

Moving toward the “City of Love”

Hindustani Lyrical Genealogies

In 1997, science professor Ashraf Aziz narrated an extended personal memoir as a Hindi-language talk radio feature for Voice of America (VOA), broadcast out of Washington, DC. The memoir proceeded through his reflections over the circulation of gramophone records of Hindustani¹ film songs among South Asians in East Africa, descended from those whom the British transported to East Africa as bonded laborers to serve their war efforts during World Wars I and II. In 2011, the Hindi literary journal *Jalsa* (Fête) published a transcript of the radio feature under the title “*sigret sinemaa sahal aur sharaab*” (Cigarettes, cinema, Saigal, and spirits) in a special issue dedicated to the theme of exile.

An epigraph for Aziz’s memoir refers to D. N. Madhok’s lyrics for a song from the film *Saiyan* (M. Sadiq, 1951): “*vo raat din vo shaam kii guzrii huii kahaaniyaan, jo tere ghar mein chhod diin pyaar kii sab nishaaniyaan*” (The little bygone stories of that day and night, that evening—which left behind all those little traces of love in your house).² The memoir begins, “Without literature, there is no life in history,” and then proceeds as, essentially, a subaltern narrative preoccupied not with the exploits of any emperors or kings but with the memories of a community of “ordinary people.”³ The author emphasizes that he himself is neither a historian nor a litterateur but a member of such a community who has recollected and recorded a history of film songs in the form of a personal memoir.

Aziz then narrates the World War contexts in which his grandparents and parents left and returned to British India and again departed for East Africa as bonded laborers who served British war efforts during World Wars I and II. He writes, “The traces of those Hindustani people [bonded laborers and soldiers] who were martyred in the first war are apparent in both directions of the rail lines that run between Tanga and Moshi.”⁴ The word that Aziz uses for “traces,” *nishaan*, is the same word that appears in the lyrical epigraph. In this manner, the memoir

continually invokes Hindustani poetic motifs of separation, longing, and remembrance. It emphasizes the importance of music and poetry as resources for a community whose recent history was shaped by—albeit irreducible to—labor exploitation and displacement. For this community, Aziz's memoir attests, the images and affects of Hindustani film songs came to invoke not only specific diegetic sequences from films but also their own lives and experiences in which the songs had an intimate, everyday presence as both a source of pleasure and a language of contemplation.

Recalling his childhood in Tanga, in present-day Tanzania, Aziz expresses incredulity that he has no recollection of "the blasts in which Hiroshima and Nagasaki were reduced to cinders and the course of history irrevocably altered." He vividly remembers, however, that sometime between 1946 and 1947, his elder brother brought home a gramophone and some 78 rpm records of a Hindustani film songs from Mombasa. By overlaying cataclysmic geopolitical events with deeply personal ones, Aziz joins multiple scales of history through acts of reading and remembering Hindustani film songs. While the ethereality of the songs seduced Aziz's youthful attentions and managed to eclipse even the catastrophe of two nuclear genocides, this very ethereality of Hindi film songs also spurs Aziz's lyrical and deeply critical reflections over his own relative privilege in that moment and in others, as a diasporic South Asian who came of age in East Africa.

The dawn of a postwar nuclear age comes full circle in Aziz's eventual immigration to the United States in the 1960s, at a time when Cold War policies sought to woo third world professionals to the US for higher education.⁵ Voice of America, where Aziz's memoir was initially broadcast as a Hindi radio feature for the fiftieth anniversary of India's independence, was itself established during World War II and continued through the Cold War as an arm of US cultural diplomacy in the world. The memoir's multiple narrative and extra-narrative contexts of migration, media circulation, translation, and publication highlight the significance of aural/oral technologies and transmissions in twentieth-century experiences of war, cinema, and the everyday. Aziz recalls:

In our town, Hindustani film music first set foot in our house. In the milky moonlight upon the verandah, the first film song that I ever heard was Noorjehan's song from *Village Girl*, "I am seated, propped upon the sustenance of your memory."⁶

The poetic trope of an ineffable feminine beloved personifies an *audiovisual* media object in motion by whom the viewer-listener is irrevocably and intimately transformed. Aziz's personification of Hindustani film music as entering his family's home on an enchanted, moonlit night is itself a romantic image that invokes two motifs that have proliferated through older folk genres as well as courtly genres of Hindustani poetry and that have in turn become mainstays of Hindustani film lyrics: the motif of a new bride stepping into her husband's home as the night of

their union has fallen and the motif of a woman going stealthily into her lover's home by night under the cover of darkness. The latter motif again recalls the lyrics in the epigraph, sung from the perspective of a woman who is bereft, but for her memories of such a tryst: "The little bygone stories of that day and night, that evening—which left behind all those little traces of love in your house." A feminine figure's act of crossing the threshold to enter an unknown home in both motifs allegorically invokes the risk and anticipation of border-crossing journeys, with their possibilities of immense pleasure as well as pain.

Romantic tropes in film songs—like *prem nagar* (City of Love), the figure of the feminine beloved and the tryst that is as fleeting a night as it is enduring a memory for the bereft, anguished lover—can become loosened from singular referents, authors, and at times even genders, through the promiscuity of their circulation through the worlds of innumerable lyrics and films. These tropes have repeatedly surfaced across an array of diegetic situations through the composite labor of lyricists who wrote them into their film lyrics; playback singers and musicians who rendered their melodies; and actors, actresses, and hundreds of technicians who gave them their embodied onscreen expression. Rather than working solely as clichés or stock images, they can offer themselves up as open-ended metaphors within a public domain of poetic resources, available as raw materials for narrating memories and desires, for archiving histories and envisioning futures.⁷ Contemplative cinephilic engagements with film songs and lyrics, such as Aziz's memoir, connect the profoundly public presence of these lyrical modes of expression to their circulation in spaces that are much more intimate and personal.

In this chapter, I focus on the specific Hindustani lyrical trope of *prem nagar* (City of Love). I look at songs whose lyrics invoke *prem nagar*, a trope derived from folk songs and poetry attributed to ascetic and mystic *sant* (saint-singer) poets—namely, Kabir (fifteenth century) and Bulleh Shah (eighteenth century). The City of Love is a choice destination referred to by more than fifty film songs from just as many films between 1934 and the early 2000s, whose lyrics were penned by more than twenty different lyricists working in the Hindi film industry between these years.⁸ Moving from its folk and literary antecedents through its cinematic iterations, I show that referents for *prem nagar* in film songs ensue from generalized experiences of transit to and within the modern-industrial city on the one hand and from the possibilities of romantic love in urban spaces on the other and that the experience of popular cinema becomes inextricable from both.⁹ In other words, as Hindustani film songs incorporated the premodern lyrical trope of *prem nagar*, this trope—the City of Love—became reconfigured as an ekphrastic epithet for the romantic pleasure-spaces of motion pictures and their associated milieu of urban life. Those in search of the modern City of Love (and I will show that *prem nagar* enters cinema as an ephemeral, mirage-like destination for seekers who remain in perpetual transit) are lyrically addressed as a collective of cinephiles, who are willfully entranced by the repetitious, rapturous songs—the seductive artifices and utopian dreams—of Hindi popular cinema.¹⁰

In contrast to film song sequences and film music, film lyrics have only occasionally constituted a primary site of analysis for media scholars, music historians, musicologists, cultural anthropologists, or literary scholars of South Asia.¹¹ Often dismissed for being an inconsequential string of hackneyed clichés¹² or nostalgically recalled as being meaningful in one or another bygone era, film song lyrics have occupied a somewhat paradoxical status vis-à-vis South Asian popular cinemas both historically and in scholarly accounts. The coming of sound in the colonial studio era of the 1930s inaugurated new categories of workers, such as music director, lyricist, and dialogue writer.¹³ On the one hand, one could convincingly argue that film song lyrics were irrelevant in many instances, particularly when audiences had little to no knowledge of a given film's language. On the other hand, in addition to their primacy in production workflows, printed song booklets constituted a prolific form of film publicity since the very advent of the talkie. In this manner, song lyrics circulated as oral and written texts that have constituted an important interface for reception outside the space of the theatre.¹⁴

The work of the lyricist—many of whom also had or aspired toward reputations as writers and poets outside the film industry—thus vacillates between being of utmost primacy to being superfluous to commercial film production, meaning-making, and reception. Even when the National Film Awards instated all-India awards for artists and technicians in 1967, the lyricist remained absent from the eight award categories (best actor, actress, color cinematography, black-and-white cinematography, direction, music direction, playback singing, and screenplay). When an award for best lyricist finally emerged at the National Film Awards in 1970 (alongside a new category for best child actor/actress and separate categories for male and female playback singers), it was quite unlike the rest of the awards for artists and technicians in its specificity: "Lyric-writer of the best film song on national integration."¹⁵ The seemingly bizarre specificity of such an award category reveals the post-independence state's preoccupation with mobilizing cinema's potential for the project of national integration and its recognition of the potential ideological impact of film song *lyrics* by virtue of the catchiness and repeatability of film songs.

Following India's independence in 1947, national integration was a strategy touted by the first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, for promoting and ushering in a sense of national belonging for a populace that was highly stratified by divisions of gender, caste, class, language, religion, and ethnicity.¹⁶ By the 1950s, several lyricists were popularly known, highly regarded, and celebrated *as* film lyricists, despite the fact that the initial version of the award category for film song lyrics acknowledged their potential to merely serve nationalist sentiments rather than having any creative or artistic merit beyond this narrow parameter. While some popular as well as scholarly accounts consider the 1950s and 1960s as constituting a golden age of Hindi film songs,¹⁷ others lament the 1960s for abandoning the previous decade's progressive ethos in favor of songs that were overly preoccupied with romance and composed for highly escapist color films.¹⁸ To what extent, however, did the

progressive potential of cinema reside in the content of specific films or lyrics versus the broader fervor of public engagement with cinema across both decades?¹⁹

A genealogy of *prem nagar* as a lyrical trope specific to film songs that became reflexively tied to modern, affective spaces of cinematic encounters affords an opportunity to consider a longer history of film song lyrics' ekphrastic claims about cinema. With increasing frequency in the 1950s, *prem nagar* reflexively invoked not only the space of the onscreen romantic couple but also the spectator's affections for cinema. The sincerity on both sides of this latter affair, lyrical arguments held, could transcend the transactional and extractive conditions of their encounter. While one could cynically—and not incorrectly—regard these arguments as self-serving justifications on the part of the film industry as a profit-oriented enterprise, the compulsive repetition of such arguments reveals a wider historical anxiety over the commoditization of human feelings: that is, the sense that even love—as a sacral object of modernity—would be rendered inauthentic, as a marketplace commodity. Love-as-cinephilia is thus lyrically articulated as faith in the potential for commercial cinema to engender love as an embodied truth, despite its extractive and even fraudulent means.

Since the 1997 publication of *The Cinematic City*, an anthology edited by David Clarke, a plethora of film scholarship has analyzed links between city-space and cinema-space as mutually constitutive representational as well as lived spaces.²⁰ This body of work has investigated the ways in which "the cinema" and "the city" have not only shaped and been shaped by one another but also precipitated ways of seeing, being, and moving that have been fundamental to the experience of twentieth-century modernity.²¹ Theories of visual culture and architecture have supplied critical disciplinary perspectives within analyses of the cinematic city, premised upon the irrefutable omnipresence of reproducible moving images alongside the rise of modern cities, both of which have affected the very parameters of experiencing and negotiating the space of the world in and after the twentieth century.²² The cinematic city has delineated a historical and theoretical context for not only investigating modern subjectivity (e.g., "ways of seeing") but also querying contemporary political life.²³ For the city and the cinema remain historically bound to processes of industrialization and to the crystallization of the masses—a collective variously identified as workers, voters, or audience members—who form a primary unit of (re)public societies in the era of cities and citizens that succeeded the earlier reign of kings and kingdoms. In short, the spatial and social dimensions of both the cinema and the city have formed crucial axes for the organization of modern life.

Contributions to cinematic city scholarship have come from a variety of disciplines including—once again—architecture and visual culture studies, in addition to urban planning, art history, and sociology. A genealogy of Hindi cinema's lyrical

city of *prem nagar* highlights the specificity of cinema, as an audiovisual form and technological formation whose status was audibly and visibly caught between that of an expressive art and an industrial commodity. The trope of *prem nagar* moved out from a domain of sung poetry attributed to premodern, pre-colonial saint-mystics and into the modern space of Hindustani film songs. The emergence of this latter-day cinematic City of Love directs our attention to the movements of popular music in constituting the *audiovisual* spaces of modernity, public as well as intimate.

In her critique of "the attractions of the cinematic city" for scholars, Charlotte Brunsdon points to the lure of the cinematic city as a space that promises interdisciplinarity, translocality, and theory. She argues that the shape that this scholarship has taken often fulfills these promises through juxtaposing several essays that are concerned with different contexts and that arise out of different disciplines, rather than through sustained reflections and syntheses of either the relationship between *a* specific cinematic city and *the* cinematic city as a theoretical term or the disciplinary perspectives that have contributed to this work. Brunsdon argues that the cinematic city emerges in a post-celluloid moment of the neoliberalizing university, "repositioning [cinema] within a 'high culture' paradigm at a historical moment at which its threat and energy as a mass cultural urban entertainment is conclusively spent."²⁴ As evidence of this repositioning, Brunsdon argues that "adding attention to the cinema signifies interdisciplinary endeavor for more established disciplines, yet the reverse is not true. . . . The film studies scholar who cites poetry is seen as merely pretentious."²⁵ What *prem nagar* as *a* cinematic city associated with popular Hindi cinema contributes to an understanding of *the* cinematic city occurs by virtue of its historical location at the interstices of poetry, literature, music, and film in a much longer genealogy of South Asian lyrical and popular practices. This genealogy—and that of *prem nagar*—carries profound ethical investments in vernacular oral practices as modes of knowledge production that have critiqued violently inegalitarian social formations.

The body of hagiographic and scholarly writing on the Hindavi poetry of Kabir, an oppressed-caste, fifteenth-century weaver who lived near present-day Benares, is immense.²⁶ Kabir has been embraced as a political, literary, and even god figure in contemporary Dalit (formerly "untouchable") and anti-caste movements. Milind Wakankar has asked what it means to think through "prehistory" as the silences in contemporary accounts of the past, with respect to the present political contexts in which Kabir, a historical figure, has been rewritten for different ends—both hegemonic and subaltern—as either a Hindu mystic in the devotional tradition of *bhakti*, a Muslim Sufi, a Dalit leader, or even a Dalit god.²⁷ Wakankar argues that the singularity of this prehistory, as the concrete experience of structural violence to which Kabir bears witness in his poetry, necessarily becomes abstracted and

mystified in the identity-based politics of civil society that have congealed around Kabir. His life and poetry have since been deified, glorified, and romanticized in the face of what Wakankar refers to as the unbearable weight that a prehistory of scripturally sanctioned, upper-caste brahminical violence continues to exert upon the present.²⁸

In the poetry attributed to Kabir, *prem nagar* emerges as a miraculous space that is inhabited in the real time of the poet rather than as one that is imagined. The specificities of *prem nagar* remain vague, although Kabir affirms in his verses that these specificities are necessarily esoteric. For Kabir, given the concerns of his oeuvre, *prem nagar* is where caste exploitation and brahminical (upper-caste Hindu) orthodoxy, as well as animosities between religious communities, come to the fore and simultaneously come undone in his ecstatic communion with the Other, achieved through the mystic's (sung) testimony that bears witness to the irreducible, concrete experience of both pain (violence) and God (love). Kabir's *prem nagar* lies in an intellectual history of anti-caste utopias that vehemently rejected the violently enforced inequalities of their respective presents.²⁹ Addressed by Kabir to "my friend"—none other than his own heart—the verses below are not celebratory in their tone but highly mournful and disillusioned in the face of their addressee's inability to overcome ignorance and inactivity, a prerequisite to the discovery of "the secrets of this city of love":

O my heart! You have not known all the secrets of this city of love:
In ignorance you came, and in ignorance you return.
O my friend, what have you done with this life?
You have taken on your head the burden heavy with stones, and who is to lighten it
for you?
Your Friend stands on the other shore, but you never think in your mind how you
may meet Him:
The boat is broken, and yet you sit ever upon the bank;
and thus you are beaten to no purpose by the waves.
The servant Kabir asks you to consider:
Who is there that shall befriend you at the last?
You are alone, you have no companion:
You will suffer the consequences of your own deeds.³⁰

In an analysis of the poetry of another South Asian saint, the eighteenth-century Punjabi poet Bulleh Shah, Denis Matringe looks at the various devotional and poetic genealogies that Bulleh Shah's verses draw upon. As an example of the fused Krsnaite bhakti and Sufi elements in Bulleh Shah's poetry, Matringe offers the following verses, which open with a mention of *prem nagar* followed by a description that is far more buoyant than that of Kabir's invocation of the same:

In the city of love, everything is upside down
Reddened eyes become happy,
The 'self' gets caught in a net.
Once my self was caught you killed it.³¹

These lines celebrate the glory of the self's annihilation in the Beloved, the ecstasy of which is rendered as the infinitely joyous experience of *prem nagar* in an immanent world of the present, where the *sant* resides and where "everything is upside down." For Punjabi mystic Bulleh Shah,³² too, as for Kabir, *prem nagar* is experienced in the here and now, as a place where "everything is upside down" and where "now I am lost," having annihilated the Self into the Beloved:

Now I am lost in the City of Love
 I am searching for myself
 Finding neither mind, nor hands, nor feet
 Having shed my Self
 I found self awareness
 Bulleh Shah! The Beloved resides in both worlds
 There is none but this.³³

In these early poetic instances as well as some of the more contemporary cinematic ones, the ecstasy of *prem nagar* affirms faith in the possibility of overturning the real-world violence of the interrelated orthodoxies of religious dogma and structural inequalities of caste. Kabir's poetry, however, suggests that faith itself is not enough. A melancholy cynicism as to how and to what extent faith can precipitate any change ("The boat is broken, and *yet you sit* ever upon the bank")³⁴ arises out of a critical and reflexive practice (Kabir speaks to himself/his own heart: "Your Friend stands on the other shore, but you never *think in your mind* how you may meet Him").³⁵ For Kabir, this deeply critical mode of questioning must necessarily be taken up in order to know *prem nagar* and arrive at its "secrets." Furthermore, both Kabir and Bulleh Shah testify to finding and dwelling in *prem nagar* only by embracing the fragmentation—if not the annihilation—of the individuated Self.

The unsentimental social critiques advanced by Kabir—among other *sant* poets—carry a trenchant politics that challenges sentimentalized Indian nationalist legacies that have placed Kabir within a larger fold of Hindu bhakti and more narrowly construe *prem* as a decontextualized devotional love.³⁶ While a popular claim about bhakti is that it was a radically egalitarian, vernacular Hindu devotional movement that critiqued brahminical monopolies on material and spiritual accumulation, some scholars have characterized the bhakti movement and its afterlives as far more ambivalent, at best, regarding matters of caste and social equality.³⁷ They point, firstly, to the fact that the written hagiographies of even oppressed-caste bhakti saints remained a significantly brahminical—and eventually nationalist—vocation.³⁸ And secondly, to the fact that there is little evidence of bhakti effecting large-scale transformations toward the eradication of caste, in spite of the ubiquity of its textual and ritual presence across the subcontinent in multiple vernacular and popular forms, both oral and written.³⁹

Modern anti-caste movements thus insist on the importance of figures like Kabir in ongoing struggles to translate radically egalitarian ethical visions into large-scale material transformations of the social.⁴⁰ If *prem nagar* is the abode of

Kabir's singular, intimate experience of Love/God, a corollary, as I will show, is that the cinematic *prem nagar* becomes an abode of love—in the incarnation of cinephilia—that can inspire belief in the possibility of moving toward the imagined, utopian worlds of which cinema seductively and suggestively sings. Taking a cue from Kabir's question, this chapter asks how, and to what extent, such cinephilia might induce active, material transformations through an ethical insistence on both individual reflection and collective action against oppressively inegalitarian forms of modernity.

By the turn of the twentieth century, Kabir's mainstreaming as a literary figure—and as a representative literary figure, even—of the Indian subcontinent is evident in India Society, London's publication of *One Hundred Poems of Kabir* in 1914, translated into English by Indian writer Rabindranath Tagore the very year after Tagore won the Nobel Prize in Literature.⁴¹ *One Hundred Poems of Kabir* was reprinted in 1917 by Macmillan, London as well as Macmillan, New York, with the latter edition carrying the alternative title *Songs of Kabir*.⁴² The apparent interchangeability of "poems" and "songs" is firstly indicative of the (after)life of Kabir's poems both as oral texts that have circulated in the form of song and as written texts that have circulated as literature. Secondly, this interchangeability is also indicative of a wider field of popular *sant* poetry that has been a legacy of the Indian subcontinent's medieval history, wherein the act of repetition through participatory singing has enacted the poetry's strong investments in experience as an immanent form of knowledge. In its most critical instances, this vernacular poetry condemned brahminical knowledge production and Sanskritic scriptural orthodoxy as thoroughly exploitative, rather than spiritual, endeavors.⁴³

From the very inception of the Bombay-produced talkie, with Aredeshir Irani's *Alam Ara* (*The Light of the World*) in 1931, diegetic songs became a staple of popular cinema in India. Cheaply produced song booklets were published independently and sold alongside a film's release; they often had a color, poster-style title image of the film on the cover and contained a plot summary, followed by the printed lyrics for each of the film's songs. The pages were sometimes interspersed with advertisements and poster images previewing other films. Hindi film song booklets were often bi- or trilingual, with translations of the plot summary and transcriptions of the song lyrics rendered in Devanagari, Nastaliq, and/or Roman typefaces. While it is possible that the song booklets may have been collectible items—especially for their covers—and purchased by audiences irrespective of literacy, the English translations of plot summaries, Roman text, and bi- and trilingual transcriptions of song lyrics were intended for a filmgoing audience that was construed as urban, literate, highly cosmopolitan, and desirous of singing along.⁴⁴

Via song lyrics, the trope of *prem nagar* was rewritten into the space of cinema in this early studio era of the talkie, amid the convergences of older and newer

popular participatory practices of sung poetry, the presence of literary activists in the film industry, and the anti-colonial-nationalist and progressive-leftist movements that were under way at the time. Lyricists in this moment (1) were no exception in often having migrated from elsewhere and ultimately finding work in the Bombay-based film industry, (2) were frequently either Hindi or much more frequently Urdu writers and poets in their own right,⁴⁵ (3) were therefore highly attentive to details of language, (4) would have been cognizant of the genealogies of *sant* poetry from which *prem nagar* emerged, and (5) tended to be involved with progressive, anti-colonial movements, given that the more conservative writers would not have involved themselves—and their reputations as purists—with the likes of the film industry.⁴⁶

In the first two decades of the talkie, Hindustani film songs drew upon a repertoire of folk songs as well as musical genres that had been codified into classical and semiclassical forms. In this sense, it is hardly surprising or noteworthy in itself that *prem nagar* moved from a domain of popular musical and lyrical practices into the arena of cinema. What is more intriguing is a sweepstakes departure that takes place all at once, as the modern form and context of cinema razed and rewrote the temporal and spatial relationships scaffolding the space of *prem nagar* as it had emerged in *sant* poetry. Differences notwithstanding, the *prem nagar* of both Kabir and Bulleh Shah is a place that is inhabited by the poet in the real time of a miraculous present. The self is put forward by as the major obstacle standing in the way, whether in its lack of perceptual acuity or failure to embrace a trenchant rejection of the world in the case of Kabir, or in its failure to obliterate and lose itself to the ecstasy of Love/God in the case of Bulleh Shah.

In contrast to the eternal here and now of *prem nagar* as it unfolds in *sant* poetry, the cinematic City of Love is catapulted onto a horizon that lies perpetually ahead. In 1934, three different lyricists wrote *prem nagar* into the cinema. In addition to a song from *The Mill* (dir. Mohan Bhavnani) that opens with the line "*prem nagar kii raaha kathin hai sambhal sambhal kar chala karo*" (The path to the City of Love is difficult, go carefully), two other film songs from the year 1934 open with references to the City of Love (see table 1): the well-known "*prem nagar mein banaauungii ghar main*" (I will build a house in the City of Love), rendered by singer-actor K. L. Saigal in a duet with Uma Shashi for the film *Chandidas*, and "*prem nagar kii or naiyaa khivayen hain, prem ke saagar mein*" (In the direction of the City of Love are boat and oarsmen, in the Sea of Love), a lesser-known song from the lesser-known film *Chalta Purza*. In all three instances, *prem nagar* is configured as a destination that lies spatially and temporally ahead—as a place toward which one must proceed carefully, as a place in which a house will be built one day, as a place in whose direction a boat and oarsmen are poised to row toward.

This City of Love materializes in these instances as a cinematic city in being tied to an apparatus of mechanized movement whose emergence was historically intertwined with forms of mass transit for people both migrating to and moving within

TABLE 1. References to *prem nagar* (City of Love) in Hindi film songs

SONG	FILM	YEAR	DIRECTOR	SINGERS	LYRICIST	MUSIC DIRECTOR
" <i>prem nagar kii or naiyaa khivaiye hain prem ke saagar men</i> " (In the direction of the City of Love are boat and oarsman in the sea of love)	<i>Chalra Purza</i> aka <i>The Invincible</i>	1934	R. N. Vaidya	"Moti - Shiraz (Vijay Singh)"	Dina Nath Madhok	Damodar Sharma
" <i>prem nagar men banaauungii ghar main</i> " (I will build a house in the City of Love)	<i>Chandidas</i>	1934	Nitin Bose	K. L. Saigal, Uma Sashi	Agha Hashra Kashmiri	R. C. Boral
" <i>prem nagar kii raahaa kathin hai sambhal sambhal kar chhalaa karo</i> " (The route to the City of Love is difficult, go carefully)	<i>The Mill</i> aka <i>Mazdoor</i>	1934	Mohan Dayaram Bhavnani	Tarabai	Premchand	B. S. Hoogan
" <i>prem nagariyaa vaale raahaa bataa de, panchrang chunariyaa vaale mukhdaa dikhaa de</i> " (Dweller of the Township of Love, tell me the route, o wearer of the many-hued raiment, show your face)	<i>Shri Satiya-naarayan</i>	1935	Drupad Rai		Radheshyam Kathavachak	Somnath Patpat
" <i>sakhii chal bas prem nagar men, prem nagar ati sundar basti</i> " (Dear companion, come dwell in the City of Love – the City of Love is such a beautiful township)	<i>Jungle Queen</i> aka <i>Jungle Ki Rani</i>	1936	Nandalal Jaswantlal			Anna Sahab Maainkar, H. C. Baali
" <i>prem nagar ke bith mein chalii nain talvaar . . . raadhaa tui aur main kanhaiyaa</i> " (Daggers of eyes flashed in the middle of the City of Love . . . You are Radha, myself, Kanhaiya)	<i>Nishaan-e-Jung</i>	1937	Abdul Rahman Kabuli			
" <i>prem nagar kii prem pujaarin prem diip pragataay</i> " (The priestess of the City of Love lights the lamp of love)	<i>Talwar ka Dhani</i>	1938	Dhirubhai Desai	Urmila Gupta	Pandit Gouri Shankar Lal "Akhtar"	Kikubhai Yagnik
" <i>prem nagar ke raajaa aao dil kii lagii bujhnaao</i> " (Come, king of the City of Love, assuage the desires of the heart)	<i>Toofan Express</i>	1938	Chunilal Parekh	Jal Merchant, Raa]kumari	Chunilal Parkeh	Baldev Naik

" <i>premii prem nagar men jaayein</i> " (Lovers shall go to the City of Love)	<i>Aadmi</i> (Hindi) aka <i>Manoos</i> (Marathi) aka <i>Lifés for Living</i>	1939	V. Shantaram	Shanta Hublikar, Shahu Modak	Munshi Aziz	Master Krishnarao
" <i>prem nagar men prem pujaarii piyaa darshan ko aate hain prem kii mithii baaton se . . .</i> " (In the City of Love are the priests of Love seeking out the vision of the Beloved, upon sweet words of love . . .)	<i>Actress Kyon Bani</i>	1939	G. R. Sethi			Ram Gopal Pande
" <i>prem nagar kii phulvaarii men sundar phool khile sajnii</i> " (In the garden of the City of Love blossom beautiful flowers, my dear)	<i>Aandhi</i> aka <i>The Tempest</i> aka <i>The Storm</i>	1940	Dinesh Ranjan Das	Picturized on Kumari Manjari (character Ila)	Aarzoo, Rashid Gorakhpuri, Pandit Nautiyal; for this song: Aarzoo	Krishna Chandra Dey; asst: H. P. Rai, Pranab Dey
" <i>mast havaaen prem nagar men aaj sandesaa laaii hain, soye huye hriday . . .</i> " (The heady breeze of the City of Love has today brought news, the sleeping heart . . .)	<i>Haar Jeet</i> aka <i>Abhinetri</i>	1940	Amar Mullick		Aarzoo, Kedaar Sharma	R. C. Boral, asst: Haripad Chatterjee
" <i>main prem nagar kii raanii, suno merii priit kahaanii, madh se miithaa meraa pyaar</i> " (I am the queen of the City of Love, listen to my tale of love, my love sweeter than honey)	<i>Nirali Duniya</i> aka <i>Trust Your Wife</i>	1940	V. M. Vyas		Ahsaan Rizvi	Mushataq Husain; asst: L. Hussain
*" <i>aaye re, pii kii nagariyaa se aaye re, saajan ke nainaa se nainaa milaaye re . . .</i> " (Having come, having come from the Township of the Beloved, the lover's eyes have met with another's)	<i>Prem Nagar</i>	1940	Mohan Dayaram Bhavnani	Sharda (gramophone recording); Vimala Kumari (film)	Dina Nath Madhok	Naushad Ali
*" <i>saajan aao aao aao, man kii nagariyaa basaao</i> " (Come, come, come, darling, dwell within the Township of the Heart)	<i>Rupa</i>	1946	Aziz	Rajkumari	Rammurti Chaturvedi	Govind Ram

TABLE 1. (Continued)

SONG	FILM	YEAR	DIRECTOR	SINGERS	LYRICIST	MUSIC DIRECTOR
" <i>prem nagar kii or chale hain prem ke do mativale</i> " (Two intoxicated with love are headed in the direction of the City of Love)	<i>Manjehdaar</i> aka "Lost in Mid-Stream"	1947	Sohrab M. Modi	Khurshiid, Surendra	Shams Lakhnavi	Ghulam Haidar, Gyan Dutt, Anil Biswas; for this song: Gyan Dutt
" <i>prem nagar men busnevaalo, apnii jiiit pe hansne vaalo, pritiit hansaaye pritiit rulaaye, pritiit milaaye, pritiit hii saath chhudaaye, hansmukh phuulo ye mat bhuulo</i> " (O dweller of the City of Love, O you who rejoices in your own victory, love draws laughter, love draws tears, love joins together, at the same time love rends apart, O smiling blossom, do not forget this.)	<i>Barsaat</i>	1949	Raj Kapoor	Lata Mangeshkar	Iqbal "Hasrat" Jaipuri, Shailendra, Ramesh Shastri, Jalaal Malihabadi; for this song: Hasrat	Shankar-Jaikishen
**" <i>mujhe pritiit nagariyaa jaanaa hai, koiit hai jo rastaa batalaa de</i> " (I want to go to the Township of Love, is there anyone who can guide me and tell me the way?)	<i>Ek Nazar</i>	1951	O. P. Dutta	Lata Mangeshkar, Mohammed Rafi	Rajendra Krishan	Sachin Dev Burman
**" <i>mere dil kii nagariyaa men aanaa, na aa ke jaana balam pardesiya</i> " (Come to my Township of the Heart, don't leave from here my beloved stranger)	<i>Madhosh</i>	1951	J. B. H. Wadia	Lata Mangeshkar	Raja Mehdi Ali Khan	Madan Mohan
**" <i>o ruup nagar ke sandaagar o rang rangiile jaaduugar</i> " (O merchant from the City of Beauty, O colorful magician)	<i>Sazaa</i>	1951	Fali Mistry	Pramodini Desai, Lata Mangeshkar	Rajendra Krishan	S. D. Burman
**" <i>urmaanon kii nagariyaa ujad gayii</i> " (The Township of Desires has been lain to waste)	<i>Tamasha</i>	1952	Phani Majumdar	Lata Mangeshkar	Bharat Vyas	Manna Dey
**" <i>sapnon kii nagariyaa haaii</i> " (The Township of Dreams, Oh)	<i>Raj Ratan</i>	1953	Hiren Bose	Asha Bhosle	Bharat Vyas	Neenu Majumdar
**" <i>chalii pii ke nagar ab kaathe kaa dar</i> " (I left for the City of the Beloved, why is there any reason to be afraid now?)	<i>Mirza Ghalib</i>	1954	Sohrab Modi	Shamshad Begum	Shakeel Badayuni	Ghulam Mohammed

*“sun rii sakhii <i>mohe sajanaa bulaaaye, mohe jaanaa hai pii kii nagariyaa</i> ” (O listen, my companion, my dear summoned me, I must go to the Township of the Beloved)	<i>Nagin</i>	1954	Nandlal Jaswantlal, I. S. Johar	Lata Mangeshkar	Rajendra Krishan	Hemant Kumar
*“o bedardii <i>jaane ke na kar bahaane, is man kii nagariyaa se jao to jaane</i> ” (O callousness, make no excuses to leave! If you leave this Township of the Heart, who knows?)	<i>Lalkaar</i>	1956	Nanubhai Vakil	Mahendra Kapoor, Sabita Banerjee	Madhur	Sanmukh Babu
“ <i>prem nagar se jogii aayaa, aayaa badal ke sakhii rii bhesh</i> ” (A mystic came from the City of Love, he came, my friend, having altered his garb)	<i>Miss Punjab Mail</i>	1958	N. Vakil	Asha Bhonsle	Kaifi Azmi	B. N. Bali
*“ <i>tuu ruup kii nagarii kaa raajaa, main pyaar galii kii raani</i> ” (You are the king of the Township of Beauty, I am the Queen of the Lane of Love)	<i>Jagga Daku</i>	1959	Chan-drakant	Manna Dey, Geeta Dutt	B. D. Mishra	S. N. Tripathi
“ <i>are pataa note karo, ho pataa note karo hamaaraa, hamise aa milhaa dubaaraa, prem nagar men prem sadak ke sabse unche maale par hai, khoolii number gyaaraah, pataa note karo</i> ” (Hey, note the address, o! note my address, come meet me again, in the City of Love it is on the highest floor of a place on the Road of Love, room number eleven’s open, note the address!)	<i>Zara Bachke</i>	1959	Nisar Ahmed Ansari	Mohammed Rafi	Raja Mehdi Ali Khan	Shaukat Dehlvi Nashad
“o <i>madam o madam coma coma . . . tum thiik hii kahtii ho madam, main paagal huun, main paagal huun, main paagal huun . . .</i> ” (O madam, o madam, come, come, come . . . You are right, I am crazy, I am crazy, I am crazy!)	<i>Girlfriend</i>	1960	Satyen Bose	Kishore Kumar	Sahir Ludhianvi	Hemant Kumar
“ <i>hoye prem nagar men banaaungi ghar main</i> ” (Oh! I will build a house in the City of Love)						

TABLE 1. (*Continued*)

SONG	FILM	YEAR	DIRECTOR	SINGERS	LYRICIST	MUSIC DIRECTOR
" <i>tuu prem nagar kaa saadhu chala kar jaaduu meraa dil luut liyaa, oye meraa dil luut liyaa</i> " – **" <i>tuu ruup nagar kii ranii badii mastaanii meraa dil luut liyaa, haaii meraa dil luut liyaa</i> " (You, a saint from the City of Love, cast a spell upon me and looted my heart, oh you looted my heart – You, a seductive queen from the City of Beauty looted my heart, oh you looted my heart)	<i>Masoom</i>	1960	Satyen Bose	Mohammed Rafi, Sudha Malhotra	Raja Mehdi Ali	Robin Bannerjee
" <i>ik but banaauungaa teraa aur puujaa kariungaa</i> " (I will make an idol of you to which I will pay my obeisance)	<i>Asli Naqli</i>	1962	Hrishikesh Mukherjee	Mohammed Rafi	Shailendra, Hasrat Jaipuri; for this song: Hasrat	Shankar-Jaikishen
" <i>ruup kii chaandii pyaar kaa sonaa prem nagar se laake, terii sundar chhabii banegii donon chitiz milaake</i> " (Having brought the silver of beauty, the gold of love from the City of Love – combined, your beautiful countenance will be formed)						
**" <i>farishton kii nagarii men main aa gayaa huun, main aa gayaa huun</i> " (I have returned from the Township of Angels, I have come)	<i>Hamari Yaad Aayegi</i>	1962	Kedar Sharma	Mukesh	Kedar Sharma	Snehal Bhaskar
**" <i>chalii aaj gorii piyaa kii nagariyaa, mangiyaa men sinduur odhe chunariyaa</i> " (Today the fair one has gone to the Township of the Beloved, forehead bedecked by vermillion, wrapped in a stole)	<i>Godaan</i>	1963	Trilok Jetley	Lata Mangeshkar	Anjaan	Ravi Shankar
**" <i>ruup dhaar kar ruup nagar se aayii sundar naarii</i> " (Carrying herself with poise, a beautiful lady has come from the City of Beauty)	<i>Flying Man</i> aka <i>Havaaii Insaan</i>	1965	Pradip Nayyar		Khaavar Zamaan; for this song: Soz Haidri	Naushad
**" <i>main ne pyaar kaa nagar basaayaa o nagar basaayaa</i> " (I settled the City of Passion, oh the city I settled)	<i>Rustom-e-Hind</i>	1965	Kedar Kapoor	Shamshad Begum	Qamar Jalalabadi	Hansraj Behl

*“jao re jogi tum jao re, ye hai premiyon kii nagari, yahaan prem hii hai pujiya” (Go, O go, enraptured mystic, this is the Township of Lovers, here Love itself is worship)	<i>Amrapalli</i>	1966	Lekh Tandon	Lata Mangeshkar	Hasrat Jaipuri, B.A. Kamal, Shailendra; for this song: Shailendra	Shankar-Jaikishen, Saraswati Devi
*“kaun rokega ab pyaar kaa rasta, main to pii kii nagariya jaane lagti, aaj baithhe-bithaaye ye kyaa ho gayaa, dil kii har baat aankhon men aane lagii” (Who will stop me now in the along the road of love, I for one have begun the journey to the Township of the Beloved, today whilst seated what was happened? Each desire of the heart has come before my eyes)	<i>Ek Kali Muskai</i>	1968	Vasant Joglekar	Lata Mangeshkar	Rajendra Krishan	Madan Mohan
“la la la la, tum pyaar se dekho, ham pyaar se dekhain . . .” (La la la la, you shall behold with love, I shall behold with love . . .)	<i>Sapnon Ka Saudagar</i>	1968	Maresh Kaul	Sharda, Mukesh, Saathi	Hasrat Jaipuri, Shailendra, S. H. Bihari; for this song: Shailendra	Shankar-Jaikishen
“nagarii javaan armaanon kii ye prem nagar hai, har dil uchhal rahaa hai mohabbat kaa asar hai” (The Township of Youthful Desires, this is the City of Love, that every heart is jumping is the effect of love)	<i>Pujarin</i>	1969	Dhirubhai Desai	Mohammed Rafi	Madan Bharati	Naryan Dutt
*“piyaa kii nagariyaa sajke gorii jaaye re, naihar kii yaad dil se bisraaye re piyaa kii nagariyaa sajke” (Having bedecked herself, the fair one shall go to the Township of the Beloved, from within her heart memories of a childhood home shall disperse, O to the Township of the Beloved, having bedecked herself . . .)	<i>Updhaar</i>	1971	Sudhendhu Roy	Mohammed Rafi	Anand Bakshi	Lakshmikanth-Pyarelal, asst: Shashikant, Gorakh
“main ek raajaa hoon tuu ek raani hai, prem nagar kii ye ek sundar prem kahaani hai” (I am a king, you, a queen, this is a beautiful love story of the City of Love)						

TABLE 1. (Continued)

SONG	FILM	YEAR	DIRECTOR	SINGERS	LYRICIST	MUSIC DIRECTOR
"aao tumhen main pyaar sikhaa duun – sikhlāa do na – prem nugar kii dagar dikhaa duun – dikhlāa do na" (Come, I shall teach you the ways of love – Teach me, won't you – I shall show you the way to the City of Love – Show me, won't you)	<i>Upasna</i>	1971	Mohan	Mohammed Rafi, Lata Mangeshkar	Indeevar	Kalyanji-Anandji
"jaaduugarnii aayii prem nagariya se, dil se dil milaa ke" (A sorceress has come from the Township of Love, conspiring to join hearts)	<i>Bijli</i>	1972	Ram Kumar (Bohra)	Asha Bhosle	Asad Bhopaali	Usha Khanna; asst: Parte, Sardaar
"o taangevaale, chal prem nugar jaayegaa, batalaa taangevaale – oye kii gal hai kudiye" / (O horsecart driver, shall we go to the City of Love? – O what is it, girl?)	<i>Jeet</i>	1972	A. Subba Rao	Lata Mangeshkar, Mohammed Rafi	Anand Bakshi	Lakshmikanth-Pyarelal; asst: Shashikant, Gorakh
*"luute koii man kaa nugar ban ke merna saathii – kaun hai vo, apano men kabhii aisa kahiin hotaa hai, ye to badaa dhokhaa hai" (Becoming my mate, someone looted the City of the Heart – Who is this one? Among one's own how can this occur, this is indeed a huge fraud)	<i>Abhimaan</i>	1973	Hrishikesh Mukherjee	Lata Mangeshkar, Manhar Udhas	Majrooh Sultanpuri	S. D. Burman
"kiskaa mahal hai kiskaa ye ghar hai, lagtaa hai ye koii sapnaa o sapnaa, prem nugar hai ye apnaa o ratnaa" (Whose mansion is this, who's home is this, it feels like it is some dream oh darling - is this my own City of Love, my precious one)	<i>Prem Nagar</i>	1974	K. S. Prakash Rao	Lata Mangeshkar, Kishore Kumar	Anand Bakshi	S. D. Burman; asst: Mira Deb Burman, Anil, Arun, Maruti Rao
"prem nugar kaa rahne vaalaa thaa ek sundar raajaa, ruup nugar kii rahne vaalii thii ek sundar raanii" (He who dwelt in the City of Love was a beautiful king, she who dwelt in the City of Beauty was a beautiful queen)	<i>Suhani Raat</i>	1974	Vijay Mohan Gupta	(For film: Shailesh Mukherjee, Mina Kumar, Rekha Gupta, Durga Borkar)	F. M. Qaisar	Ram Ganguly; asst: Ramlal, Kamal Ganguly

<p>“<i>main raajaa tuu raanii – tuu raajaa main raanii – main prem nagar kaa raajaa tuu ruup nagar kii raanii</i>” (I am the king, you, the queen – You are the King, I, the queen – I am the king of the City of Love, you are the queen of the City of Beauty)</p> <p>*“<i>my name is anthony gonsalves, main duniyaa men akela huun, dil bhii hai khaali ghar bhii hai khaali, ismen rahetii koi qismat vaalii, haarii jise merii yaad aaye jab chaahie chalii aaye, ruup nagar prem galii kholii nambar chaar sau biis</i>” (My name is Anthony Gonsalves, I am alone in the world, my heart is vacant, and my house, too, is vacant, in it will some fortunate lady live, oh, the one who thinks of me shall come over whenever desired, to the open room number 420 on the Street of Love in the City of Beauty!)</p> <p>“<i>o mere prem nagar ke raajaa ab to aa aa re ik dukhiyaaran ke dhaar . . . aa jaa re</i>” (O king of the City of Love, come, come now to the door of a wretched one, o come)</p> <p>“<i>aaajaa mere paas aaajaa, ruup nagar kii main raanii, prem nagar kaa tuu raajaa ho raajaa ho raajaa</i>” (Come, come to me, I am the queen of the City of Beauty, you are the king of the City of Love, o king o king)</p> <p>“<i>o dholaa dhol manjiiraa baaje re</i>” (O the drum, the cymbals, resound)</p> <p>“<i>prem nagar kaa jogii huun main thaam le meraa haath</i>” (I am an enraptured mystic of the City of Love, grasp my hand)</p>	Dildaar	1977	K. Bapaiah	Kishore Kumar, Asha Bhosle	Anand Bakshi	Lakshmikant-Pyarelal
	<i>Amar Akbar Anthony</i>	1977	Manmohan Desai	Amitabh Bacchan, Kishore Kumar	Anand Bakshi	Lakshmikant-Pyarelal
	<i>Karva Chauth</i>	1980	Ramlal Hans	Usha Mangeshkar	Pradip	C. Arijun
	<i>Ham Donon</i>	1985	B. S. Glad	Anuradha Paudwal	Anand Bakshi	R. D. Burman
	<i>Joshilaay</i>	1989	Sibte Hassan Rizvi	Asha Bhosle, Suresh Wadkar	Javed Akhtar	R. D. Burman

TABLE 1. (Continued)

SONG	FILM	YEAR	DIRECTOR	SINGERS	LYRICIST	MUSIC DIRECTOR
" <i>main prem nagar kaa raaajaa</i> " (I am the king of the City of Love)	<i>Pyar Hua Badnaam</i>	1992	Vicky Sharma	Asha Bhosle, Shabeer Kumar	Sameer	Anand Milind
" <i>prem nagar men rahnevaalo ho, apnii dhun mein bahnevaalo ho, kuchh to jaano o divaano</i> " (O dwellers of the City of Love, those floating in their own tunes – know this, o enraptured ones)	<i>Radha Ka Sangam</i>	1992	Kirti Kumar	Anuradha Paudwal, Sukhwinder Singh	Hasrat Jaipuri	Anu Malik
" <i>ruup nagar kii raanii huun mujhe haath na lagaanaa re babul</i> " (I am the queen of the City of Beauty, sir, do not touch me)	<i>Kartavya</i>	1995	Raj Kanwar	Poornima	Rani Malik	Dilip Sen, Sameer Sen
" <i>o hamisafar dil ke nagar, sapne chalo ham sajaayein</i> " (O my traveling companion, o my City of the Heart, dreams we shall follow)	<i>Fareb</i>	1996	Vikram Bhatt	Alka Yagnik, Kumar Sanu	Neeraj	Jatin-Lalit
" <i>baajre ke khet mein</i> " (In the millet fields)	<i>Benaam</i>	1999	T. L. V. Prasad	Jaspinder Narul	Anwar Sagar	Bappi Lahiri
" <i>o yuun lagataa hai prem nagar se ye kaavaa hai aaya, muua kaalaa kaavaa aayaa</i> " (It seems that this black crow has come from the City of Love, damned black crows come)						
" <i>ishq binaa kyaa marna yaaro, ishq bina kyaa jinaa</i> " (What is dying, without love, what is living, without love?)	<i>Taal</i>	1999	Subhash Ghai	Anuradha Sriram, Sujatha, Sonu Nigam, A. R. Rahman	Anand Bakshi	A. R. Rahman

"*ishq hai kyaa ye kisko pataa, ye ishq hai kya sab ko pataa, ye prem nagar anjaan dagar, saajan kaa ghar kaa kisko khabar, chhotii sii umar ye lambaa safar . . . ye dard hai yaa dardon kii davaa, ye koi sanam yaa aap khudaa*" (What is love? Who knows? At the same time, everyone knows what love is, the City of Love lies down an unfamiliar path, who knows anything of the Beloved's house? A short life, a long journey . . . Is this pain or balm? Is this some sweetheart, or God Himself?")

" <i>prem jaal men plas gayii main to, prem taal pe nach padii main to, prem nagar men ho gayii merii shaam</i> " (I got caught in the net of Love, I was obliged to dance to the beat of Love – in City of Love I was finished)	<i>Jis Desh Men Ganga Rehta Hai</i>	2000	Maresh Manjrekar	Sukhwinder Singh, Anuradha Sriram	Dev Kohli, Praveen Bhardwaj	Anand Raj Anand
" <i>o re chorii</i> " (O, maiden)	<i>Lagaan</i>	2001	Ashutosh Gowariker	Udit Narayan, Alka Yagnik, Vasundhara Das	Javed Akhtar	A. R. Rahman
" <i>sun sun le sajan rahe janam janam ham prem nagar ke baasii</i> " (Listen my darling, lifetime after lifetime let us remain dwellers of the City of Love)						
" <i>baajre ke khet men</i> " (In the millet fields)	<i>Reshma Aur Sultan</i>	2002	S. Kumar			Abhi-Raj
" <i>o yuun lagataa hai prem nagar se ye kaunvaa hai aaya, muaa kaalaa kaunvaa aayaa</i> " (It seems that this black crow has come from the City of Love, damned black crows come)						
" <i>prem nagariyaa kii tum bhii dagariyaa dhalo</i> " (You, too, come along the path to the City of Love)	<i>Chalte Chalte</i>	2003	Aziz Mirza	Udit Narayan, Alka Yagnik	Javed Akhtar	Jatin-Lalit, Aadesh Shrivastava

* Lyrics include "sister cities" to *prem nagar* (City of Love).

** Lyrics include *ruup nagar* (City of Beauty).

urban spaces to earn their livelihoods.⁴⁷ Upon being subsumed into cinema, the trope of *prem nagar* unfolds within the industrial cinema space of the modern city, which is associated not only with an intensified experience of perpetual locomotion through migration or transit alongside the movement of (audiovisual) images but also with an experience of perpetual movement toward the egalitarian promises of a utopian modernity that is imagined—in contrast to a space that materializes in the present as a miracle through the *sant's* rejection of the world at hand—and therefore always deferred. The (post)colonial condition of Indian modernity compounded and complicated this deferral through its multiple temporalities in vacillating between desires to move toward Western ideas of nationhood, progress, and development on the one hand and to return to an idealized, premodern, pre-colonial antiquity that was often but a contemporary narrative that effaced its own modernity in the guise of tradition on the other.⁴⁸

The film song, however, was an arena in which claims to so-called tradition were often null and voided by its very form. By its associations with the cinema, the film song became so deeply tied to technologies of recording and reproduction that critics often positioned film music as the modern antithesis to the so-called traditions of Indian music, both folk and classical.⁴⁹ The latter, in contrast, circulated as culturally authentic, embodied expressions even when they, too, came to circulate in recorded forms.⁵⁰ I highlight the status of the film song as a quintessentially modern form in order to account for the fact that *prem nagar*, despite originating within a premodern space of ostensible tradition, became synonymous with the modern space of cinema so quickly after it first surfaced in film song lyrics during the mid-1930s.

In gesturing toward a utopian horizon ahead, *prem nagar's* appearance in film songs could have easily been a masked reference to independence during the 1930s and 1940s. "The use of Hindi lyrics as a means of articulating a progressive sentiment was, not surprisingly, intertwined with the freedom struggle," note Ali Husain Mir and Raza Mir, while simultaneously noting the scrupulousness of the British censor board in banning any such songs.⁵¹ A trope that was associated with *sant* poetry, *prem nagar* could be deployed in the pre-independence moment of the talkie with a degree of ambiguity as a means of subverting the iron fists of film censor boards that had been set up by the British colonial government. By singing of a vaguely utopian future, these film songs could escape the censors' scrutiny and go on to become anthems in the struggle for freedom from the oppression of colonial rule, among other social movements such as workers' rights movements. These themes were taken up in the 1934 film *The Mill*, one of the earliest instances of a film containing a song whose lyrics invoke *prem nagar*. The lyricist for *The Mill's* songs was none other than Munshi Premchand, the pen name of author Dhanpat Ray Shrivastava, who some have characterized as "the single most important figure in the development of a mature narrative style in both Hindi and Urdu."⁵²

Although Premchand has been a central figure in the scholarship as well as pedagogy of modern Hindi and Urdu literature, Premchand's brief—and failed—foray into the Bombay-based film industry has been of relatively minimal academic interest. *The Mill*, also known as *Mazdoor* (Worker), was adapted from Premchand's writings, and the author himself was hired to write dialogue for the film.⁵³ Premchand's own brief narrative of his time in the film industry as gleaned from letters that he wrote from Bombay, as well as from the retellings of that time by his biographers on the basis of these letters, conclude that the film industry was no place for a writer like Premchand, who wished to portray and critique pressing social issues of exploitation through his creative work. However, as labor historian Sabyasachi Bhattacharya astutely points out, this narrative of Premchand's stint in the film industry is belied by a cursory historical investigation into *The Mill* and the reasons for its failure.⁵⁴ Bhattacharya suggests that Premchand's disenchantment with the film industry was, more than anything else, a consequence of his dire financial straits when the film failed to rake in revenue in addition to the fact that his health was failing at the time, rather than, despite what Premchand writes in his letters, because popular cinema's aesthetics and entertainment values compromised its social relevance.⁵⁵

For although elements of romance and melodrama were apparently part of *The Mill* and not to Premchand's taste, these aesthetics were not inherently at odds with the film's investments in critiquing the reality of labor exploitation and validating the cause of worker's movements through its plot. Bhattacharya points out that the film failed because it was banned by colonial officials and Indian businessmen who sat on film censor boards in various provinces of British India and had vested interests in the textile business.⁵⁶ These men saw the film as being highly incendiary at a time when relationships between mill owners and labor unions were especially volatile, having erupted in a series of strikes that had wracked the productivity of mills in cities that included Bombay and Ahmedabad.⁵⁷ By virtue of being banned, then, *The Mill* certainly had succeeded in hitting close to home. The cover of a song booklet that was published in Bombay wears this badge of success with pride, in all caps: "M. BHAVNANI PRESENTS THE ORIGINAL VERSION OF THE FILM THAT WAS BANNED."⁵⁸

The year 1936 would be Premchand's last. He had left the film industry, and his health and financial situation had deteriorated considerably by this time. Among the legacies of his final days was a speech he delivered at the first meeting that convened the All-India Progressive Writers Association (AIPWA) in Lucknow, for which he accepted an invitation to give the presidential address.⁵⁹ By this moment, Premchand had become disillusioned not only with the film industry, but also, as Carlo Coppola notes,

with the Gandhian approach to the questions of India's independence from Britain, the plight of the Indian masses, and the role of the writer in society, and [he] looked

to a more forceful, aggressive political, social, and literary activism to attain these various problems. . . . Among the organizers of the progressive movement Premchand found both young writers in need of assistance from an older, established author, and political thinking of a distinctively leftist cast.⁶⁰

In an admittedly polemical gesture, Coppola suggests that the ailing Premchand's address to the first AIPWA meeting, titled "The Purpose of Literature," may have been either ghostwritten or gleaned from Akhtar Husain Raipuri, whose article "*adab aur zindagi*" (Literature and life) had been published in the Hyderabad-based literary journal *Urdu* just the previous year.⁶¹ Raipuri's article had created quite a stir, and Coppola notes that it bears many similarities to Premchand's presidential address to the AIPWA.⁶² Both Premchand's address and Raipuri's published essay delineate their criticisms of Indian literature to date and go on to uphold the project of a modern Indian literary movement that would direct its concerns toward the plight of the masses, elevate social consciousness, and effect changes for the betterment and empowerment of those who suffered oppression.

Whether ghostwritten, plagiarized, or not, Premchand's address does indeed overlap with concerns in Raipuri's essay and in turn, with concerns that had become major points of discussion among Urdu writers of the time. At one moment in his address, Premchand indicts earlier practices of Indian literature—namely, the output of poets under courtly patronage for their indulgence, in contending that "the ideal of love satisfied lust and that of beauty contented the eyes."⁶³ "True" literature, for Premchand, cultivated critical acumen and tastes:

That literature which does not rouse our good taste . . . which does not awaken our love for the beautiful, which does not produce in us resolution and the determination to achieve victory over difficulties, that literature is useless today. . . . [Literature] tries to awaken this love of beauty in man. . . . [The writer's] esthetic sense becomes so refined that whatever is ugly, ignoble, and devoid of human qualities becomes intolerable to him. He attacks this with the full force of words and feelings at his command. . . . Society is his court and he submits his plea to this country and deems his efforts successful if it arouses a sense of the esthetic and a sense of justice.⁶⁴

In the above passage, Premchand identifies the purpose of literature (which, he contends, is progressive by its very nature if it is indeed "true" literature) as its ability to awaken a "love of beauty in man" and thereby arouse a "sense of the esthetic and a sense of justice." Prior to this portion of the address, Premchand notes that the emergence of modern literature as a secular form paved the way for the pursuit of such ideals, possessing the power to finally steamroll over the narratives by which religion in feudal societies—that is, obeisance to a cosmic order that rationalized inequality—held power over people.

Both Premchand and Raipuri note that the production of literature in India, until the modern era, was dominated by two classes of people: poets under courtly patronage on the one hand and mystic-ascetics on the other. While Raipuri reserves

his most scathing critiques for the former, he is highly dismissive of Kabir as a poet who is representative of the latter, for embracing death-in-life in "lament[ing] the impermanence of life and the helplessness of man."⁶⁵ Such an indictment entirely disavows Kabir's historicity, as death-in-life was also an uncompromising rejection of the caste hierarchies that had brutally condemned so many. By regarding Kabir as a writer who exhibited poor taste in his literary choices, Raipuri displaces the historical and interceding hagiographical contexts that are imbricated in Kabir's poetry and isolates the poet as "an individual of enormous power and charisma . . . [and] as the figure of a feisty individuality."⁶⁶

It is this conception of the author as "an individual of enormous power and charisma [and] of a feisty individuality" that Premchand and Raipuri both take for granted. By exalting the author as the primary agent of progressive thought, whose genius is attested to by the author's ability to convince the masses of the merit of his progressive thinking, a rather patronizing stance toward these masses emerges in its foreclosure of any possibility of active participation, aside from that of acquiescence. In Premchand's address, this stance is especially evident when his discussion of the "purpose of literature" quickly gives way to a self-aggrandizing characterization of the author: "[Literature] tries to awaken this love of beauty in man. . . . [The writer's] esthetic sense becomes so refined . . . [and he] deems his efforts successful if it arouses a sense of the esthetic and a sense of justice."⁶⁷

Revisiting the letters that Premchand sent to the younger Hindi writer Jaiendra Kumar from Bombay, it becomes apparent that the film industry's apparent disinterest in Premchand's eminence as an author was what seems to have left him most disenchanted. Writing about his experience with *The Mill*, Premchand opens a letter to Kumar:

I knew you won't like "Mazdoor." Though mine, it is not mine. A romance is on its way, even that is not mine. Very little of me has gone into it. The same with "Mazdoor." In a film, the director is all in all. A writer may be a nabab of his world but to the director he is a bonded slave, without any say. Only through submission can he survive in this celluloid world."⁶⁸

In his letters, Premchand does indict the film industry for capitulating to powerful producers and for thriving on vulgar public tastes for cheap entertainment, although he admits that "even the directors are dissatisfied."⁶⁹ However, the primary source of Premchand's dissatisfaction with the film industry, which he addresses at the outset of another letter that he wrote to Kumar from Bombay as well, seems to be his fall from his status as a "nabab" to that of a "slave" upon leaving his home in the world of letters and entering the foreign territory of cinema. "Very little of me has gone into" the finished product, Premchand writes with disappointment, expressing his frustration over the fact that his own writerly contributions were overrun by other concerns on the part of producers and directors in the hierarchical space of the studio.⁷⁰

Yet, what popular cinema could potentially give the public, even through entertainment, was exactly what Premchand identifies as the mode of critique that lies at the heart of his own conception of a modern [progressive] Indian literary movement. This purpose was not necessarily to offer a realist reflection of the present but rather to usher in a "love of beauty," or a desire for the utopian promises of modernity that would sustain the constant mobilization of a large collective through its infinite deferral, as it would always remain ahead of the far more disappointingly less-than-ideal present, particularly for those who were most vulnerable to exploitation. Conceived thus, the radically egalitarian, anti-authoritarian promise of literature—as well as cinema, among other forms—resides not in the liberal subjectivity of either the author or the reader-viewer-listener as an individual but in a field of energetic, collective engagements that constitute a world of radical possibilities through critical acts of reading, as elaborated by J. Daniel Elam.⁷¹

A feminist commitment that Elam advances in his consideration of foundational anti-colonial Indian intellectuals' conceptions of reading is that the critical potential of reading privileges neither mastery nor efficacy nor applicability. In other words, these intellectuals' writings point to the "inconsequential" pleasures of reading as opening up anti-authoritarian, anti-colonial, "impossible" forms of a world imagined by a reading collective who would hope against hope. The radically egalitarian promise of such reading would ensue from disburdening the act of reading from having to satisfy either masculine ideals of mastery and productivity or related pragmatic concerns over applicability that would necessarily capitulate to hegemonic, structural limits of the "possible." Necessarily illiberal in its ethical horizons that eschewed the primacy of the Western, post-Enlightenment self, the modernity advanced by such reading practices is not altogether unlike the lyrical conception of knowledge attributed to figures like Kabir and Bulleh Shah, who similarly rejected both the preservation of the ego and the orthodoxy of authoritative (brahminical) mastery for being self-serving pursuits that were ethically abhorrent.

In Premchand's AIPWA address, the font of a text's creative and political energies are concentrated in the genius of the individual author. The heterogeneous form of Hindi popular cinema, however, destabilized the status of any single author or authority significantly enough to have allowed for the collective participation of audiences, particularly around the infinite catchiness, repeatability, and open-ended poetics of its songs.⁷² In his AIPWA address, Premchand criticizes the excessive love of older courtly genres of Indian poetry at the same time that he upholds love as the essence of a progressive ethics of modern literature. The pursuit of love and beauty as ideals thus unfolds as a slippery slope between justice and indulgence—or, as noted by theorists of both love and cinema, between radically egalitarian sociopolitical formations through the politicization of aesthetics and those that are utterly fascistic through the aestheticization of politics.⁷³ This

slippery slope comes to the fore in post-independence iterations of *prem nagar*, as the City of Love becomes an increasingly reflexive reference to the romantic, sensual space of popular film/songs and begins to field various arguments around popular cinema and its bids for entry into arenas of "authentic" national culture.

In her analysis of V. Shantaram's 1939 film *Aadmi*, Sangita Gopal points to the film's stake in establishing a realist aesthetic for Indian cinema amid the growing nationalist movement toward independence.⁷⁴ Gopal discusses a scene in the film that lays out this investment as the film's hero and heroine, a policeman named Moti (Shahu Modak) and prostitute named Kesar (Shanta Hublikar), stumble upon an outdoor film shoot. A song sequence is being shot, which makes fun of romantic duets as well as the kinds of films that were made by the Bombay Talkies studio. In addition, a parody of the song "*prem nagar men banaauungii ghar main*" ("I will build a house in the City of Love") from the 1934 film *Chandidas* ensues, with Kesar and Moti singing and acting out their own version of a romantic duet in the song sequence "*premii prem nagar men jaayein*" ("Lovers shall go to the City of Love"), which "pushes to absurd limits the romantic idealism proffered by love songs . . . [as] they sing of 'prem ki chulha, prem ki roti, prem ki chutney'—stove, bread, and chutney made of love."⁷⁵

Gopal concludes that "by aligning the artifice of the product with the inauthenticity of the producers, Shantaram makes a case for an indigenous—and therefore more nationalist—aesthetics."⁷⁶ The sequence from *Aadmi* pejoratively equates the City of Love to a cinema of artifice whose exemplary feature is its indulgence in the cloying excesses of romance, especially through the romantic song sequences that are its cheapest trick. In the next few years leading up to the subcontinent's independence in 1947 and in the decade of the 1950s that was to follow, *prem nagar* remained a staple among other stock images that made regular appearances in romantic songs.⁷⁷ As a uniquely spatial motif that could refer to not only the city in its modern sense but also expressions of romantic love that had by then become inextricable from the idioms of popular cinema, *prem nagar*, a trope that had previously been closely tied to *sant* poetry, was increasingly synched to the diegetic and spectatorial spaces of popular cinema and the repeatable, romantic songs that marked them as such.

Shantaram's desire for a realist aesthetic at the heart of a purportedly more authentic Indian cinema and his concomitant critique of a cinema that indulged in the artifice of romantic excess was a nationalist desire that snowballed through the 1950s on the part of a much wider constituency.⁷⁸ In the 1950s, "sister cities" to *prem nagar* proliferated through film song lyrics, registering a shift that imbued the City of Love with increasingly romantic, fanciful, and intimate connotations by association: *pii(yaa) kii nagar* (City of the Beloved), *man kaa nagar* (City of the Heart/Desires), *priit nagar* (City of Affection), *dil kaa nagar* (City of the Heart),

sapnon kaa nagar (City of Dreams), *farishton kaa nagar* (City of Angels), and *ruup nagar* (City of Beauty) (table 1; see rows marked with asterisks).⁷⁹ The trope seems to have completely pried itself from its roots in *sant* poetry, moving from the mid-1930s moment when cinematic references to *prem nagar* implied experiences of transit and deferral that were formally and historically embedded in the medium of the cinema and its constitutive city-spaces of industrial modernity through the 1950s when *prem nagar* became a township affiliated with a series of sister cities of Affection, Dreams, and so on.

However, a song from the 1958 film *Miss Punjab Mail* (N. Vakil), which was scripted by celebrated Urdu poet and AIPWA member Kaifi Azmi, recuperates an association between *prem nagar* and *sant* poetry through an explicit reference to the figure of the mystic. It begins, "*prem nagar se jogii aayaa, aayaa badal ke sakhii rii blesh*" (A mystic came from the City of Love, he came, my friend, having altered his garb). While the film is no longer extant, an archived script fills in the diegetic context for this song: "Heroine is dreaming, singing and dancing on the moon with two girl friends."⁸⁰ Presumably, the heroine is a young girl who is either awaiting an initial romantic experience or awaiting a lover for whom she pines, as she sings of a fraudulent "mystic" from the City of Love who, having altered his countenance, was able to seduce her. While she chides this figure through the song lyrics as *chanchal* (capricious), the tone of the lyrics and the context of the song suggest that the sequence is flirtatious and upbeat overall.⁸¹

Two years later, a song (table 2) was recorded for the album of film *Masoom* ("Innocent," Satyen Bose, 1960), whose refrain similarly recuperates the figure of the mystic in its reference to the City of Love: "*tuu prem nagar kaa saadhu chala kar jaaduu meraa dil luut liyaa, oye meraa dil luut liyaa*" (You, a saint from the City of Love, cast a spell upon me and looted my heart, oh you looted my heart). Artifice is characterized as a pleasurable mode of seduction, defending the space of *prem nagar* and the wily, irresistible charms of, respectively, the mystic and saint who disguise themselves as celibate ascetics but are in fact masters of illusion, magic, and seduction, and who hail from the City of Love. Throughout the rest of the song from *Masoom*, the masculine and feminine voices alternate in a dialogue of verses that are not only replete with explicit references to other films and to the processes of going out to watch movies (buying a ticket, finding that a particular film was sold out, etc.) but are also each set to the tune of well-known, more-or-less contemporaneous film songs (see table 2). The lyrics of each verse parody the original songs that are referenced melodically, but this time, in contrast the sequence from *Aadmi*, the parody upholds rather than debunks the use of artifice, epitomized by stylized performance and romance.

What is apparent in a song like "*tuu prem nagar kaa saadhu*" is that the authority, or the meaning, of the text is relegated to the audience. Its sense as an argument for the pleasures of cinema is scaffolded by its reflexive pastiche that becomes robust

TABLE 2. Lyrics of “*tuu prem nagar kaa sadhu*” (You, a saint from the City of Love), a parodic duet on the album of Masoom (Satyen Bose, 1960)

Hindi Lyrics	English Translation
<i>f – tuu prem nagar kaa saadhu chala kar jaaduu meraa dil luut liyaa oye meraa dil luut liya</i>	f – You, a saint from the City of Love, cast a spell upon me and looted my heart, oh you looted my heart!
<i>m – tuu ruup nagar kii raanii badii mastaanii meraa dil luut liyaa haaii meraa dil luut liyaa</i>	m – You, a queen from the City of Beauty, overjoyed, looted my heart, oh you looted my heart!
<i>m – ham dekhan ko gayaa thaa chaltii kaa naam gaadii jab tikat na milaa to ham dekh aayaa anaarii</i>	m – I had gone to see <i>Chalti Ka Naam Gaadi</i> ¹ Since I didn’t find a ticket I watched <i>Anaarii</i> ² and came!
<i>f – sab kuchh tum ne dekhaa na dekhii hunterwali hunterwali se mister karte hain akhii-chaalii</i>	f – You have seen everything? ³ You haven’t seen <i>Hunterwali</i> ⁴ The men (taking a cue) from <i>Hunterwali</i> Flirt/make eyes at you!
<i>m – sab kuchh ham ne dekhaa na dekhii hunterwali</i>	m – I have seen everything I haven’t seen <i>Hunterwali</i> !
<i>f – tuu prem nagar kaa saadhu . . .</i>	f – You, a saint from the City of Love . . .
<i>m – tuu ruup nagar kii raanii . . .</i>	m – You, a queen from the City of Beauty . . .
<i>f – o tere baap kaa makaan saiyaan badaa aaliishaan puchhe mere abbaa jaan hai kiraayaa kitnaa</i>	f – O, your father’s house, darling ⁵ is rather luxurious Ask my dear father How much rent is!
<i>m – leke puuraa khaandaan aajaa ban ke mehmaan main na puchhuun merii jaan tuu ne khaayaa kitnaa</i>	m – Bring your whole family, come as my guest I won’t ask, my love, How much you ate!
<i>m – pyaar ke sholon men tere main jaluungaa ek din chhod ke duniyaa jahannum ko chaluungaa ek din chhod ke duniyaa jahannum ko chaluungaa ek din</i>	m – In the flames of your love ⁶ I will one day burn Leaving the world, to Hell I shall go one day Leaving the world, to Hell I shall go one day!
<i>f – tumhaare sang, tumhaare sang main bhii chaluungii piyaa jaise patang piichhe dor haan re piyaa jaise patang piichhe dor</i>	f – Along with you, ⁷ Along with you I, too, will come just like A string tethered to a kite Yes, o my love, like A string tethered to a kite!

TABLE 2. (Continued)

Hindi Lyrics	English Translation
<i>m – chaand chhupaa aur kutte bhaunke</i> <i>raat gazab kii aayii</i> <i>soch samajh ke milne aanaa</i> <i>dekh na le hamsaayii</i> <i>o dekh na le hamsaayii</i>	m – The moon silent and the dogs ⁸ barking, The wondrous night arrived Calculating carefully, come to meet me Don't let the lady next door see you, O don't let the lady next door see you!
<i>f – uunche uunche bangale kii</i> <i>divaare saiyaan phaand ke</i> <i>jii phaand ke</i> <i>main aaungii</i> <i>tere liye taangen apnii tod ke</i> <i>main aaungii</i> <i>tere liye taangen apnii tod ke</i>	f – The tall, tall bungalow's ⁹ walls, my darling, I'll jump over Yes, jump over and I will come Breaking my legs, for you I will come Breaking my legs, for you!
<i>m – hai hai!</i>	m – Whoo, whoo!

f = feminine voice

m = masculine voice

¹ *Chalti Ka Naam Gaadi* (That which moves is called a car, Satyen Bose, 1958); “super-hit” earlier film by the director of *Masoom*.

² *Anaarii* (Novice, Raj Kapoor, 1958); “super-hit” film that swept several Filmfare awards that year.

³ Melody and lyrics: parodic citation of *sab kuchh hamne siikhaa* (I have learnt everything), a song from *Anaari*.

⁴ *Hunterwali* (Lady of the whip); title of both a 1959 film and a famous 1930s stunt film.

⁵ Melody: parodic citation of *tere dil kaa makaan* (The house of your heart), a song from *Do Ustad* (Tara Harish, 1959).

Original lyrics:

f – *o tere dil kaa makaan, saiyaan* / O, the house of your heart, darling
badaa aaliishaan / is rather luxurious
bolo bolo merii jaan hai / tell, tell my love
kiraayaa kitnaa / how much the rent is
m – *khaalii dil kaa makaan* / to the empty house of the heart
banke aajaa mehmaan / come as a guest
ye na puchho merii jaan / do not ask, my love,
hai kiraayaa kitnaa / how much the rent is.

⁶ Melody: parodic citation of a song from *Sohni Mahiwal* (Raja Nawathe, 1958).

Original lyrics:

aaj galiyon men terii / Today in your lane
aayaa hai diivaanaa teraa / has one crazy for you arrived
dil men lekar gham teraa / having taken your sorrow in his heart,
hothon pe afsaanaa teraa / your story upon his lips
aaj galiyon men terii / today in your lane
aayaa hai diivaanaa teraa / has one crazy for you arrived.

⁷ Melody: parodic citation of a song from *Sohni Mahiwal* (Raja Nawathe, 1958).

Original lyrics: The same. The joke is that as a response, the feminine voice is saying that she will be happy to follow her lover to Hell “just like a string tethered to a kite.”

TABLE 2. (Continued)

⁸ Melody: parodic citation of a song from *Sohni Mahiwal* (Raja Nawathe, 1958).

Original lyrics:

chaand chhupaa aur taaren dube / The moon hidden and the stars submerged,
raat gazab kii aayii / the wondrous night arrived
husn chalaai hai ishq se milne / Beauty has left to meet Love
zulm kii badlii chhaayii / the spell of tyranny clouded
ho raat gazab kii aayii / o the wondrous night arrived.

⁹ Melody: parodic citation of a song from *Nagin* (Nandlal Jaswantlal, 1954).

Original lyrics:

unchii unchii duniyaa kii divaaren / The tall, tall walls of this world
saiyaan thodke / my darling, I'll break
jii thodke / yes, break
main aaungii / and I will come
tere liye saaraa jag chhodke / leaving behind the whole world.

with meaning only when the audience can contribute their cinephilic expertise. Furthermore, the song's slightly altered repetition and recombination of a number of other film songs is merely an exaggerated instance of what is more or less typical. Hindustani film songs not only refer to one another and/or recombine and repeat stock phrases and images continuously but also in this way become both templates as well as reflections of participatory practices among audiences, who take pleasure in repeating, referencing, and creatively recombining songs from films. At its best, this amounts to a collective cinephilic practice of critical reading.

While "*tuu prem nagar kaa saadhu*" appears on the record album and in song booklets for *Masoom*, the song stands out as extraordinarily ludic against the film's narrative, which is about three orphaned siblings who are left homeless and must fend for themselves on the streets of Bombay. A developmentalist commitment to social justice on the part of the filmmakers concludes the prose summary-introduction that precedes the printed lyrics in the song booklet:

In our own humble way, we have in MASOOM attempted to focus attention to this vital social problem. MASOOM tells the story of three lovable children orphaned by the sudden and untimely death of their father, and whilst presenting this story of three innocents in an unkind world, we are drawn to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's words—"It is the birthright of every child to have education, love and affection, proper clothing and opportunities to progress in life."⁸²

Although writer Ruby Sen won a Filmfare Award at the time for Best Story, the film's narrative has not carried forward a legacy. In fact, the extremely well-known children's song "*naanii terii mornii ko mor le gaye*" (Granny, the peacocks have made off with your peahen) actually comes from the film *Masoom*, although the film as a whole—materially, in any recorded format and discursively, as a cultural memory of its generation—has all but fallen into oblivion. The song "*naanii terii mornii ko mor le gaye*" was penned by Shailendra, a beloved lyricist associated with actor Raj Kapoor and known as a poet of the people.⁸³ When I came across one

extant positive celluloid print of *Masoom* at the National Film Archive of India (NFAI), the exciting discovery of such an interesting song sequence—how was a song like “*tuu prem nagar kaa saadhu*” picturized?—seemed imminent.⁸⁴ Yet, the song neither appears in the film nor is it referred to anywhere in the archived script on file at the NFAI. The song’s appearance in the latter might have indicated that the song was intended to have been shot but was never actually filmed, or it was filmed and later excised. Was the song recorded for another film originally and then added as a bonus to *Masoom*’s album? Was it recorded as a whimsical, romantic song to appeal to people who may not have purchased the album without such a track?

Another explanation arises out of *Masoom*’s historical context. The film emerged at a time when the Indian state had established institutions to support an alternative, properly modern cinema, and some saw Hindi cinema in this period as having “turned its back to the political and social scene and started churning out romantic films.”⁸⁵ The song “*tuu prem nagar kaa saadhu*” makes an argument for the merits of popular cinema around its belovedness, in spite of and even because of its tricks of stylized artifice. This ekphrastic argument complements *Masoom*’s publicity materials, which position the Bombay cinema as an all-India public’s alternative representative vis-à-vis the state. In the summary-introduction of *Masoom*’s song booklet, the filmmakers put forward their support of a developmentalist program of intervention that might ease the plight of orphans. The film proffers to instill through its story a widespread sense of compassion for such orphans, in whose lives the public will then have a stake. The prose turns to a declaration by India’s first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru that “it is the birthright of every child to have education, love and affection, proper clothing and opportunities to progress in life.”⁸⁶ This citation affirms the Nehruvian state’s developmentalist program at the same time that it critiques it as a failed promise, due to its conspicuous unfulfillment.

Popular cinema steps in here, exhibiting itself as both an ally in a nationalist program of development and a critic that voices social issues affecting a public constituency that remains underserved by the state. It is to make such an argument for popular cinema—synonymous with love as both romance and cinephilia—that “*tuu prem nagar kaa saadhu*” is thoroughly a part of *Masoom*, even when it isn’t. On the one hand, we can analyze the progressive textual aspirations in a film like *Masoom* (e.g., its narrative, its publicity), but on the other hand, these meanings are rendered unstable by the extent to which such a film’s various parts—lyrics, songs, specific dialogues—could circulate more or less on their own, and unpredictably so. The transformative potential of cinephilia is perhaps apprehended only by taking these various texts seriously and critically and holding together their contradictions: that is, to neither dismiss a song like “*naanii terii mornii*” as merely “silly,” nor to take reflexive celebrations of popular cinema’s romantic pleasures at face value, nor to dismiss the same outright, nor to assume the vacuity

of lyrics and lyrical tropes—or even films, for that matter—that seem utterly banal and formulaic. The pressure for cinema to be productive of social good for the nation and world in this period precipitated films' active engagement with questions that remain of pressing importance to any commercial media that interfaces with its publics on a large scale: What constitutes social good? Does pleasure itself constitute a social good? How so, for whom, and by what means?

Ekphrastic, lyrical paeans to love were one way of articulating the truth of pleasure at the heart (pun intended?) of popular cinema, as a response to charges of exploiting audiences with cheap tricks of romance and frauds of unreality and artifice. In both the song from *Miss Punjab Mail* and the song from *Masoom* whose refrains invoke *prem nagar*, performative modes of seduction through the artifice of disguises and spells—the charms of cinema—are affirmed as participatory, consensual forms of romance, pleasure, and even social justice. The one who is seduced by the saint-mystic is neither *really* caught off guard by the artifice nor an unwilling party to the seduction by any means. The song from *Masoom* explicitly links the seductions of artifice to the pleasures of popular cinema through a plethora of melodic and lyrical references to other film titles and film songs. The presence of the figure of the saint-mystic as well as the trope of *prem nagar* harken back to a genealogy of popular practices of song, nodding in the direction of the *sant* poetry from whence the trope of *prem nagar* emerged.

However, given the structure of the songs and their lyrical associations of the saint-mystic and *prem nagar* not with asceticism and spirituality but with the trickery of both romance and cinema, it is clear that by the 1960s, the City of Love, despite its genealogical affinities with *sant* poetry, had become explicitly tied to the modern context and form of popular film/songs. The City of Love here argued that it could offer the public *itself*—as a space for “inconsequential” pleasures inhabited and created through public participation and as a jurisdiction of a fantastic artifice that keeps in motion those who have willingly submitted themselves to its charms in pursuit of a utopian future that the real-time of the present continues to withhold.

Among the sister cities to *prem nagar* that spring up in song lyrics in the post-independence decade is *ruup nagar*, the City of Beauty (table 1; see songs marked by double asterisks). Within the diegesis of the film *Sazaa* (Fali Mistry, 1951), a band of folk singers performs a song that begins, “o *ruup nagar ke saudaagar o rang rangiile jaaduugar*” (O merchant from the City of Beauty, O colorful magician). In this song, *ruup nagar*, like *prem nagar* by this time, is characterized as a space of illusion and magic and furthermore, as a bazaar-like marketplace of merchant-magicians and street singers. As *prem nagar* and its sister cities are reflexively rendered as the space of cinema, this characterization of *ruup nagar* is one that underscores the industry of cinema as a commercial enterprise aligned with

peddlers of attractions—magicians and merchants—milling about the bazaar, the open-air market of city streets. One recalls that the duet from *Masoom* opens with a playful accusation in a feminine voice: "*tuu prem nagar kaa saadhu chala kar jaaduu meraa dil luut liyaa*" (You, a saint from the City of Love, cast a spell upon me and looted my heart). To this, the masculine voice responds in the next line: "*tuu ruup nagar kii ranii badii mastaanii meraa dil luut liyaa, haaii meraa dil luut liyaa*" (You, a seductive queen from the City of Beauty looted my heart, oh you looted my heart).

Having first entered film song lyrics in the 1930s from *sant* poetry that had been transmitted through participatory practices of song, *prem nagar* was increasingly coupled with *ruup nagar* in particular as the domain of an alluring feminine figure akin to the Beloved: the bewitchingly beautiful, unattainable object of courtly genres of classical Hindustani poetry. This split between a masculine City of Love and feminine City of Beauty falls along hierarchical binaries reinforced by the dyad of gendered voices in romantic duets: masculine and feminine, active and passive, depth and surface, substance and appearance, public and private, subject and object. In a lyrical genealogy of *prem nagar*, this splitting emerged at a juncture that saw the dominance of the social—what Prasad refers to as the feudal family romance—whose nationalist-ideological core revolved around the cinematic construction of the middle-class, upper-caste, heterosexual Hindu couple, in tandem with the prominence of the romantic duet.⁸⁷ But as poetic tropes that had by then become clichés of cinematic romance, the lyrical deployments of *prem nagar* also carry a more transgressive force that goes against the grain of idealized, heterosexual Hindu monogamy.

In a well-known episode of the Hindu epic of the Ramayana, the abduction of the deity Rama's idealized goddess-wife Sita occurs through the demon-king Ravana's employment of subterfuge. Versions of the Ramayana have been central to violently patriarchal assertions of Hindu nationalism and brahminical modernity, which have insisted in unambiguously absolute terms upon Rama's martial virtue, his consort Sita's chastity as a devotedly married woman, and Ravana's demonic villainy.⁸⁸ At a pivotal moment of the epic, Ravana disguises himself as an ascetic in order to beguile Sita into crossing the *lakshmana rekha*, a protective spatial boundary demarcated by her brother-in-law Lakshmana, within which her honor as the married consort of the deity Rama would remain impervious to any potential for violation. With the figure of the wily mystic-lover invoking this myth of the lustful Ravana disguised as an ascetic, the lyrical defense of (cinematic) artifice hinges on an allegorical assertion that the feminine Beloved is not merely a passive victim but in fact a resolutely willing party to the seduction at hand. In such a defensive assertion of consensually transgressive pleasure epitomized by the ostensible excess of nonconjugal, nonreproductive feminine sexuality, the spectator is addressed as shrewdly role-playing in their suspension of disbelief—in gleefully crossing a *lakshmana rekha* with their eyes wide open and in having their hearts willingly "looted," whether by love or by beauty, on- or offscreen.

The publicness of popular cinema—the space of the theatre that assembles the masses as a collective—has been a fixture of film theory, especially within Indian film studies' emphasis on the pivotal historical role that cinema has played in mediating the public's postcolonial transitions into political society as the domain of the rights-bearing citizen of the modern nation-state.⁸⁹ In the case of South Asian popular cinemas, the public's encounter with cinema-as-modernity in the public space of the theatre was deeply interlaced with cinema's presence in much more intimate spaces. With (and even without) the technology of the radio and gramophone, cinema entered the home in the oral/aural forms of film song melodies and lyrics and in printed forms like song booklets, which, despite circulating autonomously, were constitutive of cinema as a technological and aesthetic formation whose mediation of social worlds was not limited to the space of either the theatre or the screen.

The question of spectatorship and cinephilia becomes a key stake for revisiting claims about the degeneracy of Hindi cinema over a period of the long 1960s. As often as some have celebrated this period as part of a post-independence golden age that began in the previous decade, others have decried the 1960s for a range of cloying excesses, none more egregious than the facile escapism of romping, romancing couples. Naseeruddin Shah, a renowned thespian associated with the middlebrow Indian new wave, famously blamed Hindi film star Rajesh Khanna for the industry's decline that began in the 1960s and accelerated through the early 1970s. Shah remarked in 2016 that mainstream Hindi cinema had yet to recover from the damage inflicted by this period: "The quality of script, acting, music and lyrics deteriorated. Colour came in. You could make a heroine wear a purple dress and hero a red shirt, go to Kashmir and make a movie. You didn't need a story. This trend continued and I certainly think Mr. Khanna had something to do with it because he was a God in those days."⁹⁰ Such sentiments situate the value of Hindi film/songs in the aesthetic unity of their stories and the quality of authorial content. Such an emphasis on the aesthetic and authorial unity of content echoes Premchand's AIPWA address, which situates the project of progressive thought in the individual genius of authors who can incite and mobilize the public through the charisma of their ideas, whether in terms of the films' narratives (films concerned with social and political issues versus romantic films) or song lyrics (progressive lyrics versus politically vacuous lyrics).

This chapter's pursuit of *prem nagar*, an open metaphor for a space whose content has been colored in by the contexts through which it has traveled and whose poetic and cinematic genealogies imbue it with a social history of vernacular forms of sung poetry and love lyrics, points to an alternate formation of the progressive that ensues out of participatory cinephilic engagements. Such poetic forms can become available within a collective domain of the popular in ways that exceed their alignments with dominant capitalist as well as statist imperatives, fueling the creative energies of spectators like Ashraf Aziz, who in turn contribute as additional authors of movements toward an egalitarian world that is debated

and forged—rather than merely consumed—by “the masses,” in its multiplicity of memories, histories, and desires. The ensuing chapters continue to explore reflexive engagements with love-as-cinephilia over the long 1960s through a set of productions that sought to cross various thresholds: of national borders, linguistically demarcated publics, and, perhaps most crucially, the rational and possible.