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Cinema, Architecture and Domesticity: The Filmic House in Basu Chatterjee's '*Piya ka Ghar*'

Smita Dalvi

Industrial Design Centre, IIT-Bombay MES Pillai College of Architecture, Navi Mumbai

Email: smitadalvi@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the intersection of cinema and architecture to analyse the Filmic House in Hindi film Piya Ka Ghar (Dir. Basu Chatterjee, 1972). It deploys Environment-Behaviour Studies for film interpretation to make readings about the unique habitability and domesticity of chawls, a residential typology evolved in Bombay for communal living in a dense urban situation. The central premise of the film is constructed around the spatial anxieties faced by a young bride having grown up in a spacious village house when she arrives at her new marital home, a single room chawl tenement that is home to five other people besides her husband, and is always overrun by chawl friends. This marital house (or 'The Home of the Beloved', of the title) and its extreme utilisation of space is the source of her anxieties and impacts her behaviour. The lived space rendered in the film and its architectural mise-en-scene is found to communicate about the strategies of adaptation and possible reconciliation to a life in chawl. It also communicates nuanced meanings about the generally understood notions of domesticity such as home as a private and inner domain vis-à-vis the world outside by showing their fluidity in the context of chawl living.

1. Introduction

This paper explores the intersection of cinema and architecture and deploys Environment-Behaviour Studies (EBS) for film interpretation to make readings about the unique habitability and domesticity of chawls, a residential typology that evolved in Bombay in the early twentieth century for communal living in a dense urban situation. There is a value to seeking to extend the scope of architecture in other disciplines. Architecture shares many spatial and imagistic characteristics with cinema. More importantly, "both architecture and cinema define qualities of lived space as existential space and allow for experiential life situations." (Pallasmaa, 2007). Lefebvre, in *Production of Space* (1974), describes the space of architects as 'conceived space' represented by abstract means, whereas the user's space is lived, not conceived and socially produced. There is an abundant scope of seeking social meaning in the narrativised architecture of filmic spaces.

This is reflected in recent interest in cinema in architecture pedagogy. Increasingly, film analysis is seen to be useful to grasp the responsive qualities of architecture. This is an engaging way to apply theory, rather than learning the principles in abstract terms.Michael Dudley (2010) has argued for using films as a significant component to teach environment and behaviour in architecture and design classrooms. He considers actors representing people in (often designed) environments of a film as an interesting and fruitful proxy for actual observations. "Film offers students an opportunity to connect the theoretical discourses we engage in classes to a range of social issues represented through the lens of Hollywood movies" (Giroux, 2001, p. 589). We argue that there is abundant scope in analysing Hindi Films for purposes just mentioned. Hindi cinema is a powerful cultural medium and has a common public imagination. Film scholars now acknowledge the cultural, social and political inferences possible by deeper readings of Hindi cinema, or at least certain films in the canon of Hindi cinema. This is seen in the works of Virdi (2003), Raghavendra (2008), Lal and Nandy (2006), Prasad (1998), amongst others.However, the subject of film architecture has been rarely discussed in serious studies on Hindi cinema.

This paper explores the representation of domestic space as seen in Hindi cinema. In many Hindi films, the domestic is the principal setting. The lived experience of urban existence is chronicled in an ever-present architecture

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that I call the 'Filmic House'.[1] The concept of house or home alludes to domestic space pertaining to a household, a place to reside. Whereas the term 'house' refers to the physical or material entity, a building or an architectural space; 'home' refers to a personal, perceptual or emotional way to refer to where someone lives, dwells and belongs. The term 'domesticity' refers to discourses around the social space traditionally linked with the house/ home and everyday life. "It is our use of a pile of bricks and mortar which makes it a 'house'; and what we feel, think or say about it that makes a 'house', a 'home'."(Stuart Hall, 1993, p.3). The focus here is on the typology of a chawl and how an analysis of a 'filmic chawl' can unravel an architecture of domesticity unique to it. Kaiwan Mehta (2011) argues that the production-construction of the chawl is a different process than its adaptation. He makes a case for a need to inquire into the notion of the 'dwelling' in a chawl. The process of adaptation is a lived experience of domesticity which narrativised in a film, can produce and communicate readings in a cultural context.

The Chawl finds representation in several Hindi films, mainly deployed to signify the lower middle class or working-class nature of characters residing in them. In some films however, the social architecture of a chawl is given centre-stage and have a significant narrative role. A prominent example is *Piya ka Ghar* (Dir. Basu Chatterjee, 1972). In this film we observe a remarkable filmic house in the way it portrays the lived life of a joint family in a very limited space of a chawl tenement and the strategies of adapting to it. Amrit Gangar (2011) considers such films as narrativised records of this unique architecture, giving a structural and social feel of its character – what he characterizes as 'chawl-ness' – a collective extended family "where everyone is a relative". Madhava Prasad (1998) observes a tacit prohibition of the representation of the private in Hindi films. He refers to a type of films – 'Middle Class Cinema'[2] –that tackles the issue of privacy in middle-class existence and mentions *Piya ka Ghar* as dealing with the problem of private space in a humorous fashion. Gangar (2011) writes about *Piya ka Ghar* as a film that comments on how living space impacts human behaviour.These writings are generic in nature on issues in cinema and neither specific nor detailed about the role of film architecture. The aim here is to analyse in detail the architectural mise-en-scene[3] of BasuChatterjee's*Piya ka Ghar*, the impact of architecture on human behaviour and to discuss relevant issues of domesticity that emerge. Here, in the filmic house, the pertinent issue is that of space and the struggles to attain private space. In the film, the articulation of the private is perceived differently by different characters. This makes it a relevant case study for the adaptation of built space by the processes of habitation.

For this purpose, we deploy theories of Environment-Behaviour Studies or EBS[4] that examine transactions between individuals and their physical settings in which their behaviour and experiences are shaped by the environment (Gifford, 2007). Architecture is socially situated and constructed, as are films when viewed in their appropriate contexts. Filmic representations are creative interpretations of reality, and have the potential to add a layer of cultural meaning that would otherwise not be available were the researchers merely analysing theory or observing public behaviour (Dudley, 2010). Dudley has deployed several Hollywood films to discuss the interface between urban planning and human behaviour. The theories of EBS find many applications in architecture and urban design and are largely applied to understand user behaviour in institutional or public spaces. The realm of domestic spaces is rarely discussed from the behavioural perspective and being a private domain, it also presents practical problems of observation based empirical research. Domestic spaces portrayed in cinema have a great potential to bring to fore an otherwise private domain. According to Giuliana Bruno (2002, p.91), despite the interest of cultural studies in the notion of home, the connection between architectural and cinematic perspectives on the subject have yet to be mobilised. In general, film scholars are attracted to explore the concept of the urban in cinema. In Hindi cinema too, several scholars have analysed the concept of cine-city and portrayal of urban space. However, a closer look at domestic space has not been attempted.

Our central analysis deals with the issue of 'dwelling' in a chawl in Bombay, in a city where space is the commodity most scarce. When, in very limited space, several persons are compelled to live together for a large part of their lives,

[1]This paper is a part of my larger PhD research that focusses on cinematic renderings of the domestic realm from the standpoint of architecture.The research conceptualises the 'Filmic House' as lived space charged with meaning. It explores the narrative roles of the Filmic House in Hindi cinema and the ways they communicate notions of domesticity.

[2]Madhava Prasad (1998) has described the dominant social genre as all-inclusive or subsuming of other generic forms, its disaggregation into three forms, namely new cinema, cinema of mobilization and middle-class cinema during the political crisis of the seventies. The appellation of 'Middle Class Cinema' refers to films that revolve around middle-class subjects and find appeal to a middle-class audience, whose generic specificity derives from the effects of ordinariness, familiarity or spectator identification and the real world.

[3]The French term mise-en-scene literally means 'placing in a scene'. In film analysis, it refers to what we see on screen in a film. It's the film's visuals; meaning, all of the elements that appear on camera and their arrangement. The settings and the props form an important element of a film's mise-en-scene.

[4]A body of theory relating to human-environment transactions. Known variously as Environmental Psychology, Architectural Psychology, Environmental and Behaviour Research or Environmental-Behaviour Studies – theories and research concerning human spatial behaviour.

they have to contend with the behavioural issues of Personal Space, Territoriality, Crowding, and Privacy. All these issues make their presence felt in the Filmic House of *Piya ka Ghar,* allowing for the interpretation of spatial behaviour caused by such proximal living.

2. Mumbai's Chawls

Mumbai grew predominantly as a city of migrants. Chawls came up in colonial Bombay to house a large number of migrant workers as the city transformed into a mercantile and textile powerhouse. In typical chawl typology, multiple units of single or two room tenements (*kholis*) were strung along a common corridor or gallery and stacked on two to five identical storeys. Stairways and shared sanitary blocks were usually placed towards one end of corridors. The *kholi* was initially meant for only the migrant male who, leaving behind his wife and family in the village, inhabited them in the most economical way possible – sometimes as many as ten to twenty-five men occupied a single tenement – largely to sleep and keep their meagre belongings (Adarkar, 2011). Away from their real families, the migrants found familial support amongst themselves.

As the mills prospered in Bombay and migrants became settled, they called for their families from the villages to come live with them. The space of the *kholi* now began to be inhabited by entire families, making the chawls unique examples of collective living in very limited space. The same spaces that once served as group accommodation for several single men, transformed into homes of multi-member families that internalised several strategies of negotiating personal lives within a limited amount of habitable space and common toilets. More and more chawls were built in the inner-city areas and in the mill lands of south-central Bombay. Since land was expensive, builders filled their sites with chawls and squeezed into them as many tenements as possible. This resulted in overcrowding (Menon and Adarkar, 2004). Builders also economised on the quality of materials and construction and on the provision of sanitation. Water supply was scarce and taps often ran dry.

From the time of their inception in the late 19th century to their proliferation in the first half of 20th century, the socio-economic patterns of the chawl dwellers changed. With improved economic conditions and the availability of modern education to their children, many families witnessed upward mobility while continuing to live in the same tenement. Each family would make several improvements to their *kholis* and populate them with the material possessions of the time. A characteristic sense of community compensated for lack of space, privacy and material comforts. Many spatial strategies came into being to smoothen these constraints to various degrees.

3. The Filmic House in *Piya ka Ghar*

The Filmic House in the film *Piya ka Ghar* is a large chawl called Bharat Mahal in central Bombay, where a number of working-class families have been living for decades. The film focuses on the Sharma household that consists of Girdharilal, a retired mill worker, his wife, a married son and daughter-in-law who are theatre enthusiasts and two younger sons. The middle son Ram is a clerk with the LIC. His wedding is arranged with Malati from a faraway village.

The central premise of the film is constructed around the spatial anxieties faced by the bride when she arrives to her new marital home in Bharat Mahal. Malati, who all her life has been used to a spacious house and open landscape in her maternal village is introduced to a single room chawl tenement that is home to five other people besides her husband, and is always overrun by friends, neighbours and visitors. This marital house (the *Piya ka Ghar* or 'Home of the Beloved', of the title) is the source of her anxieties and a subject of our analysis.

3.1 *The Filmic House through its Architectural Mise-en-scene*

The contrast between the two habitats (the village house and the chawl) is set up in the opening sequences that introduce and establish the two houses, in the village and in Bombay respectively, through the movements of a match-maker priest who is on a mission to fix the wedding between Malati and Ram.

3.1.1 The Village House and the Chawl

The film opens with the priest approaching the village house through an open, wooded landscape. It is a spacious house with multi-layered spaces within. Seated on a wide verandah, the priest sings praises of the groom's family and describes their house in Bombay. *"Panchmanzila makaan me hai ladke ka ghar. Raja Maharajaon ke jaise mahal hote hain, Bambai walon ki chawl hoti hai…".* (The groom lives in a five-storey building. Just as the kings have their palaces, Bombayites have chawls.) The next sequence, as the credits roll, has the same priest approaching the chawl called Bharat Mahal. The presence of the building is unmistakable as it fills the screen with its size.We are allowed a lingering look during the title sequence. This is an imposing, sprawling block with wooden galleries running its length, punctuated by several staircases.

The credits continue through a movement sequence-beginning with the priest entering the chawl, climbing a staircase, moving along several galleries and culminating at the main door of the groom's house. This is a piece of visual story-telling that synoptically portrays the quintessential qualities of chawl-life in Bombay. We see the priest having

to wade through the thick of daily life spilling out in to the galleries, the very spaces that Neera Adarkar (2011) describes as "galleries of life". The sequence draws attention to the warren like aspect of a chawl – each tenement with hardly a door and a window in width, arrayed along the gallery, onto which each family brings a part of their domestic life. Various forms of storage, seats, chairs or cots line the gallery, there being a tacit understanding of markers of semi-private territory within the portion of this otherwise common corridor. This is further evidenced by the main doors which are almost always kept open, only a cloth curtain shielding the privacy of the inner space if required.

These initial sequences in the film provide an elaborate introduction to the Filmic House and draw attention to the spatial contrast between the native and marital houses of the future bride, setting the stage for the key narrative point of the film – the bride's arrival to the chawl and her reaction to a new, unfamiliar living situation.

3.1.2 The Chawl Tenement

A small tenement in Bharat Mahal accommodates six members of the Sharma household and several visiting friends through the day. It is a remarkable lived space allowing for differently occupied zones within the space of the tenement, essentially a single room sub-divided by wooden partitions, to carve a sleeping space for the elder son and his wife and a kitchen space at the rear, leaving the front space as family space. This architectural mise-en-scene captures the physical space of a lower middle-class joint family living in this small chawl tenement. The Sharma family members are at ease with this limited space and are resourceful in negotiating with it to live life in full measure, while also accommodating neighbours and friends.

The situation is different for the new bride though, who is used to larger spaces. Malati's existential situation as a new bride is elaborated through her various encounters with the new space. Her arrival to the chawl in a bridal procession, shown in a movement sequence which echoes that of the priest earlier, introduces her to the "five storey palace" that is Bharat Mahal. She traverses the labyrinthian galleries to eventually arrive at the tenement, her husband's home.

3.1.3 The Kitchen

Malati's mother-in-law welcomes her inside introducing, "our small house". She then ushers her inside the kitchen – "from now on this is your room", she says while shutting the door behind her. Once alone, Malati surveys 'her' room as the camera pans from one end to the other revealing the space of *mori* (nahani) with several water storage containers, a tiny cooking counter, and several storage racks with pots, pans and jars, a typical lower middle-class kitchen in Bombay. A small metal dining table is pushed in a corner to make space for the cot which looks out of place and overbearing in the small space. There are two windows, one of which opens right into the common side corridor. It is here that Malati waits for her husband Ram to arrive with trepidation, brought forth by her coyness and exacerbated by her strange new surroundings.

3.1.4 The Bedroom

The long sequence of Ram and Malati's wedding night in their make-shift bedroom turns out to be a tragic-comic disaster. The groom's various attempts at intimacy are met with resistance by the bride whose sense of her private space is repeatedly infringed upon in a number of ways:

Malati is disturbed by the amount of light streaming in from outside and is afraid of being seen. She can overhear the conversation of the other married couple sleeping on the other side of the partition and becomes afraid of being heard. The couple is disturbed by knocks on the door because a family member wants to drink water and later by ladies of the house and neighbours who want to fill water. The invading women gather near the *mori* chatting animatedly about their luck in getting bonus municipal water (released as there was a fire nearby) completely oblivious of the plight of the couple and unconscious of any guilt in disturbing their privacy. Several such disturbances through the wedding night make it a disaster for the couple. Her spatial anxiety makes a consummation of marriage an impossibility for some time to come. Malati even banishes Ram from the kitchen, sending him out to sleep in the gallery outside.

The implications of this action are poignantly captured in an overhead pan shot. The shot begins from the outside gallery where Ram has been sent off to sleep, then pans to the right, crosses over the front door where we see the father fast asleep on the cot while the mother and the youngest lad sleeping on the floor. The camera crosses over the partition wall to show the elder couple snuggled in their bed. The camera continues to pan crossing over the next partition to reveal the figure of Malati sleeping on a single mattress positioned in the centre of the kitchen space.

3.1.5 The bride's negotiations with the house

Being closeted with so many people in a cramped accommodation is bewildering for her and she constantly finds her personal space violated. Even as she slowly assimilates with her new family whom she clearly likes, her movements in the house are minimal and restrained in stark contrast to her sister-in-law. The kitchen space was introduced to Malati as "her room" and she stakes out her territory in it even to the exclusion of her husband at night.

Her real negotiation with the house happens when she finds herself alone in the house for the first time. She lingers in different parts of the house and interacts with the space and objects within, with a new-found sense of freedom. The space that she had always seen crowded with people is, all of a sudden, all hers and she imagines herself to be the queen of the house. Through her movements and interaction with different possessions – chairs, trunks, her clothes, mirror and bed, a different experience of the space is evoked. Later, sensing the predicament of the couple to find privacy, the sister-in-law contrives occasions for family members to be away from the house so that the couple can get a few hours alone at home. But every time, it becomes a lost opportunity as they get disturbed by pesky neighbours or visiting relatives.

3.1.6 The World Outside

Ram decides to take Malati for a day's outing in the city. They visit several attractions and city landmarks. Amidst the crowd of Bombay's public spaces and public transport, they are finally able to enjoy private moments unlike any they have experienced at home. They talk about their situation at home and fantasise: *"Ek chhota sa kamra jo rasoi-ghar nahi hai, jahan koi faltu roshni nahi aayegi aur na koi aawaz, aur na koi hamari baat-chit sun payega."* (Wish there was a room that was not a kitchen, where outside light or sounds wouldn't disturb, where no one can overhear us). In response, Malati wonders, *"Hai aisa koi kamra Bambai me?"* (Really, is there such a room in Bombay?)

3.1.7 Resolution

The resolution of the film takes place when Malati observes the other family members are willing to sacrifice for her sake. Love of her family reconciles her with the reality of her marital home. Her coming to terms with her spatial situation is captured in the concluding sequence of the film, which is an echo of the previous overhead pan shot, only this time, the gallery outside the house is empty, while when it reaches its far end, we see the young couple sleeping together blissfully on the kitchen floor.

4. Interpretations: Influence of Space on Behaviour

The filmic space and its impact on the behaviour of the characters/occupants, particularly that of Malati, the protagonist is interpreted using some concepts of EBS – personal space, territoriality, crowding and privacy – to derive inferences about lived space and domesticity in chawls.

4.1 *Personal Space*

The primary contact of a human being with his/her environment is phenomenological, through the body/space interface, the space most proximal to them- the 'bubble' that they constantly move in. This space, more perceptual than physical, is known as 'Personal Space'. Almost all human behavioural interaction takes place through this personal space bubble. The study of human personal space and its manifestations is known as 'Proxemics', a word coined by Edward Hall in his book *The Hidden Dimension* (1966). Proxemics is inherently a part of culture and gets shaped by social norms and expectations. Caste and gender roles as cultural variables have a strong influence on proxemics, especially within the rural context of India, in stark contrast with its urban situation (Thirumalai, 1987).

We can first read Malati's reaction to her new house and her tentative interactions with her new family as a consequence of intrusions in her personal space – the space bubble or the region surrounding her which she regards as psychologically hers. Personal space is a flexible concept based on an individual's perceptions of their immediate environment at any given moment and is mediated by their cultural conditioning. It may expand when a person is stressed or threatened or contract when one is comfortable (Hall, 1966). Malati's personal space bubble is substantially large owing to her rural habitat and coy nature. When thrown into the extreme close proximity of many relative strangers, she experiences stress, causing the bubble to expand further. This affects her social interactions with the family and their friends as she is unable to find a comfortable social distance with them in the house. This is particularly seen by her reaction in the sequence when a male neighbour enters the house wearing only vest and undershorts. Personal space for an introverted person would be significantly larger than that for an extroverted or outgoing person (Holahan, 1982, pp. 301-302). This is clearly visible in the contrasting behaviour of Malati and Shobha, the elder son's wife who is an extrovert and is much more at ease with the house. Malati's anxiety in the context of her new accommodation is aggravated by the feeling of encroachment on her personal space. This is further manifest in her refusal to admit her own husband into her intimate space.

4.2 *Territoriality*

Charles J Holahan (1982, p.256) defines territoriality as "a pattern of behaviour associated with the ownership or occupation if a place or geographical area by an individual or a group and may involve personalization and defence against any intrusions." In human interpersonal interactions, territoriality is not only a matter of appropriation of physical

space and its defence, but is also related to the perception of personal space.

Through the course of the film, we observe a tendency in Malati to stake out her own territory in the Filmic House. C. M. Deasy (1985) points out that territorial behaviour in human beings "…merges with feelings for personal space and status." (p.26). A feeling of threat to her personal space and a need to reclaim it manifests in Malati's appropriation of the kitchen. Gary T. Moore (as cited in Snyder and Catanese, 1979) has defined characteristics that determine the formation of a territory, one of them is to satisfy some needs or motives. According to him, people will defend, or at least feel discomforted if their territory is violated in any way by an intruder. Malati's territoriality is functional in the sense that it allows her a way to come to terms with her environment. She defends her territory during the night even to the exclusion of her husband. Territorialised spaces are however, not isolated but formed as individual spaces in a larger environment. These are spaces of possession, but also of negotiation and renewal, as can be seen in the film. During the day the kitchen is obviously a shared space to which the husband is also admitted to catch a few private moments. It becomes a space of renewal of conjugal relationship when Malati eventually reconciles with the house and the young couple resume sleeping together there.

4.3 *Crowding*

Crowding occurs when an individual is deprived of the agency to personal space, largely due to the proximity of several other individuals. Excessive crowding leads to the causation of stress, and in extreme conditions, a deterioration in health and psychopathological behaviour (Baron, Byrne, & Kantowitz, 1980). Freedman (1975) measures crowding as a factor of density – as the amount of space per person. However, an individual's perception of density could be subjective depending on their circumstances. In the film, due to close proximity of several other individuals in a restricted place, Malati experiences a deprivation of agency to her personal space. This is a condition described as crowding which may result in a collapse of behaviour described as 'behavioural sink'[5] by John Calhoun (as cited in Baron et al., 1980).

Crowding is a common cause of High Load,[6] leading to stress (Mehrabian, 1976, p.12). In such situations, a person will adopt a behaviour of withdrawal, or adopt a defensive posture. This reaction is known as 'cocooning' (Sommer, 1969, p.62), the act of screening the environment from a high load to that of a lesser load. Malati's behaviour of withdrawing from her husband occurs due to a high load of environmental stimuli in the form of constant sounds and light signifying the presence of people even in the middle of night. "How can anybody sleep when there is so much noise and illumination", she asks her husband. In the film, Malati reacts to the cramped space of her new home and presence of several people inside who are strangers by restricting her movements and remaining withdrawn in the kitchen. In contrast, her elder sister-in-law is temperamentally and spatially is at ease and moves freely. Freedman (1975) suggests a perception of crowding can intensify social orientation amongst a group depending on compatibility of group members. In a situation of crowding, social interaction will reduce amongst a group of incompatible occupants, but would in fact, increase for people with compatible personalities. Malati is reserved in her behaviour till she attains a level of compatibility with her new family and friends.

4.4 *Privacy*

For the continued maintenance of a person's self-worth and individuality, it is essential that privacy be taken care of and sustained. Privacy is closely linked with both personal space and territoriality. An intrusion into an individual's personal space bubble is a kin to an invasion of that person's privacy. An invasion of one's territory may also be construed as an invasion of one's privacy. Irwin Altman (1977) defines privacy as 'the selective control or access to the self or to one's group'. The excess of unwarranted environmental stimuli – that may be visual, acoustic or olfactory –may result in a person's selective control of access to other persons to bring down the high load mentioned earlier. For Altman, such a selective control is a defining feature of privacy. In the film, Malati is seen precisely doing the same, exercising selective control to the self to compensate for her loss of privacy. Nancy Marshall (1970) has identified six orientations of Privacy: solitude, seclusion, intimacy, anonymity, reserve and not-neighbouring. We can identify most of them in relation to Malati's spatial situation in the house and her corresponding behaviour.

4.4.1 Solitude

Marshall defines solitude as the desire to be alone. Even within the relative intimacy of one's family, one desires sometimes just to be 'away from it all' and by oneself. The sequence in film where Malati finds herself alone in the house for the first time, she feels elated interacting with the spaces and objects on her own terms and considers herself as the 'queen of the house'.

[5]This phrase has, through considerable usage in the media, been evoked to describe crowding in urban ghettos and inner-city areas, but in Calhoun's own experiments in the laboratory referred to a large number of individuals populating a very restricted space.

[6]When a person is in an environment he/she is constantly receiving stimuli. This received input may be called a Load.

4.4.2 Anonymity

Solitude may occur when one is anonymous, in the presence of strangers. It is ironical, as sometimes, in order to be alone, a person may seek a public space. This is what occurs when variously, all the three married couples residing in the house seek the city outdoors, they find solitude and privacy.

4.4.3 Seclusion

is described as privacy from external stimuli. Intimacy is an imperative need, to be alone with someone with whom one is very close. Here too, the need to screen oneself from both the presence of other individuals as well as from unwanted external stimuli is paramount. Malati's anxiety in achieving intimacy with her husband results due to the couple's inability to seclude themselves within the house from all kinds of external stimuli, including bright lights and external noise and the presence of windows opening into a corridor. This manifests in her behaviour of withdrawing herself spurning the overtures of her husband.

4.4.4 Reserve

relates to enhancing one's personal worth by creating a certain aura of private-ness about oneself. An attitude of reserve explains Malati's withdrawn behaviour when the family is boisterously engaged in playing games of cards or carrom. This is particularly noted in a scene when she comes out of the kitchen to re-join a carrom game, but quickly withdraws back upon seeing the two friends of the father who are as good as members of the family. She slowly learns to partially discard her reserve leading to her assimilation in the family.

4.4.5 Not-neighbouring

Marshall describes a preference for not being involved with one's neighbours. In such a situation, the relative presence of unprotected doors and windows may also lead to stress in the inhabitants. Malati experiences 'not-neighbouring' in clearly spatial terms when she is overtly conscious of windows in her make-shift bedroom and the neighbours beyond them.

4.5 *Interpretation/ Inferences*

The narrative in *Piya ka Ghar* maintains tight focus on indoor space. There are few external plot points to introduce conflict as is usually the case in Hindi cinema, nor are there any parallel tracks as distractions. There are no overt villains – family members have cordial relations and the parents are benign, ruling out negative aspects of family life like dominant patriarchy, jealousy or falsehoods in the plot. The family members are more than happy to include the new bride in their life and she also comes to like them slowly. Nor are there any external catastrophes or threats to ruin the peace of the household. Yet, if the film succeeds in introducing tension, its sole source is space and how it is perceived differently by Malati in contrast to her husband and the rest of the family. The claustrophobic space of the house is, so to speak, the main antagonist. Even if its psychological effects are overtly manifest in Malati's behaviour, there are enough hints in the film that it affects others too. The only difference is that they have acquired a learnt behaviour to ignore the stresses of proximity and carry on in seemingly unmindful ways.

Thus, Malati's behaviour is a result of her extreme anxiety induced by spatial deprivation and lack of privacy. Her personal space bubble is tuned to her native rural habitat of plenitude of space. She is suddenly transposed in a tiny chawl tenement crowded by many people and cluttered by paraphernalia of daily life. The scarcity of space means there is an extreme utilisation of it where there are hardly any personal or private space markers during the waking hours. For the family, the entire house is a public space. Malati's rather large personal space bubble keeps getting invaded by the presence of so many people, family and friends. She takes time to learn how to wade her way through the tangle of bodies omnipresent in the front room. In the narrative space she is shown staking out a territory for herself in the kitchen, retreating to the inner-most possible space.

Malati finds her personal space invaded to such an extent that it prevents her from achieving intimacy with her husband. She constantly feels her privacy under threat due to multiple external stimuli. She is unable to achieve intimacy in the conjugal relationship due to her constant fears of being seen, observed or overheard. As a consequence, she banishes Ram from the kitchen to go back to sleeping in the gallery outside, signalling a complete territoriality over the kitchen. Her behaviour is influenced by her perception of space and space alone. The overhead pan shot is a remarkable cinematic device that poignantly shows the conjugal frustration of the newly married couple sleeping separately at two extreme ends of the house.

Since home space is the culprit in this narrative, preventing conjugal bliss, the resolution is also logically spatial. This happens when Malati accepts the reality of the urban situation and agrees to become a fellow traveller in negotiating with it. She finds a reconciliation with the house by adjusting her own personal space in tune with it. She rejects the suggestion of returning to the parental house, and neither does she allow others to leave the house for her sake. The concluding scene again uses the device of overhead pan shot mirroring the previous one which captured the couple a sunder. This time, however, the couple is seen sleeping together in the kitchen. The camera zooms on them to show

Malati snuggling up to Ram. In her reconciliation, learning to merge her personal space with the social, she becomes at home in the *Piya ka Ghar*- the home of the beloved.

Conclusions

The examination into the nature of the filmic house in *Piya ka Ghar*, the notion of dwelling that the lived spaces in the film allows and the negotiations of the lived experience in the form of several adaptions both at a material as well as at a behavioural level, allow us to make several conclusions about the notion of domesticity in such a building typology. The manner by which this lived experience is narrativised (something possible only in a film) communicates meaning, both at an urban as well as a socio-cultural level.

A socio-cultural appreciation of domesticity deals with understanding commonly held notions of home as private domain of a family, an inner refuge protected from the vagaries of the outer world,[7]usually associated with the feminine in terms of nurturing it and maintaining its sanctity. Thus Private/ Public or Inner/outer among others are the usual dichotomies that are expressed in association with a home vis-à-vis the world.[8] (Chatterjee, 1994; Banerjee, 2010). These notions can be examined from an architectural standpoint in terms of spatial arrangements and their connotations, but as has been seen in the portrayal of the Filmic House in *Piya Ka Ghar*, the inferences of lived space are better observed in the portrayal of domesticity in a film.

As has been inferred, the film narrativises architectural space to the point of being a protagonist, in the absence of any external threat or even individuals with dubious intent. Thus, the most appropriate analysis to lead meaning comes through the appreciation of lived space and its impact on behaviour. This approach gives a fresh look at the binaries of Public/private, inner/outer, home/world.

The Filmic house that the Sharma household occupies, while portraying life lived in a typical chawl tenement, creates opportunities for negotiations by the occupants to lead their daily lives as fully as possible in a limited space. Spatial strategies, such as carving domains (territorialising) within a single room tenement, characterise the unique urban domesticity in a chawl. In the film, a deployment of public, semi-private and private domains – normally associated with full-fledged spacious houseis achieved by use of partitions, curtains, and tacit understandings between family members. Another side of this spatial strategy is that spaces operate differently at different times. They are not marked with any fixed function unlike in apartment living. The spaces are occupied differently during day-time and night-time. The kitchen – earmarked as a bedroom during nights for the newly married couple Malati and Ram is the prime example of this. The wedding night sequence shows the predicament of the newly-wed couple to find privacy in this make-shift kitchen to consummate their marriage.[9]

The tenement is part of the larger universe of the chawl that acts as a neighbourhood in itself. The concept of inner/ outer assumes a fluid shape when every family brings a part of their life into the common space of outer galleries. Windows in the tenement also open into these common spaces, making it a transparent zone. The front doors that usually regulate the interface between the home and the world, are always open in a chawl, the customary cloth curtain is more often than not always drawn open. In the Sharma household, close neighbours and chawl friends can be seen freely coming and going and are part of family life. This fluidity or ambiguity between inner and outer in a chawl is also observed in a few other Hindi films, Katha (Dir. Sai Paranjape, 1983) and Dastak (Dir. Rajinder singh Bedi, 1970) for instance. It can be a positive factor, fostering a sense of community or a 'chawlness' as in the case of the former or as a severe detriment to family life as in the case of the latter.

Lefas (2009), referring to Martin Heidegger's well-known essay 'Building, Dwelling, Thinking', considers earth and sky among the components forming human beings' association in so far as they 'dwell' in the world. The change from earth hugging house in villages to 'stacked' multi-storey housing results in a loss of association with earth. Moreover, the tightly packed dense houses where windows overlook other buildings, result in a loss of association with the sky. In the film, Malati is seen twice to run to the kitchen window when she hears the sound of an aeroplane and cranes her neck upwards to glimpse a small patch of sky. The necessity

[7]According to Partha Chatterjee (1994), nationalism during the freedom movement separated the domain of culture into two spheres- the material and the spiritual. The claims of the western civilisation were most powerful in the material sphere, symbolised by the outer world, typically a male domain. But the imitation of the west was undesirable and unnecessary in the spiritual sphere, the inner self, symbolised by the 'home' represented by the women.Thus, the colonised / not colonised dichotomy was played out in the familial sphere of domesticity of world/ home corresponding with outer (compromised)/ inner (true identity).

[8]Swapna Banerjee (2010) suggests that domesticity became the new cultural logic in late colonial India in which notions of modernity, progress, and new nation were embedded and it can be argued that this logic extended itself in the post-colonial period.

[9]SmrutiKoppikar in her essay 'Inner Spaces, Women's voices' (2011) based on conversations with women living in chawls in Bombay indicates the lack of privacy as a theme in most conversations. Women expected their homes to be very personal and private without being watched. However, the lack of privacy in a chawl told on two distinct aspects of female life-menstrual cycles and marital relations, and the fear that these become public knowledge.

to associate with the outer world is also seen in the actions of the other couples in the film (the parents, elder brother and wife) who also tend to escape to the city outdoors. Interestingly it is here, in the midst of the teeming masses that they find anonymity, a situation of environment comfort that allows moments of privacy with their spouses. Life in a chawl presents a distinct domesticity when viewed as lived narrative space in a film. In the situation of acute spatial deprivation and forced proximity, the pressure on personal spaceis variously negotiated and spatially compensated for by the inhabitants. When so much of home life spills through ever open doors and in the shared zone of outside galleries, it is accepted that there is very little private-ness even when notions of domesticity are considered.

For the women in the household, expectations of basic privacy in terms of personal space are difficult to rule out. The domestic as a private domain can be exercised in a very limited sense by employing unique spatial strategies such as shared spaces, partitions or curtained off spaces, mixed rather than fixed uses of spaces, and learning to ignore extraneous environmental stimuli while conducting intimate acts. Clearly, the difficulty of conjugal expression within the confines of their home is an issue, and the youngest couple faces it most acutely. The acceptance of their spatial situation and the learnt behaviour of strategizing space is a compromise they learn to make, bringing back a sense of domestic balance in this multi-membered household. Ultimately, it is this sense of community that compensates for the lack of space, privacy and material comforts. *Piya ka Ghar* is particularly prescient in the portrayal of different spatial strategies thatare brought into being to smoothen these constraints.

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