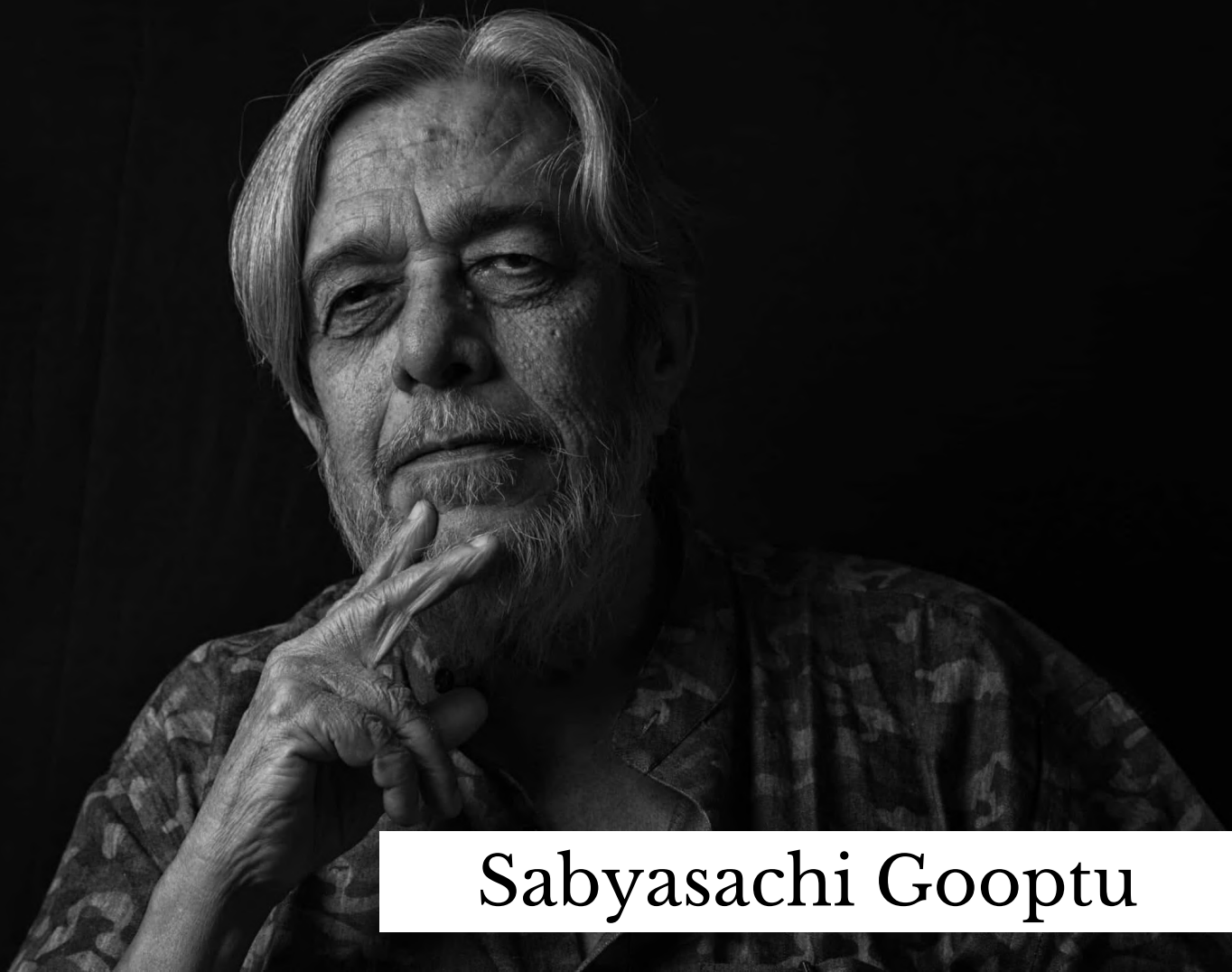
What's a Pandemic to a Rapunzel  
in marble tower armed to teeth?  
: a ceaseless lullaby of pale blue  
pill-bottles and cream-filled  
croissants.

You smile just as easy as people  
die,

At least the new AC works fine.

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Sabyasachi Gooptu

# Perks and Pangs of Correcting a Nationwide Faux Pas

Exploring the socially charged filmography of Saeed Akhtar Mirza

The beauty of Saeed saab is that though he lies at the core of the Parallel Indian Cinema movement, his films could very well have found a place in Commercial Mainstream Bollywood films. However, Saeed Mirza till date remains the biggest promoter of the need for an institution like NFDC(National Film Development Corporation) to continue playing its role in funding & enabling independent relevant cinema aimed at raising critical questions regarding current society, politics & culture i.e, where Commercial success takes a backseat.



Contemporary & Modern filmmakers like Hrishikesh Mukherjee, Kundan Shah, & Ram Gopal Verma have been deeply influenced by Mirza's subjects & style and gone on to make Middle Cinema (influenced by Parallel movement but made with a Commercial purpose). I myself, born in 1974 – grew up watching his films on Doordarshan & in spite of being a lover of the Commercial variety in my childhood, there was something relatable in an Albert Pinto or Salim Langde which even a Class 7-10 boy could be attracted to & be inquisitive about. As a teen, I felt that it was thought provoking, an alternative style – yet not dealing with abstract issues which many other parallel filmmakers chose. Later, when in College ('91 to '96) – the Ayodha movement was fresh & BJP had gained prominence, I watched his films again & now they touched my heart & mind. This is when I found out that it was the same filmmaker who created our very own “Nukkad” (a sitcom) on TV bringing me emotionally closer to his work. I was fortunate to watch Naseem when it released in 1995 & this reflective masterpiece made Saeed saab the “Leftist Sufi”, admired & loved throughout the country.



Saeed & Aziz Mirza were lucky to be born in a Liberal, educated, upper middle class family where from an early age they were encouraged to reason & think for themselves and not be bound by tradition & custom. He himself went on to marry a Christian girl, Jennifer & his brother married a Hindu girl. As a Filmmaker, his career spans 40 years – where he made 11 Documentary films, 4 TV serials & 5 full length feature films. He initially started off with Documentaries on social issues like Slum Eviction (banned since anti-establishment) and after 2 years of preparing ground, he graduated to films in 1978. Each one of his 5 films, equipped with wonderfully colourful names, are masterpieces, and the best way to delve into the plethora of ground breaking work is to take them one at a time.



Arvind Desai Ki Ajeeb Dastan (ADKAD, 1978) deals with the difficult, niche subject of how a rich privileged young man is disillusioned with his life & struggles to find meaning/relevance to his role in society. The protagonist whose heredity has given him the ownership to a posh Curio-Handicraft-Carpet boutique, feels trapped in societal bonds and is at a loss as to how he can leverage his evolved Education & Culture to make his life meaningful.



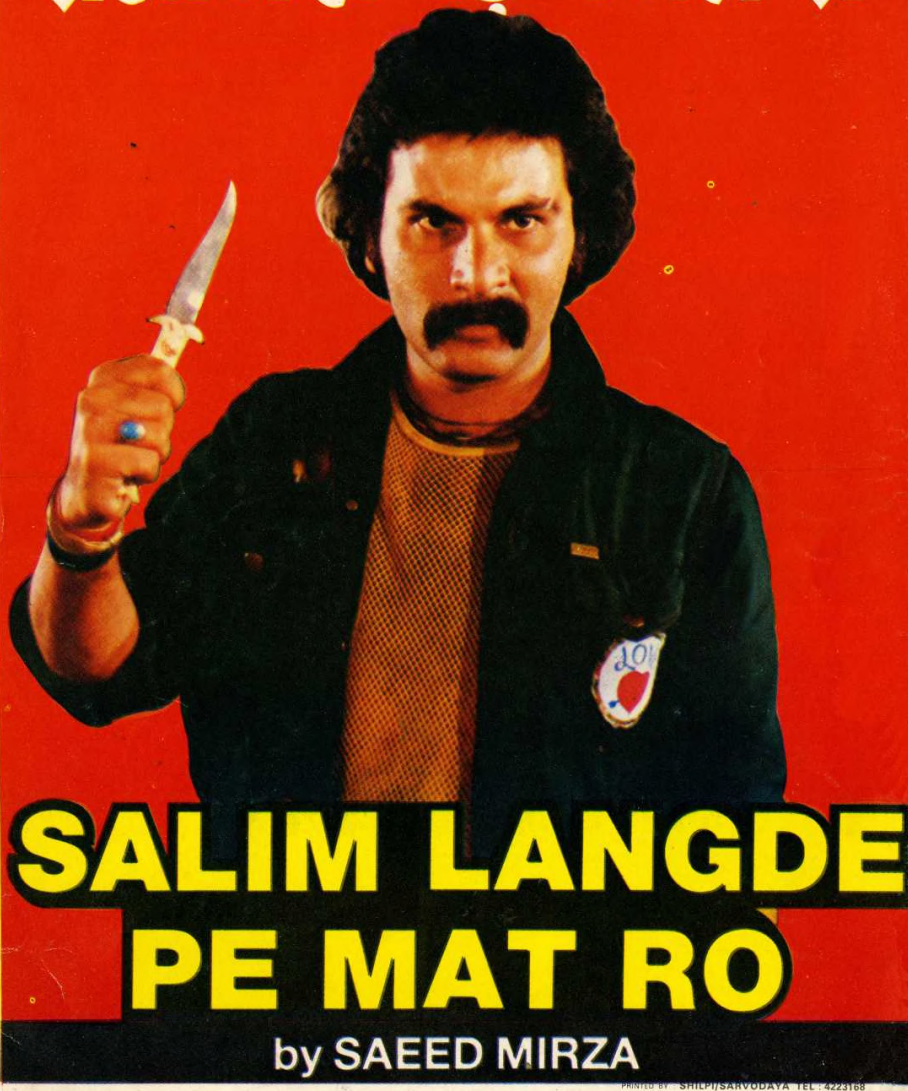
"Lack of family warmth, Class Barrier & Not being able to find relevance of the Individual in the context of Society is leading to Marginalization"- Mirza chose this subject as his debut film to also make a statement regarding the "Unrealistic Dream world" portrayed in Bollywood Commercial movies where the "Rich Businessman Hero" 's life seems to be a bed of roses.

He turns that visualization on its head – and defines the modern alternative cinema by portraying the Rich Hero as a dark, disillusioned, lonely person who needs help but there is no one in society who can help him. Having said that, ADKAD was simply his debut film & I would say that it was just a trailer to the "real stuff".

Albert Pinto Ko Gussa Kyon Ata Hai (APKGKAH, 1980) is arguably his most impactful film. This is where Saeed saab's Leftist concerns come to the fore, not as an onlooker but very much as an insider. The film, made during the buildup of the Textile Strike in Bombay – when for 18 months, the mills remained non-operational since the Mill Workers (25% of Bombay's formal labour force) registered their demand for "A life of Dignity" - 2 years before the final deadly blow in 1982 Climax, when 50% of the 2,30,000 jobs got retrenched. The big picture reality was that by 1980, the age old Textile Industry in India was no more competitive & profitable – facing heat from China & other developing countries & Mill owners were looking for an excuse to shut them down & sell their land-assets to promoters/developers.

N.F.D.C.  
PRESENTS

# सलीम लंगडे पै मतर रो



The strike from 1980 to 82 gave them the golden opportunity to shut shop, blaming the Left trade union leaders & workers for the non-cooperation. In the film, Albert Pinto's father is a mill-worker in his 50s with 2 sons and 1 daughter – who is part of the strike. However, Albert (played by Naseeruddin) a young car mechanic is an expert in his work – proud of serving his customers with excellence, so much so that he suffers from this false perception that his rich customers have become his friends.

Albert looks at himself to be representing the modern Bombay-ite who believes in only 1 principle – do your own work well (without any concern for the society around you) and life is taken care of.

Therefore, even at home he preaches the same principle & discourages his father from participating in the strike movement. There are other characters in the film like Albert's sister (Smita Patil), his girlfriend (Shabana Azmi) & his colleague (Om Puri) – but at the core is Albert (representing the Capitalist view) & his Father (representing the Socialist view). Om Puri, unlike Naseer – thinks like a member of the Labour Class & has been intelligently used by the Filmmaker to show him the other side, thereby provoking Albert's emotions to feel a sense of belonging to the class he actually comes from.



Then, one day he realizes that the Garage Owner happens to be connected to the Mill Owner & he gets to hear the Capitalist Owner's view of why he feels all strike workers must be taught a lesson by kicking them out of job. This is when the anger of Albert Pinto starts building up.

However, the moment of truth for Albert is when his father gets beaten up by hired Goons employed by mill owners. In the climax his father opens up his heart & explains to Albert why in spite of being conscious of the repercussions of the strike, he as a representative of the "working class" thought that he had to raise his voice against the injustice done for decades by the "owner class". This provokes the already reflecting Albert to move to the semi-permanent housing arrangements where the migrant mill-workers stay & understand the injustice that they have faced for decades. Having been able to relate the ground reality to his father's belief, Albert is transformed & joins his father in the Textile Mills Strike movement. Even with a shoestring budget, Mirza has masterfully observed the scenario of the time with authentic emotions, hard facts & a balanced perspective where both side's views are elaborated sufficiently before arriving at the film's conclusion.

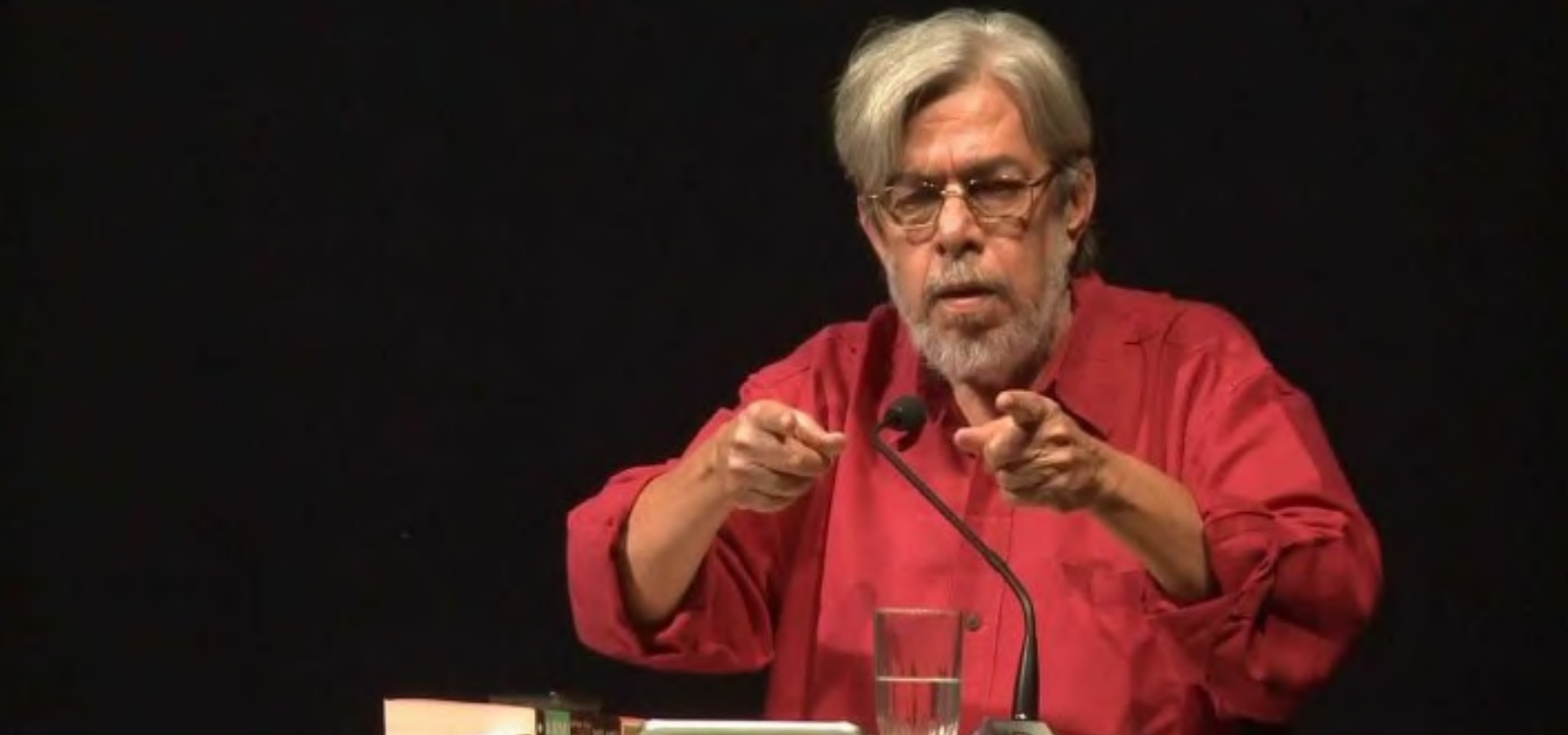
Mohan Joshi Hazir Ho (MJHH, 1984) took a different trajectory & followed a rather humorous style like never before. In his early days Mirza had made a documentary on slum eviction which was banned for being critical of establishment.



This time around, he took a different route to raising his voice on a similar subject– that of Chawl (cramped apartment buildings) Owners of Central Bombay intentionally not repairing/maintaining the buildings, to ensure that either due to the buildings breaking down or residents feeling it to be unsafe – they would get vacated & the owners would be free to sell the Land to Promoters/Developers at exorbitant prices. The film pushes forward a documentary like narrative too but chooses to narrate through characters, emotions & stories, instead – to make it more acceptable, subtle & appealing to all – audience, critics & the Government. Saeed Mirza, the “Urban Socialist” is raising his voice against the ills of society – the same subjects dealt by Good Commercial Filmmakers but in his own alternative way, rooted to ground reality and portrayed through real characters – where the primary purpose is to make meaningful cinema & not to make money from a business. However, this is where I feel that Saeed Mirza plays his masterstroke – this time around, he changes the presentation style and makes the 1st half of his film as a comedy satire of a light variety. Slowly, in the 2nd half he builds up the emotion and finally moves into the climax in the last 15 minutes. Once again, a masterpiece.

From the mid-80s, the Ram Janmabhoomi movement gathered steam after BJP performed reasonably in the 1984 LS elections (2 seats) and VHP activities generated momentum. The Muslim Head Clergy at that time was a fire-brand person - Syed Abdullah Bukhari who in tandem with a few other political leaders made the religious dialogue very confrontational. Therefore, the period 1986-89 was a time of Bloody Riots, across India including Bombay. On the other hand, the 1989 LS Elections were due shortly. However, VP Singh had in the meantime played the master-stroke of the Mandal Commission, thereby dividing the Hindus into caste-based mobilization groups. At this juncture, BJP realized that the only way to the top was to polarize in these few years through the Babri Masjid issue by fooling the masses & unifying Hindus (at least Hindi Heartland) under the umbrella of a conflict regarding Ram's birthplace. There could not be a better distraction. Unfortunately, the Muslim Community masses across the Hindi Heartland who were largely less educated & more unemployed – fell into this trap & got provoked into allowing this polarization. This is when Mirza, after a brief hiatus making TV shows, decided to return to make cinema to communicate to the Muslim Community the circumstance of how Politicians & Leaders on both sides, for their own selfish interests were using the masses to create riots.





Then came SALIM LANGDE PE MAT RO (SLPMR, 1989) – once again, a Masterpiece that was a huge service to the Community itself. Interestingly, this film can also be considered a sequel to Albert Pinto in the sense that while APKGKAH ends with Albert joining his father in the Textile Strike movement, Salim Langde, the son of a victim of the Textile Strike, is a retrenched employee in his mid-40s – who could never again get back his employment in spite of adequate qualifications. Salim Langde is in fact the reverse of Albert Pinto, where the Film shows Salim to be a born rebel who believes that since Muslims are discriminated against, he has a right to be a Goon and earn money through illegal means. His father tries to reform him by inculcating his own values but in spite of family support, he is stuck on his ground. Fortunately, every marginalized community has a messiah & here, the character called Islam who's strong belief influences Salim over time (after shocks, disillusionment & extended self-reflection that Islam's view is the right view) and he ultimately reforms himself by leaving the corrupted industry & taking up the job of a car mechanic, expressing his genuine wish to learn from scratch. Unfortunately, the film ends with Salim getting killed in a typical RGV style revenge, showing how difficult it is to exit a gang without getting killed. The political focus of the film was to demonstrate and push forth how the Socialist "Class Struggle" should always be treated as top priority, over and above other emotion-passion driven provocations such as





Unfortunately, after 1989 – the hindutva momentum only strengthened and finally in 1992, the unthinkable happened - the Demolition of the Mosque and since then, India was never the same ever again – because the trust deficit became so strong that it was impossible for the “Islams” of the world to convince the Salims . In such a mood of dejection & doom in inter-religious faith & harmony, Mirza again returned from Documentaries to his last Feature film, NASEEM, 1995, breaking away from his Long Nomenclature, in a way showing that this would be his last film ending with a full stop, with no more appeals to any Community, simply a poetic reflection of the glorious past being the only value-support to hold on to. A Masterpiece in its own right, though very different from the normal Mirza movie.

While the others were studies in History & Social Science, Naseem is a piece of art – a curio piece to be kept away in the most precious part of your heart & taken out only when there is a very special guest, who you know will be able to appreciate the art. An extremely sensitive film portraying the beautiful relationship of love, respect, trust, values & knowledge between the teenage schoolgirl Naseem & her Grandfather, played by Kaifi Azmi. Though he has named her Naseem, he endearingly addresses her by “Jaanu”. Naseem loves to listen to Grandfather’s interesting stories of his younger days about funny incidents & moral values. More so, whenever she has a life question as to Why something is the way it is – Grandpa is her go to man since he always has an answer which makes sense & puts her mind to peace.



The family mood and atmosphere is portrayed in the backdrop of the tension building up in the year 1992. Grandpa representing the filmmaker (comparable to Islaam of Salim Langde) explains to Young impatient Muslims the reason for why they should be tolerant, patient & ensure a bridge in the existing trust-deficit, which is the only route to a unified India. However, the current generation's feelings are portrayed accusing Grandpa of living in his past dreamy-world of bonhomie-filled stories. Only Naseem has unquestioned faith in Grandpa's wisdom & therefore, she feels that the young sensitive girl can be the new Messiah for the Muslim Community – the old Messiah in preachy Islam bhai might not be effective & what might work with the new generation is an imaginative mind which can visualize/paint an absolutely new picture –Saeed saab feels that post 1992, what might possibly open up a solution is the Feminist Ethics of Care – as against the conventional Ethics of Justice which recommends equal rights in the country for all Religions & Communities. When Prose does not have any more answers, Poetry needs to take over!

It is evident that I am a big fan of Saeed Mirza's films – one and all. However, I will admit that what amazes me even more than his Films is his TV series NUKKAD (1986-87) – especially when seen in the context of his films. Not only was it an instant hit at that time but even my son couldn't get enough of it almost 30 years later. Such is the universal appeal & magic of Nukkad!



Truly representative of the Ideal Nukkad imagined by Grandpa from Naseem, portrayed in a light-hearted manner through interesting funny characters which sums up the Indian lower middle-class and poor community. But, the most interesting aspect is to observe how Saeed saab's characters from Albert Pinto to Mohan Joshi to Salim Langde sort of come together (with the same actor combos) and sort of culminate on TV with this emotional comedy. When looked at from a distance, it seems that the film characters who had a chip on their shoulders & a statement to make to the world have now turned a new leaf and transformed into their light-hearted twins with the ability to crack a joke on their own self. Once again, unique – never before & never after! Saeed saab is truly one of a kind and still remains a towering figure in Indian Cinema.



# BODHISATTWA GHOSH

*Bodhisattwa Ghosh is a jazz guitarist based out of Kolkata, India and is the leader of one of the biggest experimental jazz bands in the country - The Bodhisattwa Trio.*

*1) Could you tell us about your journey with jazz? How did you get started with it?*

It all started back in 2008. I was pretty much a Rock player playing with my first band "Insomnia" since 2002, but I was never happy about the fact that my knowledge was so limited. That time there were a lot of Jazz concerts (including international acts) in the city, namely every Thursday at Princeton Club, and I used to attend all these shows. I used to get very frustrated with the fact that I could not understand what was being played, so one day after a Los Amigos (led by the late Monojit Datta) concert I went up to Bass player Mainak Nag Chowdhury (Bumpy) and drummer Sanjay Gupta and told them that I really wanted to improve and play music which challenges me. So Bumpy asked me to join his Jazz Fusion band "Kendraka", and it basically started from there. Months of rehearsals where I kept performing poorly prompted me to take up music seriously full time. I quit my job which I was doing at the time, started listening to nothing but Jazz, consulted my teacher Amyt Datta about the direction I wanted to take and began a strict practice routine of around 10 hours every day. That's how it started.

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## *2) Who would you say has been an influence on your art?*

I have a lot of influences across almost all genres of music. I take my listening as a very important part of my training, so I try to incorporate anything that sounds good to me. But obviously, my teacher Amyt Datta has the strongest footprint on my music. I have been learning from him for the last 18 years and apart from his lessons, the music that he creates and composes have taught me immensely about a lot of things including composition, arrangements and aesthetics of music.

Apart from Amyt Da, a few of my all time favourite musicians are Miles Davis, Ustad Vilayat Khan, Wayne Krantz, David Gilmour, John Mc Laughlin.

## *3) How did The Bodhisattwa trio, as we know it, come into being?*

It happened in 2012. I was supposed to put together a band for a Jimi Hendrix tribute gig at The Basement, Samilton. So I asked drummer Premjit Dutta and Bass player Roheet Mukherjee if they would be interested and obviously they were very eager. The curator suggested that I call the band "Bodhi and Friends" but that sounded too cheesy to me, so I decided to call it "The Bodhisattwa Trio". We shared an incredible chemistry on stage (especially me and Premjit), so we decided to take the band seriously and start writing our own music. That's how it started, and now we have completed 8 years together with 3 full length albums, 2 line up changes and of course a massive shift in sound since we started.

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#### *4) What is the Grey Album about? What's your favourite track on it?*

"The Grey Album" is more or less a reflection of humanity on the whole. We don't exist in absolutes, nobody is pure good or pure evil, and we all have "grey areas" or areas of conflict and duality, there is darkness amidst light and light amidst darkness, hence the name "The Grey Album". It has 2 parts- Part 1: Chaos to Creation and Part 2: Creation to Chaos. Track 3 (Degrees of Freedom) is my personal favourite.

#### *5) Calcutta being home to jazz in the 70s, did it have an influence on you and your music?*

Not directly, but the fact that my city has a rich background in Jazz right from the 70s is a very inspiring fact and I am proud of that. Fortunately I have managed to witness some concerts of the legendary Carlton Kitto before he passed away and I feel very blessed because of that. I was supposed to take some lessons from him as well, but sadly that didn't happen.



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*6) COVID-19 has taken a toll on us all. How has it affected musicians like you and how have you been dealing with it?*

It is indeed the most challenging time for us musicians, especially people like me who are full time performing and touring artists. Live shows are my life and it is very disheartening that all my shows and tours got cancelled this year. On the bright side, we are taking this time to write new music, and the Trio has started work on our 4th album, with 3 new tunes down already! We just have to be patient and wait for this time to pass. Good things await all of us and I am hopeful about better days ahead.

*7) You are a touring musician as well. What has been the best and worst experience as a musician constantly on the move?*

They are all great experiences, and each experience including the bad ones play a pivotal role into shaping one's personality and hence in shaping the music. The best experiences are obviously those few gigs where the band just clicks right from the word "Go" and such concerts stay in our minds and hearts forever. From our last year's tour of Europe, the concerts at Blue Note Jazz Club (Poznan, Poland), White Cube Bergedorf (Hamburg, Germany) and Fest Jazza International Jazz Festival (Koprivnica, Croatia) are the highest points of our month long tour.

The worst experiences have to be early morning flights, no doubt about that.

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## *8) What are some things you would advise musicians to keep in mind while touring?*

It is very important to stay in good health and be physically fit during a tour. Most of these tours are very exhausting and hectic, so one should be very careful regarding their stamina and fitness, because a fatigued body and mind will not be able to deliver the best performance. Drink a lot of water, eat healthy food, get enough sleep and rest whenever possible (sometimes due to travel schedules, I have gone without sleep for more than 48 hours), if you are going to a new place keep the sight-seeing as a last priority, use that time to relax and concentrate, and obviously keep the partying to a minimum (use the off days for this). Another very important thing is to get a full warm up with your instrument on the performance days. I do this for 2 hours in the morning in my hotel room with a metronome and a cup of coffee.

## *9) Could you give our readers any words of advice? Especially For people looking to play jazz.*

All I can say is be open minded, be honest and be hard working. Something like Jazz is a very difficult art form, and one needs to be extremely patient and to honest to yourself. The progress might seem really slow, but one will see the improvement gradually. There are no short cuts, and a good attitude goes a long way.





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*10) How does it feel to look back upon your early days when you were just starting out as a musician?*

It feels great! When I was starting out, I never imagined that so much would change and so many events and experiences would happen. It was all wishful thinking and daydreaming back then. Now when I look back, in some ways I do feel that I am living my dream, but now it seems obvious and the element of excitement has really reduced. I feel that I have a long way to go, but at the same time I am truly thankful for everything that has happened over the years which has made me the man I am today.

*11) So what's next for you and your band? What lies ahead, if I may put it that way?*

Apart from our upcoming concert for the digital version of this year's Kolkata International Jazzfest, we are working on our 4th upcoming album, which is a concept album and very much in the lines of science fiction.

The concept of the album is about the 3 of us leaving Earth in the search for intelligent life in space and hopefully finding the answer to the purpose of life and existence. Each tune will represent a phenomenon in space-time that we are experiencing in our quest. Some of the other tunes that we are working on are "Das Experiment" which is about looking at the Earth from above and realizing that life on Earth is an experiment in the grand scheme. Another one is called "Countergenesis" which will appear in the album just after "Europa Swim" (exploring the vast subsurface oceans of Jupiter's moon Europa, discovering a wormhole/gateway that leads us to a parallel universe).

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Countergenesis is about experiencing the birth of this new Universe. As our Universe is being destroyed, this parallel Universe is undergoing genesis, hence the name "Countergenesis". We don't have a name for the album yet, but we currently have given it the working title "Frontier", since space is the final frontier. We are very thankful to our record label "Intek Music" from Croatia, who have shown immense enthusiasm in this project, and we expect them to have a very important and pivotal role in the making of the 4th album.

We plan to record it overseas in fall 2021, featuring a lot of musicians from different genres and different countries. The final product should be ready by the end of 2021 or beginning of 2022.

# Conventional Weapons

**Varshneyee Dutt**

THE FACETS OF SCIENCE CANNOT BE  
PLACED ABOVE THEIR  
CONSEQUENCES

In a boxing match, one may not hit one's opponent below the belt; in judo, one may not gouge out his eyes. These methods are not approved by convention. In war, you may destroy your enemy's food supply by destroying crop — that is a conventional method; but you may not destroy his supply of manpower by destroying the civilian population. That would be an unconventional method. This raises a pertinent question with regard to whether war, its methods, and its weapons at all fall under a category which we may judge in term of un/conventionality. If we adhere strictly to the Clausewitzian take on war, then we may conclude that war is the sum of decisions and actions in an uncertain, dangerous. War is but a continuation of politics “with other means”. In such a context, the very question of war being either conventional or unconventional gets nullified.

The idea of ‘conventional weapons’ has altered since the days of Goliath.



Updating the means and modes of destruction of human lives has become an obsession among scientists, businessmen, and politicians all over the world, irrespective of time and space.

The 'rise of the conventional weapons' began in the Stone Age with a single category: Stones – either a 'blunt instrument,' or a sharp one, as the coroners would put it today.

But there have been innovations since — and innovation by its very nature is unconventional. Since that time, the categories have proliferated: first into 'conventional' and 'unconventional', and then into subcategories — not at an arithmetical, but at a geometrical rate; and the schedule of 'conventional' weapons has been listed in a bewildering variety, under the assumption that arms and warfare are acceptable as a normal, 'conventional' aspect and mode of human existence, since they promote trade and beget profit.

In spite of all being fair in love and war, the United Nations has categorized some murderous weapons as 'conventional,' (i.e., one can murder people with them without the UN raising an eyebrow). Thus in 1991, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms (UNROCA) listed 'conventional' weapons under seven categories as:

Battle tanks, Armoured combat vehicles, Large calibre artillery system, Combat aircraft, Attack helicopters, Warships, Missiles and Missile launchers,





But within a few years, it had to be expanded to nine. The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament (UNRCPD) lists them as nine in number:

Armoured combat vehicles, Combat helicopters, Combat aircraft, Warships, Small arms, Light weapons, Landmines, Cluster munitions, Ammunition and artillery.

And they are cautious to make a special note that the ‘conventional’ weapons are ‘not limited to’ the above terrifying range of weapons categories. Therefore, any weapon falling outside this miscellany may also be considered ‘conventional’ — now or in the immediate future — if the UN decides to consider them so.

Currently the UN recognizes a category called ‘Small Arms and Light Weapons’ (SALW). It covers such ‘conventional’ weapons as

Machine guns, Rifles, Hand guns, Portable anti-tanks, Anti-aircraft guns, Missile launchers, Grenade launchers, and Mortars of less than 100 mm calibre.

These SALWs are the principal weapons that fuel intrastate conflicts, domestic and transnational crimes, human rights violations, and violence against non-combatant civilians (including women and children) all over the world. But they are ‘conventional,’ and therefore freely tradable.

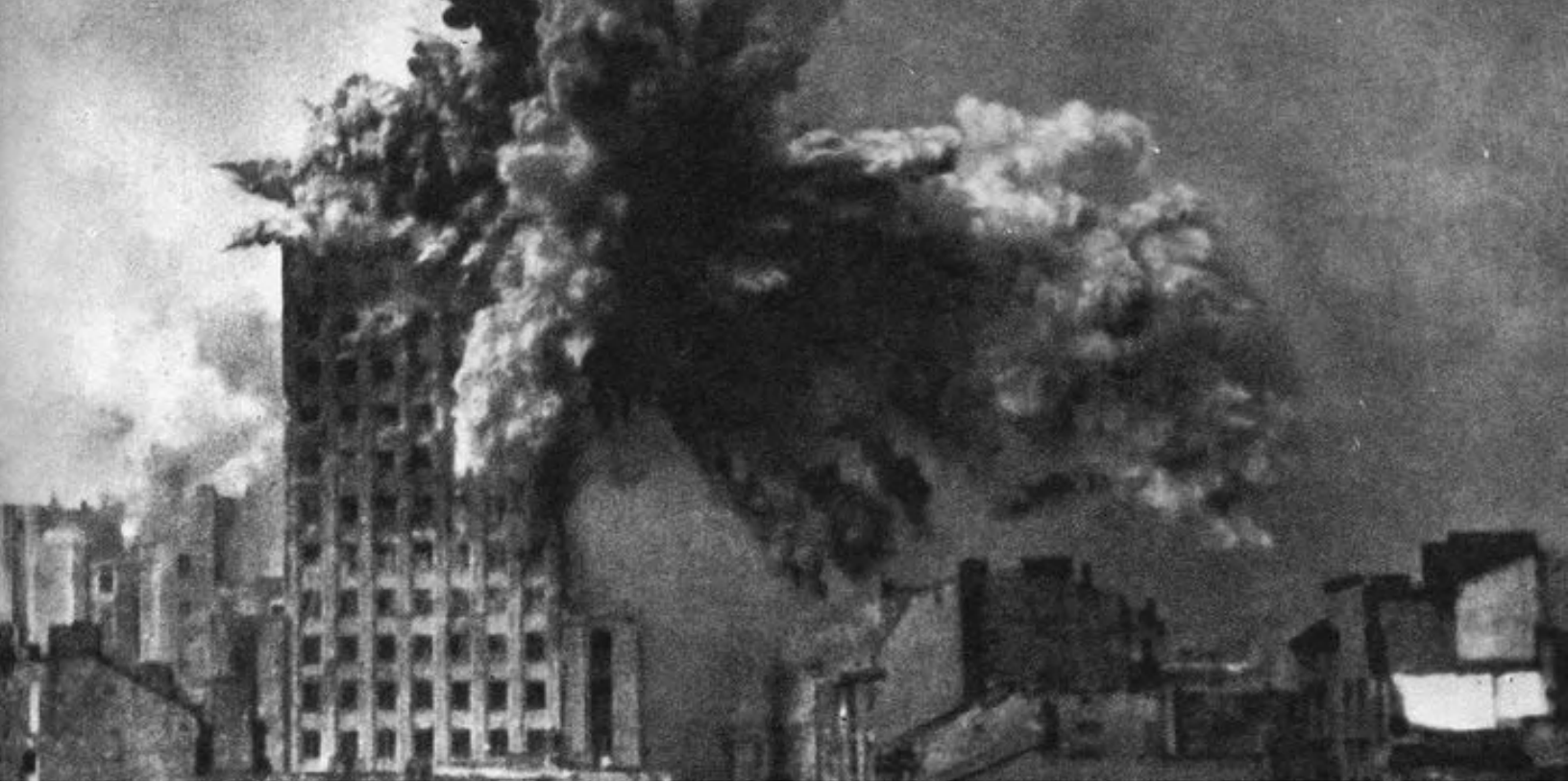
A representative of Togo in the UN had pointed out that light weapons are only light in name and promoted problems ranging from exploitation of natural resources to child soldiers, piracy, terrorism, and trans-border organized crimes. The easy procurement of those weapons caused violence and instability even in countries free from internal conflict. Africa has become the most profitable market for arms traffickers, and existed in a state of “permanent trafficking and vulnerability” due to uncontrolled trade in these ‘Light weapons.’

Outside of the UN, the Wassenaar Arrangement had proposed the first global multilateral arrangement on export controls for ‘conventional weapons’ and sensitive dual use of goods and technologies. However, in their eagerness to preserve peace among the nations, they forgot to ban such exports, and especially, imports.

As a result, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad deployed T -72 tanks which are estimated by Action on Armed Violence (AOAV) to have caused an average of 16 civilian casualties per shell fired into Syria’s towns and cities. That, however, is a ‘conventional’ weapon that Russia sold, and Syria bought, to maximize unconventional death.

Thus today, we should logically speak, not of the ‘rise’ of conventional weapons, but only of the ‘proliferation’ of conventional weapons which are ‘not limited to’ a listed few, but are registered under an ever expanding list which may soon include bacterial, chemical, and of course atomic weapons (since it has a glorious precedence of usage), according to their marketability. On the other hand, ‘unconventional’ would be only those weapons which lie outside one’s comfort zone.





In the instance of warfare, we might ask ‘what is the measure of convention in battle methods and battle implements?’ Is it ethics? Is war at all ethical that we should sit on judgement on the methods used by the contending parties? We argue that ‘conventional’ methods are hallowed by historical practice, but forget that the Homeric Greeks killed off a whole populace deep at night in their sleep. So did Ashwatthama in the Mahabharata. The Asiatic Semites (the Hyksos) deployed chariots against the Egyptian foot warriors to defeat them and establish the XVth Dynasty; Archimedes destroyed Roman ships by using heliostat; the British used guns against the Indians. They were conventional weapons to one party, but not to the other.

The choice today is between kill or be killed: where the survival principle tells us to live and let die. But in order to let die, we must have not only advanced weapons, but also enemies to fight with. Where there is a shortfall in enemies, the instigators or agent provocateurs of the arms manufacturers create them for us. For war is trade today — a simple lesson that Mother Courage had failed to learn. It is not so much a question of morality, ethics, or convention, of the fight, but how much profit it brings to the arms dealer. Kant once opined that “a state of war” did not essentially mean interrupted violent conflicts but rather constant threats of such conflicts. Each state will naturally feel apprehensive and fear other states, and this very fear will ultimately culminate in wars. Therefore, it is the “Categorical Imperative” of every government to retain domestic peace.

However, in reality, when these very governments, in order to sustain their soft corruption, stir violence and global conflicts, there is little to no room left for law and order to persist. In *Discipline and Punishment* (1975), Foucault employs war as a model for garnering an understanding of social relations. Indeed, it is only in a nefarious impasse like this one that we realise where humanity truly lies in the scheme of power politics, and to what extent our “elected representatives” are ancillary to the tenets of Rousseau’s General Will.

We are too overawed by what we term science — scientia or vijñana or knowledge — to realise that what we are actually hypnotized by is not wisdom; not even knowledge; but merely our own irresponsible curiosity. As Isaac Asimov has so wisely remarked: ‘The saddest aspect of life right now is that science gathers knowledge faster than society gathers wisdom.’ There have been 2,056 nuclear test detonations all over the world since July 1945, which gives us an idea of the amount of heat generated, contributing to global warming. The USA has released a total of 196,514 TNT, and Russia a total of 296,837 TNT of energy during the period. But the weapons and their modes of deployment were quite ‘conventional,’ boosting the national ego of at least eight nations to the extent of considerable global warming.





Irresponsible knowledge, glorified as 'science' has led us to the edge of doom; and we, like Icarus receiving a pair of wings from Daedalus, have received self-destructive knowledge from Science. It may not be long till the wax in our wings melts and we fall, frantically snatching at an emptiness to save ourselves.

It is time we questioned ourselves: what purpose does it serve to distinguish between weapons as 'conventional' and 'unconventional' weapons when all alike are aimed at the destruction of human lives, and perhaps the annihilation of mankind?



# ছুটি

" English Channel?

ঢাকুরিয়া লেক। "

সৌমিত্রের সাথে আমার প্রথম পরিচয় তার দুটি পা-এর। মাঝে মাঝেই মনে হতো ওই বয়সের জঞ্জালে ডুলে যাওয়া সোনার কেল্লার CDটা উদ্ধার করে ওই এক জোড়া হাঁটু তে একটা প্রণাম হুঁকে আসি। এখন সেই CDটি হারিয়েছে।

সত্যি বলতে কি, ভদ্রলোক চলে যাওয়ার পর খুব যে বিরাট বেদনা-আচ্ছন্ন হয়ে মুরছে পড়েছিলাম, তা নয়। শুধু, মনটা বেশ একটা খারাপ হয়ে গেছিল। মানে প্রিয় একজন বন্ধু অনেকদিন দেখা না দিলে যেমন ফিকে একটা অভিমান যুক্ত মন খারাপ লেগে থাকে রবিবারের গরাদ-ঘেরা আকাশের গায়ে -- ঠিক সেইরকম। ছোটো থেকেই তো ভদ্রলোক কে চিনতাম, মাঝেমাঝেই নিজের পরিবার এর লোক-ই ভাবতাম (কিন্ধা ভাবতে পছন্দ করতাম) তাই তার ছাড়পত্রের ডাক যখন দোরগোড়ায় এসে কড়া নাড়লো, তখন বেশ একটু অভিমান-ই হল বৈকি।

সোনার পাহাড় দেখেছেন ? দাদু - দিদা দের নিয়ে অত্যন্ত মধ্যবিত্ত ধাঁচের একটি ছবি। আসলে সেই খেলনা-দাদুর মতোই ছিলেন সৌমিত্র বাবু। মনে হয়েছিলো ওরম মজার আরেকজন দাদু থাকলে কি ভালো হতো। কারণ ভদ্রলোক কে প্রায়ে সেই জায়গাতেই বসিয়েছিলুম নিজের কল্পনায় -- বিস্ময়ে এবং শ্রদ্ধায়। অনেক কটা মানুষের গল্প নিজের ঝুলিতে ভরে রোজ বিকেলে ফেরি করতে আসতেন। এখন, হয়তো কোনো অন্য অলি গলি ঘুরে, অন্য কোনো কাউকে টানছে সে অদ্ভুত সুরে ।

Atri Deb Chowdhury





তাই নন্দন-চত্বরে মৃত্যুর আলিঙ্গনে শায়িত ঠান্ডা ওই দেহটি দেখতে আর যাওয়া হয়নি।  
হয়নি বলা ভুল হবে, যাইনি। কারণ পান এর দোকানে চারমিনার চাওয়া আমি, বাঁশি  
বাজানোর চেষ্টা করতে গিয়ে পাশের বাড়ির কাকিমার ঝাড় খাওয়া আমি, অরণ্যের  
দিনরাত্রি দেখে পাঞ্জাবীর হাতা গোটাতে শেখা এই আমি'র-- খেলনা-দাদুর ওই বিখ্যাত  
হাসির পলায়ন এর খবর শুনে বেশ একটু অভিমান ই হয়েছিল বৈকি।

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# THE HISTORY OF JAZZ pt 2

Ayush Chakraborty

What is jazz?

Yes, we are back to the prodigal question. Bear with me. But just to reassure you, no. We are not back to square one. We've gone through a series of revelations throughout my last article and this is a continuation of the aforementioned series. We shall continue to endlessly ponder this question, philosophise with no particular end result in mind. For a question like this, I presume, has no end in particular. For jazz, has always been in a state of constant evolution, and still is in that very state. You see, the subject of jazz brings forth the idea that evolution is constant. Pun intended.

Now before you begin to track me down for that, let me finish what I started a month back. We began with the coming of slaves to the New World, and paused the story of jazz at King Buddy Bolden. In this article we shall pick up the story again, but in a different country almost a decade later. In fact, in my home country of India in the '30s. India's story with jazz is something out of the ordinary. Although, nowadays jazz in India is confined to a few wonderful academies, venues and cafes, like the Goa Jazz Academy or the Skinny Mos Jazz Club right here in my beloved hometown of Calcutta (that narrows it down to a cautionary degree, they're gonna come at me for that one pun now). Jazz in India for enthusiasts like me is now simply romanticising about Carlton Kittle playing bebop in Moulin Rouge and wondering if Sinatra would've sung about Calcutta if he ever did visit. It is writing unnecessary articles about the uninteresting story of jazz whilst listening to old Glenn Miller records with a cigarette in one hand and moral obligations in the other.

But for the people of '30s India, it was more than just popular music. It was something quite out of the ordinary. Something new and radical. And the people were quick to take to it. Some were quick to disregard it as music completely, as Naresh Fernandes, a journalist and author of "The Taj Mahal Foxtrot" said at the Indian Summer event in Vancouver "*Almost for as long as jazz has existed, Indians have had a pretty good idea of how to fix it*". But India was in love with jazz at the same time. And this tale of romance begins in the 1920's with Jimmy Lequime and his band.

Lequime, who played the trumpet for his band was spreading hot jazz music all over the East. He was hired to introduce the popular genre of the time to the Indian audiences in the Grand Hotel of Calcutta, the then second largest city of the British Empire, and Lequime and his Grand Hotel Orchestra demonstrated the internationality of jazz. The band comprising of people from Canada, Russia, Austria, the US, Philippines and Mozambique, travelled to British Colonial India, walked into the studio of the HMV company in Calcutta and recorded the first jazz track ever to be recorded in India:



*In that house just over the way  
The house where the shutters are green;  
Every night and morning without any warning  
I can always be seen  
To the outside partner, your business do not tell  
All you have to do is, to ring the bottom bell;  
In that house just over the way  
The house where the shutters are green*

- House Where The Shutters Are Green by Lequime's Grand Hotel Orchestra

The amalgamation of African rhythms, polyrhythms and spirituals sung by slaves in the plantations with European concepts of harmony found its way to the Eastern parts of the world and gradually to India with relative ease. Jazz was born at the dawn of the recording age and gramophones were becoming readily available. So, it was just a matter of time before the sound of jazz began to flourish in the streets of colonial India. But it was never a question of "love at first sight", for the then Indian audience weren't impressed when they heard the early jazz records. They found jazz music and jazz dancers to be degenerates, and the aristocrats of the era would come up with the opinion that jazz should try to incorporate Hindu melodies to improve jazz.

But it was not long before America decided to feed the sub-continent with a steady diet of jazz. In 1935, Leon Abbey, a violinist from Minnesota came to Bombay (now Mumbai as you all know) to play at the Taj Mahal Hotel, the foremost colonial hotel, with his band comprising of musicians with impeccable skill. His arrival caused the elites of Bombay to go into a trance of sorts. Their repertoire consisted of solid swing, sending the audiences into a frenzy, with extraordinary numbers like "You" which had both melody and rhythm. But the staggering tempo at which Abbey's band practically lived on and the swiftness of the cabaret dancers who accompanied them, left the Bombay elites in the dust as they desperately tried to catch up.

The enthusiasts asked the band to play more “simpler” tunes and the Times of India reported “*Their quicksteps have slowed from Paris speed – the fastest in all the dancing world – to Bombay speed*”. However, the Times seemed to be rather complimentary about Abbey’s music. This was unexpected considering that the said newspaper had criticised jazz heavily some years ago. Leon Abbey would remark at this saying “*First they swore at my music, then they swore by my music*”. In the end it all contributed to the spread of jazz around the world.

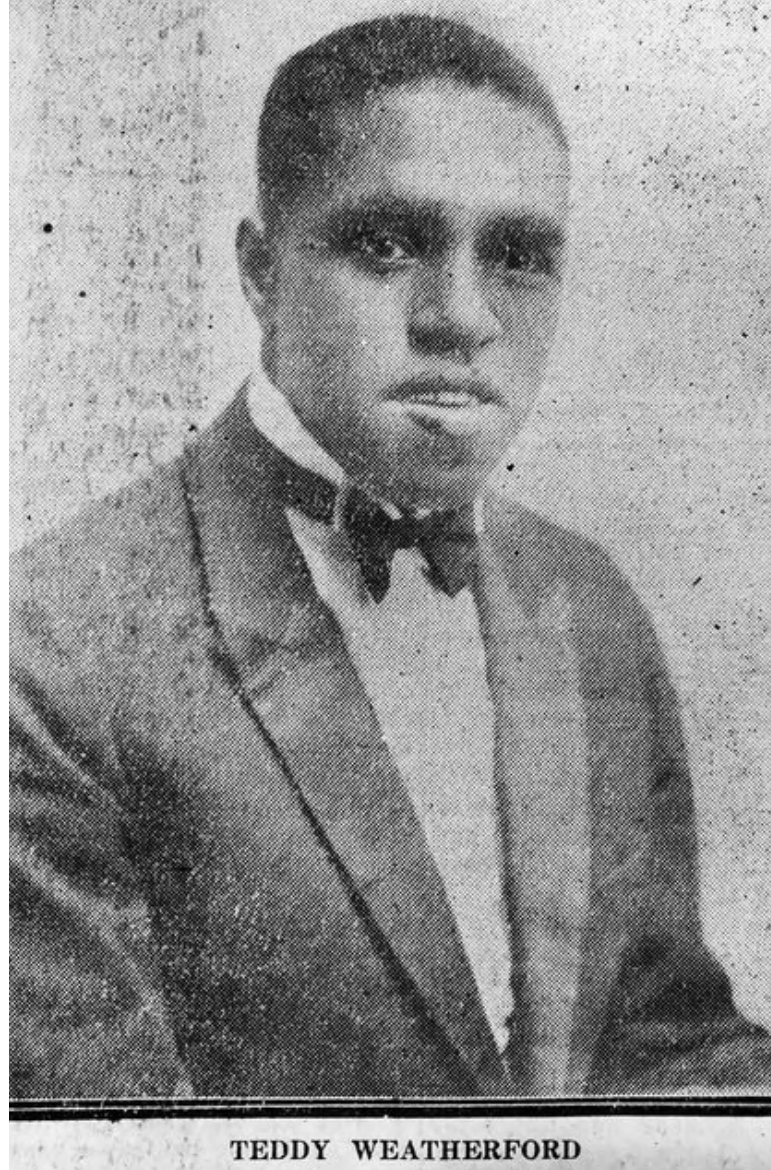
The growing popularity of jazz was a matter of great pride for the African-American community. The Roarin’ 20s had seen the birth of jazz, an exemplary contribution made by the worthiest of musicians of the community. African-American newspapers would flourish during these times, reporting extensively on politics, social matters and jazz musicians playing all over the world, and amongst these journalistic publications was the Chicago Defender, nicknamed as the Black Bible. In a feature called “Across the Pond”, Leon Abbey’s contribution to the spread of jazz in India received acclaim. In the feature, along with a picture of the band, the caption read: “From now on the snake-charmers will play swiny tunes through their fifes, after hearing swing music for the first time”.



Jazz was successful in penetrating the hearts and minds of the Indian audiences with its syncopated rhythms and soulful melodies. The improvisational foundation that jazz was structured around, seemed to perfectly fit in with the Art-Deco style of architecture in '30s Bombay. One can spot the influence of jazz if they would take just a glance at the architectural designs of old buildings in present day Mumbai. Doing so would open the viewers eyes to the globalisation and the inter-changing of ideas around the world. India gets inspired by jazz, and Africans get inspired by the act of non-cooperation of Gandhi (however, I do refuse to comment on the irony of his conversations with Howard Thurman). India’s romance with jazz had just begun, and although it did not last as long as many would’ve hoped it to, myself for instance, it lasted well.

*Here we are  
Out of cigarettes  
Holding hands and yawning  
Look how late it gets  
Two sleepy people by dawn’s early light  
And too much in love to say Goodnight*  
- Two Sleepy People by Fats Waller

But the story of jazz in India didn't end with Leon Abbey and his band. In fact, it was simply the beginning, ushering in a new age of jazz musicians in India. Cricket Smith and Teddy Weatherford came into the scene next, playing on the regular at the Taj Mahal Hotel in Bombay. Cricket Smith was an American born trumpet player who made quite the name for himself playing jazz in Paris. He would find refuge in the warm coast of India as Nazism and Fascism plagued Europe, making it harder for Black musicians to make a living. Smith was already putting his mark on the jazz scene in Bombay and Calcutta when he was recruited by Abbey's band, along with Rudy Jackson, to play at the Taj Mahal Hotel in Bombay and later became the leader of the very band at the same luxurious venue. Bill Coleman would comment on Smith's playing, saying that he was a proper first chair player. One of the most compelling musicians in his band was Teddy Weatherford. Weatherford played the piano, and according to some accounts, he would play as a trumpeter would blow his horn. They would perform, not only the tunes written in America, but also new tracks, recorded during their stay in India.



A famous piece called the "*Taj Mahal Foxtrot*" was one of them, recorded by Cricket Smith and his Symphonians, soon after he became the band leader:

*In all your grandeur there you stand alone  
Guarding a secret all your own  
Oh Taj Mahal, you fill us with amazement  
We all gaze with wonder of you*

- *Taj Mahal Foxtrot* by Cricket Smith and the Symphonians

This tune was written by Menas Silas, a Baghdadi Jew whose family had been living in Bombay for a decade. Silas was a musical theatre director, trying to make his living and build his dreams with part-time actors of Bombay. But he was quite unhappy for the lack of talent made it impossible for him to stage shows on the scale he wished. Instead, he took to forming an orchestra to perform his own compositions.

India definitely had its own jazz musicians, like Ken Mac for instance, playing since the '20s. Nevertheless, the addition of African-American musicians brought the jazz culture to the forefront. But the bands were never limited to solely African and American musicians.

Bands comprised of people from different ethnic backgrounds performing in lands foreign to them. And it wasn't long before they started to take in and teach Indian musicians how to play jazz. Earlier they would learn how to play jazz by listening to records and studying musical scores. Then Cricket Smith and Teddy Weatherford would begin to recruit Indians to teach them how to play it the American way.



Amidst the early Indian musicians recruited by American bands were the names of Frank Fernand, a trumpeter; Josic Menzie, a multi-instrumentalist, Micky Correa and Chic Chocolate. Born Antonio Xavier Vaz, he decided it was no name for a jazz musician, (just like our Frank Fernandes), and came up with his new identity as Chic. He was nicknamed the “Indian Louis Armstrong” and rightfully so, for he would often imitate his idol on-stage. He would even instruct his wife to pack 6 handkerchiefs in his suitcase when he left for shows, so that he would wipe his forehead just like Armstrong. His presence on stage was described as dramatic, with him falling to his knees and raising his trumpet to the stars during the band's crescendo.

These musicians became central figures in the band and played regularly at lavish hotels in Bombay. Soon, these Indian musicians became band leaders themselves with Micky Correa leading the band at the Taj Mahal Hotel.

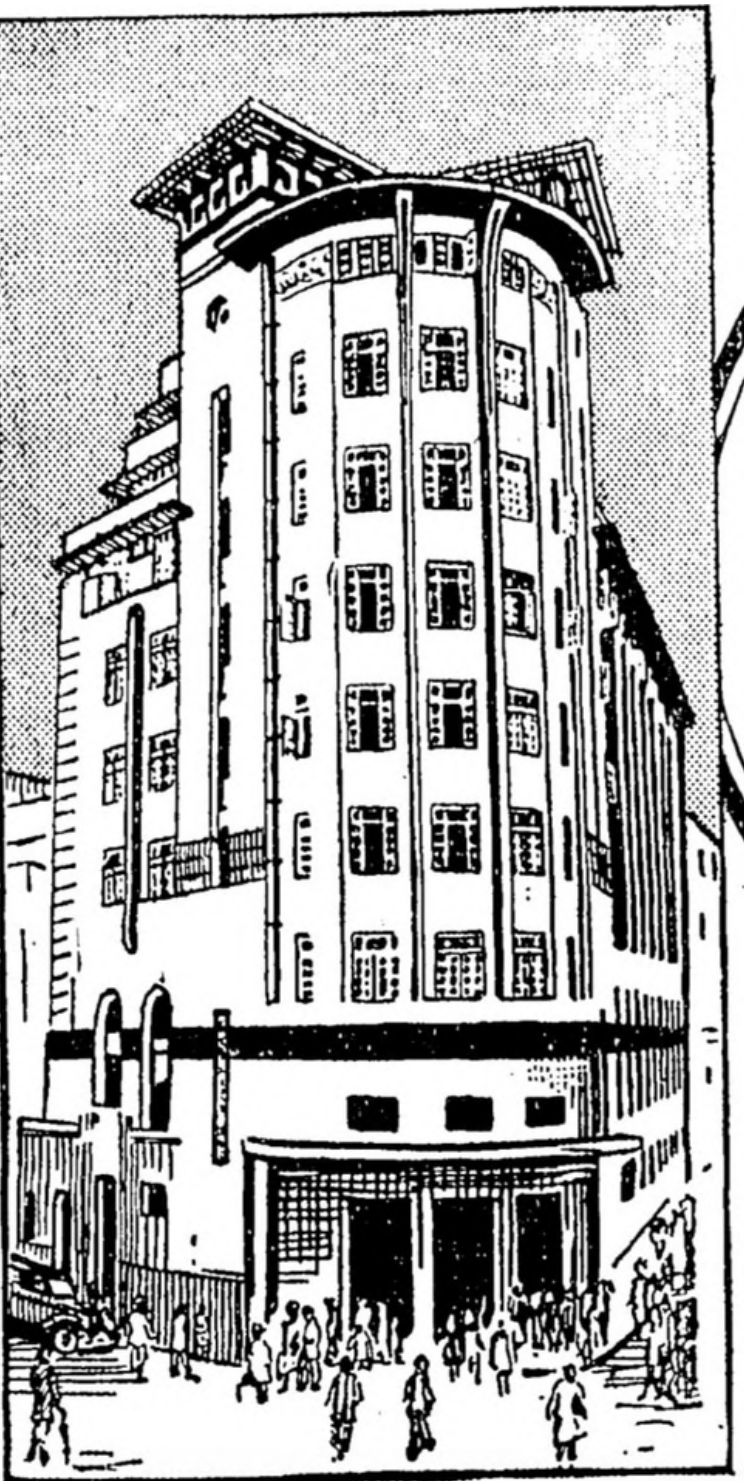
*Summertime and the livin' is easy*  
*Fish are jumpin' and the cotton is high*  
*Oh, your daddy's rich and your ma is good lookin'*  
*So hush little baby, don't you cry*  
- Summertime (From Porgy and Bess) by Bessie Smith

Nearing the end of the 1940s, jazz musicians began to wonder if India held a place for them anymore. After the partition of India into Pakistan and India in '47, the mood in the air was questionably tense. Amongst the refugees in Bombay, there were scores of swing musicians who used to play in places that had all of a sudden become foreign territory. Apart from the unemployment, jazz musicians began to wonder if they were going to have a job playing in India anymore, for a lot of cultural forms were considered to be colonial hangovers, i.e. relics of the past, belonging to colonial times and were to be discarded as the country was transitioning from a colony to a democratic republic, and there could not be a single thing that would prevent it from doing so. And Jazz was considered as one of these hangovers. This is where film music and Bollywood steps in.

During the early '30s, recording technology had advanced greatly, and as a result, sound in films was allowed to become more refined. The “talkies” of the period used musicians to create film scores to suit the emotion of a scene. But these scores were composed and recorded only by small groups of Indian classical musicians.



Indian music was melodic, revolving around reiterating a melody line. Western music was harmonic, relying on overtones and undertones to express an array of emotions. A melodic score isn't as effective at conveying the depth of emotions as a harmonic score is. And this is where jazz musicians came in. Film producers would hire jazz musicians from Goa under Portugal as assistants in composing their film scores. They would arrange a sitting with the assistant, the composer and the lyricist and the producer would take them through the plot of the film. The producer would point out the places where he would need a score, the composer would hum out a tune with his harmonica and the assistant would take note of the composer's ideas. It was then the assistant's job to piece the ideas together and write out the score to be performed and recorded by Indian classical and jazz musicians together, with the Indian instruments as the lead and the trumpets and clarinets providing harmony.

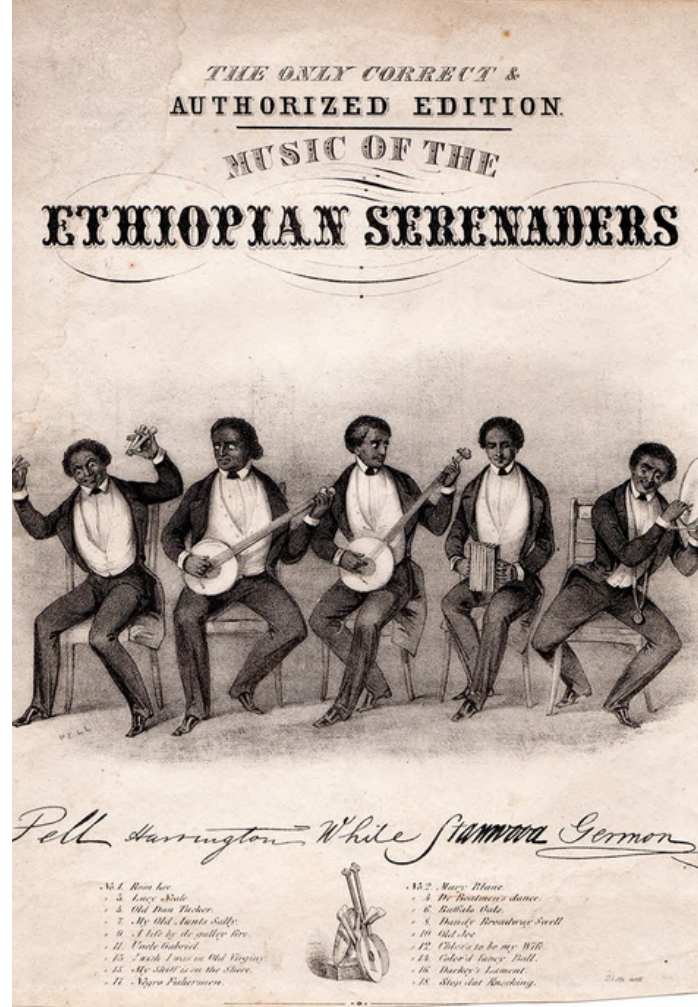


*Main hoon jadugar  
ho main hoon jadugar  
Kar du jamane ko idhar se udhar  
Main hoon jadugar  
ho main hoon jadugar  
Kar du jamane ko idhar se udhar  
Main hoon jadugar  
ho main hoon jadugar*

- Main Hoon Jadugar by Asha Bhosle

But the story of jazz does not go without tales of atrocities being committed. Jazz musicians are all too familiar with these atrocities, for they are part of what led to jazz. The Indian audience were familiar with the sound of African-American music even before Leon Abbey waltzed into Bombay. During the 1850s, Bombay would be filled with all-white groups who would darken their faces with coal dust or burnt cork and would perform caricatures of African-Americans singing spirituals. All-white groups like the New York Serenaders would have their play and dance routine, clowning around on the stage, playing and singing African-American spirituals to imitate “negroisms”. They would promise the audience that they would get to experience the “true American Negro character”. The horrid nature of these shows provided “entertainment” for the Bombay elites and the masses of the upper classes. Though absolutely derogatory in nature, these bands would receive applause for what they did, which would only contribute to the growth of these bands in town.

Dave Carson and his band were such a group. Born David Nunez Cardoz to a Jewish father and Spanish mother, he had left his home in 1853 to perform in the mining towns of Australia. Carson came to Calcutta in 1861 and by the time he reached Bombay to perform at the Grand Roads Theatre Royal, newspapers had already made the point that he had “attained Hindustaneese”. He would not only perform black-face caricatures, but also would perform skits on native life. To understand his influence on the public better, here is a quote on Carson made by a journalist: *“This gentleman appears to combine in his person the functions of a low comedian and a local satirist and has acquired a considerable reputation for his delineations of native character, making the Parsee laugh at his caricature of the Hindoo while the Hindoo is convulsed at his clever skits on the Parsees”*. The constant praise that he received from his audience would compel him to continue his shows for the following couple of decades. He would establish and maintain touring circuits of major cities, performing skits and sketches which he would write using his vocabulary and sense of observation.



His fans would all be amused by his performance while his wife accompanied on the piano. Unfortunately, it would take four decades of derogatory caricatures for Bombay to experience true spirituals sung by genuine African-Americans. The very first group which brought true spirituals to Europe and Asia was the Fisk Jubilee Singers, students of the Fisk University in Nashville. They were credited with being the first band to truly showcase the culture that had been made fun of for so long.

Ken Mac is another example of a musician committing derogatory acts. The Anglo-Indian would present himself and his band as the pioneer of European bands in India. He was the bandleader people would choose to have in white-only venues such as the gymkhanas of Bombay. His band stood out as the only pale-skinned band in a scene dominated by Goan musicians. Mac would maintain the fact that his band was all-white and if he ever had a black musician playing with his group, he would hide them behind a screen. Once, he called up Carl Evans, a bassist, and asked him if he was available to play as a session musician and if he was “white or otherwise”. To this Evans had replied that he was otherwise. However, during the years leading up to Leon Abbey’s arrival in Bombay, when Anglo-Indian musicians were hard to find, he would reluctantly look for darker employees. He offered Evans a job once again, but Evans had refused, saying that he was still otherwise.

But Ken Mac stood out on stage with his personality which hovered around the word “elegance”. A signature Ken Mac tune would entail short dramatic bits and pieces throughout the track to allow him to sway along.

**The job of a jazz band conductor was to conduct the audience, to let them understand what was going on, instead of the musicians. Jazz as a genre is open to individualistic interpretations, and the musicians were all masters in their own right. The audience were the ones that needed catering to, and Ken Mac ensured that his audience was never left behind, struggling to keep up.**

**Segregation and discrimination have always been a part of the story of jazz. They are quite like recurring motifs in a musical score. Except for the fact that motifs don't plague the score throughout its entire length. The troubles of musicians and the tales of them overcoming hardships have led jazz to become what it is today. The backbreaking labour of the African slaves, singing spirituals at the plantations; the chain gangs outside the prisons, toiling away in the midday heat or succumbing to their injuries inflicted on to them by the whites. The people playing ragtime on the street corners of the harsh neighbourhoods of New Orleans, just to make a simple living. King Bolden and his band, playing in the sweaty dance halls of the Crescent City, wailing out the loudest notes ever, only to be stuck in an asylum, while the genre he helped create flourishes all over the world. The blood, sweat, smiles and tears of every single musician who has had an influence on jazz and on music in general is a part of jazz, for jazz was made in the smelly dance halls and the shabby gin joints all over the world, where music flowed freely without inhibition. Where every man and woman were free. For jazz was made by every single person who ever played it. And it is still being made by everyone who plays it.**

**So, what is jazz?**

**To try and answer this question now, would be done in vain. There is a lot left to talk about, a lot left to unearth. A lot left to discover and rediscover. About jazz and about ourselves. In the previous article I had made a claim that I understood the story of jazz. But just the simple act of beginning to write this one made me realise that I had only scratched the surface. I simply understood where it came from. But there's so much more to it. So much more than just understanding its story. For these articles I'm writing, are not about the story of jazz. But rather about jazz itself and the people who've made it what it is.**



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