Nationalism in Indian Cinema

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Edited by

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The concept for this book came about in June 2022 when a seminar on "Nationalism and Indian Cinema: Celebrating the Unsung Heroes of Cinema in *Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav*" was organized at the National Institute of Technology (NIT) Durgapur, West Bengal, India, as part of the seventy-five week celebration of seventy-five years of Indian Independence. The overwhelming response to our call for contributors, followed by the enthusiastic participation of delegates from different parts of India, encouraged us to take the idea forward. Our anonymous peer reviewers had to undergo a rigorous and harsh selection process in order to pick only twelve out of many quality research papers presented at the seminar.

We gratefully acknowledge all the authors without whose contributions this volume would not have materialized. Our heartfelt gratitude is also due to the peer reviewers from whose comments we have greatly benefited. We would like to acknowledge the support of NIT Durgapur, and ICSSR, New Delhi, India, who made this seminar happen. We also want to extend our sincere appreciation to Cambridge Scholar Publishing for bringing out this volume.

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INTRODUCTION

In the modern era of technical innovations, no other medium of communication can claim to possess as potent an influence on public discourse as cinema. Since cinema possesses this huge opinion-building capacity, it has become a vital instrument for various social and political organizations and institutions to further and promulgate their agenda. The Indian film industries are no exception to this. From the days of the Indian freedom struggle to the present, several Indian filmmakers have contributed to the creation of India as a nation. Manoj Kumar, Mehboob Khan, Mahendra Kapoor and Hemen Gupta are some of the people who did not sacrifice their lives for their country. However, their creative works have constructed a niche of nationalism in the heart and collective consciousness of several generations of Bharat (India).

While various films during the period of the Indian freedom struggle like *Great Bengal Partition Movement: Meeting and Procession* (1905), *The Terrible Hyderabad Floods* (1908), *Delhi Durbar and Coronation* (1911), and *Cotton Fire at Bombay* (1912) reverberate with the undercurrents of patriotic and nationalistic fervour, various sociopolitical concerns were of paramount importance in the films after independence, like *Do Bigha Zamin* (1953), *Naya Daur* (1957), *Mother India* (1957), *Upkar* (1967) and *Purab and Paschim* (1970), providing a wide range of impetus to bring harmony to the newly independent India. Though the theme changes with time, the ethos remains the same. Moreover, if nationalism is at the core, creativity will bloom from the sense of belongingness. The contemporary world of cinema, which is replete with narratives, must be considered from different perspectives.

This contribution to nation/opinion building by the Indian-cinema community is not adequately acknowledged and perceived in an absolute sense. The Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav (Seventy-five Years of Indian Independence) is the perfect time to celebrate the contributions of the unsung heroes of cinema, and ponder the power of cinema in perception building. This collection of essays has been developed with the vision of examining the role played by Indian cinema in narrating, inspiring, determining and challenging our comprehension of the idea of India as a nation.

The opening chapter, "Benegal's *Junoon* and Incipient Nationalism" by Sanjoy Saksena, explores human relations during the rising tide of nationalism in the middle of the nineteenth century. *Junoon*, directed and scripted by Shyam Benegal in Hindi, is beautifully explored by Saxena from the perspective of nationalism. The growing nationalism in northern India, race relations, religious disputes, gender bias and conflicts and tragedies embedded in the ways of the human heart are some key points of this chapter.

Sanjeev and Aarti Vishwakarma's "Intersections of Nation and Gender: A Study of *1947 Earth* and *Qissa*" explores how these films show the intersections where the nation reduces the other-than-male-gender people to the state of absolute "Others" during such abnormal times as the Partition of India. It evaluates the role and status of women in pre and post-Partition times, and highlights the issue that women were/are deliberately and automatically violated by "men," who were/are supposed to be the primary agents of nation formation, being systematically erased from the mainstream history of the nation and left out as "Others."

"Shifting Paradigms in the Discourse of Nationhood Projected through Indian Cinema" by Mita Bandyopadhyay traces the shift in the casting of heroines from conventional roles to more independent and verbose ones who are capable of deciding and defending their self as well as the interest of the nation. Focusing on Bollywood movies like *Jhansi ki Rani* (1953) *Begum Jaan* (2017), *Neerja* (2016), *Raazi* (2018), *Manikarnika* (2019) and *Gunjan Saxena: The Kargil Girl* (2020), Mita underlines the change in the monolithic structure of nationhood, as shown in Bollywood movies.

Raazi (2018) is also discussed by Labani Biswas and Punyajit Gupta in "Nationalism and its Repercussions Represented in *Raazi.*" This film by Meghna Gulzar, based on Harinder Singh Sikka's novel *Calling Sehmat* (2008), is explored, focusing the representation of Indian women in the narration of the nation and the conflict between national and individual identity.

Bapi Karmakar's "Patriotism and Nationalism from the perspective of Gunjan Sexena and Sehmat Khan Syed: A Non-toxic and Sensitive Approach towards the Unsung Heroines of Cinema" focuses on the role of women in war-centric movies of Bollywood. This chapter highlights the shift from the concept of the abala nari (helpless woman) crying and lamenting the male member of the family to the image of a confident woman who makes decisions in the service of the nation.

Indrajit Patra's "Challenging The 'Male Gaze' through the Portrayal of Female Leads in three Twenty-first Century Patriotic Indian Movies," using the theoretical viewpoint presented in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975) by Laura Mulvey, argues that many twenty-first century women-centric patriotic movies have tried to break new ground by opposing and challenging the normative portrayal of patriarchal patriotism. The chapter highlights how the depiction of real-life patriotic heroines can challenge the patriarchal and masculine objectifying "gaze" and inspire a new generation of millennials with the spirit of patriotism.

Avijit Das's "Cultural Synergy and National Identity in Goutam Ghose's *Shankhachil*" focuses on the representation of the trust deficit among the people of Bengal, as portrayed in the film. It also traces the cultural synergy, visible in the shared love for language, literature, music and poetry of both West Bengal and East Bengal, i.e. Bangladesh. The chapter also draws attention to how the film critiques the "solitarist" approach to human identity, urging people to rally around common humanitarian grounds.

Anisha Mondal's "Discoursing Partition: Reviewing the Aesthetics of Manto in Nandita Das's *Manto*" considers Partition from the lens of Nandita Das's biopic *Manto* (2018). She stresses the concept of emotional connection with one's land and analyses Das's biopic via the Indo-Pakistani writer Saadat Hasan Manto, who represents how the passion for one's work is just above the boundary line of partition, religion, societal status or any other contemporary turmoil.

Ashoke Kumar Mandal's "Nationalism and the Hindi Film *Sardar Udham*: A Critical Review" critically assesses Soojit Sircar's 2021 film as a cultural output that has constructed and reconstructed the concept of nationalism. This chapter argues how these constructions and reconstructions are accepted in nationalistic discourse. The multi-layered collusions between film and history, moving away from the historical accuracy of the representation and analysing what film does in advocating a more inclusive Indian society, are also discussed in this chapter.

While Shibu Gorai's "Nationalism and Religiosity: Relocating the History of the Indian Freedom Struggle in Shoojit Sircar's *Sardar Udham* and S. S. Rajamouli's *RRR*" touches upon the concepts of history, religion and nationalism. He highlights how the retelling of Hindu myths and Indian philosophy in these films strengthens the movements of the freedom struggle in various parts of the world and how, in today's world, the

nationalistic zeal is tightened through such narratives in the hearts of millions of Indians.

Similarly, Nibedita Mahatha's "A Modified and Re-modified Definition of Nationalism as Projected Through the Lenses of Indian Cinema" locates the definitions and dilemmas wrapped around the term "Indian Nationalism."

The concluding chapter, "Negotiating Indianness: Exploring the Impact of Bollywood on the Indentured Labour Diaspora" by Sumit Singha, explores the impact of Bollywood on refashioning the world of the indentured diaspora by making them embrace deterritorialized Indianness through imbibing transposed homogenous Indian values outside the Indian territory. This chapter further problematizes this homogeneity of Indianness by bringing other competing notions of Indianness into a complex interplay of provincialism and religion.

CHAPTER ONE

BENEGAL'S *JUNOON* AND INCIPIENT NATIONALISM

SANJOY SAKSENA

Mahatma Gandhi (1910) defined nationalism as "self-rule," and to this one may, for specific purposes, add "natives" to make it "self-rule of the natives." Nationalism in this sense has been practiced since the earliest times of history, and with the passage of time the definition of nationalism has evolved. In 1857 it had become abundantly clear that the British were the dominant power in India and the natives wanted to get rid of them. The British rule as a symbol of power and authority became obvious after the Battle of Plassey, and successive victories thereafter made it stronger. But implicit in these victories was resentment against them and the burning desire of the people to get rid of them. The rulers sometimes aligned themselves against and sometimes with the British, but the masses were always a disgruntled lot, uncomfortable and restless during the period of their domination. The British suffered from nationalism, and by default instilled it among the Indians. When the First War of Independence began in 1857, Bahadur Shah Zafar was restored to the throne in Delhi and the people rallied behind him while the local chieftains pledged their support. This was not an abrupt development but a groundswell and an upsurge which had been coming for a long time in the minds of the princes and the people. Self-rule was the root cause behind disgruntlement and anger among them. Like all conquering powers, the British were seen as foreigners, usurpers and alien plunders. The Muslim rule had become embedded and had amalgamated with the Indian society to such an extent that they were no longer perceived as outsiders. The people wanted a Hindustan for themselves and a ruler in whose blood something of India flowed. It was the Mughal hybridity in culture, blood and manners, their adoption of India as their own, which made them one of us.

Shyam Benegal's film *Junoon* deals with the much debated First War of Independence. Some historians have described it as a mutiny because of the

immediate cause of Mangal Pandey's rebellion along with other soldiers against the British in Meerut. Had it been so, the vast number of people, principalities and kingdoms which made common cause would not have thrown in their lot. After all, Mangal Pandey was just a sepoy, as were those who joined him at Meerut in sacrificing their lives. The question arises of whether these kings and chieftains would have joined him had it been a much bigger cause than greased cartridges.

Benegal's film deals with the course of the war as it happened in Shahjehanpur, a small district in Uttar Pradesh. *Junoon* is based on Ruskin Bond's novel *A Flight of Pigeons*, which is a fictionalized account of the events. The Labadoor family was among those British families killed because of the War of Independence. Religious and racial hatred became intertwined with issues of freedom and liberty. The British domination also encouraged religious conversions, very often forced on the natives, and this encouraged those who professed popular religious faiths to rise up against them. Islam had been in India for a thousand years and had become acceptable to the people as a part of their reality, but Christianity had not. The church was seen a symbol of authority and religious coercion by non-Christians, and the East India Company as an attack on the religious freedom of the colonizers, who were never considered a part of the Indian landscape and soil. Nationalism drove the people against the British, but human relations between the British and the natives continued, the ruler and the ruled very often on friendly terms, even though they remained suspicious in their heart of hearts.

Many definitions of nationalism have been given, and in my opinion we should confine ourselves to those provided during the nineteenth century, especially because the subject concerns the First War of Independence of 1857. Renan (2018) believes that the nation-forming experience could be that of earlier conquerors inter-marrying and adopting the manners and culture of the conquered people. Once they decided to settle down, the conquering races became one with the local population, and their distinguishing traits gradually became inconspicuous and vague. One of the characteristics of nation formation is "forgetfulness," which is to say that with the passage of time, memories become blurred and even disappear. Spirituality was the defining feature of life in the nineteenth century, and Renan is convinced that the nation possessed something akin to the human "soul," described as the "spiritual principle." The spiritual principle involved a merger of the past and the present in which the wish to live together and continue to cherish the composite heritage was inherent. The idea of a nation and nationalism depended on the glories by which they set

much store. It is on this memory of a glorious past and ambition to move ahead in life for the better collectively that the national unity depended. Renan also says that the nation was not something static and could even change or split; that its existence depended on "a daily plebiscite." There was no way the nation or nationalism could be forced on a people because their very existence depended on free will and accord. The more recent thinker Benedict Anderson describes the nation as an "imagined" political community, and the emphasis here is on the imagination. If people imagine themselves as a unified community, only then can the nation and nationalism exist, and in 1857 this is precisely how many of those who were against the British felt. It was by a process of othering the Europeans that they saw themselves as a nation, and resultantly indulged in nationalism and warfare for freedom in 1857.

Renan's views are different from those expressed by Johann Fichte and Johann Herder, who speak about the "primordial nation," raising issues like the "realness" of the nation. This realness was achieved only when the invaders gradually started accepting the past heritage as their own and got mixed up socially with the people of the place in which they settled. This process of becoming one took a few generations, but it did shape the new reality and make the nation and nationalism more profound. Among the Indian nationalists who shared Renan's views was the father of the Janta Party, Jai Prakash Narayan.

The movie opens with a few lines from Kabir in which he says "Lali dekhan mai chali … mai bhi ho gayi lal." The lines are de-contextualized first and finally re-contextualized in terms of what is to come in the form of a battle against the British. Kabir meant red in terms of the divine, and that those who seek the divine become immersed in the divine. Benegal gives a new twist to the meaning by positing that those who felt the heat of the times were coloured by it, which is to say that they were soaked by the idea of removing the British and putting an end to the foreign rule. It is a sufi gathering in which, along with the fakir (Amrish Puri) and others, are seated redcoats or Indian soldiers of the British army who were to join hands with the rebels. There is no use of the fakir beyond the novel, and Ruskin Bond himself (2002) tells us that a fakir, who spent much of his time in the vicinity of the Khannaut River, had made a prediction that the East India Company would be driven away. The point which has to be noted is that this gathering, including the fakir, turned against the Europeans, and in the case of the holy man it was his unconscious mind speaking, indicating that the divine powers were with the natives. Along with those others present, the fakir was hankering for a wish fulfilment. Nascent nationalism had spread far and

wide on the subcontinent but had not been theorised in the modern sense by the Indians who practiced it without quite being aware of its conceptual underpinnings. For them the modern political vocabulary did not exist but their inner compulsions were driving them into nationalistic behaviour in accordance with the demands of the times.

Schlegel described Germany, along with most of Europe, as the "true oriental self" of India. Along with the German romantics, he fuelled German nationalism. It has been argued that Indian or Hindu ideas, in their modified form, returned to India through the German romantics and inspired the Indian people, partially because the British themselves were influenced by the German romantics. Hegel wrote more about India than Greece and drew much inspiration in shaping his ideas about "freedom." He was more interested in spiritual freedom, but his concerns, with Indian philosophy prominently at the centre, gave Indian thought respect in the eyes of the colonials. The Europeans developed respect for not only the achievements of the Indians but their capacity to run their affairs well. Nationalism was not merely a political affair but spilled over into intellectual domains and the colonials themselves on the rebound contributed to it in India by appreciating the philosophical and theoretical ideas which emanated from all corners of the subcontinent. Ideas knit a people together and emotionally integrate them, and this sharing of common ground contributed to building nationalism among the Indians in the first half of the nineteenth century. Interestingly, the colonials had a subterranean role in this activity, even though it went against them. It wasn't nationalism cut and dried but transfused by a gamut of considerations.

The metaphysical and the nationalistic were rolled into one, and as the action unfolds in *Junoon* this becomes more obvious through the dialogue of Nazam Ali. The dialogue of this film was written by four people: Shyam Benegal, Satya Dev Dubey, Ismat Chugtai and Ruskin Bond. Therefore, the adaptations remain faithful to the original narrative of the novel and succeed in maintaining its spirit. The film has resonances which are overtly in consonance and conjunction with nationalism as the Indian characters come to life. The sweep of the film drags us forwards and is focused on the love of the rebel Jawed Khan (Shashi Kapoor) for Ruth Labadoor (Nafisa Ali). However, the other Indian characters, for some personal reason or another, tend to be aggressively against the British and end up finding a common cause. The nationalistic cause symbolized by Bahadur Shah Zafar at the helm of affairs is strengthened by the personal dislike which many of them, including women, nurse in their hearts for the British. The common perception was that the Europeans were there to exercise power and amass

wealth at their expense, and that their entire project and system were domineering and ruthless. It was wealth, privilege and authority vested in many Indians which brought the Europeans closer to the natives. No one who was close to the British was poor, and the downtrodden had no use for them except as servants. Mariam Labadoor's grandmother (Ismat Chugtai) belonged to an illustrious family of Rampur, but the brothers and sisters were raised according to the Christian faith. She herself married a white man who was a clerk in the magistrate's office.

After the sufi gathering, our attention is focused by the camera on pigeons flying in the sky for some time. Pigeons are traditionally symbolic of freedom, peace and love, and they are kept as pets and used to send messages written on paper. The symbolism works very well at multiple levels in the film and novel. A flight of pigeons can also symbolize fleeing from danger, like Ruth and Mariam (Jennifer Kendal) try to do. The two women settle themselves into safe havens, comfortable and secure, like pigeons generally do. The word "flight" also means "escape" and "release." Thus, Ruth and Mariam are escaping from the danger posed to their lives by the rebellion, and try to take shelter with influential Indians in secure and safe places. It could also mean that danger existed for the white people who shared the colour white with the domesticated doves in the Khan household, and there was no way that they would otherwise be allowed to hang around in Shahjehanpur. Sarfraz Khan (Nasiruddin Shah) blames the doves and Jawed's love for them – and by implication for Ruth Labadoor – for the bad performance of the natives in the war. Ruth Labadoor is a distraction for Jawed Khan, and his affection for her distracts him from making the right and timely moves against the enemies. Sarfraz Khan reacts by wringing the necks of a few doves until he is stopped. To his mind, doves are the British through and through, and, for a man as radical as him, Ruth and Mariam are British agents in his own house. His opinions and suspicions about these two English women are shared by the women of the Khan family, perhaps more so because Jawed Khan is absolutely smitten by one of them and bends over backwards to please the older of the two to get her consent for his second marriage, which Islam permits him. They provided them shelter, but all Indians anticipated correctly that they would cross over without the least hesitation once they were freed. The white women appreciate that they were sheltered and protected at a time when they ran the risk of being murdered and raped, but never express any solidarity with the Indian cause. They are also nationalistic in as much as they are with their compatriots, and will not succumb to any Indian pressure. British nationalism flourished on Indian soil doggedly, and they are confident about their eventual victory. It would be accurate to say that they are patriotic because they know the prevailing

chivalrous code of conduct, which Lala Ramjimal (Kulbhushan Kharbanda) and Jawed Khan display in abundance, and the others of their fraternity respect. Otherwise if the rebels had shown their daggers and swords to them, they would have surrendered. Mariam is brazenly patriotic about her country and ilk because no real threat to her life exists. She knows that she will be rescued by her hosts come what may. When the East India Company triumphs over the natives, she is absolutely delighted, and after reaching the church is reluctant to allow Jawed Khan even a look at her daughter, knowing well that the man loves her girl more than his life, and that till a few moments earlier they had been sharing his house as fugitives. Mariam says: "Kya fayada, Jawed," and in the novel Ruskin Bond writes: "What good will that do?" (2002, 124). She assumes superior airs and her nationalism comes to the fore callously, without any respect for the man's sentiments. In the clash of nationalisms, British and Indian, love is the casualty and has no regard for human relations, despite the smart talk which comes out of the woman's mouth about remembering their "kindness." Charles Grant, who wrote a pamphlet about the state of Asiatic subjects of the East India Company in Bengal, was like Kipling against the intermixing of the races, and his growing popularity with the British led to strained social relations among the colonials and the Indians. After 1857 his popularity grew among the British and his ideas spoiled the healthy social relations between the two communities, leading to the growth of racism. His ideas are also in the minds of Mariam and Ruth, colouring their imagination. After talking to Jawed and the doctor, the two pigeons, Mariam and Ruth, clearly slip out of Jawed's hands, and Mariam is cooing differently. She doesn't want to entertain him anymore and makes short, aggressive grunts like pigeons do when they become hostile. The tide has turned decisively, and the protector is no longer required.

According to Matthew Arnold, who was alive when the rebellion took place, the idea of a nation was inherent in culture and works through culture or a shared culture: "we find no basis for a firm state-power in our ordinary selves; culture suggests one to us …" (Arnold 1994, 135). It was this binding quality of culture that Matthew Arnold talks about in *Culture and Anarchy*, which was present among the Indians, and culture must be understood in the broadest terms. The absence of culture is "anarchy," which is disorder, and in Shahjehanpur disorder was the result of a revolt against the East India Company and not a state of being cultureless. The colonials, and later on the historians, showed some blindness towards the cultural ramifications which contributed to building nationalism in 1857, despite the Orientalists. Mainstream British thinking was political and nationalistic in support of Britain, so culture was to be used for imperialistic purposes. The problem is

that, in such a controversial situation as the rebellion, the natives were always represented by the Europeans and never really heard in their own voice, and whenever there were some samples of their informed dissent they were either ignored, suppressed or simply muted. It is necessary to remember the Foucauldian link between the production of knowledge and the exercise of power. The double-faced colonial discourse, being more powerful and widespread, led to unjust epistemic violence, and the counter-hegemonic discourse in the face of reprisals took decades to find a firm footing. Edward Said (1993) speaks about the "orthodox habits of the mind," and it is this lack of flexibility which gave the English the power to withstand the pressure of Indian culture, and dismiss it outright where convenient, as Lord Macaulay deprecatingly did. Mariam also suffers from such thinking in *Junoon*, even though she has an Indian mother. When it permeates nationalism, culture tends to become regenerative, and this strength of culture is what gave strength to the more systematic freedom movement which followed the mutiny. Before the mutiny began, to borrow from Frantz Fanon (1963), "devaluing pre-colonial history" had started, and with political resistance it took on a "dialectical significance" – thesis, antithesis and finally synthesis. Fanon began with a psychologist, and in his opinion cultural colonialism's indulgences penetrate and disturb the "psycho-affective equilibrium." Thus, the First War of Independence was psychological first and political later, and this finds an expression in *Junoon*.

The pigeons bring discord to the Khan family and the Pathans, who once loved the birds and are now worked up because of them. The unconscious symbolic association of the doves with the British makes them get worked up. There is a scuffle and some pushing between Sarfraz and Jawed, gentlemen who once loved each other, and all members of the Pathan clan are shocked because, with dreadful pouring in, Jawed Khan is busy with his past times and unrequited love, instead of focusing on the rebels, fighting shoulder to shoulder, in keeping with the Pathan code of honour. Jawed's wife, Firdaus, doesn't care for the doves; when the going is good between the husband and wife, she enjoys feeding her parrot. The doves are offset by the parrot, though unlike the pigeons they are caged. Preferences for birds are symbolic in times of emotional distress and political disturbances, and this is made vigorous by associative editing. The catastrophe does not befall the Khan family and instead affects all the residents of Shahjehanpur along with the rest of the country. It is the duty of Jawed Khan to fight wholeheartedly for the honour of his family and the local people because of his privileged background and position. The doves come somewhere in between his duty to his society and the country. When the doves are pulled out of their pigeonholes and killed, it shows the frustration in Sarfraz's head

and heart. The other family members, including the reluctant Kothiwali, are applauded for their hostile behaviour towards the British because someone very close to them has broken the code of conduct expected from an able-bodied Pathan. The ladies are unsparing in their derision, and Jawed's love for Ruth Labadoor is construed as his sympathy and love for their enemies. In the film, this connection works at multiple levels and is written large on the faces of those present. The camera shows a holistic picture of the action which takes place in the courtyard. Firdaus (Shabana Azmi), Jawed Khan's wife, is angry because in Ruth she sees a co-wife and a rival. This grows with the passing of time into a general dislike of all white people, something which the hardcore Indian soldiers share and approve of. Firdaus has, because of her unwanted white guests, become unconcerned about the doves, and if the doves symbolize the Europeans in her unconscious mind, her indifference is understandable. The analogy is pressed by Sarfraz rather too well to be overlooked, and she is also his sister. Jawed Khan has become so shameless that, despite his brother-in-law's tongue lashing, goes to caress and comfort the doves. It is the doves who are pulled out, and the white ones only, no grey pigeons. Benegal's symbolism is clear, as is the racial divide that existed between the whites and non-whites, which is brought out unmistakeably by the director. The birds flutter around, having been tormented, manhandled and brutalized in the courtyard, as well as comforted by the Indians. The British are attacked by Indian rebels, and people like Jawed Khan and Lala Ramjimal (Kulbhushan Kharbanda) try to save them. Benegal does not show any doves in Lala Ramjimal's house but he makes it clear that he has some softness in his heart for Mariam, which she reciprocates silently. The emotional entanglement between the natives and the whites proves to be more potent than the socio-economic engagements. Lala Ramjimal had been a rich man and he gave money on credit to the British, some of whom had died in the clashes or run for their lives with hostility in their hearts. And yet Lala has a fancy for Mariam, and is willing to risk his life for her. It is Lala Ramjimal's mother who behaves in an antagonistic manner towards the proud English lady and is not reluctant to express her opinions and displeasure in front of the white woman. The old woman understands that they were on the side of their enemies and that if the mother and daughter were quiet it was because they were under a state of siege. Once free of native belligerence, both would not hesitate to connive against the Indians. She knows that Mariam would not forgive the killing of her husband and may seek revenge. When the battle between the natives and the British forces gains force and the British are on the run, the camera moves skywards. We are shown kites, crows and vultures to draw our attention to their preying on injured people, and the

heavy toll in terms of human loss. Later on, the camera moves towards the doves and the pigeons because the director wants them to stay in the back of our minds. It is among the doves and the pigeons that the soul of *Junoon* lies.

Pigeons were common pets among Indian families, and training them was a favourite pastime of those who indulged them. Pigeons were a part of the imagination of the people of the area. The symbolism therefore used by Ruskin Bond in his novel and by Shyam Benegal in the film is organic and intrinsic to their productions. Both the novelist and the director use pigeons to show the different eyes with which they could have been seen during the outbreak of the rebellion in 1857, and how at different times they could contribute to the growth and development of different shades of thought. Pigeons were like family members, and interestingly the white doves among them are associated with the white people. After battle comes peace. Birds fly in the distant sky, and Shahjehanpur has been a troubled terrain ever since the British established control, the sleep and peace of the people disturbed due to their apprehension. Pigeons are harmless birds, and if we associate them with the Indians we also assume that the Indians are a peace-loving people. The story operates at polysemic levels and releases multiple meanings, often in conflict. It is interesting to note that many of the central ideas embedded in the novel and film are released through subtle symbolisms, which are made to work ingeniously. The fluttering and flying of pigeons indicates the restlessness of the human world. When frantic human activity takes place, with cannons booming, cavalry charges and soldiers marching through the town, how can the pigeons be expected to rest in peace? Disturbances in the human world find their reflection in the avian world.

When the monsoon arrives, women are taken out in palanquins to an orchard where a swing is hung from a mango tree. The women of Lala Ramjimal's family sing "savan ki ayibahar re," and the Labadoors sing a madrigal. The choice of the madrigal is noteworthy because, as the words go, it was written by Christopher Marlowe: "Come live with me and be my love." Asha Bhosale's voice and the traditional musical instruments, without any of the regular Bollywood extravagance such as a loud orchestra, take us back to the middle of nineteenth-century Awadh. Indian ladies have no politics to express, though are brought in slyly by Mariam in music when her turn comes to sing. The most interesting and amusing part of Mariam's song is that none of the Indian ladies comprehend it. Shakespeare also wrote a song on similar lines in keeping with the pastoral tradition, but it was Marlowe's song which finds favour in *Junoon* and is sung by Jennifer Kendal, both

onscreen and for the recording. Sir Walter Raleigh wrote a reply to Marlowe and Shakespeare in 1600 in which he doubts the fidelity of the shepherds and their ability to be consistently faithful to the women they seem to be pursuing for marriage. Raleigh says that the women had doubts over whether the shepherds were realistic about the future of matrimony. Marlowe's version is more comprehensive, and towards the end he also includes the women's point of view, and the uncertainty in their hearts about the truthfulness of the shepherd's love for them. It was a patriarchal society in Elizabethan times, and women were subdued, but they nonetheless tried to speak their minds and express their fears and apprehensions about the men who wanted to marry them. Mariam Labadoor is unsure about the ability of Jawed Khan to be truthful and faithful to Ruth, primarily because he is an Indian, and Indians, in the eyes of the whites, are licentious, promiscuous and profligate. At that time, race and colour were also issues which plagued the white imagination when it came to inter-marrying. Mariam could never really express herself freely because she had been granted asylum by the Pathan family at the behest of Jawed Khan, when other family members resented both her and Ruth's presence at a time when the revolt had taken a most violent and deadly turn. Jawed Khan had been professing his love openly for Ruth, like the shepherd in the madrigal songs, but instead of the girl it's the mother who voices her fears in poetry. In the song, race and politics are not issues, but in *Junoon* they are the prime issues. The Labadoors are superior to Jawed Khan and his family, who belong to the nobility, and Mariam's husband is just a clerk to a magistrate in Shahjehanpur. This is race and power deciding matters of class against the natives in colonial times.

Part of the madrigal which Mariam sings in the film goes like this:

> There will we sit upon the rocks
> And see the shepherds feed their flocks,
> By shallow rivers, to whose falls
> Melodious birds sing madrigals. (Marlowe 1875)

In her mind, she also has the retort to Marlowe which Sir Walter Raleigh provided, and it is more Raleigh's ideas that she seems to set store by because she isn't sure of Jawed's loyalty to Ruth in the event of a marriage between the two. The madrigals raise contradictory opinions, reminding one that mere professions of love are never enough, and that the truths of marriage, union and life, including polygamy, are different.

> Time drives the flocks from field to fold,
> When rivers rage and rocks grow cold;

> And Philomel becometh dumb;
> The rest complain of cares to come. (Sir Walter Raleigh 2013)

She is unrelenting because she knows that, after her daughter Ruth, there could be other wives apart from Firdaus. Nonetheless she sings because their lives are in the hands of heathens and enemies, and to spoil their pleasure would amount to generating problems for herself and her family in Shahjehanpur. Mariam's thoughts are complex, and in her helpless state she does not surrender to the pressure from Jawed for Ruth's hand. The song which Mariam sings can be said to contain double meanings: one in her head and the other for her companions in the orchard. In the film this is emphasized by the central framing of Mariam and Ruth, and it is for the viewer to decode the jump cuts. For a Christian lady to marry her daughter to a polygamous Muslim is in itself a horrible idea. Firdaus is unhappy about Ruth marrying her husband, but there is no way that she can prevent it because her own religion and society permits and sanctions it.

The madrigal, apart from being a short lyrical song, indicates how comfortable the duo is in the company of their Indian well-wishers and refuge providers. Vanraj Bhatia's music is in consonance with that of those times, and he manages to pull it off with a minimum of instrumentation. It is as though the two clashing civilizations of East and West have come together, united in pleasure, forgetting about the cruelties of war under a mango tree. But pleasures are momentary and mutiny is the reality, and an even greater reality is that people have been killed and are still likely to be killed. The best part of Mariam's song is that none of the Indian ladies can understand it and yet are pleased by it.

In her book *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir (2011) proves that women's suppression is historical, and that the nature of women is a social construct that has resulted in their being treated as the inevitable others and inferiors. St. Thomas Aquinas famously described women as "imperfect men," and it their imperfection continued to be highlighted in the years after, resulting in their being treated as inferior. Later, says Beauvoir, a treacherous aura was built around women and their being mysteriousness was emphasized. In *Junoon*, Firdaus is treated as out-and-out inferior, and Mariam and Ruth are provided with the female mystique. Considerations of race and power sometimes help them to survive as privileged, and none of the Indians who surround them can ever really understand them. It is due to the lack of proper understanding of the white women by the natives that they manage to survive in the hands of Lala Ramjimal, and later on in the Pathan family.

Ruth Labadoor enjoys dressing like an Indian girl, and when she is complimented about looking like a begum, she becomes all the more comfortable in her skin and clothes, even though her mother does not approve of her conduct and behaviour. Mariam's rejection of Ruth's dress is her rejection of all things Indian, and her mind works like that of a racist and Indophobe. While all this happens, Jawed Khan continues to steal glances at Ruth while caressing the pigeons, and doesn't fail to give loving looks at Ruth, even when her grandmother dies. Here he oversteps his limits, but love knows no bounds. Love blossoms in and out of season too. He is not bothered about the old woman and becomes shameless in his love. Mariam becomes dolefully aggressive because she feels that it was her business to ensure that the funeral was in keeping with the Christian traditions. In the evening, when Mohammad Rafi's song "Ishq Ne Todi Sar Pe Qayamat" is heard, a lovelorn Shashi Kapoor is seen pacing up and down his own haveli, and Mariam becomes suspicious of the Pathan and shoves her daughter's face into her bosom to show her resentment of his expression of love. Mariam is not willing to relent, and Jawed chooses to become helpless like man of honour, rather than menacingly coerce the woman through sheer exercise of force. All he has to do is put his dagger to her throat and the matter would be over, and the illusive prize won. His being in love is disappointing as Ruth refuses to reciprocate his feelings overtly, and whatever love exists is carefully suppressed. She had grown up in India and is used to polygamy. The ways of the heart can be strange, and they make Jawed Khan a lesser man in the eyes of the Indian people because of his half-hearted participation in the war. His being in love, the song tells us, is comfortless and disgraceful. The song further tells us that all hell has broken out in him because of his extraordinary involvement in love. The obsession with Ruth takes place at a time when people are being killed on the battlefields, while he has become ridiculous in the eyes of the people at home and in Shahjehanpur. He is unsuccessful in love and has also not succeeded in front his countrymen by displaying his bravery and leadership among the rebels. It is worth noting that Benegal does not present Ruth, or for that matter Mariam, as salacious, and continues to emphasize that love is to be found in the eyes of the beholder, even though it may be a risky affair.

Sarfraz Khan is appalled by Jawed Khan succumbing to a self-deluging love for an English woman. He chastises him with great anger and vehemence because a man who had avowedly been against the British in the revolt has, according to his own standards, been playing a subdued role. Sarfraz Khan, with great bitterness, says to Jawed: "Aap ek junoon ki giraftmeinapneaap ko daga de rahe hain" ["Under the spell of passion you are cheating

yourself"]. Love for Ruth is a personal matter, and to make compromises with the larger cause is incomprehensible to Sarfraz Khan. He knows that Ruth's sympathies are not with the Indians and that at the first opportunity she would openly side with the British. At a time when the battle is gradually turning against the local people and the sepoys, Jawed Khan is half-hearted in his pursuit of the British forces. Sarfraz knows that losing the battle would spell doom and disaster for the natives as well as the Pathan family. Their role, including Jawed Khan and Sarfraz Khan, in instigating the rebellion and attacking the British at the church during the prayer service is well known. There is no way that they are likely to be pardoned because the blood of British men and women is on their hands. Jawed Khan's aunt (Sushma Seth) reminds them that women are the worst sufferers of the consequences of warfare: "Jab bhi jang hoti hai aurat jaat par hi qayamat toot-ti hai. Durgat unki hoti hai" ["In war it is the women who bear the brunt. They suffer the most"]. Jawed Khan is a proud man and Firdaus is his wife; therefore it is natural that she should be jealous of Ruth for whose hand her husband is "prostrating" himself before Mariam, in her eyes. The numerous requests Jawed makes to Mariam to marry her daughter appear demeaning and insulting.

Jawed beseeches Mariam and begs her persuasively, but does not try to use muscle and sword to settle the matter once for all because they are his helpless prisoners. Jawed Khan is a man of some moral uprightness and does not want to marry the love of his life by forcing his way through with them like a villain. He wants their consent but cannot get it, especially because, in Mariam's eyes, he is already a married man, and above all the bloodthirsty man who murdered her husband. To the Christian imagination, polygamy was anathema, although the British had been in India for a long time and had become used to the Indian family system. Mariam does not understand that they did not have anything against her husband personally because it is the clash of nationalisms which overpowers her mind. She does not understand that the British rule in India was established through wholescale killing, coercion, deception and chicanery, as well as that both the parties are guilty of excesses in the ongoing conflict. There is no way to look at things objectively in the heat of the matter. Jawed Khan does not believe that all is fair in love and war. Otherwise, he would kill Mariam and marry Ruth without any qualms. The notions of gentlemanly behaviour and correctness predominate the Pathan's mind, and he will not compromise his honour. Mariam and Jawed are on opposing sides and this settles the issues. Being helpless, she repeatedly expresses her gratitude to Lala Ramjimal and all members of the Khan family, but will not forgive them for all that has been done to her compatriots. The biggest part of it is that she does not

understand her own daughter, in whose heart love for the Pathan has been germinating steadily, but as fate would have it will not blossom and fructify at all. Jawed Khan is childless and he wants Ruth to give him a baby, which Firdaus has failed to do. Ruth hides her feelings from Jawed Khan as well as her mother. She is an introverted and reserved girl, and does not express her emotions freely, partially because she cannot speak the local language or Urdu. Firdaus is clear about the allegiance of the two English women with the East India Company troops, and her husband tries to overlook this sad fact. The question is, had Ruth married Jawed Khan, would his allegiance change in favour of the British? We can ask the question differently and imagine whether, after the marriage, the two English ladies would sides in the bloody conflict. These are questions which keep popping up in the minds of both the viewer and the reader. A further question arises over whether Jawed Khan would further compromise his nationalism.

Jawed Khan is overconfident about himself and feels that sooner or later Mariam will yield to his wishes, and that the Indians are bound to drive out the British. But then, he often becomes impatient with her, getting worked up and occasionally losing his temper. The excuse Mariam gives is that before she makes up her mind it will be necessary for her to consult her brothers in Bharatpur. To further strengthen her point, she argues that he had also promised to wait until the fate of Delhi had been decided. When such arguments come up, an exasperated and indignant Jawed Khan bursts out: “May the Firangi name perish, I say! … Surely your brothers have all been exterminated by now!” (Bond 2002, 92). Then, Bond recounts an incident in which Mangal Khan adopts a Hindu boy, proving the prevalence of Hindu–Muslim unity during the rebellion. Benegal also does not fail to give this space in his film. If, on the one hand, Jawed Khan bends over backwards to pamper, humour and placate them, on the other he gets peeved, enraged and infuriated with the Labadoor ladies.

Foucault argues that power is constituted through accepted forms of knowledge and truth – that truths are manufactured and produce the effects and symptoms of the exercise of power. The Indians in 1857 were being ruled by the East India Company and white people through their brutalities which proved their superiority, a reality which had been internalized by the natives over a period of time. The British episteme of power and knowledge had been driven into their unwilling heads and made them comparatively docile. To maintain the power structures, the powers that be employed the services of what Jeremy Bentham describes as the panopticon. There was no physical panopticon, but the British and their spies performed its function efficiently. The revolt began sporadically in Meerut and later became a

common cause for people from different parts of the country. The East India Company acted towards the territories it had conquered like a prison warden. On a polyphonic level, the houses of Lala Ramjimal and the Pathan family could be described as panopticons meant to keep an eye on Mariam and Ruth. But Mariam and Ruth manage to subvert these moving panopticons because of their race and colour as well as their emotional entanglements. In this situation of surveillance, Foucault (1995) believes that those who work in the prison-houses gain power over the minds of the prisoners. The two English ladies resist, and Mariam eventually says that she will marry her daughter to Jawed Khan only when Delhi falls. Mariam has tried to resist but succumbs to the mental pressure and surveillance. There is a limit to resistance, and it is only after victory at Delhi and later at Lucknow that she manages to escape from the mental trauma and pressure.

Life during the time of the rebellion was very different, and Jawed Khan has to hunt to put some meat on the table. At one point he approaches Mariam when he is in pain with some remedies. She thinks he is doing well and gives him a piece of advice about not shooting on Thursdays. Jawed Khan tells her that on the Thursday before he had aimed at a black buck and the misfired cartridge hit a white pigeon sitting on a grave. The conclusion is that the fluttering pigeon must have died

later on. When he mentions this, also listening is Abdul Rauf who angrily censures Jawed Khan for shooting a harmless bird, because in his opinion pigeons are people who come out of their graves to breathe the fresh air on Thursdays. If the white pigeon by analogy could be a British person, would it be proper to shoot them down when they came out of their hole or grave to refresh themselves? The Pathan code of conduct does not approve of killing innocents, and it is believed that such acts and actions bring about curses. By introducing superstitious beliefs and associating them with the pigeons, Bond and Benegal strengthen the cleverly interwoven metaphor and symbolism. Doves are harmless, and in the novel and film are often clearly analogous with the whites. Does this mean that the whites are innocent and not guilty of excesses, scheming and plotting? The film and novel become polysemous and, as Bakhtin puts it, "unique thought" arises, pushing us into an "unfinalizable" domain.

In the thick of fighting, Jawed Khan's aunt, addressed as Kothiwali (Sushma Seth), shows up along with her servants. Jawed Khan is confident about the defeat of the Firangis, as he tells his aunt that he had seen quite a few of them running for their lives, chased by the sepoys and the people. Kothiwali Chachi has a soft corner for the Europeans because, after her husband's

murder, it was the district collector who showed up at her residence to pay condolences and help her retain the property. Chachi is unhappy with the rebels' "cause." Jawed Khan tries to rebut her arguments:

> "The rebel cause! Why do you always call it the rebel cause, Chachi?" Jawed Khan looked very upset. "Rebels against whom? Against aliens! Are they not to be expelled from the land? To fight them is not rebellion, but a meritorious act, surely!" (Bond 2002, 99)

Kothiwali Chachi is not the only one who feels obliged to the English; there are others, especially since the general administration is in the hands of the East India Company. No administration is totally bad and all administrations are run by human beings who are moved by human suffering. In a way, all rulers as well as feudal lords are exploitative towards the common people and peasants because they thrive on the taxes collected from them. While the conversation is going on in Jawed Khan's house we are informed that an British general's daughter has been saved from death by one of Nana Sahib's men in the tents at Kanpur. This poor girl was purloined by Zerandaz Khan at night on the sly. Zerandaz Khan tried to rape and brutalize her to such an extent that, when he fell asleep, the poor white girl killed him with his own rapier. To prove his own honour, Jawed Khan tells his Chachi that he has not even looked at Ruth properly, let alone touch her. Kothiwali tells the company that she would never marry Ruth to him were she her daughter because, in her eyes, the man is "inconstant." To this, Mariam adds that Ruth and Jawed together would make an "incongruous" pair. This conversation goes on happily in the house because Jawed is confident that the Moghul emperor sits on the throne at Delhi as the master of India. Whether or not he is the master in practice is debatable, but he is certainly an Indian.

Irfan Habib and Chris Bayley are of the opinion that the roots of Indian nationalism lay in "traditional patriotism," which is the result of their loving devotedness to the land, liking for the language and culture of the people. This mindset existed before the British had set foot on Indian soil, and nationalism has always been reworked and is evolutionary in nature, never static. The arrival of the British interfered with nationalism, and the Moghul rule had been around for so long that most people accepted it as part of their lives, ceasing to see it as foreign. The huge empire of Aurangzeb had collapsed, giving birth to several nation states, which the English tried to unify prior to 1857. The English rule encouraged the people to imagine themselves as separate groups but unified them as a nation. It can also be said that by imagining the whites as their others, the Indians could think of