

Film Songs As Urban Folklore: A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract- Film song is a genre of popular culture that can document evolving realities of urban living. This pre-supposes urbanism i.e. an analysis of the unique situation within which human behaviour occurs, and by which the human behaviour is shaped. The city of Bombay (Mumbai) has and continues to be the subject and/or the context of human behaviour that Hindi film songs portray. These songs have long captured the imagination of people, and probably shaped their perceptions of the city and life in this city. Through a phenomenological analysis of Hindi film songs, I profile the urban folklore of the city.

Keywords: Urbanism; Bombay (Mumbai)

INTRODUCTION

A city is what a combination of social, political, cultural, economic, and other conditions shape it into. These conditions in turn shape the lived experiences of the people – their social ties, lifestyle, and aesthetic values (6). While official records document the tangible dimension of a city, the lived experience is its intangible aspect and is captured in the popular culture of its people at the point of time. Film songs are a modern form of popular genre (12) that ‘archive the urban’ (2). Yamini Krishna defines the urban as the conditions that shape the lived experience of a people. This is consistent with urbanism as situations unique to urban life which must be managed through appropriate strategies (9). Urbanism is the basis for Laba’s proposition that urban folklore examine phenomena in light of the context in which these exist and with which they interact. This departs from Harvey (2003), who sees the formation of cities as historical and seeks to investigate if these narratives are urban folklore. These lead to the research focus: Urbanism in film songs.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The scene and an expressive behaviour are Properties of a cultural world. The scene is a context or a site for activities, and these activities entail highly particularized modes of interaction (9). A pub is a scene because it represents not just physical context but also human activity, human conduct, and specific mode of interaction. This mode of interaction includes human conduct i.e. action of the actor, and the specialized utterances that cumulatively help him navigate the situation. Such a mode of interaction is called emergent behaviour. Activities recur, and members share these recurring experiences with one another through expressive behaviour. Expressive behaviour describes the specific situation confronted by self/other and narrates the behaviour/s undertaken for managing the situation. An expressive behaviour can be replicated by other individuals and this is how expressive behaviour becomes instrumental in realizing customary patterns of behaviour in response to recurring situations that come to characterize scenes in a cultural world.

Q6. What combination of instance/s of urbanism and expressive/emergent behaviour/s characterizes city songs?

Q4. What folklore of the city have city songs created?

A principle of folklore research is that folk is expressive behaviour for defining and managing everyday life (9). Because activities recur in a cultural world; because the purpose of interaction is the description and management of these activities; and because these interactions recur, interactions become folk and the description and management of recurring events becomes the expressive behaviour. Expressive behaviours of members in face-to-face settings are relevant for folklore research.

Folklorists tend to study elements of rural folklore in urban contexts (9). Laba (1979) argues that research needs to move away from generalized structural qualities of social-relations that are held constant, toward looking at social-relations as dynamic social-networks so that a more genuine as well as a more humane image of the city can emerge. This implies a break from viewing urban people relations through the classical sociological characteristics -- tradition, social conformity and continuity, and stability in human roles and relationships as depicted in/by rural life Vs. urban life which is marked by heterogeneity, social-change, complex division of labour, and by tenuous (fragile, unsubstantiated, questionable) and ephemeral human relations (3). Also, this characterization of the city has to be done by the urban dweller because social density i.e. frequency of contact and interchange are important to communication.

When an urban dweller seeks to express his assessment of a novel experience and/or the management of discordant information, he must use a rhetorical device that can become a vehicle for communication. Jokes, analogy etc. are all rhetorical devices in which the dweller symbolically represents this novelty, and these symbolic representations become public property i.e. members of a sub-culture come to a shared knowledge/understanding of what the symbolic representation seeks to describe, and themselves use this symbolic representation For expressing the object/idea. For this reason, urban folklore has to be studied within the theoretical

framework of rhetorical resources used by urban dwellers. A collection of such shared and situated symbolic representations become folklore. Classical sociology sees urban dwellers' use of these symbolic representations in expressive behaviour for managing everyday life is the mode of life called urbanism.

Laba (1979) defines urbanism as a behavioural mode of life which is a consequence of the city environment. The actor goes about performing activities in This environment. His performance of The activity can be beset with challenges as he confronts situations that are unique to the city. These situations must activate emergent behaviours that combine conduct and specialized utterances for managing the effects of the situation for the actor. Appropriate actions become strategies that help him navigate the situation. This factor i.e. situations specific to city life, and appropriate strategies for navigating these situations connote a mode of life called urbanism. The need to be street smart and to cut competition and not just work hard for a living is an instance of urbanism. Individual actors may have different strategies for dealing with the same unique situation, and expressing these strategy/s is how they go about creating a personal identity or for expressing their belief system etc. Actors may share these scenes through Personal Experience Narratives (PE Narrative) as expressive behaviour. But if the exchange is an interaction i.e. a live encounter where actors are in transaction, the exchange qualifies as emergent behaviour. As expressive behaviour, the PEN seeks to help the actor create an image of the activity/ actors/ personal identity etc. These expressive behaviours can vary in detail, and may be about different situations and strategies, but all versions are pieces of a larger picture of the activities of an occupation. Multiple members of a sub-culture must encounter some/all of these situations even as the strategies may be shared or individualized. Urbanism is an assortment of such situations and strategies. Whereas the classical folklorist definition of urbanism is an expressive behaviour about a novelty that is taken-up by the sub-culture, Laba's definition of urbanism is expressive behaviour about the individual's strategic management of a unique situation.

Q1. What instances of urbanism do city songs narrate?

QA. What image/identity of the urban dweller emerges from his personal experience narratives of urbanism?

When an individual confronts a situation/information that is novel, he draws upon the familiar rhetorical devices for documenting this novel phenomenon. This coding of a real phenomenon in a rhetorical form is the act of symbolic representation of the situation/information (3). When members of the sub-culture decode the symbolic representation and themselves use the symbolic representation for communicating the given situation/information, the symbolic representation becomes a folklore of the situation within the sub-culture. I see any communication that presents the symbolic representation along with the urban dweller's assessment i.e. value judgement of it as an expressive behaviour. Urbanism can be a unique but not necessarily symbolically represented scene, and an emergent behaviour that focuses on navigating this situation (9). An emergent behaviour combines conduct and specialized utterances that the urban dweller employs for navigating a situation. When this emergent behaviour is used for expressing a personal image/identity/belief, it qualifies as a personal experience narrative (PEN). when the urban dweller repeatedly narrates the PEN over time, he creates a personal folklore.

Q7. Which version of urbanism do city songs foreground?

Tradition is another issue to be addressed. Folklore studies look for subjectmatter that can be classified as tradition. When Urbanism is repeatedly narrated, these become recurrent performances of beliefs, self-image, and strategies for living, which lend to texts a folkloric character (9). So selection of texts for folkloric analysis must fulfil the criterion of repeat performance. This way of looking at the city gives it a human outlook because it deals with city life and not the city as a physique.

RESEARCH DESIGN

A focus on urban folklore requires that analysis identifies situations that are unique to the city which the urban dweller confronts, and appropriate strategy/s for dealing with the situation. A strategy is a combination of actions i.e. conduct and specialized utterances, and a strategy is considered appropriate when it helps the actor navigate the situation. For it to qualify as folklore, the specific instance of urbanism must be a tradition i.e. it must recur. Urbanism itself constitutes the scene within a cultural world that is inhabited by sub-cultures, and scenes are shared through expressive behaviour which describe these scenes and ways of managing the scenes. Songs are a modern form of expression (2 (4 (5 (12) that narrate stories of individuals' experiences. These experiences result from individuals' interaction with the traditions and/or culture of a city at a point in time. Albeit in varying degrees, a song must reflect reality of the place, people, and conditions that it depicts. A factual overview of the evolution of Bombay (Mumbai) is pertinent (8). Constraint of space and the focus of the present study deter elaboration of its content, but the work is evidence that the film songs dealing with Bombay (Mumbai) as theme do reflect its realities. These reasons underlie the current study's decisions of the research design – hermeneutic phenomenology. S. Oerther details the methods and analyses that hermeneutic phenomenological studies can employ (11). Film song is the tool used for data collection i.e. narratives of experiences of urbanism in Bombay (Mumbai). Convenience sampling technique is employed for selecting songs about the city. For tracking change/s in experience of urbanism, I select one song from each decade starting 1951 (Post-independence era in India). A large number of film songs are set against the backdrop of a city, but the theme of the song is not necessarily the narrator's experience of urbanism. Further, I focus on experience of urbanism in Bombay (Mumbai), and so songs focusing on other cities are eliminated from the pool of songs for analysis. This is why there is no song from the decade 1960-69 included for analysis. More than one song in a decade of 1970-79 and 1980-89 deal with experience of urbanism in Bombay (Mumbai). The song with the greater emphasis on the city is included for analysis. The section on analysis & Findings curates instances of experiences of urbanism from segments of songs, and presents these as coherent arrangements.

Hermeneutic phenomenological analysis focuses on explaining behaviour i.e. identifying experiences, traditions, and culture of a people/place at a point of time that shape individuals' behaviour. This is consistent with the construct of urbanism which results from a situation that is unique to life in the city, and an appropriate strategy that the individual uses for dealing with the situation. A strategy is made-up of conduct (action) and utterance (expression). A strategy is considered appropriate when it is effective at realizing the goal. For identifying these situations and strategies, the songs are broken down into self-contained segments. These

segments are assigned labels that relate to constituents of urbanism. These themes are then classified and/or categorized. In the next stage, segments are isolated from the parent-song, and clustered based on similarity. In the following stage, relations within and across categories are drawn. The outcome of these relations is presented, and the labeled segments are presented in the appendices.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

1. Competition is an aspect of the unique situation that the urban dweller confronts (#78; #83; #07). At both the material and the metaphorical levels, Staying in the game requires him to keep moving and to maintain speed (#83; #07). But collision – be it of vehicles or of actions -- is a potential risk of speed, and so a shared ground rule is to ensure that one's movement does not interfere with that of another. This is reflected in the city's obsession with civic discipline (conduct) (#83) and the popular colloquism 'Dusare ki Vaat nahi lagane ka' (utterance) [Do not mess it up for others] (#07). Staying competitive requires emotional intelligence (conduct). Choices have to be made that can deprioritize the ethical and/or the personal. Brooding over what has been compromised can distract the individual out of competition altogether and so must be avoided. 'Move-on' (#83) is both utterance and conduct that makes-up the appropriate strategy for dealing with the unique situation.

2. Professionalizing of the unethical is another aspect of the unique situation in the city. It is for every individual to identify gap/s across activities and to create opportunity for himself (#78; #56). The need for the unemployed to fend for himself. Stiff competition, and the lure of success have all contributed to the normalizing of unethical conduct across walks of life (#56; #78; #83). From indulging in gambling (#56#78) and being able to sell the unimaginable (#78), unethical activities have evolved into something sophisticated (#98). This itself is an opportunity created from spotting systemic lacunae. While the city is less disturbed by unethical behaviors for bridging performance gaps, it is fussy about efficiency. Effective execution of unethical tasks pre-supposes specialized skills, mutual understanding with persons in position and with power across spheres of activity, and a foolproof process for timely and accurate completion of tasks (#98). This has led to emergence of a community of professionals colloquially called the 'Bhai' (Goon) (#98).

The goon executes tasks against a fee colloquially called the 'Supari'.

Few can scorn at the goon because everyone has at some time chosen to avail-of the goon's services for his own benefit. So, there is a code of conduct that the city follows towards its goons, and which has crystalized in unique utterances -- No problem-mongering (lafda nahi karne ka)

which includes Minding one's business, Not playing smart (shaanpana/Shining nahi karne ka),

and perhaps most important is treating the goon with cordiality that expresses itself occasionally in the gesture of a treat to tea but a routine greeting

'Kasa kaay, bara aahe' (Trust all is well).

To qualify as folklore, these instances of urbanism must fulfil the criterion of tradition i.e. repeat occurrence of situation/s and of actions in these situations. It is evident from analysis that themes of competition recur, and describe the experiences, traditions, and cultures of life in and of the city of Bombay (Mumbai).

LIMITATION

Use of the convenience sampling technique may have ignored different narratives of urbanism, even if inadvertently. A more rigorous sampling technique may be explored that not only surveys the humongous number of songs about the city of Bombay (Mumbai) but also about other cities in India and across geographical boundaries. This can develop into a comparative study of city folklore.

The current study focused on film songs. The plots of films themselves can deal with experience of urbanism. Films like City of Joy, and Slumdog Millionaire are instances. Again, the current study restricted itself to songs from films produced in the Hindi language. How films in languages other than Hindi depict experiences of urbanism in Bombay (Mumbai) can enrich the folklore of the city.

Song is one but not necessarily the most robust or the most popular rhetorical device in which individuals cast their experiences of urbanism. Interpersonal interactions about experiences of urbanism in the city is just another and perhaps a more robust genre to explore for alternate rhetorical device/s and narratives.

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Appendices

#07 2007 Taxi No. 9211 (Movie)

Expressive description overcrowding migrants Lakh lakh roz aa kar basjate hai
 Is Shahar se dill aga kar phasjate hai.
 Expressive symbolic rep. description Sone ke raho me soneko jagah nahi, yaha to footpath bhi houseful hai.
 Expressive conduct speed materialsm Yahan time ka matlab paisa. Mujhe 30 minute ki journey 3 minute me puri karni hai
 Emergent conduct civic discipline shared norms utterances Khudko murna hai to mur, dusare ki vaat kaheko lagata hai.

#98 1998 BombayBoys (Movie)

Emergent conduct-utterances Live life as usual friendly greetings Khane ka pine ka etc. tension nahi lene ka. Bhai se puchhne ka kasa kaay I am mumbhai.
 Expressive description purpose money spinner Hai beer bar dance bar lagatar note chhapne ke liye solid hai karobar
 Expressive informed action maintain distance Bhai kea ada par dikhta hai jo ek bar udharich reh jata chhod ke apna ghar bar.
 Expressive description proxy politician for public crime-politicsnexus ends justify means nexus
 Petition election telephone connection construction permission, illegal erection, paisa collection, paper correction, everything perfection jabhi le le bhai action.
 Expressive description parallel administrator Court me agar jayega to 20 years thamba law and order se to pandu bhai ka haath hai lamba.
 Expressive description hatch-it man Neta abhineta ya builder , bhai ko de kar supari karwata hai murder.
 Haath me uska hai power hai sub uska aage jhukta.
 Expressive description city at his mercy Uska khopdi satka to sara Mumbai rukta.
 Emergent no oversmartness dos-don'ts Marega sar pe hugega ghar pe kya? Zada shining nahi karneka.
 Balcony se nikal ke stall me aa,
 Khopche me le ke du kya?
 Flattery boss! Something correction and sware back.
 Yap and 1 bloody kanpat you'll get
 Emergent don't problem monger Area me aa ke jhol nahi karne kabolana tere ko mai bhai hai idhar ka samjha.
 Expressive description worse alternative Kya re bhai bhai? Tu bhai hai to hum bhi behan hai samjha? Abhi dhande ka time hai, meroko jane ka. Aata kya khandala? Nahi to ja ke Thanda la.
 Emergent keep him cool psychofency Bhai, chay mangavu kya

#78 1978 Don (Movie)

Expressive description novel symbolic rep wealth Sone chandi ki dagariya dekh.
 Expressive description wealth overwrites destiny Jadu tone ki bajariya me maya ki nagariya me jhjat pat badle mukadar ka lekh
 Expressive description gamble risk apitite Dour dour se log aate hai yaha daav lagane
 Ghar gaav chhod ke preet tod ke soya soya naseeba jagane.
 Apna kya hoga. Hoga so hoga pasa humne diya phek.
 Expressive description want more Malamal hai, tung haal hai. Zindagi niral. Maal kitana bhara phirbhi hara admi hai sawali.
 Emergent grab opportunity Bigadi banale, cash karwa le mukadar ka cheque.
 Shaharo me Shahar. Expressive description oddities Baat sabhi ulti firbhi wah bombaiwa.
 Expressive description opportunities gamble Reti ke pani ka bhav dekho.
 Ghodo pe carodo ka daav dekho.
 Expressive Description Easy morals Haseeno se sabhi ka lagav dekho.
 Machi hai aapas me jung
 Expressive description dizzying symbolic rep Samandar me jese khul gai bhung, ye rung dekh ke mai hogaya dung.

#83 1983 Haadasaa (movie)

Expressive description co-incidences keep going Ye bombai Shahar haadso ka Shahar hai, yaha zindagi haadaso ka safar hai. yaha roz roz har mod mod par hota hai koi na koi haadasaa.

Expressive description-cum-mgt speed forces no contemplation take it in the stride strg. Bahut tez rafter hai zindagi ki, hai fursat kise koi kitana bhi soche. Khushi gum haadasaa hai. Hakikat bhoola kar har koi bhagata hai. Bhag daud me hota hai haadasaa.

Expressive description success addictive Aadmi aasmaa choomte hai, nashe me taraki ke sub jhoomte hai.

Expressive description self-discipline civic sense Hari Roshni dek bhagi vo cars, achanak ruki phir bun ke katare.

Expressive description promiscuity Yaha parindo ki parvaz dekho. Haseeno ke chalne ka andaz dekho. Yaha husno-isk ki aabo hava me hota hai haadasaa.

#56: 1956 CID (Movie)

Expressive description judgement Challenge E dil hai mushkil jeena yahan, zara hut ke zara buch ke ye hai Bombay meri jaan.

Expressive description complaint Industrialization loneliness Kahi building kahi trame kahi motor kahi mill, sub kuch yaha milta ek milta nahi dil. Insaan ka nahi yaha naamo Nishan.

Expressive mgt satire Unemployment breeds crime Kahi satta kahi patta kahi chori kahi race, kahi daka kahi faka kahi thokar kahi thes. Bekaaro ke hai kahi kaam yaha.

Expressive description satire unscrupulous insensitive Euphemisms disguise unpalatable Beghar ko awara kahe hush us, khud kate gale kahe usko business. Ek cheese ke hai kai naam yaha.

Emergent conduct-cum-utterances individual responsibility Mind one's business Boura duniya ko hai kehta essa bhola to na bun. Jo karta vo bharta ye hai yaha ka challan. Dadagiri nahi chalne ki yaha.

Simplify Suno mr. jeena aasaan.