Frames in Harmony - A Critical Analysis of Song Sequences in the Films of Guru Dutt

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FRAMES IN HARMONY – A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF SONG SEQUENCES IN THE FILMS OF GURU DUTT

By

Anagha Kulkarni

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FRAMES IN HARMONY – A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF SONG
SEQUENCES IN THE FILMS OF GURU DUTT

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Guru Dutt was one of the most important filmmakers in India, who worked for a little over a decade starting in 1951. He died prematurely in 1964. In those few years, he made some of Indian cinema’s most memorable films. Song and dance sequences are an integral part of the narrative structure of popular Indian cinema. Guru Dutt, working within that paradigm, devised innovative methods of using song sequences. In his films, the song sequences were not a distraction, but they served the purpose of carrying the narrative forward, expressing the inexpressible, and replacing scenes. He achieved this by his creative use of locations, lyrics, music, camera angles, and placement of the song within the narrative. This study critically analyzes song sequences from five of his films – Aar Paar (Through and Through, 1954), Mr. and Mrs. 55 (1955), Pyaasa (The Thirsty One, 1957), Kaagaz ke Phool (Paper Flowers, 1959) and Saahib Biwi aur Ghulam (Master Mistress and Slave, 1962). Guru Dutt’s style of song direction focused on realistic depiction and the quality of storytelling. He used each feature of the song to his advantage never losing control of the larger narrative. This study also brings to the fore Guru Dutt’s conflicted views as an artist on the issues of tradition and modernity, and the position of women in the emerging nation.
Dedicated to the memory of my guru, the man who instilled the confidence in me to pursue my passion

Chetan Datar

I miss you
I would like to thank…

Dr. William Rothman and Dr. Christina Lane for shaping my critical approach towards cinema

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My uncle Sushrut for always having faith in me
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Guru Dutt was a filmmaker in India who worked through the 1950s and the early 1960s. Along with contemporaries Raj Kapoor and Mehboob Khan, he made some of the most important films of Indian cinema that are revered even today. In a short career that spanned a little over a decade, Guru Dutt directed eight films and produced and acted in some more. In 1964, Guru Dutt died by committing suicide. In the short duration he worked for, he made some significant contributions to Indian film culture. With *Aar Paar* (Through and Through, 1954), he along with his script writer Abrar Alvi introduced a naturalistic way of dialogue writing and delivery as opposed to the hitherto theatrical methods. As an auteur he was well known for the way he directed song sequences in his films. A discussion of Guru Dutt’s films is incomplete without a mention of the lyrical beauty the song sequences added to them. The focus of this study is a critical analysis of these song sequences within the larger film narrative.

Through repeated viewing of his films, Guru Dutt’s primary goals can be described as follows; as with dialogue, he wanted to infuse realism in his song sequences as well. He wanted to make the song functionally intrinsic to the text of the film and not be an added appendage. He wanted the song to bear the weight of the narrative and help in carrying it forward. A study of the techniques he employed to achieve these goals is the primary focus of this study. Guru Dutt’s experimentation in film song direction can help decode his whole filmic style.

A work of this nature is crucial to the growing scholarship in Indian screen culture studies. Study of film as part of popular culture was not a serious endeavor in Indian
academics till the 1980s. More scholarship indigenous to the texts is required as applying the concepts of Western film theory to Indian films leaves a lot of inadequacies.

Each successive generation of filmmakers and scholars in India has shown an interest and reverence for Guru Dutt’s work. Currently well-known director Rakesh Om Prakash Mehra is working on a feature film about Guru Dutt’s life. There is a lot of mystique attached to Guru Dutt because of his premature death. The answers to some questions about his life lie in decoding his work.

Guru Dutt started working when India was still a young country having gained independence from British colonialism in 1947. Independence also marked the downfall of the studio system. Through the 1930s and till the mid 1940s, Prabhat Studios (Pune), New Theater (Calcutta) and Bombay Talkies (Bombay) were the major studios making films. After the Second World War, financiers “bloated with war-time profits” started investing in the market (Vasudevan 1989, 29). These financiers offered more money (sometimes in cash) which tempted actors, music directors and other technicians to join the freelance market on a contract basis (Kabir 2005, 30). In the light of these events, independent production companies started springing up and Bombay became the center of the commercial film industry. At this time Guru Dutt was working as a choreographer with Prabhat Films in Pune. This experience gained from choreography definitely helped Guru Dutt in developing his own style of directing songs giving him a better understanding of melody and rhythm. After his contract with Prabhat expired, Guru Dutt along with some of his colleagues moved to Mumbai and they fanned out looking for work. Guru Dutt landed a job assisting Gyan Mukherjee and later Amiya Chakravarty. In
1951, he got the opportunity to direct his first film *Baazi* (The Gamble, 1951) starring Prabhat colleague Dev Anand.

It is imperative to discuss here the importance of songs in the commercial Hindi cinema narrative and the problem of genre associated with it. Sangita Gopal and Biswarup Sen in their essay *Inside and Out: Song and Dance in Bollywood Cinema* say that “song-dance is a sign that helps us read the meaning of Bollywood cinema” (Gopal and Sen 2008, 147). Though the song-dance is popularly considered to be not connected to the text and a mere distraction, it actually performs the function that the rest of the text – the story or the narrative – cannot. The song in Hindi cinema represents what is otherwise “unrepresentable” (Gopal and Sen 2008, 150). I concur with their reading in the capacity that certain emotions are best understood when represented in poetry rather than prose. This form of expression is possible within the facility of the medium and if used correctly can enhance the lyrical quality of the text. Guru Dutt’s work bears much significance in this context and warrants a deeper analysis.

The other point that Gopal and Sen raise is about the exteriority of the Hindi cinema song (Gopal and Sen 2008, 152). In India, a film song stands individually outside the context of the filmic text. They get transposed to other media like radio, television and CDs. Films songs are sung and enjoyed at social gatherings or at an individual level. They are a part of the popular culture. Biswarup Sen reiterates that popular music in the Indian subcontinent is “unique because it consists almost completely of *filmigita*, that is, song originally featured in the movies” (Sen 2008, 85). The popularity of these songs has cultivated a global culture where these songs are listened to by Indians and other
Scholar Gayatri Chatterjee in her chapter on song and dance sequences in Raj Kapoor’s *Awaara* (The Vagabond, 1951) explains the importance and evolution of film music in the 1950s:

> The decade of the fifties was a watershed for Indian film music... The most important things to happen in this decade were the end of a singing style, the introduction of Western music in a big way, and improved recording facilities... The death of Kundan Lal Saigal can be taken as an event that marks the end of an era. The new singing style, Bhaskar Chandavarkar explains, had a crooning intimate quality; the singers brought in more depth, modulation and perspective to their voice. (G. Chatterjee 2003, 128)

This discourse goes to show how critical music was in this era. The way that a song is shot within a film is important because the visuals if compelling stay in the viewer’s mind. In keeping with technology and trends, every era has its own telling choreography pattern. Songs from Guru Dutt’s films are popular till today and most of them are not mentioned without the association of the characters on whom they were pictured. Contemporary filmmakers pay tribute to the classics in different ways. The soundtrack of Rohan Sippy’s 2005 film *Bluffmaster* featured remixed versions of old Hindi songs which included the famous *Tadbeer se bigdi hui* from Guru Dutt’s *Baazi* (1951). Songs from Guru Dutt’s films were popular when they films came out and are popular even today. Tying this with the fact that his song sequence direction was innovative makes this study more relevant as it is important to analyze the songs placed in their original context. The question here is to find out what exactly was their intrinsic value within the text.

According to Gopal and Sen, most Western film scholars who are used to the conventions of traditional Hollywood filmmaking, the presence of song-dance in Indian
cinema seems disconcerting and inconsequential. They look at it as a mere “distraction” than anything else and deem it “inconsequential” (Gopal and Sen 2008, 148). The most common tendency here is to equate these films with Hollywood musicals. This however is not justified. It has been pointed out before that Indian cinema contains elements of all genres – action, adventure, musical, comedy, and slapstick and so on. It is not possible to categorize Indian cinema within the parameters of Western genre theory. The song-dance sequence as discussed above is integral to the Hindi film narrative but that does not mean these films can be equated with Hollywood musicals (Gopal and Sen 2008, 150). Darius Cooper follows this same erroneous assumption by referring to Guru Dutt’s social melodramas as musicals.

Darius Cooper in his book *In Black and White – Hollywood and the Melodrama of Guru Dutt* discusses the influence of Hollywood cinema on Guru Dutt’s aesthetic sense. He discusses each aspect of Dutt’s film making in the context of different Hollywood theory readings. In his chapter on Guru Dutt’s song direction, he elaborates on the influence that classical Hollywood had on Dutt’s “musicals” (Cooper 2005, 92). Although I am uncomfortable with his usage of the word “musical” to describe Dutt’s films, his analysis on how these songs are shot in an unconventional manner compared to those times is quite interesting. He bases his argument in conjunction with theories of classical Hollywood musicals. A more in-depth reading is beyond the scope of his book. In my analysis, I am going to study the relevance of these song texts within the narrative of the given film. I am expanding on Cooper’s work with a more extensive and focused textual reading of each song sequence and what it adds and/or takes away from the film.
A note on the genre of films in the post-independence period when Guru Dutt worked is imperative here. Scholar Ravi Vasudevan elaborates on this issue in his article in *Screen*:

The Hindi film has produced the following narrative types: the mythological, drawing mainly upon the great Hindu myths; the devotional, about the relationship between devotee and deity; the stunt films, oriented to the spectacle of action; the historical drama, with an emphasis on period costume and setting; the social problem film, dealing with issues of social reform; and, much more broadly, the social. Though overlapping with the social reform film, this genre is not always so precise about the social ills it addresses. Set in modern times, the genre generates societal images that delineate ethical precepts raising questions of dignity, equality, honesty. The social referent is generally the plebeian or the déclassé. It has becomes the characteristic genre of the post-independence era.” (Vasudevan 1989, 30)

The ‘social’ was the principal genre of the post-independence period. India was in the nascent stages of freedom and the focus was on nation-building. There were debates over the dichotomy of tradition and modernity and which one was to be embraced for the betterment of the nation. There was experimentation with modernity and at the same time the fear that too much imitating of the West would threaten the self-identity of the national culture (P. Chatterjee 1989, 237). Just as the nation was in this state of conflict, so were the filmmakers and Guru Dutt comes across as a particularly conflicted individual.

As a filmmaker, he never recognized where exactly he stood. In India, the Bombay film industry is known for producing commercial cinema that appeals to the masses and is watched all over the nation. A primary reason for this is the fact that these films are made in Hindi, which is the national language, and hence spoken and understood by a majority of people. There is a clear distinction between the commercial and art/parallel cinema even today. In the 1950s, it was the intelligentsia in Calcutta that
held the reigns of the art cinema. This is when young filmmakers like Satyajit Ray and Ritwik Ghatak had started their careers, influenced by European film movements like Italian Neo-realism. These filmmakers did not use songs in their films at all. They made clear that it was not a part of their domain and only an indulgence of Bombay cinema. So even within India there has always been the debate of whether songs are really essential and if they make for meaningful cinema.

Though Guru Dutt was a Mangalorian by origin, he had grown up in Calcutta under the influence of his uncle B.B. Benegal, who was an artist. Guru Dutt loved Bengali art and culture and referenced it several times in his films. Circumstances and opportunity brought Guru Dutt to Bombay. He was an admirer of Satyajit Ray and even expressed the wish to make a song-less film. In *Classics and Cash*, which is one of the rare retained articles written by Guru Dutt, he says,

… By giving more prominence to the story and its treatment and by a lesser reliance on the music-at-any-cost craze we could definitely change the pattern of present-day film making. I firmly believe that the songs seriously hamper the emotional development of a story in a film, however good the literary content and however brilliant the musical form of the song, unless it is out and out a musical picture… (Dutt n.d., 110)

Making a film without songs was not possible within the economy of the Bombay film industry. This is probably why Guru Dutt was so determined to develop a unique style of filming songs. It was a challenge for him to add meaning to the songs and he gave them the narrative heft that they needed. Today it is impossible to think of Guru Dutt’s films without songs. They would certainly be incomplete. So by not just playing to conventions but not giving them up altogether in the interest of survival within the industry, Guru Dutt placed himself in an overlapping region of the art and commercial cinema. However he remained conflicted till the end as is obviated from the denunciatory position of the artist
in his most important films *Pyaasa* (The Thirsty One, 1957) and *Kaagaz ke Phool* (Paper Flowers, 1959). Guru Dutt portrayed the artist himself in these films and there is never reconciliation with the times. There is just complete rejection which is what Guru Dutt the man opted for as well by taking his own life.

Another reflection of the conflicted state of the nation in Guru Dutt’s films came in his portrayal of women. The principal female characters were always caught somewhere on the spectrum between tradition and modernity. A striking feature of Guru Dutt’s films is the absence of the character of the mother which in Indian cinema is equated with the nation. In the confusing post-independence era by eliminating the mother, Guru Dutt acknowledges the nebulous state of the nation. In *Pyaasa*, Vijay has a mother but cannot meet her or take care of her and she is only mentioned later on account of her death.

The role of the woman in the nation-building process was treated with much scrutiny. In her article *The Nationalist Resolution of the Women’s Question*, Partha Chatterjee discusses the analogous dichotomies of tradition/modernity, spiritual/material, home/world and feminine/masculine with reference to the position of women under colonial rule at the end of the nineteenth century (P. Chatterjee 1989, 234-253). The position of the woman as explained in the ancient scriptures was at home taking care of the domestic. With the introduction of education and exposure to Western culture and ideas, this position had to be reformulated. Certain aspects of modernity had to be accepted without losing the “spiritual” and “feminine” core. The author presents the following argument:

The new norm for organizing family life and determining the right conduct for women in the conditions of the ‘modern’ world could now be
deduced with ease. Adjustments would have to be made in the external world of material activity, and men would bear the brunt of this task… But the crucial requirement was to retain the inner spirituality of indigenous social life. The home was the principal site for expressing the spiritual quality of the national culture, and women must take the main responsibility of protecting and nurturing this quality… the essential distinction between the social roles of men and women in terms of material and spiritual virtues must at all times be maintained. There would have to be a marked difference in the degree and manner of westernization of women, as different from men, in the modern world of the nation. (P. Chatterjee 1989, 243)

These are complicated theories which become even more complicated when applied to practical situations. This is where the women from Guru Dutt’s films can also be placed. In each film different aspects of a woman’s life are in question and the answer within the text of the film is never absolute and demands further questioning. Although these issues are more stark in films like *Mr. and Mrs. 55* (1955) and *Saahib Biwi aur Ghulam* (Master, Mistress and Slave, 1962), they are addressed in all the films that will be discussed in this study.

Documentary filmmaker Nasreen Munni Kabir has done the most comprehensive account till date of Guru Dutt’s life and work. In her book *Guru Dutt – A Life in Cinema* she talks to numerous people connected to his personal and professional life in an attempt to recreate the man and artist behind the myth. There are a lot of references made to his creative process that would be of great assistance in analyzing the song direction in his films. Guru Dutt worked very closely with his lyricists and music directors and made sure they had a thorough idea of what he was looking for. As lyricist Majrooh Sultanpuri recalls,

> When we worked together, Guru Dutt would sit with me and the music director. He would start by explaining the story to us. The he’d describe the situation in which the song would appear. The music director would give me the tune. Guru Dutt also had a great sense for music. He would
describe the vocabulary used in dialogue by his screen characters. He would always make sure that the songs I wrote would correspond to the vocabulary his characters used… it (the song) should not repeat what the dialogue has already stated. Guru Dutt always wanted the song to carry the narrative forward, and that his songs be an integral part of the screenplay. (Kabir 2005, 81-83)

This gives an idea of how he designed the whole process of shooting the song. His involvement from the inception stage ensured that when the song went on the floor the concept was already crystallized. In many songs, there is no music piece leading up to the opening lyrics. That was deliberate as it made the song a natural extension of the dialogue. One character would be talking and in response to a question or comment, another character broke into song. This technique provided the much needed continuum and didn’t make the song a distraction. Majrooh Sultanpuri provides more insight,

Guru Dutt looked out for two things in a song: the lyrics should not have any opening music, and secondly, the song must not be dull… Guru Dutt would cut straight from the dialogue to the first line of the song. In this way, he made the song work as a direct extension of dialogue… I think he was the only director in those days who made sure that the song had pace. He gave that great importance… He gave them (the songs) much thought. He’d spend nights thinking of song situations. (Kabir 2005, 84-85)

When Guru Dutt did use an opening passage of music in a song, it was because the role of the song was to highlight fantasy as separate from reality (Kabir 2005, 85). Kabir also observes that Guru Dutt paid great attention to the locations where his songs were filmed. That was in keeping with his stress on realism. Love songs in commercial Hindi cinema are usually shot on a scenic location to create a fantastical atmosphere. I believe that Guru Dutt’s style of directing songs aimed at creating that atmosphere of love and intimacy within the realm of the character’s own universe. This added authenticity not only to the character’s emotions but also to the placement of the song at that point in the film. Rather than using long shots that focus on the dance choreography
in the song, Guru Dutt used medium shots and close ups to give insight into his character’s world. This way he did not lose grip on the narrative flow of his story since he did not disengage from his characters.

In my analysis I am going to expand on these general observations and see how they apply to particular songs in five of his films viz. Aar Paar (Through and Through, 1954), Mr. & Mrs. 55 (1955), Pyaasa (The Thirsty One, 1957), Kaagaz Ke Phool (Paper Flowers, 1959), and Sahib Biwi aur Ghulam (Master Mistress and Slave, 1962). I want to posit that the applications of these concepts made the songs perform the dual function of replacing a scene and representing the “unrepresentable”. This is possible by a critical textual analysis of the songs and check for how each song fits seamlessly into the larger narrative. My attempt in this study is going to be to present a more holistic critical analysis of songs from Guru Dutt’s films with a focus on the form and content of the song. I do not wish to place the songs outside the narrative framework of the film.

I shall begin each chapter with a brief summary of the movie’s storyline. Wherever needed, translations into English of discussed portions of the original song from Hindi will be provided. Arguments will be supported with corresponding screen captures from the film.

The reason for choosing these films is that they were his most significant works and chronologically trace his growth as a film maker. They were successes at the box office, with the exception of Kaagaz ke Phool which wasn’t very well received when it was originally released, but achieved cult status years after Guru Dutt’s death.

I have to note here that though Guru Dutt did not direct the film Sahib Biwi aur Ghulam, it was his decision to direct the songs. The film was directed by his long time
colleague and script writer Abrar Alvi. In his memoirs *Ten Years with Guru Dutt* Alvi recounts how even after he had already shot one song, Guru Dutt disapproved and reshotted it according to his style (Saran 2008, 148). It shows how much control Guru Dutt exercised as a producer and it was also interesting how he was sensitive to the overall tone of the film while leaving his own trademark on the songs. It was finally decided that Guru Dutt would shoot the songs but Alvi decided not to be present on the set when he did so to avoid creative clashes (Saran 2008, 149).

Guru Dutt himself played the protagonist in all the above mentioned films. Very often, Guru Dutt started off by choosing a popular hero to play the lead in his films but ended up doing it himself. He was a perfectionist and impatient too. If he thought his film was suffering he would take any step required.

Indian scholar Ravi Vasudevan in his 1989 article terms the Hindi film song as a “para-narrative” unit, functionally performing narrative or narrativising performance. He categorizes cabaret and comic songs as “spectacular and non-narrative in the basic nature of their address” (Vasudevan 1989, 44-46). In *Aar Paar*, Guru Dutt broke this norm by attaching specific meaning and purpose to the cabaret numbers. He did not indulge in the typically disengaging nature of these songs and as was his style, did not let the song function outside the realm of the narrative.

Comedian Johnny Walker featured in all of Guru Dutt’s film as comic relief. However his role was never that of a slapstick comedian but always had a specific purpose to play in the narrative. In the films that he played Guru Dutt’s friend, his character was usually the counterpoint to that of Guru Dutt’s. These films would be *Mr. & Mrs. 55* and *Pyaasa*. In both these films, Guru Dutt plays the role of an impoverished
struggling artist rejected by society. Johnny Walker’s character provides the counterpoint
by being positive and more happy-go-lucky. In Aar Paar, though he played the man who
runs the gangster’s club, he was a jovial Parsi man who ultimately comes through as man
with honest intentions. In all his films, one crucial song was always filmed on Johnny
Walker. Guru Dutt used Johnny Walker’s naturally comedic disposition to his advantage.
By combining that with his own unconventional style of filming songs, he propounded
the genre of the ‘comic relief’ song.

To conclude this introduction, I would like to give a brief biography of Guru Dutt.
He was born Gurudutt Shivshankar Padukone in Bangalore, India, on 9 July 1925.
Though he was born in Bangalore, Guru Dutt was brought up in the culturally rich and
intellectual city of Calcutta as his mother moved there with his siblings while he was very
young and his father worked elsewhere. Guru Dutt’s uncle B.B. Benegal encouraged
Guru Dutt’s artistic endeavors. His family was not financially well-placed, so after
graduating from high school, Guru Dutt won a scholarship to learn dance at the Uday
Shankar India Cultural Center at Almora. Uday Shankar ran a prestigious cultural center
in those days that attracted musicians, painters and other artists from all over India. After
the academy closed in the mid-1940s, Guru Dutt joined the Prabhat Studios in Pune as a
choreographer. By the end of the 1940s, Guru Dutt’s contract with Prabhat expired and
he moved to Mumbai.

Guru Dutt married playback singer Geeta Roy in May 1953. However though
they loved each other, the marriage was an unhappy one from the beginning. They were
always fighting and caught in the midst of misunderstandings. Guru Dutt’s affair with
actress Waheeda Rehman only made things worse. Before his death on 10 October 1964
Guru Dutt had tried to commit suicide on three other occasions. All these aspects of his personal life spilled over in his films *Pyaasa* and *Kaagaz ke Phool*. His untimely death left a lot of projects unfinished.
Chapter 2: *Aar Paar*

*Aar Paar* (Through and Through, 1954) is a light hearted romantic comedy/drama. Kalu (Guru Dutt) is a working class cab driver in Mumbai. The movie starts with his release from jail after serving a short sentence for speeding. He has been released early on account of good behavior. Once out, he tried to go back to his old job but the cab owner refuses him. Kalu then gets a job as a mechanic at a garage and falls in love with the garage owner’s daughter Nikki. When Nikki’s father discovers their romance, he throws Kalu out. Kalu asks Nikki to elope with him but she cannot bring herself to do it. This angers Kalu and he stops seeing Nikki.

A menial errand brings Kalu to a dance club where he meets a gang of crooks and inadvertently gets involved with their business because of a job opportunity. A cabaret dancer who works at the club and is never given a name but only referred to as ‘Madam’, falls in love with Kalu. He treats her as a distraction while he is grieving over Nikki’s betrayal. When the dancer realizes that Kalu doesn’t love her back, she becomes vengeful. Kalu becomes trapped in a series of unfortunate events – he unknowingly becomes an accomplice in a foiled plan of robbery by the gang he is working for. The leader of the gang is afraid that Kalu divulge their secret and to keep him from doing that they kidnap Nikki on the cabaret dancer’s suggestion. But Kalu fights the bad guys, rescues Nikki and wins her hand from her father.

*Aar Paar* was Guru Dutt’s fourth film as a director and second film as an actor. He was already established as a name to be reckoned with as a director and this film helped him showcase his acting talent as well. Majrooh Sultanpuri wrote the lyrics and
O.P. Nayyar composed the music for this film. Nayyar was influenced by western music by the likes of Bing Crosby and that added an upbeat mood to the music.

The first song is *Kabhi aar kabhi paar*, the title song of the film. It takes place at about six minutes into the movie. This is the first time that the hero and heroine meet. Our hero Kalu has just been released from prison. He is walking on the street and trips over a mechanic working under a car. Irritated, he pulls the guy out by his pants only to discover that it is in fact a beautiful young woman. It is the heroine Nikki. Annoyed, she accuses him of misbehavior. Nikki is dressed in a t-shirt and pants and has a scarf stylishly tied around her loose hair. She is an image of the modern woman doing something that is traditionally recognized as a man’s job. Kalu has fallen for her charm and beauty. Having already “fallen” physically, he starts flirting with her. She threatens to call the police and Kalu even encourages her.

NIKKI: Why can’t you look down when you are walking?
KALU: I am a man and I walk holding my head up!

NIKKI: Why not call the police and see how you hold your head up then?
KALU: Sure! There’s a police station nearby. Why don’t I get them for you?

At this point, the song begins with a dance done by some street urchins. Dancing adds to the artificiality of a song sequence. It is observed that Guru Dutt consciously avoided elaborate dance choreography in his effort to portray realism. In this particular song, there is a piece of music that leads into the song. Guru Dutt allowed this as the main characters Kalu and Nikki do not sing the song themselves. As the street urchins start dancing to the music, Guru Dutt frames them from behind Kalu and Nikki.
Kalu and Nikki stand in for the viewer here as they are looking at the urchins just as we are. Hence the characters in question are not a part of the spectacle.

The words of the song are mouthed by a construction worker on a site nearby. Here Guru Dutt both keeps and breaks conventions. This is the song that harbingers the romantic union of the main characters. However it takes place under the scorching sun near a construction site, next to a car that needs repairing, not in a conventionally romantic setting as was typical in the movies of the 1950s. In the famous *Chhod do aanchal* song from *Paying Guest*, for example the hero (Dev Anand) serenades the heroine in a beautiful park, following her around and dancing to create an impression.

The words in *Kabhi aar kabhi paar* are mouthed not by one of the main characters but by a completely unrelated character that is physically not connected to the space that the Kalu and Nikki are in and is not a part of the film either. Guru Dutt uses this technique again later in the film to present an argument and counterargument about love through musical interaction with complete strangers not part of the main narrative. He did this time and again in other films too. So the song almost becomes a part of the background score echoing the sentiments of the characters. The words of the songs are
simple, like the words of a romantic ballad. The essence of the song is obvious in the rough translation of the opening lines:

The arrows of your glance go through and through
Oh darling you’ve pierced my heart

The sentiments are those of Kalu and Nikki, but of course they are vocalized by other people. The song goes on to speak more about their love and feelings for each other. Kalu and Nikki, however, just carry on repairing the car teasing each other occasionally. They are framed with various parts of the car or through the car windows, silently acknowledging the feelings harboring within. This screen capture shows them stealing a glance at each other while working under the hood of the car.

Guru Dutt follows conventions by having characters dance but the dance, or rather, the swaying to the melody and rhythm of the song, is done by the unrelated characters, who become narrators, in effect. In more typical films of the period, popularly as is seen in the song *Bade hai dil ke kale* from *Dil Deke Dekho* starring Shammi Kapoor and Asha Parekh, the main characters dance while mouthing the lyrics of the song while extras are used as fillers during the music portion. In this song, it is the construction workers who dance while Kalu and Nikki express the meaning of the song, the sentiments expressed by the words, through their performance. Thus Guru Dutt achieves
a dual target here. He keeps the audience engaged with the dance routine, but his main characters are never a part of that domain. He remains adamant about his convictions. The main characters express their emotions the way he wants them to. Dutt uses big close ups of the construction worker as she vividly renders the song the way a heroine would in a typical Hindi film of the 1950s.

The next song, *Babuji dheere chalna*, is the quintessential seductress number of 1950s Hindi commercial cinema. This “seductress” actually falls in love with Kalu and this song is their first meeting. A person who was in prison with Kalu has asked him to visit this bar/club and deliver a message. The song is shot in a smoky, stifling environment. It is an example of the way Guru Dutt uses a song that may seem unconnected to a particular situation, but is implicitly relevant. In the previous scene, Kalu has procured a job as a mechanic at Nikki’s father’s garage. He has done this with the hope of starting a romantic relationship with Nikki. The seductress’s song is supposed to warn Kalu of what lies ahead for him. The opening lyrics of the seductress’s song sensually ask Kalu to

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Tread carefully mister
Be wary in love
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There is a lot of danger lurking on this path

Just before the dancer starts singing, she is tripped on purpose by one of the men at the bar. This is linked visually to the first time that Kalu met Nikki by tripping over her. Though the dancer addresses her song to the men swooning around her, it is actually a warning for Kalu. In order to make money more quickly to win over Nikki’s father, Kalu takes up a job with the crooks he meets at this bar, which ultimately gets him into trouble. Though the warning is for Kalu, Guru Dutt the director keeps him out of the song by making him a mere uninterested spectator. As Kalu enters the smoky bar, the song begins. He is physically disconnected from it as the action occurs on a mezzanine and Kalu is on the ground level.

The story is told from Kalu’s point of view and he judges this woman who gratifies men by flaunting her sexuality. It doesn’t matter to him what her name is and hence she is not. She is but a mere object for male gaze as she dances swaying her hips, and making suggestive eye contact. Kalu’s judgment of this woman, based on what he sees in this song, remains unchanged throughout the film. The film, however, through the song tells us that she is not as Kalu thinks she is. Though the dancer seduces and teases the men swooning over her, she does not give in to anybody. She is very aware of her
sexuality as is obvious in the seductive way that she poses herself gazing at a man off screen.

Her job as a cabaret dancer is to seduce and titillate the men but she is not a prostitute. At the end of the song, when a man tries to grope her, she frees herself and runs away. The man follows her down from the mezzanine but Kalu standing at the foot of the stairs trips him. At this moment, the dancer has developed a fancy for Kalu as she is intrigued by this man who didn’t show any interest in her but protected her from the drunk.

The men here are all white collared workers dressed in suits. They look very different from Kalu in his old cotton trousers, worn out jacket and a cap. Toward the end of the song, the dancer notices that Kalu is standing at the foot of the staircase leading to the mezzanine and casts a puzzled look at him because she doesn’t think that he fits in there. While the suited man’s gaze is fixed on the dancer, her gaze is fixed on Kalu, who is not aroused by her at all. Guru Dutt frames this event from behind Kalu, so the back of his head is in the foreground, occupying maximum screen space, with the dancer and the man in the background, the banister acting as a physical barrier between the two different worlds, so to speak.
As Kalu sees her seducing these other men, he doesn’t think that she is capable of love. Later in the film, when Nikki doesn’t elope with him, he takes advantage of the dancer’s feelings for him. He knows she is attracted to him but he assumes that it is how she is disposed to all her “customers”. He thinks that he is nobody special to her, and he takes his wrath for women out on her. When the dancer realizes that Kalu only loves Nikki and was merely using her, she wants to get her revenge and she plots against Kalu. Initially we feel bad for her seeing the way Kalu treats her. But that is no excuse for her putting Nikki’s life in danger by having her kidnapped. The dancer is caught in the stereotype that society has assigned her to and she herself endorses it with her vamp-like act in the end.

Before she becomes vengeful her change of heart is again expressed through a song that occurs later in the film, but which I shall talk about it here. She is drunk and alone in the gangster’s den and sings a song reassuring herself of her own sexuality – “O heart, I am still young and desirable”. She is hurt by Kalu’s actions and decides to take revenge by hurting Kalu in return. This is obviated at the end of the song when Kalu arrives and helps her get up when he stumbles to the floor. She doesn’t even look at him and brushes his hands off herself. Through the song, she addresses Kalu, saying, “Don’t
try to bring me back to my senses”. She enters another room and closes the door behind her. She has closed the chapter of Kalu in her life. As the door shuts, Kalu gets shrouded in the dark and the woman is in the foreground, foreshadowing what is to come.

The film punishes Kalu for judging this woman by letting her plan his troubles. Kalu is redeemed when he risks his life, fights the bad guys and wins back the woman he loves.

The third song, *Sun sun zaalima*, is the one in which Nikki and Kalu finally confess their love for each other. Though the confession of love through a song was common in Hindi films of the 1950s, Guru Dutt gave it his experimental/unconventional touch by his use of location, costumes, and camera. While in a conventional film, a song of this type such as *Jab se tumhe dekha hai* filmed on Rajendra Kumar and Asha Parekh, might be set in a huge, completely unpopulated garden to set the mood, Guru Dutt sets his song in Nikki’s father’s garage. In this type of song, there is typically a deliberate attempt to fabricate an environment conducive to the expression of love. Guru Dutt on the other hand, uses the location in which his characters are most comfortable. This avoids the break in continuity due to change of location, and makes the song situation and characters easier to relate to.
The song is a playful conversation between Kalu and Nikki about their ideas of love. Before the song begins, Kalu and Nikki are engaged in their own activities. Nikki has feelings for Kalu, too, but like any young cultured Indian woman of that era, she cannot confess it herself. She sees Kalu talking to a woman and feels jealous. Kalu senses that. Nikki is playing hard to get, while Kalu tries to strike up a conversation. Kalu then approaches her and breaks into the song without any musical prelude. The song begins by Kalu confessing his love and Nikki rejecting him, but of course by the end of the song, he has won her over with his playful and poetic arguments. The opening of the male part is:

Listen oh cruel one
I have fallen in love with you
Please accept my heart as yours
I swear my love to you

The female retorts by saying:

Go away you unfaithful one
Your love and romance mean nothing
You belong to nobody
Your promises are hollow

As the song progresses, Kalu convinces Nikki of his genuine emotion. The way the song starts is very interesting. The technique of not using a musical prelude creates the effect of a visual and verbal continuity between the dialogue and song. Guru Dutt relies on the raw intensity of emotions displayed by the actors on screen to give the song the feel it requires, and he is successful. Typically, the heroine would be dressed in a lovely sari accentuating her beauty. Instead, Nikki is dressed in overalls as she is working in the garage with Kalu. There is no dancing at all. Since the song is written like a conversation, there is a lot of tracking shots where the camera goes back and forth while focusing on one of the characters whose point of view is being expressed. Kalu and
Nikki are just playfully chasing each other around the garage and the camera follows them. The camera follows their performance rather than them performing for the camera. The song is composed of lots of fluid movements where it’s the camera moving with the melody of the song and making it seem like the subjects are doing the same. Guru Dutt uses tracking shots to follow the pace and rhythm of the witty repartee. He uses this same technique in the *Jaane kahaan mera jigar gaya ji* song in *Mr. and Mrs. 55*. Here is an example of this musical conversation:

KALU: How long can I be away from you?
   You are the flower and I am your color
   I belong to you, I am the string to your kite
NIKKI: The string just got cut
   Don’t try to thread it again
   Go peddle your stories elsewhere

Kalu and Nikki are often times framed through car windows and car frames leaving big black spaces in the frame and making the subjects seem small.

This particular frame is from the beginning of the film when the two have not yet united, and the car frame visually separates. It also establishes the car as an important motif, which is used in all the songs featuring Kalu and Nikki.

Usually such songs mark the union of the hero and heroine. Due to cultural codes, it is not allowed to show kissing on screen in Bombay cinema. In such cases, their
physical union is signified through a specific sequence of suggestive shots. The actors would physically move toward each other and then the director cuts to a shot of two flowers coming together or the flowers emerge in the foreground, blurring and then covering the image of the lovers in the background. In this song, Kalu and Nikki are standing with their backs against the same pillar. As the song ends, they turn simultaneously to come together behind the pillar.

Initially this may come across as being done for the camera, but as the camera pulls out, we see that it is a natural thing for them to do because otherwise they would risk being seen by someone who just enters the garage. This same technique was used by director Satyen Bose in the 1958 hit comedy *Chalti Ka Naam Gaadi* starring Kishore Kumar and Madhubala. Its “confession of love” song is also set in a garage and uses similar camera movements to follow the characters. Throughout this song, Guru Dutt uses close and medium shots, but at the end the camera pulls out to let the characters enjoy their intimate moment.

The car as a motif in all these songs is a symbol of modernity putting Nikki and Kalu’s relationship into perspective. This relationship between a low class destitute taxi
driver and a middle class Hindu girl is modern too, as their love triumphs over the class and financial differences between them.

In the next song, Nikki is trying to make up with Kalu after a fight. Nikki finds out that Kalu has been in jail. Having been brought up with a strict moral code, she is upset about Kalu’s dishonesty. Kalu tries to explain to her that all he did was speed. She does not believe him. Kalu finally forcefully takes Nikki to meet the jail warden and makes the man sign a “good character certificate”. Nikki realizes her mistake and tries to convince Kalu of her regret for judging him, through a song. The song takes place in Kalu’s cab while they are driving back. While the first two songs between Kalu and Nikki took place “around” cars, this one takes place inside a moving vehicle.

It represents the forward motion of their relationship from this point onwards. There are no more secrets and misunderstandings between them. Guru Dutt shoots the entire song with close shots of Kalu and Nikki inside the car. In the background, we can see cars and people whizzing by. These close shots are punctuated with long shots from the outside showing the movement of the car relative to the movement of people and other cars. It captures the vibrant and kinetic energy of the city of Mumbai. This technique too, is replicated by Satyen Bose in his 1958 comedy Chalti Ka Naam Gaadi.
The vehicle of Kalu and Nikki’s relationship is set in motion but does meet with obstacles. Nikki’s father still doesn’t approve of Kalu. Hence Kalu asks her to elope with him. Nikki is torn between her duties as a daughter and her commitment to Kalu. Held back by her middle class social values, she cannot take the bold decision of eloping and breaks Kalu’s heart. This act of her subscribes to the popular mentality of the audience. This is the woman that Partha Chatterjee describes in her article – the woman who is not too westernized and still retains her traditional core (P. Chatterjee 1989, 237).

Kalu takes that as an act of unfaithfulness. On the night that Nikki is supposed to elope with Kalu, her father expresses time and again how lucky he is to have a dutiful daughter like Nikki. This induces guilt in the helpless Nikki. This is a clash between tradition and modernity, a predicament that the entire nation was in. The stronger patriarchal force is Nikki’s father and he wants her to stay the traditional daughter. Kalu, though poor, is confident and aspires to be respected in the society of which he is a part. He has a more hopeful view of the young nation where he believes his hard work will yield him results. Nikki’s decision upsets him and he feels cheated.

In the next song situation, he gets a young couple in love as passengers. He overhears their mellifluous exchange about love and promises made to each other. Kalu scoffs and says nothing. This is the setup for the song. As he drops the couple off, he sings his warning note:

Go ahead, fall in love
Nobody is stopping you
But beware, it is full of illusions
In the first song of the film, the unconnected external character expresses the inner feelings of the main characters. In this song, the external character (the woman of the couple) presents the counterargument to Kalu’s cynical view of love. She sings:

Go ahead, complain all you want
Nobody is stopping you
Leave the world if you can since it is a mirage too

Kalu drops off the couple at a park. As mentioned above, this is the kind of location many directors used to shoot film love songs. By placing here a song in which the hero rejects the sentiments of love, Guru Dutt breaks conventions yet again and establishes his own mark. The counterargument in this song is presented by all female characters. They stand in for the audience who also doesn’t want Kalu to give up on his love. The women try to make Kalu see the grey areas of love, not just the black. They tell Kalu that love has to be accepted with all its challenges just as we accept life itself. Though Kalu is badly hurt by Nikki’s decision, this song is not shot or composed in a serious vein. Consequently, Kalu is not affected by the argument made the women. He is adamant on his judgment about Nikki.

Both Kalu and Guru Dutt choose to oversimplify the conflict between tradition and modernity. When Nikki meets Kalu and tries to explain why she couldn’t elope with him, he hears none of it. She tells him that she loves him, but Kalu says, “You cheated me. You should have decided that day itself. You can be on either this side or that side”. Thus he rejects the complications that occur when a woman has to make such a decision. However he shows a matured way of thinking by not forcing himself or his love on Nikki. He wants to be convinced that she really wants to be with him.
Guru Dutt shies away from addressing the complexity of the dichotomy and chooses a simplified solution where Nikki doesn’t have to make the decision anymore. When Kalu fights the bad guys and saves Nikki’s life, he wins her father over. Her father forgets the social differences between them and is happy to give his daughter’s hand in marriage to Kalu. Guru Dutt builds up the argument all throughout the film, and weakens it in the end by presenting something to merely gratify the audience. This endorses his personal conflicts as a human being and as an artist, as he was never able to place himself in a specific domain.

*Aar Paar* was the first film of Guru Dutt’s that featured Johnny Walker in the comic character’s role. He plays Rustom, the good-humored Parsi club manager. The song that is filmed on him comes at a point when things are very tense between Kalu and Nikki. This song follows *Mohabbat kar lo* in almost immediate succession. Rustom is trying to court this girl who insists on bringing her whole family when he tries to go out with her. The social structure was such back then that this was a done thing. “Dating” was not a norm. Rustom engages Kalu to drive his girl and her family to a park. There he tries to get the girl alone but she doesn’t respond to his advances and a comical song about their interpretation of love ensues. This song presents yet another positive outlook towards love but Kalu is not interested in subscribing to it.

Thus with *Aar Paar*, Guru Dutt sowed the seeds of his unconventional style of filming songs. His efforts are discernable in the visual motif that he tried to create with the use of vehicles and image sizes. He is hesitant about making certain social comments, as his own views as not yet crystallized. Through Kalu, Guru Dutt establishes a character who shared traits with both Pritam from *Mr. and Mrs. 55* and Vijay from *Pyaasa*. 
Chapter 3: *Mr. and Mrs. 55*

*Mr. and Mrs. 55* is a satirical social comedy about the passing of the Hindu Code bill in 1955. In particular, Guru Dutt’s film focuses on the clause of divorce. Throughout the film this bill is referred to as the “divorce bill”. Prior to the passing of this bill, Hindu personal law was dictated by norms in the ancient scriptures which positioned marriage as an indissoluble institution. For fifteen years, there was a struggle going on to get the new bill passed which gave women the right to terminate a marriage legally (Virdi 2000). The restructuring of the Hindu Marriage Act was met with opposition from the orthodox community. In India, personal laws are divided on basis of religion and hence the Muslim personal law had not made these accommodations. All these issues led to significant upheaval in the country on the passing of this bill. The film attributes a negative connotation to the sentiments arisen in people due to the passing of this bill, and places it wholly in the domain of the Hindu urban elite.

*Mr. and Mrs. 55* is the story of Anita (Madhubala), a rich young woman and Pritam (Guru Dutt), an unemployed destitute cartoonist. Anita has been raised by her aunt Sita Devi who is a passionate women’s liberation activist. The film begins with the announcement of the passing of the “divorce bill”. Sita Devi is having a women’s liberation meeting at her house where she announces this news, stating that women don’t have to be confined in the chains of marriage anymore. She is of the firm opinion that marriage takes away a woman’s freedom. On Anita’s 21st birthday, the lawyer reads her father’s will which states that she cannot inherit his fortune unless she is married within a month. He has left a letter accompanying which states that the clause was added because
he had foreseen that Sita Devi would force her own convictions on Anita and not let her get married. Anita having grown up in a highly protected environment is very naïve about certain things. She is very happy at this piece of news as she is infatuated with a dashing tennis player Ramesh. She thinks it is love and wants to marry him but he breaks her heart.

Sita Devi conjures up a scheme as a solution to her problem. She uses the passing of the divorce bill to her advantage and “employs” the destitute Pritam to marry Anita, only under the condition that he would divorce her whenever ordered. She asserts that Pritam would not be allowed to see Anita after the marriage and it would only exist on paper. Pritam has already seen Anita before and has fallen in love with her innocence and beauty. He agrees to the arrangement. Anita hates this arrangement but doesn’t have the courage to stand up to her aunt. She isn’t aware at this point that the man she will be marrying is Pritam, who she has already met a couple of times and found him endearing.

At the marriage registrar’s office when Anita finds out what Pritam did for money, she is livid. He tries to meet her and convince her of his sincerity many times but Anita refuses to hear him out. He finally abducts her and takes her to his brother’s house in the country. There Anita meets Pritam’s sister-in-law, who is the counterpoint to her aunt – the traditional Indian devoted wife. She sees the happiness that the woman derives from taking care of her family and it crystallizes her own feelings about marriage and her love for Pritam. Sita Devi finds Anita and takes her back but ultimately Anita finds the courage to defy her aunt and is re-united with Pritam. Guru Dutt engaged the services of Majrooh Sultanpuri and O.P. Nayyar again for the lyrics and music direction respectively.
Guru Dutt caricaturizes the aunt’s character on purpose. Sita Devi is an unrelenting feminist. She dominates Anita and doesn’t even care for her happiness if they come in the way of her convictions. Anita is often simple minded and childish having been brought up in the kind of comfort that she is. In the beginning of the film, she is shown to have conventional values as she wants to get married but is scared to confront her aunt. Her whole adult life she has been hearing her aunt hating men and how they trap women in a marriage. However she does have a mind of her own since she doesn’t get convinced by her aunt and still falls in love. Then she meets Pritam’s sister-in-law who shows her the other side of the coin. She explains to her that while there are compromises and ups and downs, ultimately if there is love between the husband and wife, all goes well. This experience gives Anita the courage to face her aunt. In her confrontation with her aunt in the end, Anita accuses Sita Devi of being negatively influenced by western women.

In *Mr. and Mrs. 55* too, as in *Aar Paar*, Guru Dutt grapples with the conflict between tradition and modernity, and class issues, in the context of nation building and the position of women within the new nation. However this time, he takes a stronger stand than he did in *Aar Paar*. He subscribes to the nationalist resolution put forth by Partha Chatterjee that while adapting to the modern scenario, a woman must retain her traditional/spiritual core (P. Chatterjee 1989, 243). Anita is modern in the way that she dresses, and traditional in wanting to commit to a marriage with the man she love. She is also modern considering the fact that Pritam’s social class doesn’t affect her feelings for him.
Pritam is not the patriarch. That role is symbolically served by Sita Devi in this film, who believes only she knows what is best for her niece. Anita is presented with two extremes of the spectrum – her aunt and Pritam’s sister-in-law, and though she chooses the private over the public, it does not mean that she will be restricted to that sphere.

In his song direction, Guru Dutt takes all these factors into consideration and blends them into the larger narrative. Johnny Walker stars in this film as the flamboyant and blatantly flirtatious Johnny, a counterpoint to Pritam’s somber personality. They are roommates and Pritam often borrows money from his easygoing friend. The first song of the film *Dil par hua aisa jadoo* features the two friends. Pritam has just met Anita for the first time and has fallen in love with her. Anita is at a tennis match watching her beau Ramesh. Her aunt’s patronizing secretary has come to take her back home. Anita spots her and starts to run away. She drops her shoes into an alcove-like space under the stadium seating. This is when we first see Pritam. He is asleep with a hat on his face invoking an image of the Tramp. Anita sits there with him to hide from her aunt’s secretary. Though Anita talks to him, Pritam cannot do anything but stare. He is completely enamored by her beauty and doesn’t say a thing. Anita then leaves and in the next shot we see Pritam sitting in a restaurant staring blankly into space. Johnny spots him there and calls out. He sits next to Pritam and expresses his anger. He berates questions at Pritam, “Where have you been? I haven’t seen you for few days. I was worried about you. Where were you?” Pritam doesn’t respond to anything and continues to be in his trance. During this time, the hotel manager approaches them and tells Pritam of his credit due and asks him to clear it. Johnny asks Pritam about the credit. In response, Pritam starts singing:
What magic has befallen my heart
  I have lost my senses
As my eyes met hers
  I am a changed person

This is the first time in the film we see Pritam verbally expressing himself. As Pritam croons on, Johnny nudges him and they slip out of the restaurant. They go to a bus stop and stand in the queue while Pritam opens his heart to Johnny. Then they get on the bus and as they don’t have money for the fare, they are thrown off the bus too. Guru Dutt cuts to a shot of them landing on the pavement, Pritam in a position like that of Charlie Chaplin’s Tramp.

Though Raj Kapoor exploited the discourse of the Tramp more explicitly, Guru Dutt also hinted at it in his socials. The position in this shot is particularly reminiscent of the tramp. They are at Mumbai’s seafront, a place which is open to everybody and there are no social or class restrictions on access to it. The song ends here with the visual of Pritam suddenly fainting. The next scene reveals that he in fact fainted because of hunger. In this way, Guru Dutt establishes the social reality of the impoverished artist. He is allowed to fall in love and even express that love, but it does not change his reality or send him in a realm of fantasy. He still has to confront his daily issues like hunger, bills and other financial challenges. Within that structure of unfulfilled basic needs, he is allowed to
articulate his feelings. Thus the song exposes a tragic comedy of circumstances. Guru Dutt uses mainly close-ups to reveal Pritam’s desires and longing for Anita.

Just as the first song establishes Pritam’s position in the narrative, the next one, Thandi hawaa kaali ghataa does the same for Anita. At this point in the film, she thinks she is in love with a national level tennis player Ramesh, who actually only humors her. He is the kind of man we read about in romance novels and is easy to fall for – tall, handsome, and athletic. He likes to spend time with Anita but has no intention of taking it any further. But Anita is naïve and thinks that what she feels for Ramesh is love. She comes to meet him at a swimming pool where he is training. This is after the reading of her father’s will, and she wants to convey the “good” news to the man who she considers her future husband. She is happy and carefree and that’s what the song reflects as she sings:

The cool breeze and black clouds are finally here
The heart dances and sways filled with happiness

In Pritam’s song, Guru Dutt doesn’t use much of dynamic camera movement. There are more still shots just focusing on his emotions. In Anita’s song however, he uses tracking and crane shots to produce motion and fluidity. These are movements that are allowed in the space inhabited by Anita’s free spirit.
There are other young women who share her happiness too. Guru Dutt uses objects such as umbrellas to enhance the upbeat mood of the song. Anita is excited about her new found love and is musing on the many ways in which it has changed her life. Though in terms of content, the song can be placed in the fantastical category, Guru Dutt doesn’t use a fantastical location. By using a live location, he creates the fantastical effect wherever needed with his camera. At one point, as Anita sings about the joys and excitement of the new life she intends to start with Ramesh, she directly addresses the camera announcing her happiness to the world. She has no fear in addressing the unknown audience as she thinks her universe can never be in disharmony.

At the end of the song, Anita calls out to Ramesh who doesn’t even look at her. This is the first sign of the falling out of Anita’s harmonious universe. She then tells him the news, but he rejects her proposal for marriage saying he never thought of her in that way, and that his career was his priority.

The third song of the film *Jaane kahaan mera* is shot on Johnny and the love interest he is pursuing. Johnny is a photographer who works for a newspaper and is interested in a typist Julie who works there. He is trying to charm her but she is hesitant. In this scene, Johnny reaches the office and the other employees leave for their break.
Julie is still typing and Johnny approaches her and starts talking. Julie however ignores him. Johnny then pretends to be searching for something desperately all around. Julie gets irritated and a dialogue ensues between them.

JULIE: What are you looking for?

JOHNNY: That which I have lost.

JULIE: What have you lost?

JOHNNY: That which I am looking for.

This continues for some time and Julie finally walks away. Johnny walks over to a nearby telephone, puts the receiver to his ear and starts singing:

I have no idea where my heart is
It was right here and now it’s gone

Julie quips by retorting

It was enraptured by somebody’s charm
It’s scared and hiding now

It is a lighthearted song full of witty exchanges between Julie and Johnny. Guru Dutt uses the template that he developed with Sun sun zaalima in Aar Paar. This type of song shot in the workplace was his forte. He did it with the class and expertise that nobody could ever replicate. The workplace as a part of the mise en scene becomes an irreplaceable element of the song. For instance, one cannot think of Sun sun zaalima or Jaane kahaan mera without thinking of the setting that they are placed in.

In this song, each and every element of the office is used as an active component of the frame construction. The song is mainly composed of medium, medium-long, and medium close-up shots. Desk, tables, files and chairs are all deliberately used in the shot construction.
We can see in the above shot the files in the background as Johnny sings to Julie. There is another shot where in the foreground prominently is a typewriter. The camera then pans as Johnny moves to reveal the typewriter at the next table in the foreground. These elements in the office perform the function of keeping the characters and the moment grounded in reality, thus creating a more relatable experience.

This makes the location a passive character in the said situation. This is how Guru Dutt skillfully brought the fantastic to the banal and created a plausible environment to place his characters in. He rejected the images of flowers and gardens popularly associated with the feelings of love and romance. For Dutt, the simplicity with its emphasis on realism made the song what it was. There was a stress on never losing sight of the character’s background and disposition in this type of song. At the end of the song, Johnny and Julie crawl under a desk and are engrossed in their musings till they discover that everyone is back.
It is again an emphasis on the “real” and the presence of an audience, unlike in other songs where the hero and heroine sing on their own in public places and there is never any crowd.

The next song *Ab to ji hone lagaa* is a ballad where Anita starts developing feelings for Pritam. For this song, Guru Dutt uses the template used for the title song of *Aar Paar*. The external narrator comes in the form of a woman selling her wares in a basket. Pritam and Anita are silent throughout the song while the woman articulates the feelings in Anita’s heart. We already know that Pritam is in love with Anita so he is quite passive in the song. Guru Dutt uses the same kind of low angle pans and close-ups on the woman as he did in the title song of *Aar Paar*. The woman faces the camera in a close up shot as she speaks of Anita’s heart.

There have been a few encounters with this face now
The pretty woman must take care of her heart

The setup for the song is that Pritam is lying on a bench in a park and Anita is there to take a walk. As she sees Pritam, she starts talking to him. This is their third chance encounter. Anita is still healing from Ramesh’s betrayal. Pritam is captivated by her innocence. When Pritam tells her that he hasn’t had bread to eat in three days, she suggests that he should eat cakes or cookies instead. Pritam’s caring disposition and
honesty towards her draws her to him. Just before the song, she asks Pritam his name. Pritam in Hindi means “lover”. Anita feels shy to say his name, but he tells her if she says it a few times, she will get used to it. This is when the woman enters the scene and starts singing the song establishing an immediate connection.

_Udhar tum haseen ho_ is a romantic ballad that signifies the acceptance of Pritam and Anita for each other and acknowledges their sexual longing. Guru Dutt uses this song as a setup for the scene that is to follow. Instead of Pritam and Anita expressing their love in prose, it is done through the song making the process more lyrical and romantic. At this point, Anita has been abducted by Pritam and brought to his brother’s house. Here, after talking to Pritam’s homely sister-in-law, Anita realizes that a woman can be happy engaged with the domestic and taking care of her family. It is the first time that Anita is seeing a woman so content in the private sphere. Sita Devi has always herself been in the public sphere and encouraged Anita to do so too.

Pritam’s sister-in-law is a traditional Indian woman representing nation and motherhood, rejecting all western values. Geographically too, she is located away from the city and the influences that it brings. So far, Anita was torn between her aunt’s views and those that were unknown. Now after knowing that marriage can be a blissful institution, she knows what she wants. She runs up to her room and closes the door behind her, her eyes welled with tears. Just then, Pritam starts singing from under her window

There you are so beautiful
Here I am so full of desire
This is a tale of romantic nights
When the song starts, Anita is on a balcony while Pritam is at the ground level, which signifies their social standing at the beginning of the film. As the song progresses, they keep coming closer together and by the end, they are lost in each other’s arms marking their symbolic union.

Anita descends from the balcony as Pritam approaches her and they meet ending the class clash between them. As the shot suggests, their union is not of the orthodox Indian marriage like the one that Pritam’s sister-in-law has. Pritam is a progressive cartoonist, an artist who critiques society through his work. Anita is an educated woman prepossessing a traditional core with western values of expression. Their marriage will not be one of oppression. Their harmony is disturbed by the arrival of Sita Devi, who is there to take Anita back with her. Just as the song brought the two of them together, Sita Devi tears them apart again. Thus the song takes the narrative forward.

When Sita Devi comes to take Anita from Pritam’s brother’s house, she says that she had done so because Anita sent her a telegram and asked her to come. Pritam is angered because he thinks Anita only pretended to love him during the song. He doesn’t give Anita a chance to explain that she had sent the telegram in panic before she had had the experience of talking to Pritam’s sister-in-law and becoming aware of her own
feelings. Like Kalu in Aar Paar, Pritam doesn’t force himself on Anita. This shows that Pritam is not a dominating Indian male. When he thinks that Anita doesn’t really want to be with him, he lets her go.

In fact, Pritam goes to Sita Devi, returns all the checks collected from her and even presents her a fabricated picture of him with some women to present as proof in court for the divorce. The next song starts as he is leaving the house.

The song is a qawwali, which is a type of Sufi music. The choice of song is significant here as it adds meaning to the situation in the film and the situation that Pritam is in. Qawwalis are generally based around the central themes of longing for God, for the separated beloved, and for the intoxication by alcohol. The words are strong and so is the composition.

As Pritam leaves Sita Devi’s house, a group of qawwals starts singing of his pain.

My world was being destroyed
And I just stood by and let it happen

I was not even conscious enough to pick up the broken pieces of my heart

There could not be a more effective way of conveying Pritam’s state of mind than by the soulful words and melody of a qawwali. The use of the external unrelated narrator proves most effective in this case. It was typical to include a soulful melody at such a point in the film but it would usually be mouthed by the respective hero or heroine. By transferring the articulation of the pain to a hitherto unseen character makes it a more real situation. Pritam even approaches the group of qawwals and is in remorse as he is made aware of his own pain and suffering.
Towards the climax, Johnny visits Anita and tells her the truth about Pritam.

Anita feels betrayed by her aunt and finally confronts her. She tells her off for lying about Pritam. The conversation progresses as follows:

SITA DEVI: I know men through my experience. You don’t know anything

ANITA: Then expand your horizons! Go look into the houses of the poor women who you ridicule and see how happy they are in their homes.

SITA DEVI: Those women don’t know that they are enslaved. I will show them the way to freedom, which I’ve learnt from women in Europe and America.

ANITA: There’s a lot to learn from those women – like how to change four husbands in a year!

SITA DEVI: I could understand if an illiterate woman spoke like this. But it sounds ridiculous coming from an educated woman like you.

ANITA: You have no idea how beautiful a marriage can be, when it is based on love and mutual respect. If a husband and wife care for each other, that is all that matters. If you call that enslavement, I would much rather embrace that than the hatred of men that you propagate!
This shows that Anita has decided to embrace the marriage with Pritam with its compromises and challenges. The complicated issue of class gets cast aside in this particular case as it is Anita’s personal matter. Her view is naïve and simple in the generalizations she makes about both Indian and western women. But she has been driven to that because of the strong views of her aunt, which she has been exposed to all her life. She is angry at this moment and all she can think of is being with Pritam.

However it must be noted here Anita doesn’t equate Pritam with God, as the Indian woman in a traditional marriage does. She doesn’t turn a blind eye to his faults and questions him when she feels he has done something wrong.

Taking all these points into consideration, the film ends on a rather positive note about marriage. The film doesn’t criticize modernization but focuses on taking small, rational steps towards it.
Chapter 4: *Pyaasa*

“Seven Cities claimed Homer dead, through which the living Homer begged his bread” – this line quoted by Guru Dutt in his article *Classics and Cash* lays the foundation of Guru Dutt’s classic social melodrama *Pyaasa* (The Thirsty One, 1957) (Dutt n.d., 107). It was Guru Dutt’s magnum opus with a story that he had been working on since 1947. Guru Dutt was always concerned with the plight of the impoverished artist. In *Mr. and Mrs. 55, Pyaasa, and Kaagaz ke Phool*, he portrayed the role of the unrecognized and misunderstood artist. In his article *Classics and Cash*, Guru Dutt cites examples from all over the world of artists who never got their due when they were alive and were only applauded for their work posthumously.

*Pyaasa* is the poignant tale of Vijay (Guru Dutt), a poor poet based in Calcutta, who is disappointed by life. In college, the woman he loves leaves him for the security of marriage to a rich man, telling Vijay that love alone is not enough to survive. Vijay is also rejected by all the publishers he approaches. They want him to write something more trite. As one publisher tells him, “Write about love and romance. Who will read your laments about poverty and unemployment?” However, Vijay doesn’t want to sell out to these popular demands. Through his poetry, he expresses his disappointment about the engagement with nation building. He wishes for his voice to be heard and his sentiments to be acknowledged. But that never happens. Instead, he faces one dejection after another.

In the meanwhile, his brothers throw him out of the house on the grounds that he doesn’t contribute monetarily. They even give away his poetry to a paper merchant.
When Vijay approaches the merchant, he is told that a woman bought his papers. Vijay has lost everything and has nowhere to go. He is sitting on a bench in a park when he hears a woman humming one of his poems to a simple tune. The woman is Gulab – a prostitute with a heart of gold. He approaches her but she thinks he is a potential client. She gets angry with him for wasting her time and asks him to leave. He drops a few pages from his pocket and Gulab matches them with the writing on the pages she has. When she realizes it was the man who wrote the poetry she loved so much, she feels bad about the way she treated him. Gulab is the only one who understands what Vijay is trying to say through his poetry. She respects his principles and through subsequent meetings, falls in love with him.

Vijay gets a menial job with Ghosh, a publisher who is actually his ex-lover Meena’s husband. When Ghosh discovers the relation between Meena and Vijay, he humiliates Vijay and fires him. Vijay’s mother dies and his brothers don’t even inform him. At this point, Vijay decides to end his life. He goes to a train station, where he gives his only coat to a beggar. As Vijay is walking on the train tracks, the beggar jumps in to save him and loses his life instead. The mutilated body is assumed to be Vijay’s and the news spreads. Gulab gives up all her life’s earnings and asks Ghosh to publish Vijay’s poems. Vijay’s work is praised and gains popularity. When the real Vijay, who is recovering in a hospital, tries to claim credit, he is put away in a mental institution by his brothers and friends, who don’t want to miss out on the profit they are making on account of Vijay’s death.

On the first anniversary of his “death”, a huge function is held in his memory. The real Vijay attends this function and is beaten up for being an imposter. Vijay no longer
wants to be a member of this society where there is only rejection and people worship the
dead rather than look at the living. He renounces his own name and the society. He goes
to Gulab and asks if she will go with him. Gulab goes with him without asking any
questions and they walk away into the twilight. The music for this film was composed by
the celebrated music director S.D. Burman, and the lyrics were written by Urdu poet
Sahir Ludhianvi.

Through Vijay, Guru Dutt articulated his own disappointment with the state of the
nation. He was always conflicted as to where to place himself and his art within the
economy of the Bombay film in particular, and Indian cinema at large. In Pyaasa, Guru
Dutt questions the role that art played in the nation building process. With all that was
going on, did anybody really care about the plight of the artist? Guru Dutt’s answers to
Vijay’s questions were hopeful, vague and conflicted at the same time. Vijay ultimately
chooses to renounce the society, and go away in search of a place where he “won’t have
to go away from anymore”. He asks Gulab to go away with him, who is much like him, a
victim of circumstances. The image of the two of them walking away into the twilight is
very hopeful, yet it leaves us wondering whether the place that Vijay is talking about
really exists. Won’t Vijay have to face the same problems no matter where he goes? This
is a question that Guru Dutt doesn’t answer. He shies away from it like he did with the
ending of Aar Paar, reiterating the fact that Dutt himself was still internally conflicted.

With the protagonist of the film being a poet, there is a special value of intimacy
attached to the songs. Guru Dutt shoots them in as poetic and lyrical a way as they are
written.
The first song of the film introduces us to Gulab. Until now, we have been oriented to Vijay’s world. The song occurs after Vijay has been told that his work had been bought by some unknown woman. Dejected, Vijay sits on a park bench with his back to the camera, the audience, and the world. He hears faint humming of a tune. Puzzled, he looks around. We see a woman clad a sari, whose back is also turned to the camera. Vijay approaches her. This is the type of song that starts without a musical prelude, as an extension of dialogue. In the context of the film, theirs is the only real and honest relationship that there is. Hence in the song direction, Guru Dutt keeps that in mind as a main point.

VIJAY: Excuse me?

Gulab doesn’t respond. Vijay probes again.

VIJAY: I was saying…

In response to this, Gulab turns and starts singing the song:

Who knows what you were saying
Who knows what I heard
Something stirred in my heart anyway

This film marked the development of Guru Dutt’s signature style of low key lighting creating a chiaroscuro effect. This song establishes the foundation of what is to be the most honest and sincere relationship in the film. Throughout the song, Vijay’s face is filmed in a way that he is always in partial darkness, reflecting his inner gloom. Gulab on the other hand, is a vision of radiance.
In the rest of the song, Gulab leads Vijay through narrow lanes and alleys while acting coy and flirtatious. As we can see in this shot, Guru Dutt frames Vijay and Gulab as silhouetted figures and the frame is almost all in darkness.

In the next frame Gulab leads Vijay out of the darkness and into the light, exemplifying her position as the only positive force in his life. As the song continues, we see Vijay’s face very rarely, and often he is framed from the back. When we do see his face, it is never completely lit, while Gulab is always charming.
Guru Dutt uses a lot of defocused backgrounds here, to place maximum emphasis on his principal characters and convey the importance of this first meeting between them. Time and again, he employs shots in which Vijay, with his back to the camera is defocused in the foreground, occupying maximum screen space, while Gulab is in the background, leaving an empty middle ground space.

By the end of this song, Vijay and Gulab have made the journey from the park to the brothel. Vijay follows Gulab as if in a trance, not at all aware of where she is taking him. The song does here what an exchange of dialogues would not have been able to. This journey becomes symbolic of the one that they begin at the end of the film.

When Guru Dutt does use a long passage of opening music, he does it because the role of that particular song is to highlight fantasy as separate from reality (Kabir 2005, 85). He manifests this idea in two songs from Pyaasa. Both these songs occur in a flashback of Vijay and Meena. A chance meeting with Meena on the street transports Vijay back to those days when they were in love. The first is a group song sung by college students on a picnic. It is an upbeat number expressing the hopefulness and exuberance of youth. Vijay and Meena are young and in love. The second song is Hum
"aapki aakhon mein," which is constructed like a dream sequence from a Hollywood musical. Within the flashback at the point, Vijay is daydreaming about his image of love. Meena, dressed in flowing whites, descends from a staircase that seems to be originating from heaven. Vijay takes her hand and dances with her while asking:

What if I ensconce my love in your eyes?

Meena, while still maintaining the smile on her face, responds:

What if I close my eyes and punish your love?

The purpose of this song is to show the shallowness and mirage of Meena’s love for Vijay. The difference between fantasy and reality is harsh. The plastic existence of the smoked environment and heavenly setting seems surreal, but it is used in this manner to emphasize the harshness of reality.

At Vijay comes back to reality after the song, he sees that Meena has already left, leaving him a letter saying that she is going away forever. Meena chooses the material world over the spiritual love offered to her by Vijay.

In *Pyaasa*, Johnny Walker plays the role of Abdul Sattar, a masseuse who is Vijay’s only friend. The next song is a trade song for Abdul Sattar. In India, such workers
who sell wares or services on the street often have a song that they sing to attract customers. The song is shot beautifully as Abdul Sattar saunters down the streets addressing potential clients with his amusing song:

If your head is spinning, or your heart is sinking
Just come to me, don’t be afraid

Towards the end of the song, Vijay arrives and Sattar is very happy to see him. He tells his client that Vijay is a great poet and that he wrote this song. He then thanks Vijay for writing a song that is getting him many new clients. Hence with the help of the song, Guru Dutt establishes two very important points – that Abdul Sattar and Vijay are good friends, and that other than Gulab, Sattar is the only one who appreciates Vijay’s poetry.

The next song, Jaane woh kaise log thhe is one of the most popular songs in all of Guru Dutt’s films. At the point where the song occurs in the film, Vijay is working as domestic help to his ex-lover Meena’s husband. However he is yet not aware of the fact that Meena is married to Ghosh. His boss Ghosh calls him to his house to serve as a waiter at a party. The party is actually a convention of famous poets from the city. Mr. Ghosh’s intention is to humiliate Vijay in front of his wife and guests. When he gets to the house and meets his ex-lover Meena, Vijay realizes what is going on.

He is forced to wait on a gathering of people who write the kind of poetry that he despises. These people write the banal, fluffy mush poetry that fill up kitsch pages in a newspaper or magazine. His humiliation and pain reaches an upsurge, and he starts to croon lines from one of his poems. As he begins, the camera is focused on the gathering of people enjoying their drinks, and Vijay is off-screen. Some of the people present including Meena, hear the voice but do not pay attention. One of the guests even remarks that Mr. Ghosh is lucky to have servants who know poetry. As Vijay goes on, the camera
now shifts attention to him. Starting with a medium-shot, the camera then moves out slowly to show Vijay standing against a book shelf with his arms stretched out. This is the image of the crucified artist framed against shelves filled with books.

![Image of Vijay standing against a bookshelf with arms outstretched.]

True to his nature, Vijay is not somebody who will buckle under pressure. He has the confidence to stand his own no matter where he is. The lyrics of the song are addressed to his ex-lover, as well as the society which he rejects (and which has rejected him). He is disillusioned by this world. A part of the song is as follows:

I wonder how those people were, whose love was reciprocated
When I asked for a blossom
All I got was a garland of thorns…
If this is what life is, I will live like this
I will not protest and just go on
I will drink my own tears
Why fear pain now since it’s been a constant companion?

This song is Vijay’s tirade in the public and private sphere both, and he is addressing both from the same physical space. Instead of expressing verbal disappointment about his humiliation, Vijay uses his most powerful tool – poetry. Meena cannot stand it and leaves the room weeping. Ghosh observes this and fires Vijay as a result.
In the next song, Guru Dutt employs a technique similar to the one he employs in *Meri duniya loot rahi thhi* from *Mr. and Mrs. 55*. In certain moments, it is not enough for the character to not just be mouthing the words; there has to be a plausible diegetic realm to place the song in. As in *Mr. and Mrs. 55*, the hero is going through an extremely painful time. In *Pyaasa*, it is the heroine whose emotions are in focus. Before the song begins, Gulab is trying to run away from a policeman who is trying to nab her. As she is running, she bumps into Vijay who is just wandering. She asks him to cover her. As the policeman comes by and asks Vijay if he saw a woman there, Vijay answers in the negative. When he asks Vijay who the woman with him is, Vijay says she’s his wife. Gulab, who is already devoted to Vijay, looks at him with love and gratitude, her eyes filled with tears. As the policeman leaves, so does Vijay. Ravi Vasudevan articulates her state of mind, and the premise for this song in his 1995 article:

> The prostitute is unaccustomed to such a respectful address, especially one suggestive of intimate ties to the man she loves, and is thrown into a sexual haze. (Vasudevan 1995, 316)

As she looks at Vijay leaving, she hears some Baul singers rendering a soulful tune. The Baul singers of Bengal are a spiritual group of minstrels with a distinct musical tradition dating back centuries. When the song starts, Gulab’s back is to the camera. She then turns toward it in the direction of the music. The camera then cuts to the singers. A woman is rendering these lines

> Tormented by long absence Radha longed for her lover  
> One day she went to her lover and lamented  
> Take me in your arms today so that I get fulfilled

The song is based on the mythological story of Radha and Krishna. Radha, who was madly in love with Krishna, addresses him in this song longing to be gratified with his
love. He climbs up a flight of stairs and Gulab follows him, stumbling and filled with passion. According to Vasudevan, this song has “residual traces of sacralization” and enshrines the male character in the “female look” (Vasudevan 1995, 315-317). I agree with this reading, as it also contextualizes that song chosen for this situation.

Just as a deity is unaware of the devotee’s presence, Vijay is unaware of Gulab’s presence. Guru Dutt shows the distance here between Gulab and what she thinks is unattainable, through a high angled shot.

As the Baul singer’s voice reach a crescendo, Gulab cannot contain herself and approaches Vijay only to retract from her trance at the last minute. She does not dare touch him as she thinks she is unworthy of him. Though the song tries to equate her desire with that of Radha’s, Gulab does not break the shackles set for her by the society in which she lives. She does not allow herself to overcome her position in the public sphere to find truth in her private sphere. She runs away without Vijay ever knowing about her presence, thus maintaining the status of devotee and deity.

Here, yet again, Guru Dutt tackles issues of tradition and modernity, and the relative position of women. It is complex because the male figure is placed in a position
of authority here; however, at the same time, Guru Dutt assigns attributes of “purity” and “unconditional love” to the woman considered “impure” by society, by equating her love with that of Radha’s. It is a clash of traditional and modern values, which reaches partial resolution in the end, when Vijay wants Gulab to accompany him on his journey into the unknown. However, since the journey itself isn’t any absolute solution, this resolution of the issue is also incomplete.

The song *Jinhe naaz hai Hind pe* is Guru Dutt and Vijay’s discourse on the nation and the social truth at the time when the movie was made. Vijay has just learnt of the death of his mother. In the context of this song and the film, the mother stands for the nation, which as we know, Vijay is disillusioned about. Not knowing what to do with his grief, he tries to drown it in alcohol. His friend takes him to a brothel to watch a courtesan dancing. As the courtesan dances, Guru Dutt cuts to big close-ups of salivating men soaking themselves in the dancer’s sexuality. Just then, the sound of a baby crying gets mixed with the soundtrack and the courtesan’s expressions change. She wants to go to her baby but is not allowed to leave. Vijay’s heart goes out to her.

A very interesting shot is used here that sets up the song that follows. The courtesan falls to the ground in her despair and wants to leave. A client however stops her, and gives her more money asking her to forget the child. This is a shot from Vijay’s point of view. Tears are streaming down his cheeks and as the woman casts a helpless look toward Vijay, we see her through his point of view, and the frame is distorted due to the tears clouding it.
This is the camera’s and Vijay’s vision of what the social order has turned into.

Vijay cannot stand to be there anymore and he leaves. As he drunkenly staggers through the narrow lanes of the red light district, he expresses his dismay through his poetry, with almost no accompanying instruments.

These lanes, these houses where pleasure is auctioned
These ravaged caravans of life that pass
Where are the guardians of dignity?
Where are those who claim to be proud of this land?

These insidious streets, where infamy is traded
Where men conceal their names, where money talks
Where chastity is bargained and purity is sold
Where are those who claim to be proud of this land?

Every time Vijay asks the question “Where are those who claim to be proud of this land?” he addresses the audience at large by looking directly into the camera. At the end of the song, Vijay appeals to the leaders of the nation to see these places and reevaluate the claims they made while building the nation.

The narrative deals with the poet’s internal conflict with the darkness within himself and his external conflict with the social reality as he sees it. With the next song,
the connection between the two is established. The internal and external conflicts are not mutually exclusive, but in fact, are consequences of each other.

In the last emotionally charged song of the film, Vijay renounces the very society which he was struggling to be accepted into. The song occurs in the bizarre situation in which Vijay is attending his own memorial ceremony. As he stands at the threshold of the auditorium, he is at the brink of being accepted into the society.

The auditorium is darkened and a light shines from behind Vijay silhouetting him as he takes the position of crucifixion again, just as he did in *Jaane woh kaise log thhe*.

As Vijay starts softly rendering the lines from the song, the camera pulls out slowly showing the large number of audience present. As the camera keeps pulling out Vijay’s image size keeps getting reduced, signifying his defeat to the sheer number of people. His disillusion is expressed through the poignant song.

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This world of palaces, thrones and crowns
The enemies of humanity, this world of rituals
These men who crave wealth as a way of life
For what will it profit if a man gains this world?
People with parched souls and wounded spirits
People with troubled gaze and sad hearts
This world which is distraught and full of trouble
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A world where life is trivial and the dead are worshipped
A world where death is cheaper than life
For what will it profit if a man gains this world?

A most critical transition in the narrative is conveyed through this song. Vijay is on the brink of getting what he was craving for all his life. But he doesn’t want it anymore. The world has gotten the better of him. As the truth about Vijay is revealed, the same brothers and friends who refused to recognize him first now arrange another function announcing Vijay’s return. At this function, Vijay renounces his own name declaring the symbolic death of the hopelessly romantic poet. He declares that he is in fact an imposter. As the mob beats him up, Guru Dutt uses the continuation of the same song from above. The song now reaches a crescendo.

Burn it, burn it all down
Keep this world away from my sight
This world belongs to you, you take care of it

This song reiterates the point made by the previous one. Vijay’s internal conflicts are caused by his constant struggle to change the external reality. He has now renounced this society. He leaves the auditorium and goes to Gulab’s brothel, standing at its threshold. Gulab senses his presence and runs to him. They embrace and walk away into the twilight. The film thus ends on a hopeful note.

Guru Dutt continued to explore the artist’s plight with Kaagaz ke Phool. However, the film was more personal than Pyaasa and the artist was emancipated only by his death, an option that Dutt chose for his own life as well.
Chapter 5: *Kaagaz ke Phool*

*Kaagaz Ke Phool* (Paper Flowers, 1957) is Guru Dutt’s most autobiographical piece of work. Like in *Pyaasa*, there is a dual focus on the life of the artist and the man behind the artist. It is the story of the downfall of a successful film maker. Back in the days, with the studio system still prevalent in India, Suresh Sinha (Guru Dutt) is a celebrated film maker. He is estranged from his wife because of his profession. His snooty wife and her family are very disapproving of Suresh’s profession as they consider the film industry an immoral place. Suresh is not allowed to see his daughter and that hurts him deeply.

At this time, Suresh Sinha is shown to be working on a remake of Sharat Chandra Chattopadhyay’s epic novel about the tragic romantic hero *Devdas*. Guru Dutt had an emotional connection with Devdas and brought a part of his pathos to the characters of Vijay as well as Suresh Sinha. Suresh is desperately searching for an actress to play the role of Devdas’s love Paro. One rainy evening, he meets a young girl Shanti (Waheeda Rehman). Her innocence and simplicity captures Suresh’s imagination. She comes to his studio to return the coat he lent her that evening, and accidently walks into an ongoing shot. Suresh sees her through his lens and he’s convinced that she’s the right woman to play Paro. She becomes his muse. There is a discernible emotional bond between them and they understand each other well. They fall in love but it is never spoken of explicitly. As rumors and gossip about their relationship surface, Suresh’s daughter Pammi is disturbed, and she goes to Mumbai to talk to Shanti. Pammi asks Shanti to stay out of her father’s life because she is going to get her parents back together. However that never
happens as Suresh’s wife is very obstinate, but Shanti goes away to teach in a small village as she doesn’t want to come between Suresh and his daughter. Suresh loses everything- he is not allowed to see his daughter and Shanti also goes away. This takes a toll on his emotional health and his work suffers.

Suresh is already depressed, and the decline of the studio system finds him out of work. He doesn’t command the same kind of respect and authority anymore. He finds it difficult to adjust to the changing economy of the film industry, and people start forgetting him. Suresh’s sympathetic brother-in-law Rocky approaches Shanti in her village, and tells her that producers will give Suresh work if she returns to the city. Shanti returns but Suresh discovers the truth and doesn’t want any favors. Suresh ends up a destitute, homeless person with no work and no money. At the end of the film, he dies a tragic death in the same studio where he once made his most successful movies.

*Kaagaz ke Phool* gives an insider look at the reality within the film industry though Suresh Sinha’s eyes. The title itself, Paper Flowers signifies the nature of this industry where from far everything seems rosy, but up close, there is no beauty or fragrance. It can make you and totally consume you at the same time.

Guru Dutt’s engagement with the struggle between tradition and modernity continues with this film as well. The fact that Suresh cannot adjust to the changes in the film industry is testimony to that. Unlike Vijay, it is not that Suresh has never tasted success. As an artist, he has been able to communicate with his audience. But the personal and professional upheaval that takes place is too overwhelming for him. He chooses the path of self-destruction, wanders around in anonymity for years, and dies a broken man.
In his own life, Guru Dutt was also part of an estranged relationship. For the last few years before Dutt died, he and Geeta Dutt did not live together. Portraying Guru Dutt’s relationship with Waheeda Rehman required particular dexterity, which the director in Guru Dutt displayed through his beautiful use of the song sequences. The music director for this film was S.D. Burman and the lyrics were written by Urdu poet Kaifi Azmi.

Guru Dutt employed a lot of experimentation in his song direction for Kaagaz Ke Phool. The film begins with a song that performs an important narrative and thematic function. In the first scene, we see the old and broken Suresh Sinha entering the gates of the studio compound where he once ruled. He enters an empty studio and starts climbing up to the catwalk. As we see Suresh Sinha in a frontal shot for the first time, starts a song that speaks of his mental state without Sinha mouthing the words himself.

I have seen what kind of friendship and loyalty the world has to offer
Everyone has abandoned me, one by one
Why should I meet the world now?
I have nothing left except tears
I had flowers in bloom everywhere
And now I don’t even yearn for thorns
This world is so selfish
Everyone has abandoned me, one by one

From here, the film dissolves into a flashback of Suresh’s glory and the entire story unfolds. The camera first zooms out from a close-up of Suresh and we see him looking down on the entire studio. Then he closes his eyes and starts making the transition to the past, as images of cranes, lights, cameras and people clapping superimpose his own.
From the pitiful state that we see Suresh in right now, we are transported to a time when he commanded great respect and authority in the same space. The space itself becomes a character here that has played a very important role in this man’s life. As we enter the flashback, we see Suresh in his younger days descending down a long flight of stairs surrounded by people wanting his autograph. The same song continues in the background, the lyrics conveying the spirit of the times.

Time is merciful  
Desires are young  
Nobody has the time to worry about tomorrow  
This trend will go on  
Time will keep passing  
Circumstances will keep changing

This song is used as Suresh Sinha’s theme song. It is used in the background with different lyrics corresponding to the situation in the film, explaining Suresh’s state of mind each time. It thus becomes the character’s tool of expression. This is especially noteworthy since the character doesn’t always have the space to express himself openly.

Like in Pyaasa, in this film too Guru Dutt plays to certain conventions in song direction, only to highlight fantasy as separate from reality. The situation is that Suresh
and Shanti are being driven to work in Suresh’s car. They haven’t acknowledged their feelings for each other yet. A group of young men and women in a car following them start singing the song.

As the wind blows in the carefree manner
It whispers something to us
New desires are awakened, new storms rise
The heart keeps getting bluffed

Outwardly, the upbeat song is just an expression of some young people out to have a good time. But the director uses it as a tool to beckon the main characters and the audience of the impending storm these winds are bringing. It is an indication of the transgression that is about to take place. Shanti respects and admires the suave Suresh and is drawn to him. Suresh too finds himself very comfortable in her presence. As the young men and women sing, Shanti finds her own desire for Suresh awakened.

As the wind caresses her face, she glances at Sinha and goes into a trancelike state. The “bluff” in the song is actually referring to Shanti and Suresh. This is the fantasy that they are in. Just as we are getting immersed in it too, Guru Dutt abruptly cuts to a scene in Suresh Sinha’s wife’s bedroom, where she is woken up by her maid as there is an
important phone call. On this phone call, we are informed that Suresh has been in an accident and there is nobody to take care of him. This is the reality. Through this song and the way it ends, the film takes its stand on the transgressive relationship between Shanti and Suresh, by placing emphasis on the estranged wife. However, Suresh’s wife refuses to come. Shanti wants to stay and take care of him, but Suresh asks her to leave saying it would be inappropriate for her to stay with him. The next time they meet is the situation for the next song.

The song *Waqt ne kiya* is like *Jaane woh kaise log thhe* one of the most memorable and popular songs from Guru Dutt’s films. Besides the very concept of the song, Guru Dutt employed a lot of technical innovations with respect to lighting that gave the song its final effect.

This song is about the confession of the forbidden love. Following the pattern of the rest of the movie, though this song is about the confession of love, nothing is spoken. It is all understood and communicated on a subconscious level. Their soul is already connected but adhering to the moral codes of the society they live in, even though Suresh’s marriage is as good as over, he cannot allow himself to act on his feelings.

The song takes place in a studio where Suresh’s film is being shot. Shanti is sitting in a chair dressed like her character Paro, Devdas’s soul mate. Devdas and Paro could never be together, and he took a self-destructive path, became an alcoholic and died. These parallels between Devdas and Suresh are drawn from time to time.

As is his habit, Suresh comes early and is surprised to see Shanti there. He goes and stands behind her and they have a conversation. Shanti is knitting a sweater and when Suresh realizes that it is for him he walks away. Shanti gets up and goes toward him.
SURESH: Shanti, I don’t think you know that I have a family.

SHANTI: I do know.

This exchange of words is the setup for the song. As soon as Shanti utters these words, the song starts. The song is in a female voice as the film does not allow Suresh to express his feelings verbally, or even in internal communication. He is always stifled. The song only plays in the background. Shanti doesn’t mouth the words herself.

What a sweet cruelty time has befallen upon us
We are not the same anymore
Restless hearts unite as if we were never apart
We are both lost on the same path
Don’t know where to go
I am walking but there is no way to go
Don’t know what I want
The heart just keeps weaving dreams

The film stresses on the transgressive nature of the relationship by never placing Shanti and Suresh face to face. The meeting of the gaze and acknowledgement of the love would displace them from the moral realm they are bound to right now. Only three sources of light are used in the whole song- two beams of light coming in through two open doors and one beam coming in through the roof of the studio. The camera fluidly works around these sources creating patterns of light and dark. Only at one point during the song do Shanti and Suresh come close and look into each other’s eyes. The camera circles around them, and as we can see in the screen shot, they turn into two black shadows.
The camera then moves out and takes a high angle on a crane becoming the external gaze, and they immediately walk away from each other in haste. In the next screen shot, the two characters stand at the extremes of the frame and the frame is divided by a strong beam of light. The apparitions of Shanti and Sinha then walk toward the beam and disappear into it signifying the subconscious mating of their souls.

In a film about films, this song is shot stripped of all the glamour and glitz attached to that world. The space where the fantastic is achieved is converted into a dark
intimidating world where true love cannot even be acknowledged. In this way, Guru Dutt’s infuses realism into the fabricated world of film.

This song emphasizes Guru Dutt’s conflicted state as an artist as he shies away from making a bold statement about Suresh and Shanti’s relationship. Suresh is shown as a weak character, who buckles under the pressure from his family and society. Instead of fighting against the odds, he gives in to them and chooses to keep his pride and renounce the world. We feel bad for his predicament when he has to choose between his daughter and Shanti, but also angered at his lack of strength.

The next significant song sequence occurs at the end of the film. Guru Dutt uses Suresh’s theme song as he did in the beginning. We have almost reached the end of Suresh’s journey. He is old now and works as an extra on movie sets. In one scene, he is playing a homeless person being offered water. The actress in this scene is Shanti. She recognizes Suresh and tries to talk to him, but he starts running away. Shanti follows him but is soon hounded by people as they see her on the studio compound. As we see the two contrasting images of the defeated Sinha, and Shanti at her peak, the song starts playing again.

Fly away oh thirsty bee, you won’t find any nectar here
Don’t sit on blossoms where fake paper flowers bloom
You have naïve desires in your heart
But this world gives with one hand and takes away with hundred
This is a very old game
Everyone has abandoned me, one by one

The camera zooms in on Suresh’s face and we cut to the present, the scene that the movie began with – Suresh Sinha sitting on the catwalk looking down at the studio. As the song keeps playing, Suresh starts descending from the catwalk and goes and sits on the Director’s chair in the empty studio. There is only one beam of light in the space, the
same one where Shanti and Suresh’s souls once became one. Suresh breathes his last right next to this light. Framed from behind, we can see Suresh’s lifeless body silhouetted by the single beam of light.

This image establishes two connections – firstly to the most intimate moment shared by Suresh and Shanti; and second to the relationship that Suresh shares with the spotlight and with his art. His thirst for recognition and artistic gratification never dies, but he lets his weakness and pride get the better of him.

In this film Guru Dutt exploited the quality of songs to express the inexpressible. He took it one step further by using them to express transgressive thoughts and desires that the characters were not permitted to express otherwise, thus making the function of the songs irreplaceable.

While in Aar Paar the resolution to the problematic issues was simplified, in Kaagaz ke Phool the resolution was presented in the form of death and renunciation. After the failure of the film at the box office, Guru Dutt did not direct any more films, as he thought he would bring the film bad luck (Kabir 2005, 161). However, he continued to act and produce, and even directed the song sequences in Saahib Biwi aur Ghulam.
Chapter 6: *Saahib Biwi aur Ghulam*

*Saahib Biwi aur Ghulam* (Master Mistress and Slave, 1962) was based on Bimal Mitra’s novel of the same name. It is a period drama based in colonial India. At the end of the nineteenth century, Bhootnath (Guru Dutt), a simple but educated village man comes to the city of Calcutta. He lives with his brother-in-law in the servant quarters of the palace of the Chaudhary zamindars (landowners). The film is the story of this wealthy landowner family through the eyes of Bhoothnath. After the advent of the British, these rich landlords were left with little to do. They just pursued their hobbies and made merry. The men living in this palace are no different. While Manjhle Babu spends all his time being coddled by his mignons, Chhote Babu takes to alcohol and a courtesan that he is besotted by. While Manjhle Babu’s wife has no problem with adorning her jewelry and sitting pretty all day, Chhoti Bahu (youngest daughter-in-law) is tormented by the lack of attention from her husband.

Through the window in the servant’s quarters of the palace, Bhoothnath observes the decadent lifestyle of the men of the house. He works at a nearby factory run by Hindu reformist movement Brahma Samaj activist Suvinay Babu. They make Mohini Sindhoor (red vermillion powder worn by Indian women on their forehead as a mark of being married) and claim that their brand is successful in keeping unfaithful husbands at home. Chhoti Bahu one day sends for Bhoothnath, and asks him to bring her some Mohini Sindhoor. Bhoothnath is overawed by her beauty and innocence. Over time a delicate bond develops between them where Bhoothnath becomes the sad woman’s confidante. Bhootnath respects and adores her like an older sister.
Bhootnath falls in love with Suvinay Babu’s daughter Jaba (Waheeda Rehman), but is too shy to tell her. He is sent away for training as a construction supervisor. By the time he is back, Suvinay Babu has died and by a strange twist of fate it is revealed that Bhootnath and Jaba were betrothed as children. Back at the palace however everything is in disarray. The Mohini Sindhoor doesn’t work in keeping Chhote Babu home. Chhoti Bahu beseeches her husband to tell her what she can do to keep him happy with her. He tells her that she has none of the qualities that the courtesan Chunnidasi does. He challenges him to drink with her and entertain him like Chunnidasi does. Chhoti Bahu agrees.

Chhoti Bahu again turns to Bhootnath to bring her liquor who refuses at first but finally agrees. Her changed disposition keeps Chhote Babu engaged for a while, but ultimately he goes back to the courtesan. Chhoti Bahu turns into an alcoholic. With time the Chaudharys lose their glory, power and all goes to the ground. Chhote Babu suffers from paralysis and finally understands his wife’s sentiments but it is too late and he dies. Manjhle Babu suspects of something going on between Chhoti Bahu and Bhoothnath and he has her killed. The whole story is revealed in flashback as Bhoothnath goes to the palace many years later to supervise its demolition.

Though Guru Dutt only produced the film and it was directed by his script writer Abrar Alvi, Dutt took on the responsibility of directing all the songs. The film looks like it was directed by Guru Dutt since Abrar Alvi had worked closely with him for ten years.

All the songs in this film are sung by women. Each song performs a definite function by explaining a particular aspect of the narrative. The reason for this is that the
male characters in the film are relatively passive as compared to the women. The songs were composed by Hemant Kumar and the lyrics were written by Shakeel Badayuni.

The first song shows the pitiable condition of Chhoti Bahu. Everybody in the palace is only addressed by their titles, and not their real names. That was the aristocratic protocol then. The song starts in the present where Bhoothnath is at the site of the palace under demolition. A ghostly voice (Chhoti Bahu’s) booms in the background and transports Bhoothnath and us back to the glory days of the palace. We go back to Bhoothnath’s first night at the palace. As he is asleep he hears a haunting melody in a woman’s voice and goes to the window.

Somebody’s calling from afar, please come
The whole night I have been waiting for you
   My heart is impatient with pain
   Oh beloved don’t torture me so much, please come

Although the voice is Chhoti Bahu’s we don’t actually see her from up close. The camera captures everything from Bhoothnath’s perspective. Chhoti Bahu is a distant figure walking the halls. In the courtyard, we see Chhote Babu coming back home totally wasted, and being helped by his servant to walk. Chhoti Bahu keeps wandering through the halls singing her woes and the song fades away just as she does. Bhoothnath is new to this situation but he understands that the woman who was singing is in pain. He finds out through other servants that that in fact is true.

The second song introduces us to Chhote Babu and his lifestyle. The song is filmed on the courtesan Chunnidasi, who he visits every night. During the whole song Chhote Babu is lying prostate completely intoxicated. Guru Dutt uses mostly medium long shots framing Chhote Babu with respect to Chunnidasi, showing him completely at her mercy.
With her sensual gyrations and suggestive singing, Chunnidasi makes Chhote Babu submit to her commands.

My love, oh my love,
It’s not good to be so cruel
Don’t tease me so beloved
I swear I’ll die

This was in the days when the use of purdah was practiced by upper class women. They did not show their face to any stranger. Men visited these nauch girls for the visual and physical titillation that they provided. In that context, Guru Dutt’s camera captures the blatant sexuality of this woman making her an object of pleasure for the viewer as much as for Chhote Babu.

All the three featured women – the courtesan, Jaba, and Chhoti Bahu – express their sexuality through the songs in this film. However, the songs are all addressed to or about the men in these women’s lives. The song describes the position of the man with respect to the woman.

The next song Bhanvara badaa nandan hai is shot on Jaba. It falls in the category of the light-hearted love songs that Guru Dutt shot in Aar Paar and Mr. and Mrs. 55.
However there is no exchange of words here as Bhootnath is not an active part of the song. Jaba is endeared to the simple Bhootnath from their first meeting and always teases him and flirts with him. He, however, does not know how to interpret her actions. Jaba, having been brought up in the liberal Brahmo Samaj environment is expressive, educated, does not use purdah and is a symbol of the modern woman. She is bolder when it comes to facing the camera. She articulates her thoughts by looking straight into the camera with no inhibitions.

She is open about her sexuality and desires. In this song, she is shown to be composing a poem using a bee as a metaphor for Bhootnath. As she playfully goes about singing, Bhootnath comes and secretly hears the whole song. He knows that she is singing about him as the lyrics suggest.

The bee is so naïve
He is a visitor of the garden
But he doesn’t know, oh he doesn’t know
That he makes the buds bloom

Outwardly unconnected, these lyrics have an undercurrent of Jaba’s desire for Bhootnath.

Sitting in her office surrounded by files and papers, Jaba with her hair left open and
simple *sari* becomes the counterpoint to Chhoti Bahu. Both Jaba and Chhoti Bahu have the same kind of desire to be loved and appreciated by the men they love. But while Chhoti Bahu’s outlook is more traditional, Jaba is more open and modern. Guru Dutt uses the concept of space well to illustrate these points. Jaba’s song is shot in the space of her office where the doors and windows are wide open and she can move around freely. Chhoti Bahu’s songs are shot in her stifling chamber.

The next song *Saathiya aaj mujhe* is a courtesan’s song shot in the Chaudhary palace. This time, it is Manjhle Babu who is enjoying the garish entertainment. After his first meeting with Chhoti Bahu, Bhoothnath witnesses this event as he is about to leave the palace. The setup is not as intimate as it is with Chhote Babu and Chunnidasi, where it is only the two of them in the chamber. In this song, Manjhle Babu sits on a throne-like chair surrounded by his mignons and other men, while a group of courtesans dance before them. The most striking feature of this song is that only the main dancer is lit completely. All the other dancers are in darkness creating silhouetted figures.

This signifies the objectification of these women by carving a generic image of their bodies. Even by not being visible in the image, they serve the purpose that they are
supposed to for the men in question. This image gratifies Manjhle Babu’s masculinity. This image of masculinity is further indulged by the lyrics of the song.

Oh lover, I will not be able to sleep tonight
Your party will go on all night
This exchange of glances will take of everything
Your party will go on all night

Guru Dutt uses high angled long shots framing the dancers, the men, and the grandeur of the Chaudhary palace all at the same time, making it a grotesque display of power and sexuality. Bhootnath can do nothing but gape at the spectacle.

Chhoti Bahu’s first song *Piya aiso jiya mein* is another timeless melody that is appreciated even today. Chhoti Bahu has procured Mohini Sindhoor from Bhootnath, and has the blind faith that it will have an effect on her wavering husband. She thinks that if she uses it, Chhote Babu will stop visiting the courtesan. She believes that a woman’s life is fulfilled by serving her husband to the best of her ability, and she is striving to get that chance.

In this song, she is getting ready for her husband. However, that is not all that the song is about. Chhoti Bahu is not like the other Chaudhary wives. She wants her husband to not just be at home, but also spend the night with her. She is demanding that her sexual needs be met by the man who wedded her with priests and God as witness. Guru Dutt structures the whole song around a mirror, exploring the relationship a woman shares with her image in the mirror.
The image of a woman in the mirror is a strong one asserting her belief in her beauty, femininity and sexuality. It is a personal moment for her. Guru Dutt uses subtle camera movements in this song. The lyrics are as delicate as they are sensual.

My beloved is so immersed in my heart,
That I’ve forgotten my own existence
Every stir I hear makes me feel he’s arrived,
So I cover my face with my veil.
Cool breeze flowed through my house
And the latch to the door opened
I knew that my beloved has arrived
I quickly went and sat on the bed adorned with flowers

Submission and the expression of an innocent hope are weaved into the lyrics of this song. Guru Dutt uses close-ups of different activities that go into getting Chhoti Bahu ready – her maids combing her loose hair, then braiding it, draping her in a regal sari, washing her feet and so on. These images punctuate Chhoti Bahu’s engagement with the mirror, where, through close-ups of her face, we see her wearing the Mohini Sindhoor and adorning herself with jewels. We see a very sensual image here as Chhoti Bahu closes her eyes and slowly lifts her head.
She begins the construction of the surreal time that she hopes to spend with her husband through her song. It was a transgression for an upper class Hindu woman of that period to assert her sexuality in this manner, but the camera allows it by giving her the space to do so. It also allows her to indulge in her own beauty in the mirror.

Guru Dutt uses more long shots in the songs with the courtesans focusing on the sexuality expressed through their physical movements. Contrarily for Chhoti Bahu, close-ups of her face and eyes are used to focus on the sexuality expressed through her emotions and subtle gestures. At the end of the song, Chhoti Bahu sees a reflection of her
husband in the same mirror in which that she has been looking at herself. Her fantasy crashes as he doesn’t even so much as cast a look at her, and simply leaves. The song reveals her true inner desires which she has never expressed in the film so far.

The next song filmed on Chhoti Bahu is *Na jao saiyan*. The song features in the film after she has turned into an alcoholic. When all else fails, Chhoti Bahu begs Chhote Babu to tell her what she can do to keep him happy. He in turn challenges her that the women of the Chaudhary household can never keep the men satisfied. To which Chhoti Bahu replies that, “I am from a poor family. I am not like the other wives. I will do whatever it takes to satisfy you.” By saying this, Chhoti Bahu tries to equate herself with the likes of Chunnidasi. Chhote Babu asks her if she would drink and sway in drunkenness with him, she agrees to that. She implores Bhootnath to bring her the wine. It does work initially, but eventually Chhote Babu gets bored and wants to return to the brothel.

Chhote Babu tells Chhoti Bahu that if he sits at home like this, people will mock him. Visiting brothels was a way for these men to prove their virility and masculinity. As he prepares to leave, Chhoti Bahu beseeches him with her song. Chhoti Bahu is lying prostate before her husband in this song, just as he was in front of Chunnidasi in the first song.

Don’t leave now, my dear
I swear I will break into tears
My heart is longing for you
What will I do without you?
These disheveled tresses, this radiant kohl
This fragrant attire, this intoxicated heart,
It is all for you my sweetheart
I will not let you go today
Chhoti Bahu displays two facets of her personality in this song. While singing the above lines, she is playing the uninhibited and sensual courtesan who arrests Chhote Babu’s interest with her display of sexuality and seductiveness.

The whole song is shot on and around the bed symbolizing the consummation of the husband-wife relationship, and the expression of Chhoti Bahu’s desires. By the second verse of the song, she slips into the role of the dutiful and devoted wife, and that doesn’t hold Chhote Babu’s interest.

I want to serve you,
I have been longing since ages
My dear, you are my only adornment
As a mark of our nuptials,
I shall wear the dust off your feet on my forehead

At this time, Chhoti Bahu is lying powerless at her husband’s feet. He just gets up and starts to leave. For the first time in the song, the camera leaves the area of the bed, signifying how Chhoti Bahu’s fulfillment is attached to Chhote Babu’s presence. Once he leaves the bed, so does the camera. Chhoti Bahu follows Chhote Babu while singing and literally falls at his feet again. The song begins on the bed and ends on the floor with Chhoti Bahu lying there helpless. As the song ends, Chhote Babu addresses her musical
rendering by saying, “Tell me something new. This is what you are supposed to do as a wife”. Chhote Babu shows no real feelings or love for his wife because he thinks that he would be less of a man for harboring those sentiments.

Even though the focus of this story is on Chhoti Bahu, an interesting discussion about tradition and modernity can develop on her emotional depiction relative to Jaba’s. As mentioned before, both of them harbor similar desires, but their motivation differs. Jaba meets a man and falls in love with him. It is her choice to love him. Chhoti Bahu learns to love the man that she has been married to. She demands her right to his love and attention. Though Jaba is open about her feelings, she does not ask Bhoothnath to marry her. When it is revealed that they were married as children, it motivates Bhoothnath to take the next step. The issues of these women were complicated, and a major part of the nationalist movement taking place at the time.

The downfall of the Chaudharys signifies the end of an era. Women like Jaba were to be a more significant part of the idealized nationalist movement.
CONCLUSION

In all of the films discussed, Guru Dutt is consistent with his innovations and experimentation. His style has worked in each of the films elevating the role of the song to enhancing the flow of the text. With realistic depiction and meaningful placement, the songs are successful in representing the “unrepresentable” and expressing the inexpressible.

In *Aar Paar*, Guru Dutt uses innovation in camera technique and locations in the songs. He uses the songs to express the characters’ thoughts and desires. He breaks conventions set by other popular Hindi cinema songs and proves how his methods are effective.

In *Mr. and Mrs. 55*, the personality and outlook of each character decides how and where the song is shot. Social realities are taken into consideration, and this helps shape the identities of the characters through the songs that they are in.

In *Pyaasa*, the tone of the narrative changes as compared to the first two films. This doesn’t impact the direction of the songs negatively, since Guru Dutt even more so sticks to his ideas of realism. Being a poet himself, Vijay finds it easy to express himself through song. The camera makes the process seem like a way of life for him.

In *Kaagaz ke Phool*, both Suresh Sinha and Shanti are extremely introverted characters. Hence Guru Dutt makes optimum use of songs by using them as tools of expression for his characters. The songs help the characters express the inexpressible since their feelings are considered transgressive by society.
In *Saahib Biwi aur Ghulam*, the songs act as replacement for scenes. The songs reveal aspects of the characters’ personalities in a more impactful manner than prose would. They also give a voice to Chhoti Bahu’s sexuality and repression.

The use of the songs in the narrative is justified and they are never a distraction as they are structured around the main narrative, making it stronger. Guru Dutt hence proves his dexterity in the shooting of song sequences. While this is true, this research also brings to the fore Guru Dutt’s conflicted nature as an artist. While he is technically progressive, his depiction of the clash between tradition and modernity that was harboring in the nation is problematic. He hesitates to take a strong stand on certain nationalist issues like the position of women in society.

Guru Dutt worked when the free nation was still young. His early death didn’t give him time to assimilate and resolve the problems depicted in his films, even for himself. Perhaps if he lived longer, he would have pushed himself to reach a resolution or even found it in the ever-changing society.

This study is a starting point for further research generated from this topic. My interest is in the development of authorship studies for post-independence Hindi cinema of the 1950s and 1960s, in the context of the new emerging nation.
Bibliography


