

“Ye Dilli Hai Mere Yaar”³: Creating and Capturing Postmodern Delhi, the City of License, in Twenty-First-Century Cinema

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Delhi

Abstract: *In this paper, I analyze the reasons first for the absence of the cinema on Delhi and then of its emergence in the twenty first century. The majority of these are tied up with the growth of Delhi itself as a megalopolis, which I shall seek to expostulate. In the latter part of my paper, I pick upon two films by Dibakar Banerjee, *Khosla ka Ghosla* (2006) and *Oye Lucky! Lucky Oye!* (2008), and one by Mira Nair, *Monsoon Wedding* (2001), to closely analyze them, and show how the best of city cinema works in close conjunction with the city itself to capture as well as create it, both materially as well as in the imagination of the citizen. It focuses on the minutiae of everyday life rather than architectural landmarks of the city.*

Keywords: *Cinema, Delhi, City of License, Bibakar Banerjee, Mira Nair.*

“What is the city but the people?”

—William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Coriolanus*, Act 3, Scene 1, Line 200.

Delhi, despite its importance as the national capital and its historic significance, has had few movies made on it in the Indian Film Industry that produces more than a thousand films annually. Those that have been have largely failed to represent its people and culture adequately. From the earliest films such as *Chandni Chowk* (1954), a love story starring Shekhar and Meena Kumari, and *New Delhi* (1956), another love story seeped in ideas of national integration in positing a marriage between a Punjabi man (Kishore Kumar) and a Tamil woman (Vijayanti Mala), the films may have included Delhi in its locales but have hardly captured its local flavour as a city nor represented its personality. There were the occasional films in the 1980s that attempted more sincere representation of the city. The Ramesh Sharma directed, Shashi Kapoor starrer *New Delhi Times* (1986) tried to capture Delhi's politics while the Farooq Shaikh and Deepti Naval starrer *Chashme Buddoor* (1981) by Sai Paranjpe was set in the lives of Delhi University graduates. Yet these attempts remained far off the mark and few in number. Other mainstream and popular directors of Bollywood such as a Yash Chopra, a big fan of Lutyens Delhi locales in his films right from the 70s to the late 90s, and a Karan Johar fascinated with Chandni Chowk in *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham* (2001), gave airbrushed versions of Delhi that fitted their bills of idyllic romantic sagas. They showed the privileged sights of the city but failed to capture its true sounds, smells and soul.

³ Tr. from Hindi: “This is Delhi, my friend.” Line from the title song of the film, *Delhi 6*.

With the turn of the century a whole slew of cinema based on Delhi is noted to come up. *Dil Se* (1998), *Sarfarosh* (1999), *Monsoon Wedding* (2001), *Ek Haseena Thi* (2004), *Hazaron Khwahishen Aisi* (2005), *Khosla ka Ghosla* (2006), *Fanaa* (2006), *Rang De Basanti* (2006), *Oye Lucky! Lucky Oye!* (2008), *Dil Dosti Etc.* (2007), *Delhii Heights* (2007), *Cheeni Kum* (2007), *Sunday* (2007), *Nayak* (2007), *Black & White* (2008), *Chandni Chowk to China* (2009), *99* (2009), *Delhi 6* (2009), and *Dev D* (2009) are some films that are either wholly or partly shot in Delhi. Some use Delhi as merely one of the possible backgrounds to base its plot, while some are little better than kitschy exoticising montages, as others seize on the ephemeral here and now to archive it. Still, there are a few within this sample that try to identify and encapsulate larger underlying tendencies of the city in its development and the evolution of its culture and people and its socio-economic and geographic expansions.

In this paper, I analyze the reasons first for the absence of the cinema on Delhi and then of its emergence in the twenty first century. The majority of these are tied up with the growth of Delhi itself as a megalopolis, which I shall seek to expostulate. In the latter part of my paper, I pick upon two films by Dibakar Banerjee, *Khosla ka Ghosla* (2006) and *Oye Lucky! Lucky Oye!* (2008), and one by Mira Nair, *Monsoon Wedding* (2001), to closely analyze them, and show how the best of city cinema works in close conjunction with the city itself to capture as well as create it, both materially as well as in the imagination of the citizen. It focuses on the minutiae of everyday life rather than architectural landmarks of the city.

I begin with the motivational reasons or rather the lack of any desire to represent Delhi in film by its people. While the Mumbaikar or the Mumbai-dweller always remained fascinated with his metropolis, and the citizens of Calcutta have maintained a zealous affection for their Kolkata, no such loyalty, affection or fascination had existed in Delhi in Independent India. Most Delhiites had been indifferent or, even worst, openly antagonistic towards Delhi, and sometimes actively disliked it. However, some sense of a loyalty may be seen to be gaining roots in recent times. The reasons for the original lack and the current sense of affiliation are again historical, economic and material.

Delhi, as is no secret, has historically been one of the most discontinuous cities of the world. Veronique Dupont in “The Alchemy of an Unloved City” (Dupont 16) invokes Spear’s words for Delhi to emphasise its “stop-go” nature. From the capital of the mythic Kauravas, to the Turks and Afghans’ Mehrauli, Tughlaqabad and the Kotlas, and the proud and resplendent cities of Shahjahanabad of the Mughals, and Lutyen’s Delhi of the British, they have all almost completely lost their original inhabitants over time. Partition is by far the greatest demographic shuffling in modern times. While most metropolises were not greatly affected, Delhi’s religious-communal makeup has undergone sweeping changes due to large scale migrations and rioting. While Kolkata today has more Muslims in numbers than pre-independence Calcutta, Delhi’s Muslim population came down from the large 40% to 10% in 1947. In 1947 while Delhi received 4,70,000 migrants from Sind and West Punjab 3,20,000 Muslims had left for Pakistan or been killed (Dupont 229). Thus, Delhi around this time had very few who could claim descent across generations from the city itself. Much of India till colonial times had seen the city as a colonial creation meant for work, and itself traced rural lineages. In Delhi’s case this has been the most potent phenomenon as immigration to Delhi takes place largely for economic reasons. Here the migrations have most often been from other townships and not just Indian villages. Partition, obviously, as cited above, proved the watershed moment.

Delhi has had some very high ratios of immigrants to native inhabitants across time. While in the 1961–71 period 62% of the population comprised of immigrants it had come down to 50 per cent within the 1981–91 period. More significantly, within the immigrant population whereas in 1971, 50 per cent of the population was born outside Delhi, by 1991 the number had risen to 60 per cent (Dupont 235). If one is to follow the trend in absence of confirmed data, the native-born immigrant figure could have only gone higher in the last twenty years. Therefore one may argue that while from the first talkie in 1931 to almost the nineties there were few Delhiites in Delhi who saw it as their real home, from the nineties onwards there was a much larger number of Delhi-borns who had lived nowhere else and needed to identify their environs and register their habitat. It is these people and their culture that grew to define Delhi over time. It was these people who felt anxious to establish themselves, and no better forum to do so was at hand than cinema. It was the traditional companion to the mega-city, both so modern in their origin.

However, unlike the Western city and its cinema, Delhi did not rise as the immediate monument to modernity and industrial capitalism. Such tags akin to a Berlin of modern industry, or a Paris of the Eiffel tower as its great modern signifier or a New York and Los Angeles with their tall skyscrapers and urban street crime never fit Delhi. It did not even have very many opportunities for a modern cityscape establishing shot. If anything came close, it was Bombay, and Bombay did right from the beginning of Indian Cinema had its films on itself. These followed many of the usual tropes of the city film. Beginning with the panned-out shots of the seafront with tall buildings, to its mills and factories and marked spirit of private enterprise, its large commuting industrial proletariat that travelled in local trains and the Best Bus system, the country bumpkin unable to find his way around in this modern urban space that also housed many of the perceived dangers and sins of the noir city and the streets of random sexual contact and loose moralities. This is why right from *Taxi Driver* (1954), *Katha* (1983), *Salaam Bombay* (1988), *Bombay* (1995), and *Satya* (1998), to *Company* (2001), *Black Friday* (2004) and *Mumbai Meri Jaan* (2008), there is no dearth for films on Bombay across the history of Indian Cinema.

Calcutta too had had a strong industry and a large port, as its British Legacy, though the split with the jute producing lands of East Bengal had brought about a decline. Yet, there was a strong ethnic, linguistic, and intellectual unity and vibrancy that lead Calcutta's Bengali citizens to come up with a powerful city-based cinema. The strong, politically charged atmosphere of the Naxal and left movements, and later the emergency also sought expression in various forms of the media including the film. Both Satyajit Ray and Mrinal Sen came up with trilogies on their city almost simultaneously. Ray's *Pratidwandi* (1970), *Seemabaddha* (1971), and *Jana Aranya* (1976) dealt with the liveliness of the big city and the depths of its moral corruption based in the contemporary politics. Sen in *Interview* (1970), *Calcutta* (1971), and *Padatik* (1973) dealt more directly with the strong left movements of the time (Kaarsholm 8).

Delhi, with its public-sector companies, government offices, small businesses, large open rural areas in close proximity, with the city having lost much in partition and its people being those who were trying to re-establish their lives, seemed very much parochial. Apart from the fact that not many inhabitants early on called it their own, most Indians, especially the filmmakers, didn't even see it as a city at par with these other two metros. As a developing city, Delhi fell short of most of the modern city's essential criterion of self-definition. It needed much more maturity which came in the nineties, which

brought in sweeping socio-economic inter-national changes by which time Delhi also had its own native born citizens from the second and third generations of the immigrants

Another major reason for this early lack of Delhi films as opposed to the existence of many on the other two metros was that of the different material conditions of production of films in the cities. Both Calcutta and Bombay had their own indigenous film industries that were producing extremely authentic and powerful works. It was only in the nineties with the establishment of some electronic media houses such as NDTV in 1988, and also that of the film city and production houses in Noida that some film technicians and admen came to India. Though, even then, hardly any feature films have yet been produced in Delhi, Delhi began to see itself on the electronic screen through its own lens for the first time.

If one was to ascribe a definite date for Delhi's change of complexion and turn of fortunes one could place it most prudently at 24 July 1991, the date of the then Finance Minister, Manmohan Singh's landmark liberalisation budget that opened up the Indian economy to foreign direct investments. It can be said that it was this one move that took India from a nation struggling with the modern industrial world to a world of postmodern late-capitalism of globally connected economies that demanded and engendered a new kind of city. Delhi, which, in the views of many, had been the laggard among the Indian metropolises, was ideally suited for this as it still had the scope for strident expansions that the other metros had almost saturated. As Partha Chatterjee, in "Are Indian Cities Becoming Bourgeois at Last?," notes for the Indian city, globalization had shifted the industry to all parts of the world away from the metropolis which was now to become the node of centralization of management of the industrial spreads at the regional, and maintaining managerial connections at the global, levels. Instead of heavy industry, financial and other product services were to be the ones housed in the city, which was gradually to become the office and residential space of the elite. Delhi with its far greater geographical area,⁴ the very lack of heavy industry, its large university system producing large manpower for service providers, already existing large amounts of exports, its geographical location in the plains, its socio-politic and international symbolic importance as the capital of a newly emerging world economy, and the quickly growing communication and commutation facilities in the capital, all helped it on its way to emerge as the postmodern megalopolis it is today.

Apart from having the most land available among the metros, another of the very favourable advantages of Delhi, particularly over Mumbai, was easy expansion on all sides due to absence of any natural barriers in the plains. Satellite townships in the neighbouring states quickly came up along its borders that function as its suburbs. This remains a physical impossibility in a place like Mumbai, which is a narrow peninsula. Calcutta's political encumbrances have not allowed it the easy road to liberalization either. The elitist demands of the postmodern city are exactly this, as according to Chatterjee. This city develops in a centrifugal fashion as the poor labour is economically forced into the periphery, while the centre develops into the economic and civic hub of the elite. There are either the very posh forays of the elite in the form of the farmhouses of Delhi into the erstwhile rural lands of Delhi, such as the Sainik Farms and other areas in Mehrauli such as the Bhatti mines and Chhattarpur, which comprise Delhi's plush suburbs, or the economically-forced migrations of the poor, mostly into the east, across the Yamuna, and away from their central squatter colonies from which they have been evacuated. Even

⁴ 3,182 km² as opposed to the much lesser 2,350 km² of Mumbai and 1,785 km² of Kolkata.

others, such as the citizens of Old Delhi, are forced into moving to either the West such as Dwarka or the better colonies of the East, and those who can afford it to the South to seek better standards of living. The other viable options are Gurgaon and Noida, the more upmarket of the National Capital Region townships, which are also the hubs of the elite technology industry and the associated residences of their employees. The NCR includes not just these two townships from Haryana and Uttar Pradesh respectively but also others from the two states as well as some from Rajasthan, besides the National Capital Territory of Delhi. Today it is the largest urban agglomeration in the world with an area of 33,578 km².

Still, just as Western modernization was appropriated after being Indianized through the prisms of the ideologues Gandhi and Nehru at the national level and at the various local lenses of tradition, postmodernism too in India or in Delhi has not succeeded in its Westernised program to the hilt. While the neo-urbanization of Old Delhi and such areas had already failed despite the autocratic eras of the Emergency and Sanjay Gandhi, the postmodern liberalized Delhi has not been able to remove or restructure Shahjahanabad and such old settlements yet. In fact, many of the heritage sites here, and elsewhere in Delhi, make Delhi what it is. While the Old Delhi heritage sites may not be protected with as much vigour, others, such as the Lodi tombs located in the picturesque gardens in the middle of the city's most posh areas are far better looked after. Together, they lend the city its character. Alongside the placelessness or the transferable absence of individuality of the mall and the multiplex, it is these landmarks that anchor Delhi. Although, it should be noted that despite their similitudes some of these franchises and malls have also come up to define spaces a certain way in this city. In Delhi, then, various architectural styles coexist at the same time, never permitting it to be the late-capitalist elite urban space, which is increasingly expected of the hub of the region, and desired by those controlling the flow of capital. It becomes and remains postmodern in the most extreme sense of an Indian or even Delhi-specific hybridity.

So it is that even in its emergence as the Indian megalopolis, Delhi continues to maintain its traditional heterogeneity in various ways. Not just in its monuments and architecture, but the large number of migrations mentioned earlier lend a hugely colourful complexion to the demographics. Also, the development of the city, most strongly since the early nineties, has, as stated earlier, resulted into geographical distribution of people over the city, not just on communal but class bases. Quite clearly, its cinema too cannot but be microcosmic and attempt to operate with one set of loci at a time. Despite its overwhelming nature as the largest Leviathan of them all, Delhi may be said to be comprised of many Delhis, and each asks for the representation of its own reality.

Another, means of self definition for the city in the post modern times of the extensive media explosion, concomitant to liberalization, has been the easy availability of images of world cities and increased travel of the middle classes. Hence, the building of chalets and villas and the aspirations of a Gurgaon as a Shanghai or a Noida's aspirations of building the world's tallest tower. Clearly, in this world of simulacra and consumerism, Delhi seems to be at the forefront of commodification of the minds of its people and the complete reification of interpersonal relations. Since it is only the elite that can increasingly retain the right to a healthy and comfortable living in this city, they almost seem to have no choice but to exercise their choices materialistically.

Furthermore, in this city of migrants, of Marwaris and Bengalis, migrants from UP, Bihar, Haryana, Rajasthan and elsewhere, the partition immigrants from West Punjab do seem to dominate to a certain extent. The reason for this, as Ashish Nandy tells us in the “Death of an Empire” (Vasudevan, *Sarai Reader* 20), invoking Stephens Keller, can be that those uprooted immigrants, having already seen the worst, mass slaughters and rapes, and survived it, think of themselves as being invincible. Distrustful of all others, they are most aggressive, both professionally and personally. This aggression and sense of invincibility have probably allowed them to pick up and restart most efficiently.

This city of immigrants, along with the easy approach to Delhi from its neighbouring towns, also made Delhi as the city of license, where non-residents have no accountability and even residents can operate freely in its large size with relative anonymity. The nouveau riche of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, who have acquired wealth recently by selling off agricultural land to developers at exorbitant prices, travel to and fro to Delhi for leisure. The aggression and sense of invincibility in the settled Punjabi immigrant of Delhi, and these parvenu neighbours of Delhi, who have easy cash to spare that has not been earned through hard-labour, combines to create the atmosphere of Delhi as the city of license.

No wonder then that the three films on Delhi which I argue deal best with its growth and development, its spaces, its people and culture all take on the Delhiite Punjabi people. Yet, within this larger ethnic sample each picks on a different class and locality, and different aspects of the city life of Delhi. At the same time, all in their unique ways showcase the strong materialist tendencies of these Punjabi Delhiites that are pervasive across different classes. The movies pick on many of the well-established tropes of the Western City Film as they represent another space of license, the western American frontier. However, the Delhi films appropriate the Western tropes and incorporate them to represent Delhi best just in the manner the city had moulded late capitalism and its own developments uniquely.

Both Mira Nair and Dibakar Banerjee drop the landmark sights of Delhi, i.e., the Red Fort and the India Gate, to move away from simplistic representations of the city in the way of a picture postcard. Both stick to representing the people, their class and culture, and their social and spatial modalities of operation that are influenced by, and help build, their cities. Therefore, their cinema presents Delhi very powerfully to its own residents, as well as to the rest of the world, sometimes establishing it in their minds in the way it is projected through their films. In many cases, these films can then serve as the point of reference for identifying or perceiving the city physically for the viewer. Thus, carrying something more than the city’s mere visuals, these movies can be seen to have a haptical quality⁵ that is felt by the eyes of the viewers. In C.S. Pierce’s terms this is more than simple iconicity and such cinema in the hands of these makers becomes indical as the signs within the movies of the cities carry more than visual simulacral associations that influence each other reciprocally and consequentially.

All three films chart Delhi, yet none of the three Delhis have much in common, even when none is any less true than the other. While *Monsoon Wedding* shows us a wedding in an elite Punjabi family in South Delhi, *Khosla ka Ghosla* is about a middle class Punjabi family of North Delhi, whose patriarch invests all his retirement money into a piece of land in South Delhi only to be duped, and the sons’

⁵For the Deleuzian use of Piercian Semiotics in film refer to Clarke, *The Cinematic City* 9.

attempts to regain it. *Oye Lucky! Lucky Oye!* is the bildungsroman of a thief who grows up in a broken West Delhi Punjabi home of a very small self-employed businessman.

Monsoon Wedding runs the very fine line of the placelessness and the global culture that a large majority of the twenty-first century elite inhabit and the Verma family's specificity in being Delhi Punjabis. Nair also succeeds in a commendable manner to highlight the inherent tendencies of the Verma household that are specific to Delhi and do not belong to any residents of any posh locality of a metropolis. Lalit Verma, played by Naseeruddin Shah, while introducing Tej Verma, played by Rajat Kapoor, establishes their migrant status. It is further proof of the cutthroat bourgeois competition, the never say die spirit of the immigrant's resolution, that is personified in the South Delhi House that these once-homeless immigrants have carved for themselves. Lalit mixes his desire to hold the most lavish wedding for his daughter with a typical tendency to be stingy in the minute details, such as the liquor offered, of one who has seen much-worse times. The family is typically large and gregarious, with certain rich American members of the Indian diaspora arriving for the wedding, which is almost a necessary requisite to Punjabi families even if not of all the elite. The wedding itself is an arranged marriage with an NRI engineer. A typically suitable match for any Indian girl, even if educated and independent as shown here in the character of Aditi, played by Vasundhara Das.

In fact, not just Aditi, but Pimmi, Riya, and Ayesha (and Mehgna in *Khosla ka Ghosla*) represent the urban woman who is educated, outgoing, has the agency to smoke or drink and to run her sexual relations as desired. Aditi even goes to meet her married boyfriend on the eve of her wedding. Such women are possible only in the urban environment, with its clandestine spaces and possibilities of anonymity. Still, it is the city which is also the space of dangerous and illicit and random sexual contact. Tej, the supposed patriarch of the family is also discovered to be a pathological paedophile. However, as a modern educated man, Lalit is brave enough to face up to it and send him away. Symbolically it is presented as the granting of a safe space for his three girls, as they are shown to romp away in the gardens in the rain at the end of the film. Even if Lalit was not open enough to understand his son who has the 'effeminate' desires to cook and dance, he is concerned for the safety of his daughters. In *Monsoon Wedding*, Nair brings us this Punjabi family of Delhi with its lavish wedding which may be seen as the essential act for the migrant to prove that he has arrived to himself and his community. Yet, she also shows us the simultaneous possibility of the placelessness of this class or its creation of these isolated, secure, and luxurious havens, far removed from the squabbles of the Old City to which P.K. Dubey, the upstart entrepreneur or wedding planner calls his home. The urban divide of the South of the city with the rest of it is evident in this one shot that shows his derelict home.

Khosla ka Ghosla deals in great depth with the land-use shift in the post liberalization Delhi. With greater flows of money into the middle class, especially to the technocrats, land prices rose exponentially within the last 15–20 years, and not just within the capital but also the NCR. K. K. Khosla, played by Anupam Kher, who has a computer engineer son Cherry, played by Parvin Dabas, exemplifies the aspirations of the middle-class man. He wants to move to South Delhi by investing his retirement money in a (hypothetical) New Sapna Vihar Plot that is representative of any of the recently developed societies in South Delhi and the NCR. Another Punjabi, Khurana, is land mafia kingpin, who takes forceful possession of Khosla's plot, and asks Mr Khosla to pay half of the money that the land is worth as ransom to gain possession of his own plot. Dibakar Banerjee not only takes a trenchant look at the

aspirations of the middle class of Delhi and the problems associated with land deals in the city, but also at the apathy of the authorities, and the law of the land where the mighty remain right. Delhi, despite all its postmodern capitalist assumptions about itself, also remains the original city of license, where the powerful actually does as he wishes. Khurana, played exceedingly well by Boman Irani embodies this maxim.

He is typical of the Delhi rich and arrogant businessmen who exploit and even defraud common men such as the middle class Khosla. However, the movie revolves around the fraud being duped in turn by the cheated. Cherry, along with his friends, manages to fool a larger plot of land to which they have no rights, but is, in fact, owned by the government. There's much laughter in the process, but as an exception, the ethical right triumphs in the film, though it remains quite clear that most often this is not the case in the real Delhi.

Sociologically, the representations of the film are perfect. Like many of Delhi's rich and successful racketeers not only does Khurana have a house in South Delhi, (Friends Colony to be precise), but also has a farmhouse further down south, which has come to be the final stamp of elitism in the city. Such farmhouses of Delhi are actually illegally built mansions on rural land that was originally sold off at cheaper rates, and violate numerous clauses such as that of floor area ratio, but since they fall within the domain of the elite they remain impervious to government counteractions. Delhi, the city of license, remains sufficiently charged both politically and economically to allow its Elite to operate as they want to. De jure sanctions exist, but the de facto existence of Delhi's privileged is beyond the short arms of Delhi's law.

In his other film too, Banerjee captures the desire to have one's way around as one wishes to the life of its main protagonist Lucky. *Oye Lucky! Lukcy Oye!* comprises, meta-narratively, of a single episode of a televised program called "Criminal,"⁶ which shows the viewer the simulated construct of the life of the thief and con-artist, Lucky. Lucky, played very skilfully by Abhay Deol, is based on the real life crook Bunty, recently released from prison upon completion of his sentence. As a purloiner of all kinds of things, ranging from cars to cash and decorative items to dogs, in Lucky we are shown the worst results of Delhi's materialistic culture and commodification of all relations. Lucky attempts to grapple with the breakdown of family life in the city and the constant social demand for material growth. As the TV episode reconstructs Lucky's childhood we look through the window into a broken family where the father has brought in another woman to live in the same house as his three sons and the first wife. Constant squabbles over money result between the father and the son, who looks greedily at rich kids moving around in fancy cars and clothes. While these moments are given a comic touch, one cannot miss the dark humour and irony underlying these moments. The North-West Delhi street-space becomes the typical risky and risqué space of urban city cinema, where Lucky interacts with other boys who lead him into an easy life where all that he desires is his for the taking. Through these commodities what Lucky really seeks is greater acceptance and normality that he lacks and misses in his family life. He is sexually innocent and inexperienced, yet the desire to enter the elusive and elite world of dating, giving and receiving cards, and professing love is all exceedingly attractive as an adolescent. Very soon he seeks the license to snatch all that he cannot legitimately lay his hands upon. His joie de vivre and charm endear

⁶ Greatly reminiscent of some highly popular shows such as *India's Most Wanted* and *Sansanee*.

him to the audience, and sometimes even to those he robs. He conducts himself with an absolute élan, which when combined with his tragic and futile desire to fit in, makes the viewers outside, and the victims in the film, begin to feel for this thief from the lower class with class aspirations. His movement from the bylanes of West Delhi to the easy inhabiting of South Delhi bungalows, albeit as a thief in stolen clothes and cars, showcases his Delhiite confidence. At the same time he shows that it takes little else beside show and pomp to move across these spatial barriers of class. Though the lack of real means always forebodes a tragic end for him, like Fitzgerald's Gatsby.

When a grown-up thief, he reaches a point where he becomes a compulsive kleptomaniac with nothing better to do, as he fails in all his social attempts at recognition by all the father-figures in the film, which are interestingly played by the same actor, Paresh Rawal. As Lucky's father, the intermediary Gogi Bhai, and the veterinarian Kukreja, who all claim to be family yet only use Lucky instrumentally, are all played by Rawal, they all seem to represent the common underlying materialistic nature in a community that has lost everything not very long back, and has had to struggle in a new land to survive and do well.

Lucky's desire for social acceptance into family, and the upper-classes—the "gentry" as the character of Dolly remarks about her sister as belonging to, being educated, from which despite all his efforts he remains excluded—is best exemplified in his obsession with images. Lucky steals portraits of happy families from their houses and puts them around in his own flat trying to claim a lineage of a certain sort. In the journalist's house that he loots with a claim to greater notoriety, which he reads as popularity, he encounters a snowed-in hill-station among the family pictures to which he soon rushes off. Pictures provide aspirational values, and a yearning to inhabit the spaces captured.

Photographs, in our hyperreal world, have increasingly the means to establish our egos. They even institute the people of the city within the classist spaces they inhabit and connote far beyond their immediate smiles through the smallest visible backgrounds. In *Monsoon Wedding*, Riya and Tej have to be clicked within the same happy family frames at the wedding before Tej can be told to get away by Lalit. In *Khosla ka Ghosla*, if Cherry wishes to go away from his family to America, then he must necessarily remove himself from the family picture too. In a markedly symbolic moment, Cherry cuts off himself from the family photograph to use his picture as a passport photo in the visa process.

Dissembling too has to be practised as much in real life as in theatre. Meghna's theatre group is roped in to dupe Khurana. Bapu, played by Navin Nischol saves the day by conning Khurana by playing the part of a member of the Elite class in an expensive suit and car. Together they manage to sell real estate to the swindler that they don't know themselves. They manage to steal from the thug through clever dissembling.

In fact, as Baudrillard has more than amply shown, the wide prevalence of media in our postmodern urban cultures has made our entire world exceedingly hyperreal. In *Oye Lucky! Lucky Oye!* Lucky is routinely seen as some film hero or the other by the people around him. He is Rishi Kapoor to his step mother, Vinod Khanna to Dolly, and Shahrukh Khan to the policeman who has caught him finally. In fact, his mental survival strategy in the face of the harsh city is one of romantic narcissism. In *Monsoon Wedding* too, Ayesha lives her few seconds to fame reliving a Sushmita Sen song in front of the wedding gathering. The desire to inhabit the personages of the stars and make the spaces around them picture-, or cinema-, perfect becomes an urban anxiety that Lucky captures the most poignantly for us.

He is at once the criminal figure of the noir city film, as well as the perfect post-modern flaneur, who lives in his stolen cars always on the street without a fixed address, observing everything without being a part of it. At the same time, he inhabits the multiple worlds of simulations as he lives the life of a film hero-thief in his world, shown to the audience through a TV episode, which is in fact a film. Delhi's materialist atmosphere breeds such a flaneur.

Thus, *Monsoon Wedding*, *Khosla ka Ghosla*, and *Oye Lucky! Lucky Oye!* capture Delhi in some of its contemporary expressions and microcosmic instances to give one an idea of some of its many complex postmodern shades. I have already elaborated in great detail the reasons for the emergence of specific socio-historic cinema, at this particular moment in the twenty-first century. This cinema becomes the city's archive while also creating the city in the imagination of its viewers⁷. “*Ye Delhi hai mere yaar*”⁸ goes the song from *Delhi 6*. It is the Delhi unique of each teller, filmmaker, and each class, people and individual. It may be possible to derive and capture certain milieus and cultures and spatial phenomenon, but there remains a diverse variety within the city's hybridity to choose from and exploit in artistic creation. Though *Delhi Belly* failed to capture Delhi's nuances as well, but the future is bound to have many more films on this city of the chequered past, especially because of its explosive now, and a future where the city is bound to grow even further, even though one fails to ascertain the directions it will take.

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⁷The material and other social phenomenon of Delhi's production in cinema and cinema's shaping of the city are highly complex and need to be studied further. The importance of the theatre or cinema hall in Delhi and its transformation into the multiplex with time, and as they have shaped the city's landscape is also an important study outside the scope of this paper. One may refer to Vasudevan “Cinema in Urban Space”.

⁸ “This is Delhi, my friend.”

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