

***Anhey Ghorhey Da Daan: The Politics and Legacies of New Wave Movement  
in Contemporary Indian Cinema***

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It is a foggy, winter morning. A man wakes up to the call of alms for the blind horses in a village, and asks for a cup of tea. His wife implores the daughter to get up and make the tea. She does, lighting the earthen stove in the outer courtyard, waking up her brother and sending him out with the goats while the water comes to a boil. The father sits sipping tea when a neighbor passing by, calls out for him to join the village council to demand justice for the demolition of a house on the outskirts of the village. A few shots later, against a haunting soundtrack, we see the camera slowly tracking through a fog-covered lane with the father eventually entering the frame (see fig. 1.1). Another neighbor passing by taps him on the shoulder and implores him to walk faster. He comes to an abrupt halt. The camera continues to track forward rendering him out of focus, and cuts 180° to a direct frontal shot. As the camera re-orientes on him, he still doesn't move and the camera swiftly switches to a flattened telephoto lens with him in an extreme close-up. The camera begins pulling back, continuing its onwards tracking, rendering the image estranged, oneiric. The man continues to stand still, experiencing time as it too stands still (see fig. 1.2). Doing so, the film foregrounds the juxtaposing experiences of duration, time and attention as it experiments with encounters between objects, materials, tonalities and temporalities.



**Figure 1.1 Father walking to join the village council**



**Figure 1.2 Time stands still, experience of duration**

This opening sequence is the prologue to Gurvinder Singh's debut film *Anhey Ghorhey Da Daan/Alms for a Blind Horse* (Henceforth, AGDD). Made in 2011, the film is based on a novel of the same name by Jnanpith award winning Punjabi writer Gurdial Singh. Shot in just 45 days in a village near Bhatinda, Punjab, and funded by the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC), the film became the first Punjabi language film

to premiere and compete at the 68<sup>th</sup> Venice International Film Festival and went on to win critical acclaim both nationally and internationally. It won awards for the best director, cinematography, and best feature film in the Punjabi language at the 59<sup>th</sup> National Awards in addition to special mention at the Venice and Abu Dhabi film festivals among others.

An NFDC production, the title at the beginning of the film reads: *For Mani, in Remembrance*. Mani Kaul, one of the key figures of the New Wave cinema in the 1970s, was significantly the creative producer of the film. In July 2011, he passed away after a long battle with cancer.<sup>1</sup> In its form and narrative, AGDD is a tribute to Kaul who was Singh's long-standing mentor, and vividly evokes Kaul's landmark first film *Uski Roti/A Day's Bread* (1970). Based on a short story by Indian novelist and playwright Mohan Rakesh (1925- 1972), narrated in third person point of view, *Uski Roti* describes a day in the life of Balo, a housewife who lives in a village in Punjab and waits at a bus stop for her husband to collect his meal, his daily bread. Sparse in its narrative and dialogues, as *Uski Roti* dramatizes Balo's interiority that Rakesh's modernist story attempted in literary form, the film is indicative of Kaul's larger preoccupation with exploring temporality and space, both inner and outer, to playing with the cinematic image and form to convey a deep stillness of being (Bhaskar, 2013: 22). Distinct in its use of stillness of camera and scenes, shot stunningly by cinematographer K.K. Mahajan who went on to work with a lot of other New Wave filmmakers, the film is marked by a strong predominance of close-ups, long silent sequences and measured, slow motion gestures which create an extremely slow rhythm.

Saturated with almost chromatic images, and a powerfully evocative play of silence and sound, reminiscent of *Uski Roti*, AGDD too narrates a day in the lives of a family in a village in Punjab. It is a haunting portrayal of their existence as they battle poverty, feudalism and industrial development. The film tells the story of a Dalit household with an elderly father, mother, two brothers and a sister. It begins with the demolition of a house by the local landlords who have sold the land for setting up a factory. Gradually we learn that the mother works on the farm of a landlord, and Melu, the elder son, is a cycle rickshaw driver in the city. He participates in a strike, and gets injured. He tries to spend the night at a friend's house, but is denied room. Fatigued, he returns to the village just when his father has left for the city to meet him. Melu runs into his sister, Dayalo who has been wandering, restlessly through the village. And the film ends with both of them walking home in silence. In an interview, talking about the film, director Gurvinder Singh says:

At the surface, *Anhey Ghorhey Da Daan* speaks about the margins where the socially repressed and exploited have been conveniently cast away. It's about a day in the lives of a family who are witnesses to the play of power equation unfolding around them. It's about silent witnesses devoid of power to change or influence the course of destiny. It's about invisible violence and desires, simmering discontent and angst that is reflected on people's faces.

(Dutta, 2011)

As the film portrays the listlessness, the sheer helplessness of Dalit life both in rural and urban contexts, and meticulously charts the miniscule shifts of emotion in human behavior, the film is as much invested in exploring the way cinema can affect us and

sensitize us to the precarious human condition as it is oriented towards an experimentation with cinematic modalities for exploring new relations between meaning and form. Filmed in 35 mm, and shot on location with a cast of non-professional actors, the film is informed by a slow, careful formalism. When the film won the national award, the press release read:

For its haunting portrayal of the lives of people in a village as they battle with the reality of large scale industrial development. Gurvinder Singh deploys an inventive storytelling form where sound, space and body operate distinctly to frame the experience of a fragile existence. Each face portrayed in the film carries the signs of persistent trauma. This is an aesthetic tour de force that confidently and successfully reinvents the contours of Indian experimental cinema.

(Cited in Bhaskar, 2013: 31)

This citation not only underlines the aesthetic concerns and innovative form of the film, but also invokes the significance of the experimental traditions within the Indian New Wave movement, pointing to an inheritance to be cherished and celebrated. Launched in the early 1970s by the state funding made available through the setting up of the Film Finance Corporation (FFC), a cluster of low budget, non-commercial, non-studio produced films succeeded in creating a niche for themselves.<sup>2</sup> The diverse and uneven range of cinematic forms and practices that this state-funded experiment made viable has variably been termed as ‘New cinema’, ‘Art cinema’ or ‘Parallel cinema’. The term ‘New Wave’ remains contested, and in this essay, I use the term as it captures effectively the surge of cinematic innovation and experimentation in the 1970s and 80s, denoting a marked shift in the production, aesthetics and concerns of cinema.

Marked by unconventional themes and styles, a resolute rejection of values and mode of mainstream commercial cinema, ranging from auteurist experimentation to cinematic realism, the films generated a kind of seriousness and enthusiasm which Indian cinema had never before received. In her writing on the New Wave, Bhaskar aptly notes, ‘despite the tremendous diversity in political ideologies and aesthetic choices, the ‘new Indian cinema’ that these films inaugurated was connected to a shared concern with aesthetics, to a seriousness of intent, and to a representation of social issues with a drive towards an understanding of reality in all its complexities, contradictions and ambiguities [...]’ (2013: 19). While the lack of distribution and exhibition, inability to reach its audiences, and a consequent financial non-viability, led to the demise of the movement by the mid 1990s, it has nonetheless left an important legacy of cinematic innovation that can be seen influencing the contemporary forms of Indian cinema today.

Since the mid 2000s, in conjunction with the shift from a Nehruvian developmentalist paradigm to a neoliberal context, the Bombay film industry has witnessed a dramatic corporatization and regulation of production and finance practices. The re-organization of industrial practices has dramatically altered modes of movie distribution and exhibition. It has engendered structural transformations of the film industry from a highly unregulated, unorganized sector located within the domain of India’s informal economy to its refashioning as a global entertainment industry. It has also made viable experimentation and new transformations in film form and style. However, within the emergence of these new formations and practices, initiated by the changes in the industry and impact of global cinema on contemporary filmmakers, I would argue that the impulses and the influence of the New Wave moment have also

persisted. From Nishant Kamat's Marathi language film, *Dombivali Fast* (2005) and Neeraj Ghaywan's *Masaan* (2015) that focus on the representation of social reality to cinematic experimentation with the ever-changing form of realism in Amit Dutta's *Nainsukh* (2010) and Ashim Ahluwalia's *Events in a Cloud Chamber* (2016) the legacy of the New Wave movement and its variety of concerns are discernible. In *Ankhon Dekhi* (2013), as actor-director Rajat Kapoor undertakes the philosophical exploration of life, and notions of seeing and believing, he echoes Gurvinder Singh in dedicating the film 'to his idols and teachers, filmmakers Mani Kaul and Kumar Shahani'. Doing so, he too explicitly foregrounds the influence of the New Wave moment. Though the context and form of many of these current films, often referred to as the new 'indies' in journalistic and industrial frames of reference is different from that of the New Wave films, I would argue that it is very much informed by the legacy of a short-lived but powerful cinematic moment of innovation and experimentation.

Drawing on *Anhey Ghorhey Da Daan*, my essay will analyze the form and style of the film to trace and interrogate this legacy and its politics in contemporary South Asian cinema. Focusing specifically on Kaul's influence on Singh, the essay will focus on the ways in which the formal experimentation and idealistic affinities of Kaul, especially those in *Uski Roti* have come to influence Singh's own cinematic language as he seeks to lend visibility to the invisible violence and desires, simmering discontent and interior consciousness of the suffering villagers.

In an interview talking about his long-standing association with Kaul, and Kaul's influence on his directorial debut, Singh reminisces that Kaul could only see the first seven minutes of the opening sequence of the film which he edited at Kaul's house. He

was waiting for Singh to come and show him the full edit when he suddenly passed away.

His last email to Singh read:

In the realm of employing time as a cinematographic tool, the space must freely become what it will. Time is not enslaved by spatial conventions of creating physical significances. Space is devoted to cause-and-effect paradigm, time is free of it because it is carried by no (cause- and effect) agency. One reason why we continue to hopelessly imagine that cause- and- effect will save us. The truth is that quite unexpectedly time takes or does not take its toll. It saves when things point to an end, it destroys when things appear imperishable. MK

(Dutta, 2011)

A similar space-time axis also comes to influence AGDD. Rather than organizing space, the film places itself in juxtaposing temporalities, into a certain quality of attention and let the space be. For example, in the closing sequence of the film, *Dayalo*, the youngest daughter of the household, restless, steps out in the middle of the night to the edge of the village when her older brother, Melu, who is a cycle rickshaw driver in the city, returns to the village and runs into her. He takes her back with him, and the meeting of the two protagonists possibly takes place (see fig. 1.4). I say ‘possibly’ because as the film draws to a close, we witness how Singh, sharing Kaul’s commitment to Bressonian principles of fragmentation and combination, creates a cinematic form that embodies the experience of the crisis of human subjectivity.

In this sequence as through the film, he alternates between the use of two lenses – 28 mm and 135 mm and attributes thematic characteristics to them that generate opposing visual effects. The first lens, a medium wide-angle with its total focusing confers a hyper



realistic quality to the images, as we see Dayalo walking through the sombre, mist-shrouded frames dominated by the constricting physical contours of the space within which the lives of the villagers is set (see fig. 1.3). Whereas, the second, a narrow telephoto lens with its selective and critical focusing lends a dream quality to images as we see at various points in the sequence - Dayalo in extreme close up or when the camera pauses on the wide-angle composition of the villager chiding the man asking for alms for the blind horses and shifts to a tightly closed in telephoto shot, isolating the men from



**Figure 1.3 Medium wide-angle framing of Dayalo wandering in the night** their surroundings as it does with the shot of Melu towards the end where following the lenses two-dimensional effect, the image loses its space-time coordinates and instead becomes a mental image.



**Figure 1.4 Possible meeting of two protagonists, Dayalo and Melu**

In playing with the lenses and shifting camera distances, Singh follows Kaul's experimentation of using this technique in *Uski Roti*. As Kaul explains, he 'confines the film to two lenses, and makes them represent the actual and mental life of the waiting wife...I mean, the wide angle provided the universal focus and the extra actuality of the cinematographic image, and the long [focal length] a critical range of sharpness or a certain dream quality' (1974: 5). As in *Uski Roti*, where mid film onwards, the line between Balo's inner and outer reality grows thinner and dimmer, and according to Kaul, the lenses were freed of their strict representation so that it is the 'real' world which appears almost as hallucination while hallucination takes on the shape of reality, in this sequence also we witness a similar blurring of the distinction between Dayalo's outer and inner reality.

However, while this dream-reality paradigm is symptomatic of Dayalo's mentalscape, as it conveys the emptiness of her life, her loneliness and larger sense of

isolation and alienation of the people in the village, given Singh's stated experiment with cinematic space, it is difficult to ascribe any immediate and simple symbolism to the experience of the shot as it unfolds. I would argue that rather than strictly indicating Dayalo's fusion of dream and reality, instead, free of diegetic compulsions it is also part of film's overall experimentation with the encounter between the object and the viewer across cinematic space.

At a Robert J. Flaherty seminar, in response to a question about the process of composing the images in *Uski Roti*, Kaul pointed out that it doesn't interest him to compose his shots, or frame them in anyway. Even when he is editing, his shots have a mobility – when a shot travels through the reels and finds a place, he knows that it has a quality of holding the spectator – ‘the position *is* its meaning’ (1998: 172). Singh is very much influenced by this aesthetic practice of Kaul which we witness in *Uski Roti* where Kaul ‘doesn't intend to create a reality by treating a ‘fragment’ in relation with another ‘fragment’ and yet another ‘fragment’” (Cossio, 1998:127). In AGDD too we similarly witness that each shot does not propose a referential and semantic relation with the consequent shot in terms of establishing or completing a meaning. Without a clear beginning, middle and an end, shots and sequences appear autonomous, independent from one another, with progress relying on juxtaposition rather than a cause-effect relation.

Reflecting upon his cinematic technique Kaul noted, ‘for me it is not just a question of finding technical means, but of discovering such a technical arrangement as would sustain itself ...technique is not subservient to the meaning, nor is it independent of it. It is neither the cause of meaning nor its effect. So that the moment itself is its own

meaning' (1974: 5). Influenced by Kaul's cinematic vision, Singh too problematizes the conventional meanings and references as he experiments with the relationship between the meaning and form in AGDD. Liberating the shot from its allegiance to continuities imposed by plot, theme, characterization, unified space, and time, the film is informed by long silent sequences, absence of temporal chronology or chronological narrative blocks, measured slow motion gestures that create an extremely slow rhythm. Scanty dialogues devoid of any dramatic convention and reduced largely to a monotonic resonance, a plot that defies any causative concatenation of events or a semantic unity and instead is composed of autonomous events – a villager's house is destroyed by a rich landlord; striking rickshaw drivers hold a rally; a field worker complains about how her employers treat her; a man with a head wound tries to find some repose; gunshots are heard in the night. All these elements make the film what review after review noted; a cinematic text fragmented, rarefied and difficult to read.

The cinematography of the film with naturalized everyday images of dilapidated houses, dingy roadside eateries and street scenes in the city, stoic villagers, disenchanted, isolated downtrodden people on the margins, and narrow lanes shrouded perpetually in the cold fog is very evocative of photographer Robert Frank's iconic and influential *The Americans*, a collection of photographs that Frank took as he traveled across the United States for two years in 1955-56. Much like Frank who desired to see around and through the rhetoric of the American dream, beyond the sentimentality, idealism and gentility prevalent in the photography of the postwar era, Singh's cinematography also constructs an India, filtered out of the gloss and rhetoric of 'India shining'.<sup>3</sup>

Frank's stylistic influence of photographs that are often under-lit and underexposed, vague and ill-defined, many a times with no central subject, of people with their backs to the camera or their faces turned, partially obscured, with expressions unclear is very much evident in AGDD's cinematography. In its focus on liberating photography from its photojournalistic function of being a document, Frank avoids the use of detailed captions for the photographs, demanding that they should speak for themselves without narrative or explanation. His photographs are marked by a loose structural coherence, what Sontag refers to as his 'deliberately random' approach which imbues them with a spontaneity while he is 'waiting for the moment of revealing disequilibrium, to catch reality off-guard, in what he calls the 'in-between moments'' (2005: 48, 94). Through the film, we witness a similar tightly orchestrated sequence of compositions that subvert a temporal or linear logic, and instead present multiple and layered meanings that elicit often conflicting emotional responses. For instance, in the opening sequence, as the father stands still and the camera slowly pulls back, the shot abruptly cuts to a medium close up and we see him standing on the side of the road, watching the horse driven carts pass him and slowly disappearing into the enveloping fog. While on the one hand, as the opening sequence elicits a sense of sympathy with the alienation, emptiness, and hopelessness that the villagers experience, the disorientation and temporal uncertainty induced by the idiosyncratic choreography creates a simultaneous distance between the spectator and the characters.

It is no co-incidence that the static, almost monotone frames of the film, are also notable for their influence of abstract expressionism on Singh. Robert Frank too had befriended many abstract expressionist painters of his time. The compositions, in their

framing and use of color through the film are very much evocative of the colour field painting characteristic for single compositions with large areas of color intended to produce a contemplative or meditational response in the viewer. As colour field paintings were characterized by artists using large areas of more or less a single flat color, Singh's frames also embody the austere and evocative quality of colour field painters. The use of a saturated monotone palette creates the sense of uniformity of color and an accompanying sense of flat consistency while at the same time lending it an ephemeral, sublime quality.

I would argue that the static spaces and still images created by the fixed position of the camera – the mist shrouded, narrow lanes of the village that repeat with a haunted grimness, father watching the arrest of his friend, despondent Melu by the train tracks, closing shots of restless Dayalo as she wanders through the village on the night of the lunar eclipse - create the experience of duration, of time but one that rather than being completely abstracted from its space-time coordinates, and acquiring an absolute dimension, is tangible and lived. For instance, in the scene when the mother is scolding the younger brother while Dayalo is looking out of the window at the village boys cheering the horses galloping past, hearing her mother's litany she turns to chide her knowing that her brother is already hurt. With her voice straining to a pitch that is unnatural to her, and despite walking off screen just as the camera moves behind her during the tender exchange between her and her brother as she inquires about his injuries, Singh creates a poignant, evocative moment.

The sound design in the film further plays a key role in containing and delineating the space-time axis as the film seeks to lend representation to the listlessness, the sheer

helplessness, of Dalit life, both in rural and urban contexts. For instance, the film opens with the sounds and images of the demolition of a house accompanied by the offscreen aggravated barking of the village dogs to then fade out to the silence of the night and the static mist-shrouded, narrow lanes of the village. This juxtaposition between the movement of the bulldozer and the stillness of the night, the violent disruptive sounds and silence of the village delineates and sets up right at the beginning the uneven relationship between the Dalit life, the precarious human condition and processes of modernity. This juxtaposition is often repeated through the film.

In another sequence, soon after the village wakes up to discover the demolition of one of the community members - Dharma's house in the middle of the night, they commune at his house to express solidarity and discuss how to protest. A despondent Dharma, expressing this to be the fate of lower class villagers walks off the screen. The still images of the villagers and his family mulling over their predicament over the low-pitched diegetic sounds of the wood burning from the cooking stove are abruptly cut by the amplified, off screen sounds of a tractor. Similarly, in a long sequence towards the end of the film, Melu, injured in the cycle rickshaw strike and trying to escape his wife's wrath for stealing money that she had been saving when she was away, tries to spend the night in a friend's house. But he is denied room. So, after eating at a local roadside joint, he parks his rickshaw in his home and walks on the rail tracks. Soon, the gradually amplifying sound of the approaching train is juxtaposed with the still, contemplative composition of Melu, on the tracks, in a close-up looking at the fast approaching train. At this moment, the screen turns dark and as we speculate about the encounter between the two, we see Melu on the side of the track. His face visible in the light from the passing

train for the first time reflects the deep angst, with the sound of the train both accentuating it as well as being symbolic of the plight and harsh difficulties of life for the poor working class in the urban context.

The film constantly invites us to engage with it on its own terms without looking for semantic and referential meanings for an enriching experience emotionally, aesthetically and conceptually. The background score and the song in the end credits especially play a key role in foregrounding Singh's vision of the cinematic discipline. Singh uses the background score to not only strike the appropriate emotional note as we witness the struggles and despair of the people on the margins, but rather than merely communicating or narratively depicting the precarious human condition, to visually and aurally sensitize us to the condition of those on the margins. Doing so, it creates space for a more philosophical reflection on the significance of our own being in the world.

In the closing sequence of the film, restlessly wandering around the village, Dayalo meets her brother Melu, and they walk together home. The static composition of two of them slowly disappearing into the mist-shrouded lanes of the village fades out to the darkened screen and we hear a non-diegetic song that continues over the end credits. Titled "Sammi", the song sung by Delhi-based painter Sidharth speaks of the angst and pain of losing a loved one, complaining of the indifference of the 'stern one', and separation from the loved one in a cruel and untimely manner. Creating a layered narrative that metaphysically reflects upon the human emotions and predicament, it evokes the memories and experiences of being. What is further significant about this song is that Singh had never planned to use any song in the end credits. The artist had sung it to him once in his studio, and thereafter Singh made him record it for the 'textural quality



of the song and its cry like quality which offered a release to the pent-up emotions in the film' (Singh, email correspondence, 2018). This use of music in the film speaks to Singh's commitment to eliciting the spectator's visual and emotional attention, and his vision of cinema as an aesthetic experience that can 'enable one to plumb the depths of the inner being' (Bhaskar 2013: 23) and move us to reflect upon our own relationship with the world.<sup>4</sup>

Reflecting on the background score by Catherine Lamb, Singh further reminisces that Lamb was a music student of Mani Kaul, having studied under him at the California Institute of Arts. When he was editing the film, Kaul, who was bedridden with cancer, saw the first 7 minutes of the edit. He could never see the rest. He played the music for Singh after seeing the opening sequences. And though Singh had no plans to use any music he did so since the 'music and the opening shots were conveying the same feeling for him, purely at the level of feelings, not worrying about meanings and consequences' (Singh, Email Correspondence, 2018). The piece that Kaul played for Singh was titled 'Field for Agnes', and was a tribute by Lamb to the American abstract painter Agnes Martin.

Significantly, Martin's work is also 'all about emotion,' and she explores its evocation through the use of colour (Eiseman, 2015). Martin's work is contained within careful, measured lines while at the same time 'using unusually soft, diaphanous, and ethereal shades that seemed to float' creating a dichotomous experience of expansiveness while contained within a rigid grip (ibid). The opening sequence of AGDD, and the accompanying background score evoke a similar emotional response. The slow tempo, measured gestures and static compositions shot frontally by a camera that seems to be

located at a fixed position, fixed at a particular distance, creates a sense of distance for the viewer from where we see the harsh, daily living conditions and an uncertain future. Simultaneously, the background score that follows the camera movements over the grey sky also invokes an experience of an infinite sublime. Much like Martin who challenges the notion of figurative art as representative of life, and abstract art as a strictly two-dimensional exercise, Singh too explores the possibility of cinema, free from the norms of a melodramatic-realist mode, to elicit an emotional response. It is very much part of his cinematic vision where for him cinema needs to move beyond the cycle of cause and effect, conflict and resolution to be a temporal form that allows the evocation and experience of emotion. Singh tellingly notes, 'So, in some strange manner, Agnes Martin, Gurdial Singh, Mani Kaul, Catherine Lamb and Gurvinder Singh come together! I'm sure there is some affinity in the personalities, concerns and nature' (Email Correspondence, 2018).

In conclusion, I would say that AGDD is an example of 'austere cinema that is reflective even as it is visually beautiful' (Bhaskar 2013, 23). It is exemplary of the cinematic vision and legacy of experimentation that contemporary independent South Asian cinema inherits from the earlier New Wave movement. While the film saw limited theatrical distribution by PVR in its Director's Rare category, and was on screen for six days, nonetheless it marks an important moment within the post 1990s liberalization landscape that has been marked by the emergence of a burgeoning, new cinematic order. The new filmic form, ascendant from around 2010, variably designated as 'multiplex cinema', 'new Bollywood', 'Hatke cinema' or the 'Indies' is informed by inventive storytelling conventions, aesthetic forms and departures from dominant dramaturgical

modes. Within this landscape, AGDD, marked by a different cinematic practice and context of production and distribution than that of the previous 'new cinema' adds to the exciting array of films and fluid formations that go beyond the established lexical registers. In its poetics and politics, it constitutes a potent moment in contemporary South Asian cinema.

It is significant to note that Singh consciously chose to make the film in the Punjabi language. After graduating from Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), he received two grants from the India Foundation for the Arts (IFA) to document the folk ballads of Punjab. Between 2002 and 2005, he travelled extensively through East Punjab, and had an opportunity to understand its cultural and social dimensions. This was a formative influence on him as a filmmaker. As he notes in an interview, he lived with folk singers, mostly the so called low caste, and traveled with them to fairs and religious places that opened up new ideas of syncretism for him, listening to folk ballads like *Sassi Punnu*, *Mirza Sahiban* and *Puran Bhagat* narrated all through the night (Dutta, 2011). From a sense of curiosity to bewilderment to a complete sense of ease, he could relate to the emotional resonance of these performers' lives and the social milieu within which they operated. His response to the language and its expressions, subsequently evolved into making a feature film in Punjabi. He notes, 'Even today I remain more like an engaged outsider to Punjab. But as of now I can't imagine making a film in another language' (ibid). Historically, regional cinema has been a category whose primary function has been to distinguish between largely Hindi language Bombay cinema and other cinemas of India. However, region in regional cinema has undergone a drastic revision and as indicated by AGDD, it is no longer a synonym merely for the linguistic

state. Instead, it alludes to what SV Srinivas points out – “market, territory, and conceptual category that enables and sets limits for production as well as consumption of informational and cultural commodities such as films’ (2015: vii).

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> When Mani Kaul died in 2011, there were moving obituaries from fellow filmmakers, students, artists, writers and film critics, attesting ironically to the wide influence he has had on Indian visual culture and arts while most of his work has had very limited circulation and much like the larger ‘New Wave’ cinema of the 1970s and 1980s remains difficult to access despite digital revolution.

<sup>2</sup> Other central and state government programs were also extremely important in catalysing the development of this new cinema. Support of film societies, sponsorship of film festivals, state and national awards, professional film training further encouraged an alternative film culture, and a literal and symbolic investment in cinematic possibilities. For a detailed discussion of the emergence, diversity of forms, political and aesthetic ideologies that informed this movement See Bhaskar 2013, Binford 1987 and Krishen 1991.

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed discussion of the significance and influence of Robert Frank’s *The Americans* See, *Robert Frank: Moving Out* (National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, 1994).

<sup>4</sup> Among various influences on Singh, his use of music is also informed by American composer and music theorist John Cage. As indicated in the email correspondence (February 2018), Cage’s writings have been formative on Singh’s cinematic vision, especially his use of silence in the film.

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