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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Passing Traditions:

Child-Directed Music as an Index of Cultural Change in Metropolitan India

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy in Ethnomusicology

by

Andrew James Pettit

2014

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Passing Traditions:

Child-Directed Music as an Index of Cultural Change in Metropolitan India

By

Andrew James Pettit

Doctor of Philosophy in Ethnomusicology

University of California, Los Angeles, 2014

Professor Daniel M. Neuman, Chair

This dissertation is one of the first forays into the living and evolving world of child-directed song practices in metropolitan India. It is an inquiry into how individuals living in India's megacities of Delhi, Kolkata, and Mumbai sing to children, what these song practices mean for both children and adults, and why these practices are changing. It investigates the nature and effects of change on the intimate practice of lullaby singing and more the public, ritualized song practices known as *sohars*. A changing family structure, shifting gender roles, increasing economic mobility, rapid urbanization, and pervasive technology are irrevocably altering life and child-directed song practices in India's megacities. In this work, I document the musical and textual features of some of the most prominent lullaby and sohar practices to show how they help transmit socio-cultural values, build connections between generations of people separated by time and place, and provide scaffolding for the creation, maintenance, and performance of an individual's identities in the contexts of India's fluid urban environments. My

research primarily draws on ethnomusicological fieldwork conducted in India in 2011-2012, in addition to four research excursions in 2004-2010, to document how child-directed song practices help transmit and preserve traditions, mythologies, memories, and values while simultaneously creating new ways for individuals to interface with a changing world.

The dissertation of Andrew James Pettit is approved.

Olivia Bloechl

Ali Jihad Racy

Helen Rees

Anthony Seeger

Daniel M. Neuman, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2014

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List of Recordings

Track Number – Recording Title – Performing Artist – Source and Date of Recording

1. Aaj kal mein dhal gaya.mp3 – Lata Mangeshkar and Mohammad Rafi – *Beti Bete* 1964
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3. Aaja ri nindiya aake na ja.mp3 – Noor Jahan – *Zeenat* 1945
4. Amare moina.mp3 – Jnanada Kakati – *Piyoli Phukan* 1955
5. Anken apane ki lale tere hone mein.mp3 – Field Recording 2012
6. Aye brishti jhenpe.mp3 – Parthapratim Chattopadhyay – Field Recording 2012
7. Bala jo jo re.mp3 – Vidyadhar Vyas – Field Recording 2011
8. Chanda dhale pankha jhale.mp3 – Lata Mangeshkar – *Piyar ki Pyas* 1961
9. Chanda mama dur ke.mp3 – Asha Bhosle – *Vacchan* 1955
10. Chandan ka palna resham ki dori.mp3 – Hemant Kumar – *Shabab* 1954
11. Chandaniya (lori lori).mp3 – Shreya Ghoshal – *Rowdy Rathore* 2012
12. Dhan dhan bhag lalanwa.mp3 – Asha Bhosle – *Sajanwa Bairi Bhaile Hamar* 1976
13. Mili Juli gaave.mp3 – Manoj Tiwari – 2010
14. Nanhi kali sone chali.mp3 – Geeta Dutt – *Sujata* 1959
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Acknowledgments

I could not have completed this dissertation without the help of several institutions and many generous, patient, and knowledgeable people. First, I would like to thank the United States–India Educational Foundation for their support in the form of a Fulbright-Nehru Student Research Fellowship. I am grateful to the American Institute for Indian Studies, Archive and Research Center for Ethnomusicology their official sponsorship during my field research. I could not have completed this dissertation without generous financial assistance from the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music Student Opportunity Fund and the UCLA Graduate Division Dissertation Year Fellowship.

I owe a deep debt of gratitude to the many people in India who welcomed me, inspired my research, shared their memories and insights, and generously gave of their time and knowledge for my research. To all of my research participants, named and unnamed in my dissertation, thank you for your time and for sharing your stories with me. I would like to thank Shubha Chaudhuri for your support and direction, and the entire staff at the ARCE for their patience. Thanks to Suneera Kasliwal and Vidyadhar Vyas for being the first scholars in India to reach out to me and for sharing your wisdom. I am deeply indebted to Emily Mendenhall for your help in kick-starting my interviews and to you and Adam for your friendship. Thank you to the staff at the Center for Chronic Disease Control, to Ekta Ohri and the staff at the Center for Knowledge Societies, and to Geoffrey Martineau at the US Embassy in New Delhi for your help facilitating many productive interviews and for the tip that *rotis* work great for satisfying a teething baby. I would like to thank Janet Chalwa and Divya Deswal for their insights into contemporary birth practices in India. I am grateful to Amy Kazmin for her help and introduction to the strong and caring Lali Sangeliya, who deserves many thanks. To my tutors at Zabaan

Language Institute, thank you for your patience and belief that, contrary to all indications, I too might one day be able to appreciate the beauty and grace of Urdu poetry. Thanks to Amy Catlin-Jairazbhoy, Manek Premchand, Nandani Borkar, and many others who facilitated my research in Mumbai and Pune.

Arpita Chatterjee and Aditi Sircar made my fieldwork in Kolkata possible. Thank you both for your incredible kindness and knowledge. Thanks to Sayan Mukhopadhyay, Parthapratim Chattopadhyay, Soumitra and Latika Saha, Dave King, Deonnie Moodie, Courtney Stephens, and everyone else in Kolkata who sang songs, shared stories, and welcomed me and my family into your homes.

I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude to Daniel Neuman, Helen Rees, Anthony Seeger, Olivia Bloechl, and Ali Jihad Racy for your indispensable guidance and encouragement. Thank you to my graduate school friends at UCLA and fellow Fulbright scholars in India for motivating me by example. Thanks to my sitar teachers Roshan Jamal Bhartiya and Ustad Shujaat Khan, I will never be able to repay the musical gifts you have so generously given. Finally, I would like to acknowledge my daughter Samantha and my wife Brenda for their support, perseverance, reassurance, and unconditional love. Thank you for accompanying me on this crazy journey. You are my inspiration.

Vita

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SERVICE

- 2013 Associate Editor, *International Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Society*
- 2012 Editorial Board Member, *Ethnomusicology Review*

- 2009-2012 Organized and facilitated numerous national and international performances and lecture/demonstrations by sitarist Shujaat Khan (e.g., performances at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.; Symphony Space in New York City; the Music Circle in Los Angeles; the University of Georgia, Athens; performances in Delhi, India)
- 2009 Organized performance/demonstration by Sidi Goma: The Black Sufis of Gujarat at UCLA
- 2008 Volunteer, UCLA Publications booth at the Society for Ethnomusicology annual conference
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- 2007-2012 Helped organize annual Music of India Ensemble concerts at UCLA
- 2007-2008 Editorial Board Member, *Pacific Review of Ethnomusicology*

Chapter 1

Passing Traditions

Introduction

Standing in a narrow aisle and enveloped by the noisy hush of jet engines a few dozen feet to my left and right, I watched the dimly lit monitor as the little icon of our plane passed the jagged west coast of Ireland heading east. Flying at 36,000 and around 600 miles an hour, we were still over eight hours from landing. My feet ached a bit, but I was wide awake and happy as my wife slept curled onto three seats, two of which we had paid for and a third that had thankfully remained empty. I stood in the aisle as we flew over Ireland, into continental Europe and past the Czech Republic's eastern border, making mental checklists of things I could not forget for my fieldwork interviews. Microphones? Check. Digital recorders? Check. Camera? Check. Notebook and pens? Check. Informed Consent Release Forms? Check. Mosquito repellent? Check. Diapers? ... Check. Baby? ... Check. A completely reformulated expectation of dissertation research and fieldwork? ... Still working on that...

I had traveled to India several times before the start of my dissertation fieldwork. Each time, I had spent months in Delhi or Mumbai living with my sitar teachers, studying Hindustani music, and getting to know portions of the vibrant and diverse cultures that constitute Indian society. I spent my time with musicians, mostly men, eating, practicing, and talking about music, people, and the past. How would the presence of my wife and daughter alter these experiences? What would I do differently and how would people perceive not just me, but now us?

What began as dissertation research examining indigenous notions of innate talent among hereditary musicians in Northern India utterly changed following the birth of my daughter;

changed for the better. For the first three months after her birth, in the fuzzy, sleep-deprived haze of new parenthood, I had, as most parents across the world do, held her, bounced her in my arms, and sung songs to her that seemingly sprang spontaneously from my memory. I sang nonsense to entertain myself as much as her. I sang songs I remembered from my childhood. “I Ride an Old Paint”¹ is still, two-and-a-half years later, her favorite song. I hummed tunes to which I did not know the words. Even before that long plane ride to Delhi, standing in the aisles with my daughter strapped to my chest, asleep in a baby blue Björn carrier, I suspected that her arrival would change the course of my dissertation research in India. How profoundly, I had yet to understand.

The title of this dissertation, “Passing Traditions,” alludes to two competing phenomena that are influencing the practice of child-directed songs. First, lullabies and child-directed songs are often passed down from parent or grandparent to child, not just in India but across the world. “I Ride an Old Paint,” a song that I learned from my father and he had learned sometime in his younger years in the 1950s is a personal example of the transmission or “passing” of a lullaby. Child-directed songs can musically encode or illustrate unique family histories and personal memories. “I Ride an Old Paint” recalls my father’s work as a ranch-hand and back-country horse tour leader in Nebraska. This song captures my father’s history and intertwines it with my own memories of growing up in the mountains of Colorado. What it will mean for my daughter, who has grown up in metropolitan New Delhi and Los Angeles, far from the plains and mountains of Nebraska and Colorado, remains to be seen, but it will only add to the richness of this family tradition. The intimate lullaby and child-directed song traditions practiced in urban contemporary India display similar qualities. An analysis of these song practices and ways of

¹ “Old Paint” or “I Ride an Old Paint” is a traditional American cowboy ballad. It was published by Carl Sandburg in his *The American Songbag* (1927) and sung by numerous artists such as Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger and others.

passing memories and cultural knowledge to children not only sheds light on family and personal histories, but also illuminates broader forces driving cultural change, the conservation of socio-cultural values, and the formulation and maintenance of individual, regional, and national identities.

“Passing Traditions” also alludes to the fact that many of these formerly enduring song traditions are passing out of use. While parents and caregivers still sing to young children in their care, many prominent songs, physical practices, and ways of relating to infants and young children are disappearing as India’s population urbanizes and adopts new technologies. Some songs have been forgotten, or are just barely remembered by my older research participants.² Commercial lullabies and those composed for India’s vast and varied film industries increasingly dominate the child-directed song repertoire. The actual practice of singing to children, in person, is slowly being supplanted by the playing of recordings on CD, mp3s on cellphones, or recordings built into various types of infant swings, cribs, or cradles. Apart from the disappearance of certain song traditions, the changing practice of singing to children marks a shift in societal beliefs about the nature of childhood, itself a result of changing family structures and gender roles. Analyzing the dynamics of these musical, social, and cultural changes helps establish a useful and personal index by which to gauge the extraordinary changes taking place across Indian society in the 21st century.

The practice of singing to one’s child is a nearly universal human phenomenon. Almost instinctually, parents and caretakers hush, coo, bounce, and sing to children, in an effort to calm a tired child, to lull them to sleep, and in an effort to preserve the fraying nerves of the parents, the household, the apartment, and, in some cases, a whole neighborhood or village. Yet, lullabies

² The loss of lullaby repertoire over generations has been noted by other scholars in other locations. See Baker and Mackinlay 2006.

are more than just sleep-inducing songs, they convey important personal, cultural, and religious values to a young child and often serve as some of the first extra-womb exposure to the child's native language, culture, and music. The thematic content of lullabies from across the world often centers on expectations and hopes for a child's future, the challenges faced by the mother or caregiver, religious and moral themes,³ and nonsense done purely for the entertainment of the baby or the caretaker.

This dissertation research explores some of the longstanding and fundamental questions of ethnomusicology, such as the nature of cultural and musical change, the role of child-directed songs in the formulation and maintenance of identity, and the role of memory in the transmission of cultural knowledge. I examine how and why young children are sung to and the functions of some musical experiences of early childhood such as lullabies and ritualized, post-birth songs known as sohars. I will investigate some of the changing cultural, religious, and moral themes conveyed through early childhood songs to better understand the extent of the rapidly changing urban Indian socio-cultural landscapes.

Hypothesis

The study of lullabies and child-directed music is particularly well suited to uncovering processes affecting cultural stability and change. As I've said, lullabies and other child-directed songs are often passed down through generations, demonstrating a remarkably resilient process of musical-cultural conservation, while the meaning derived from these songs changes with each generation and even throughout an individual's lifetime. A study of lullabies, child-directed songs, and similar recorded media played for children yields insights into the evolving social

³See Leslie 1991; Rao 1994.

structure and family dynamics in contemporary India.⁴ This study, however, is not focused on children's culture, on child-generated music, or the role of music in child development or language acquisition. Rather, I examine the choices adults make when singing to children and question how child-directed musical practices create meaning, memory, and identity as children grow into adults. This research attempts to show how these child-directed musical practices elucidate the nature and trends of broad-scale cultural change as it affects urban Indian life.

In India, and across the world, lifestyles and child-rearing practices are changing due to rapid urbanization, increasing use of technology, globalization, and a shift in physical and social living arrangements of families. Across India, the number of extended families living together is decreasing, while the numbers of "nuclear family units" are on the rise. Interestingly, this increase is most dramatic in India's rural areas, possibly as a result of an adoption of urban cultural values prior to physical urbanization (Saggurti and Nair 2005). It is even speculated that the rate of urbanization and the accompanying adoption of urban cultural values by rural Indian residents is substantially underrepresented in the most recent officially recognized statistics.⁵ What are the implications of this shift if, as I was repeatedly told by my research participants, the last refuge of "traditional" lullaby singing is now village India?

Lullabies and child-directed songs⁶ constitute some of the earliest performances of music and cultural knowledge to which a child is exposed.⁷ As such, they can have a unique influence on a developing child's mind and understanding of their personal, familial, religious, and

⁴ The relationship between social structure and sound or song structure is a cornerstone of many ethnomusicological studies (see, among others, Lomax 1962; 1968; Merriam 1964; Blacking 1973; Feld 1984).

⁵ See "We are Connected: Rapid Social Change and Assertive Voters Will Change Democracy" in the April 5, 2014 issue of *The Economist*. Found at <http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21600108-rapid-social-change-and-assertive-voters-will-improve-indian-democracy-we-are-connected>.

⁶ Other scholars (Minks 2002:380) have noted that the term "song" is somewhat limiting when referring to the wide variety of expressive practices that constitute lullabies and child-directed music. I use the term "song" for the sake of simplicity, but do not intend it to be reductive.

⁷ Children show preferences for music from their mothers' culture, and this acculturation begins before birth (Custodero, Johnson-Green 2003; Woodward et al. 1996).

regional or ethnic identity. Nearly every parent understands, at some level, the importance and influence these early experiences have on a child's development and often select these songs with extra attention to their cultural, moral, and religious values. At the same time, the choice of what to sing or put in the cassette or CD player is not always made with such consideration; when a child is screaming or unhappy, sometimes the choice of what to do is often made simply to preserve the caregiver's sanity and is less a decision about long-term cultural or religious value. The performance of lullabies and child-directed songs, particularly when a caregiver is alone with an infant, also offers space to say, sing, or emotionally release what might otherwise be unacceptable in public. These aspects of lullaby and child-directed songs, i.e. their function in preserving and passing on values, the use of mediated music combined with, or supplanting live music making, and the space these performances provide caregivers to contest or reaffirm their social, economic or individual circumstances, offer rich material for study.

The primary aim for this inquiry is to understand how the performance, function, and meaning of lullabies and child-directed songs are changing with India's urbanization. The frenzied pace of urbanization is radically transforming many countries around the globe. The mass movement of people from rural, more culturally homogenous living to culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse cities (and mega-cities) has a profound impact on all types of cultural production. Nations such as China are undergoing even more drastic urbanization resettlement, the effects of which scholars are only beginning to understand.⁸ In this dissertation, I assess how technologies (recorded media, film songs, television, cell phones, and the internet) impact the performance of lullabies and child-directed songs in urban India. I examine the musical specifics of child-directed songs of early childhood for their textual themes,

⁸ A recent *New York Times* article title grimly summarizes the issues of urbanization and cultural production: "In China, 'Once the Villages are Gone, the Culture is Gone'" (Ian Johnson, *New York Times*, February 1, 2014).

musical characteristics, and socio-cultural function. I analyze how lullaby text and performance reflect or convey social values and attitudes concerning the raising of children. Deviating from my focus on lullabies, I also examine changing practices surrounding the birth of children and ritualized songs known as sohars. Typically sung in gatherings several days after birth, sohars are functionally and contextually distinct from lullabies, yet their practice is being influenced by many of the same societal changes affecting lullabies. I analyze the social, moral, and religious values conveyed through the practice of singing (or through playing recorded media) to children, and explore how the process of individual and larger group (ethnic, religious, or national) identities are established, maintained, and transmitted. Finally, I examine lullabies produced by India's film industries, media products that dominate the lullaby repertoire in India. I analyze these songs in their film contexts and argue that these songs (and Indian film music generally) are helping establish a sense of pan-Indian, national, and even global sense of identity.

Background Scholarship: Lullabies

Lullabies and child-directed music hold only a peripheral place in ethnomusicological and musicological studies. There are very few studies that address lullabies and child-directed music in India in any detail. Historically, there has been a lack of scholarly ethnographic accounts of young children, and children's music generally. "Everyday" musical practices, often improvised, typically generated by women in their domestic space, have been perceived by some as trivial and not deserving of serious scholarly attention. Additionally, the challenge of inserting oneself as a researcher into the intimate and typically private mother-child dynamic has discouraged many from even attempting such ethnographic research (Juvančič 2010:121).

As anthropologist Alma Gottlieb suggests, infants constitute something of an "invisible" population. She finds five reasons the study of infants has, until only recently, remained at the

margins of anthropological attention: (1) adults lack substantial memories of their own childhood, and this, combined with the inexperience of young anthropologists who have yet to raise children of their own, makes the subject of infants remote for the researcher; (2) infants are seen as passive and lacking agency; (3) the domestic sphere of women has remained, until fairly recently, in the shadows of intellectual inquiry; (4) babies are difficult subjects, they lack the ability to speak, and have a propensity to “leak” tears, urine, feces, and spit-up, processes that are “devalued” in Western society; and (5) infants are not considered “rational,” and therefore their actions have been historically devalued by Western researchers (Gottlieb 2000).

I believe the difficulties associated with the study of infants, and a scholarly bias that is, in part, fueled by such difficulties, carry over to the study of child-directed music and other cultural practices associated with young children. While this dissertation attempts to help correct some of this imbalance, my focus is not directly on infants and children per se. I too found it difficult to ethnographically document lullabies and child-directed song practices in their “natural” setting. There is little doubt that the presence of a male foreign researcher, surrounded by microphones and cameras, furiously scribbling down observations, would entirely disrupt the “naturalness” of the lullaby process for just about anyone, no matter their age. Instead, this dissertation centers on how adults make music for children, and on the memories, cultural knowledge, and emotions adults rely on and pour into the intimate process of singing a child to sleep. This is a study of how childhood musical experiences shape adult identity and how this circle of musical and cultural transmission is being influenced by the social and technological realities of contemporary urban India.

When lullabies and child-directed music have been the focus of scholarly attention, the primary methods of analysis or general theoretical goals most often fall into one of four

categories: (1) studies concerned with analysis of lullaby text or mythology, (2) linguistic and musical acquisition studies, (3) psychological and child development focused studies, and (4) mixed ethnographic, textual, and musicological analyses.

The earliest scholarship covering lullabies and child-directed songs from India is found in A. H. Fox-Strangways's *The Music of Hindostan*.⁹ Fox-Strangways briefly discusses two lullabies he collected in his travels and provides a short transcription of one of the tunes in his "musical diary" made during his tour of India in 1910-11.¹⁰ Fox-Strangways also made eight wax cylinder recordings and several "phonogram" transcriptions of lullabies recorded during this trip that are still preserved in the National Sound Archives in London.¹¹ Another example of early scholarly attention can be found in recordings made by Arnold Bake, the Dutch scholar of Sanskrit, music, and Indian life whose fieldwork in India from the 1920s through the 1950s resulted in a significant corpus of audio recordings and film footage of classical and folk practices. Bake made nearly 20 recordings of lullabies from around India that remain some of the earliest and finest examples of audio and film documentation of a song genre often ignored by other early researchers. I was fortunate to be able to review these recordings at the Archive and Research Center for Ethnomusicology in Gurgaon. Most of the lullabies recorded by Bake are sung by women, without instrumental accompaniment. Unfortunately, the songs are accompanied by little information other than the singer's name, the language in which the song is performed, and the date and place of recording; there is no indication as to the songs' purported

⁹ Earlier works cite children's music and playsongs from India, but are typically concerned with child-generated, rather than child-directed, music. William Newell's evolutionary and comparative work on children's songs in America from the 1870s and 1880s is one of the earliest examples I can find mentioning game songs from "Hindostan." See Newell 1963 [1884].

¹⁰ A more in depth discussion concerning the lullabies Fox-Strangways documented in *The Music of Hindostan* can be found in the following chapter.

¹¹ Martin Clayton has analyzed some of Fox-Strangway's lullaby transcriptions against the surviving cylinder recordings and makes an argument that the metrical markings and other aspects of the transcriptions are quite problematic and emanate from a cultural bias that pervades Fox-Strangways's transcription methods and his interpretation of these lullabies in particular (Clayton 1999).

origins or composers. It is not listed if these songs were widely known in the region of their recording, whether they were used functionally as lullabies, or whether they were only understood as such due to certain lyrical-poetic features. Despite the lack of more detailed accompanying information, Bake's recordings constitute the most substantial and historically valuable collection of lullaby recordings at the ARCE.

Other studies of lullabies and child-directed songs from a variety of cultures most often analyze the textual content of these songs. Drawing comparisons between American and Japanese lullabies, Bess Lomax Hawes observed that the desire for individual autonomy can be heard in American lullabies that emphasize a journey, or movement away from the mother. Importantly, she also distinguishes between songs that are composed as lullabies and those that function as such (Lomax Hawes 1974). This distinction is important, and I examine both composed and functional lullabies equally in this dissertation. In contrast to the thematic emphasis Lomax-Hawes observes in American lullabies, Spitz (1979) finds an emphasis on safety and security for the infant in East Slavic lullabies, while reaffirming Lomax Hawes's findings that lullabies articulate the concerns of the individual and of the society in general. McDowell (1977) draws on English translations of a number of different cultures' lullabies to explore the distinctions between "folk" and "literary" lullabies; "literary" lullabies tend to emphasize stylized or sentimental interpretations of motherhood or childhood, while "folk" lullabies often express feelings of anxiety, tension, or depression that can accompany the state of motherhood. In radically different contexts, lullabies and songs of praise sung to a baby are interwoven with veneration of the Prophet Muhammad in the Islamic Tamil literary song genre *pillaittamil* (Richman 1993).

Based on the historian Teruo Uemura's collection of over 350 lullabies from the tiny agricultural village of Itsuki, Japan, Masuyama's study reaffirms the notion that lullabies can be vehicles that allow the singer to "say the unsayable,"¹² or express discontent with their circumstances. Nicholas Tucker asserts that traditional British and European lullabies can be heard as "exercises in controlled hatred," citing traditional texts that threaten harm even while the mother is forced to contain her frustration lest she further antagonize the crying child (Tucker 1984:43). Several scholars have documented lullabies from the Indian states of Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh that express the loneliness and fear felt by young mothers living with their in-laws, often away from their home villages (Patel 1974; Jacobson 1975). Working with rural laborers in the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu, Margaret Trawick finds that the love between a mother and child is most fervently expressed in lullabies and laments that also serve to voice complaints about expected future injustices perpetrated against the baby (Trawick 1988:211). In fact, the vast majority of scholars researching lullaby practice across the world acknowledge that lullaby singing functions both as a sleep aid and an outlet for the private feelings or the emotional expression (positive, negative, or ambivalent) of the mother or caretaker. This seems to be a universal phenomenon. Similar findings have been documented in research with Turkish mothers, Iraqi Jewish women, Tamil and Gujarati communities, and young American women (Macfie 1990; Trehub and Prince 2010; Khayyat 1978; Vanamamalai 1981; Patel 1974; Mackinlay and Baker 2005a).

Elizabeth Mackinlay's work exemplifies the effective integration of ethnographic and textual analyses in an effort to understand the differences between ceremonial lullabies and those meant to lull a child to sleep in the Yanyuwa aboriginal community of Australia (Mackinlay

¹² One of William Bascom's "Four Functions of Folklore" (Bascom 1954).

1999). She documents the differences between “restricted” and “un-restricted” lullaby forms,¹³ where the former function as more ceremonial instruction to teach children about the Yanyuwa spiritual or Dream world, and the latter serve more as practical aids for lulling children to sleep and illustrate everyday life apart from the spiritual realm. Lullabies also function as musical “charms”¹⁴ sung to protect the baby from evil spirits. Farber (1990) analyzes the use of lullabies as magical-religious incantations, in an attempt to show the legitimate and everyday reliance on religious magic in ancient Babylonian and Assyrian society despite its later questionable status in Judeo-Christian thought. As a very minor portion of his 1974 dissertation, Tsuge details two lullabies popular in Iran to discover the interplay between the poetic meter *hazaj* and the lullaby text’s syllabic content as determining a sung rhythm which contrasts the more obvious 4/4 melodic meter of these lullabies (Tsuge 1970:255). Studies of Italian and Nigerian lullabies conclude that lullabies are used as much for enculturation as they are for lulling a child to sleep (Guidice 1988; Ebeogu 1991). Other researchers arrive at similar conclusions in their work with a variety of cultural groups including Arab, Yiddish, Slavic, Tamil, and Turkish (respectively Caspi 1991; Metzger 1984; Spitz 1979; Osborn 1995; Emeksiz 2001; and Trehub 2010).

The above studies rely primarily on the textual analysis of lullabies to support their conclusions that child-directed songs reaffirm commonly held cultural values, express affection between the child and caregiver, express the anxiety, fear, or anger of the caregiver, and provide the singer a medium of social protest, or a way to contest their life circumstances. Many of these studies are the result of ethnographic research, but textual analysis often overshadows the analysis of lullabies as they are practiced. As Robert Garfias notes,

If from the metaphoric lullaby, or perhaps meta-lullaby, the infant learns that it is safe to sleep, then from this earliest stage there is an emotional message received along with the

¹³ See also Kartomi 1984.

¹⁴ See also Ikegami 1986; Madagáin 1989.

sound...In our tendency to separate sound from signal from signal and meaning from message we have lost sight of the important capacity for emotional communication which humanly produced sound *as sound* can carry. (Garfias 1990:105)

In other words, an examination of lullaby text in isolation can only give a partial and, in some cases, misleading picture as to the meaning, impact, importance, and function of these songs.

There is little doubt that lullabies encode a variety of linguistic and implied worldviews for the child, help reaffirm these worldviews for the singer, and help regulate infant movement, behavior, and emotion (Rock, et al. 1999). However, unless scholars carefully situate lullabies and child-directed songs *in practice* and employ broader socio-cultural, musical, and ethnographic observations and analyses to support their textual analyses, a full understanding of the function, meaning, and referential content¹⁵ of lullabies will remain elusive.

A second set of scholarship addresses how linguistic and musical patterns are transmitted to and acquired by infants through lullabies and child-directed songs. I group both linguistic and musical acquisition and classification studies together because, as many scholars have argued, lullabies and children's music occupy a "border zone" between speech and song (Hornbostel and Abraham 1975 [1904]; Herzog 1950; List 1963; Trainor, Austin, Desjardins 2000; Minks 2002). The link between speech and song, or the border zone between the two recalls, Rousseau's philosophy regarding the origins of speech and music and their relationship to the stages of human social and linguistic development. In what would become characteristic of "colonial anthropology," Rousseau traced speech-song to a middle-stage of human development that existed before modern music and people became alienated from their origins (Bloechl 2008:193). The belief that children and children's music echoed some more primitive or authentic musical

¹⁵ Trawick (1988) advocates the use of Bhaktin's analytical framework of voice integrated with ethnography as a way to bridge the gap between a limited understanding of "referential content" (on which much of the textually based studies of lullabies is focused) and an understanding of the "message" of a song and its performance, which is itself a special kind of "social action" (Blacking 1995).

expression persevered in the literature for quite some time and was part of an overall Orientalist tendency to link the “primitive” or “authentic” with non-Western music and to see non-Western people as akin to children or savages. In particular, aspects of Indian civilization and music were often seen as “sensual” and “timeless,” in keeping with India’s supposed more primitive stage of development.¹⁶ In two short studies, Bruno Nettl offers a glimpse of infant musical development gathered from recordings of interactions with his own daughter, and compares his findings with those of Heinz Werner’s (1917) study of the musical acquisition habits of children from two to five years old. Nettl tentatively concludes that there may be a correlation between the appearance of music traits in developing children and the frequency of these traits in “primitive” musical cultures across the world (Nettl 1956a; 1956b). Sands and Sekaquaptewa’s linguistic analysis of four Hopi lullabies¹⁷ concludes that lullabies are especially valid for the analysis of language and meaning because they form the basis of oral tradition and more complex literature (1978:209). Lullabies and child-directed songs have been shown to be an extension of speech communication that add layers of meaning through melodic, rhythmic and formal characteristics that are consistent across cultures (Custodero, Britto, and Brooks-Gunn 2003). Garfias notes that, “In the lullaby and other sounds made directly to the infant...are also transmitted the essential sound patterns – the formulae of stress, tone and accent – which serve both as the structure of the spoken language and which underlie the fundamental structure of the music of the group as well” (Garfias 1990:102). Most contemporary scholars agree that even vocables with no linguistic or dictionary meaning add additional layers of affective meaning, something George List attempts to classify in his pitch and contour charting of the “boundary zone” between speech and song (List 1963).

¹⁶ See William Jones’s “On the Musical Modes of the Hindus” and John Stuart Mill’s *The History of British India* for examples of these pervasive “timeless” colonial tropes (Jones 1784; Mill 1858:118).

¹⁷ See also List 1987.

A large number of studies examine lullaby and child-directed songs through the lenses of a psychology, child-developmental, and communication theory. Custodero, Britto, and Brooks-Gunn's (2003) analysis of musical interactions between American parents and children gathered from diaries, interviews, and field observations found that the frequency of performance of lullabies and child-directed music varies with the socio-demographic and mental health status of parents. Interestingly, the authors find that the frequency of musical interaction is less correlated to economic or ethnic differences, that musical communication between child and parents is most dramatically affected by the parents' mental state, and that "interactive musical experiences may provide emotional strength and help parents cope with the stress of contemporary family life" (Custodero, Britto, Brooks-Gunn 2003:568). If the practice of lullaby singing continues to decline, then the nature of alternative coping mechanisms used to help alleviate the stress of contemporary urban Indian life will offer a fruitful and socially beneficial topic for future research.

Other studies examine lullabies and child-directed songs through a psychological-developmental lens and employ laboratory methods and quantitative analysis rather than ethnographic and qualitative research more common in ethnomusicology. These studies offer valuable insight into the musical interactions between adults and children in more controlled settings. Fernald seeks to understand intonation and speech variation's effect on communication and understanding, concluding that, "the prominent intonation patterns of infant-directed speech are both more distinctive and more meaningful than those of adult-directed speech and may provide the preverbal infant with salient prosodic cues to the intent of the speaker" (Fernald 1989:1508). In a similar vein, Unyk et al. (1992) found that an adult's judgment of a lullaby's simplicity or complexity is largely culturally determined, and that the classification of songs as

lullabies is a result of the song's melodic features relating to the prosodic features of infant-directed speech. Rock, Trainor, and Addison (1999) found that infants became more self-focused or outwardly-focused when lullabies or playsongs were performed in their presence, thus demonstrating the power of child-directed music to help emotionally and physiologically regulate preverbal infants. Other researchers approach the textual analysis through particular schools of psychology, from Jungian psychoanalysis, to the developmental psychology pioneered by Piaget (Weisner 2000; Lopez 1991). The results of these studies demonstrate the inseparable relationship between melody and speech, and bolster the importance of future studies concerning child-directed music, culture, and the development of mind.

Psychologists Sandra Trehub and Laurel Trainor are two of the more prolific researchers studying music, children, memory, language, and cognition, with over 75 publications on these topics between them. Both scholars utilize laboratory and field research to document the culturally dependent similarities and differences in the practice of singing to children and the effects of music and sound on infant development. Their work has shed light on the musical characteristics of child-directed and child-generated song, the transmission of language and speech contour through singing, the expression of emotion, auditory processing, and various aspects pertaining to infants' perception of and reaction to music sung by caregivers. They note that even though lullabies are commonly associated with soothing a child to sleep, a deeper examination of their practice reveals their multifaceted uses as work songs, love songs, magical charms, emotional outlets, embellish communication, and serve to modulate the dyadic relationship between caregiver and infant (Trehub and Trainor 1998). Much of their research has focused on codifying the ways caregivers sing to children, documenting musical and linguistic characteristics of differing song genres, and linking infant behavior and perception (Trainor,

Austin, and Desjardins 2000; Trainor 2002; Trehub 1990; Unyk, Trehub, Trainor, and Schellenberg 1992; Trehub and Schellenberg 1995). These scholars find that pitch differences in the performances of men and women singing to their children correlate with infant attention, suggesting that the altered, raised pitch often employed in infant-directed singing is one of the most salient musical characteristics of affective infant-directed singing (O'Neill, Trainor, Trehub 2001). The differences between male and female pitch modulations during infant-directed singing also confirms that a "loving tone" is one of the most important characteristics of lullaby singing with both fathers and mothers (Trainor 2002).

Sarah Lopez's work is another example of scholarship that approaches lullabies and playsongs through a both musicological and developmental psychology perspective. Lopez analyzes the effectiveness of infant-directed songs at facilitating empathy between mother and child and the influence these songs have on newborn infants, using Piaget's adaptive-sensorimotor model of intellectual development along with graphical-statistical musicological analyses. Despite the challenges of reliably observing and analyzing a phenomenon as complex as empathy or resonance between parents and infants in a hospital setting, Lopez's work at least provides a baseline for future research on the effects of lullabies on newborn children.

Other studies employ a mixed methodology in their study of child-directed songs, combining ethnographic, qualitative research with textual and musical analyses. The work of Alan Lomax and John Blacking marks some of the earlier ethnomusicological research that addresses children's music in detail. Despite the many criticisms of Lomax's method of analysis,¹⁸ the inclusion of lullabies and children's songs in *Folk Song Style and Culture* is commendable in that Lomax went against an historical precedent that often saw children's music

¹⁸ See Henry 1976.

as unworthy of serious study.¹⁹ A simplification of Lomax's research premise, that the structure of music has a relation to the economic, familial, political, and cultural structure of the society from which it is produced, coincides with findings of other anthropologists²⁰ and is evocative of my focus on child-directed songs and their relationship to societal changes brought on by technology and urbanization. Although I do not seek to classify or compare either a society or its musical output, my study does examine how the changing practice of lullabies and child-directed song indexes Indian and global socio-cultural values.

John Blacking's *Venda Children's Songs: A Study in Ethnomusicological Analysis* (1967) is one of the better known works in the canon of ethnomusicology dealing with children's music. Most of the music discussed by Blacking is child-generated, or at least child-performed. Blacking's work has been valuable to my research as a template, integrating musicological and cultural analyses and for its emphasis on music as a tool for socialization. Just as music can "bring people together in the expression of common sentiments" (Blacking 1967:32), in this dissertation, I aim to show how the practice of lullabies and child-directed songs enable generations to connect across space and time.

Other scholars have assessed the place and importance of technology, recorded media, and globalization in the domestic settings of young children (Lum 2008; Young 2008), and have examined the performance of gender and ethnicity in playsongs (Merill-Mirsky 1988). Despite the differences from my research in their subject matter and ethnographic focus, these studies offer analogous support, concluding that child-performed music constitutes culturally distinct performative practices that are at once acculturating, dramatically affected by technology, and generative of their own sets of values and cultural identities distinct from the adult world that

¹⁹ Juvančič (2010) details some of the historical stigmas that dissuaded scholars from undertaking research on child-directed music in the past.

²⁰ See Barry, Bacon, and Child 1959; Hendrix 1985.

surrounds them. Nevertheless, my findings differ from those of Lum and Young.²¹ They conclude that the prevalence of in-person, child-directed singing continues unabated despite the adoption of electronic media and technology. In contrast I found that, while there has been a small increase in child-directed and family-oriented musical activities *outside* the home, the practice of lullaby singing within the home is decreasing in both frequency of practice and size of known repertoire.

Theoretical Templates

As is evident from the research discussed above, lullabies and child-directed music serve several distinct social functions. Most often, this music entertains and modifies the behavior of both child and caregiver. It serves as a tool of acculturation, and it offers a space for the performance or release of discontent or socially unacceptable feelings. Child-directed musical practices provide a point of reference for individuals as they develop their sense of identity, and serves as a line of transmission between generations for the dissemination of social values, family history, and culture. Bourdieu's notion of practice theory will help frame my discussion of early child-directed music and its relation to broader social change. The choice of what music to sing, or what recorded media to play, to one's children is influenced by several factors. Individual agency operates within a number of interlocking but constricted fields that rely on durable dispositions, which are continually negotiated throughout an individual's life. A caregiver's choice of what to sing or play for their children is not a simple matter of taste.²² The choice, conscious or not, reflects and reinforces one's social standing and upbringing (access to capital), is a negotiation between cultural, religious, educational, and political power structures,

²¹ See also Trehub 2010a

²² As Bourdieu argues, taste is not such a simple matter!

and communicates unconscious or fundamental values and informs one's worldview (*habitus* and *doxa*). In short, a practice theory approach to the analysis of lullabies and child-directed song practice offers a flexible, powerful tool for understanding how social-historical relationships, economic systems, and individual agency shape an individual's sense of self.

Technology, from electronic media to urban architecture, is shaping the ways caregivers interact with children and is simultaneously reflective of changing cultural aesthetics. Acknowledging that technology both shapes human action and is shaped by the requirements and needs of society, I will engage with two competing perspectives on technology to help explain how child-directed song practices help preserve family traditions and memories, act as “incognito” bearers of cultural knowledge, and are adapted to fit the needs of the rapidly evolving Indian socio-technological urban landscape. Technological determinism, the belief that technological developments operate independent of social influences while somehow guiding the evolution of society or constricting the possibilities for action, has largely fallen out of favor with contemporary scholars. In its place, a more nuanced understanding of how social systems influence technological development and adoption has emerged in the work of scholars in a field known as the social construction of technology, or SCOT. In chapter 3, I will explore how child-directed song practices are being reshaped by various technologies sweeping through urban India. I attempt to chart a middle path to show that, while child-directed song practice is being radically changed by the adoption of certain technologies and the structure of these technologies strongly guides potential action, the resulting social practices are neither simply determined by the structure of technology nor entirely socially constructed. The technologies influencing child-directed song practices operate both inside and outside the control of individuals. Technology

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can influence behavior to the point of being deterministic, yet its adoption or use relies on human involvement and individual choice.

Fieldwork

The primary data for this project is drawn from interviews, analyses of audio and video media, participation in parent-child music groups, and observations made over nine months of fieldwork in 2011-2012. During this time, I interviewed over seventy individuals in Delhi, Mumbai, Pune, and Kolkata (see Figure 1.1).



Figure 1.1: Map of India. Primary field research sites circled in red. Map image found at https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/cia-maps-publications/map-downloads/India_Transportation.jpg/image.jpg

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Despite the difficulties often associated with multi-sited research, the general lack of child-directed musical studies in India and the speed at which child-directed song practices are changing encouraged me to investigate the topic as widely as possible and to leave more geographically or regionally specific research for the future. In addition, most of my research participants originated from various locations around India, which had the effect of making my research automatically “multi-sited.” With only a small exception, interviews were conducted in-person, while telephone calls, email, and internet video calls were used for follow-up questioning and to exchange recordings or other relevant documents. This dissertation is also informed by my fourteen-year study of Hindustani classical music performance on the sitar with my teachers Roshan Bhartiya and Shujaat Khan, and my numerous visits to India to study music prior to the period of my formal dissertation fieldwork.

Primarily, I conducted interviews with individuals; the limited number of group interviews most often included families in which the mother, father, and children were present.



Figure 1.2: An interview with a family outside Kolkata, April 13, 2012. My (then) one-year-old daughter is being entertained by research participant Latika in the center of the photograph.

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Research participants ranged in age from their early twenties to their late eighties, and while most had children and grandchildren, this was not a requirement for participation in the study. I held interviews with natural birth advocates, midwives, and a group of women musicians from several ethnic and geographic regions in North India who performed sohar songs professionally, in addition to their work as household domestic staff in central Delhi. Other research participants' professional backgrounds ranged from "white-collar" office employees, academics, journalists, a politician and public intellectual, film makers, musicians, homemakers, and business executives, to household domestic staff. I attended regular amateur-led parent-child musical play groups and spoke with professionals organizing for-profit child musical activity groups in Delhi. I was also able to utilize the archives at the American Institute for Indian Studies in Gurgaon.

The presence of my wife Brenda and daughter Samantha significantly, and positively, affected my ability to conduct research on child-directed songs. Most of the parent-child play groups at which I conducted some research were first attended by my wife and daughter separately. Brenda's help in contacting mothers and grandmothers, friends and friends-of-friends, was instrumental for my research. The presence of my daughter Samantha changed the way people viewed me, softening their suspicions, and offering entry into a world that a male, foreign research might normally find closed. I am certain that without the help of both my wife and daughter during my field research, this dissertation would have been impossible to complete.

A Note on Translation, Terminology, Names, and Audio Examples

A majority of the interviews conducted for this research were held in English. Several were held in a combination of Hindi and English, in which I attempted to employ my intermediate-level Hindi speaking skills as effectively as possible. Several interviews were held

exclusively in Hindi with the help of a research participant, a woman who helped me establish contact with a group of *sohar* singers in Delhi, and who shared invaluable memories of her childhood growing up in Delhi in the 1940s and 50s and her experiences raising (and singing to) her children and grandchildren. Portions of two group interviews were held in Bengali, and I am grateful to Aditi Sircar and Arpita Chatterjee for their help during the interviews with interpretation. I worked carefully during the post-interview transcription process to translate any Hindi interviews, phrases, and terminology into English.

Throughout this dissertation, I use the somewhat awkward term “child-directed” to encompass several different mediums of music-making and consumption. This term is meant to encompass live music-making in addition to recorded media used for a child’s entertainment, distraction, and lulling to sleep. I also use the term “child-directed” to cover genres of music, such as *sohars* (a type of generally celebratory birth song), that are not lullabies but might function in similar ways, or are affected by similar social, cultural, and technological processes. While lullabies and child-directed songs may be performed *by* children in other contexts, these performances were not the focus of my research. I also use the general term “lullaby”²³ to cover a variety of linguistic and regionally specific translations. In Hindi, *lori* is analogous to lullaby or cradle-song, and all of my research participants were comfortable with this translation. Because of the linguistic diversity of my research participants, I encountered many variations of the term for a song used to sing a child to sleep, including *palna* in Marathi, *thallattu* in Tamil, *ghum parani gana* in Bengali, and others, that are subsumed in my use of the catchall “lullaby.” I have attempted to limit the use of diacritical marks for English translations unless their absence causes confusion or if they occur in a proper noun. For example, I use *rāg* to denote the Hindustani melodic system as “rag” could bring to mind something like a dishcloth for English readers.

²³ Others have noted the problematic general usage of the term “lullaby” in other contexts. See Espeland 1995.

Likewise, I omit diacritics from words such as *ghum pāṛāni* as their absence does not generally affect comprehension and because there is a lack of standardization for the use of diacritical marks for many South Asian language translations, but I do italicize the term *dai* (traditional midwife) to differentiate it, particularly when used in the plural as *dais*, from its English homonym. Throughout the dissertation, italics are used to denote the first appearance of foreign language term (or for continued clarity of comprehension), for emphasis, in direct quotations, and for proper nouns such as book, newspaper, article, film, and album titles.

Before I interviewed any research participant, I obtained their informed consent to participate in research, and to record the interview, and their permission to use any information thus obtained in this dissertation and future publications. That said, I generally omit the names of research participants who seemed even remotely reticent about having our conversations recorded (even after giving consent), or those who expressly asked that I not use their name or personally identifiable information in my work. For those participants who were comfortable with the inclusion of their name or other personal data in my writing, I attempt to explicitly highlight their contributions to my fieldwork. However, there is no doubt that the success of my research is entirely due to the generous help, knowledge, and encouragement of all participants involved.

There are sixteen audio examples included as supplementary material in this dissertation. Most are short clips of the main melodic vocal lines from lullabies and sohars composed for Indian films. Full versions of these songs are widely, freely, and legally available on the internet. The commercial clips I include in the supplementary material have been edited to less than 30 seconds, are for nonprofit educational purposes, and are used solely to illustrate the scholarly arguments of this dissertation. Their inclusion in this dissertation is in accordance with standard

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academic fair use guidelines and abide by the “Limitations on exclusive rights: Fair use” clause in Chapter 1, §107 in Title 17 of the United States Code. The remaining audio examples are clips taken from interviews with research participants recorded by the author in 2011-2012. For several of these interviews/recordings, it would have been culturally inappropriate to obtain written releases, particularly in the handful of instances where my research participants were functionally nonliterate. In these cases, I obtained recorded oral releases for the interviews and for possible later publication as suggested by scholars versed in the moral and legal dimensions of fieldwork recordings and intellectual property (Seeger 1992; Rees 2003). Even so, I limit the duration of these audio examples to further protect my research participants’ intellectual property. All audio examples have been compressed to 256 kbps .mp3 files. The track number and song titles of relevant audio examples are bracketed in the text of the dissertation, such as [1. Example.mp3]. I use these songs for a variety of analytical purposes throughout the dissertation but list the mp3 examples only in the sections of the dissertation addressing their musical or textual features.

Chapter 2

The Practice and Context of Lullaby Singing in Urban India

Introduction

The contemporary physical and cultural contexts for child-directed song in urban India are rapidly changing. The increasing movement of people from India's rural countryside to its cities is contributing to the disruption of the family's physical living arrangements with nearly half of all urban and rural families now considered to be structurally "nuclear." The joint or extended family structure, and the unique style of socialization that accompanies this mode of living, is becoming less common. The prevalence of intergenerational families living under one roof is on the decline, a development that has dramatically impacted child-directed song practices in India. Yet, despite these shifting contexts, children are still being sung to, albeit in different ways than generations past. Following Anthony Seeger (1992), this chapter will be organized around the basic journalistic questions of who, what, when, where, and how people sing to their children to illustrate how India's urban changing cultural and technological landscapes affect the practice of child-directed music. The question of "why" people sing to their children will be addressed more fully in the following chapter, in which I examine the role of child-directed songs in memory, the transmission of culture, and the formulation and maintenance of identity.

Despite the ubiquity of lullaby singing, there are remarkably diversified practices between the cities of Delhi, Mumbai, and Kolkata. While a family's physical living arrangements, social status, economic well-being, and the generation to which the lullaby singers belong are among the most influential factors affecting child-directed song practices, other

elements such as physical urbanization, the successes and failures of modern electrical infrastructure, consumer technologies, and electronic media can all be implicated in the shifting practice of lullaby singing in India's cities today.

Individuals and families are increasingly migrating to India's cities. The "Where" section of this chapter will discuss how the changes in physical living arrangements and alterations in the experience of the natural world affect how lullabies (and music in general) are practiced and experienced. The widespread adoption of air conditioning, declining access to "natural" space, a family's sleeping accommodations, the reliability of electrical utilities, and the dramatic urban soundscape all impact child-directed music in significant and sometimes unexpected ways. The "Where" section best illustrates the larger physical and social contexts in which lullabies are practiced and will start off the chapter's journalistic sectional ordering.

Who is singing lullabies in urban India today? Or the question might be better phrased as who is still singing lullabies in urban India today? As I noted in previous chapters, the practice of lullaby singing is, according to my research, on the decline. However, despite this apparent decline, parents, child-care providers, grandparents, and aunts, uncles, and siblings are still singing lullabies to young children. As discussed in the previous chapter, the ongoing nuclearization of the family is having a dramatic impact on how children are raised, including whether or not they are sung to, as well as the content and origins of these songs. Despite alternate forms of entertainment and distraction, from television, radio, computers, mobile phones, recorded music, and the increasing intensity of just living in urban India, lullabies and child-directed songs remain a vital aspect in the rearing of young children. However, the largest factor in the frequency of lullaby singing, and the passion with which these songs and memories

are remembered seems to be related to their family's living arrangements and the age of the parents/grandparents/caregivers.

Lullabies are meant to sooth a child, lulling them to sleep at night. In India, lullabies are generally sung to young children of around 6 years and younger. However, there are many instances where this "rule" is not followed. Lullabies can be sung or hummed around the household long after the child is grown, they can be sung by adults to other adults, children sing them to other children, to themselves, or their toys. There is a long history in Bollywood films of grown men singing tender lullabies to their adult female romantic interests. The question of "When" lullabies are sung, during what stages of an individual's life and how singing is changing with India's urbanization and modernization will be folded into other subsections of this chapter and linked to specific experiences of my research participants.

In the "What" section of this chapter, I will highlight some lullabies or songs and rhymes that have a distinct connection to family or place. Many of my younger research participants, those in their twenties and thirties, could only recall certain childhood lullabies in part because these songs, made famous in Bollywood films, are so integrated with popular culture and are heard repeatedly on the radio, television, and personal stereo system. Far from being songs isolated in memories of childhood, these film songs are re-experienced and re-heard throughout my research participants' lives. Famous Bollywood lullabies such as "Chanda mama dur ke," (Uncle moon is very far)¹ "So ja rajkumari," (Go to sleep princess) or "Aaja re aa nindiya tu aa," (Come sleep, please come) and "Nanhi kali sone chali"² (Little flower-bud is going to sleep) persist in the popular imagination long after their initial wave of popularity, and have made an

¹With most song title translations, I do my best to approximate the meaning of the lines; these are not literal, word-for-word translations which would produce confusing, disjointed titles. For example, "Nanhi kali sone chali" is literally "little dark go sleep," which obscures intention and colloquial meaning of the title best rendered as little flower-bud (little girl) is going to sleep.

² Songs from the films *Vacchan* (1955), *Zindagi* (1940), *Do Bigha Zameen* (1953), and *Sujata* (1959) respectively.

enduring impact on the practice of singing to young children. A more complete examination of the influence and style of the music from the Indian film industry and other recorded media will take place in chapter 5. In contrast to the memories of film lullabies related by my younger research participants, older participants, and those who spent their childhood in rural India, often described memories and songs that were more intimate, more connected to the particularities of family, location, and ethnic group, in addition to ubiquitous Bollywood megahits.

In the “How” section of this chapter I examine the role of what I call “technologies of sleep,” e.g. baby swings, cradles, CDs and mp3 players, and cell phones for playing recorded media, influence the practice of lullabies. I will illustrate some of the ways children are physically held and interacted with as they are lulled to sleep, thereby adding to the small number of studies that have examined cultural differences in the physical handling of children. I will also discuss the emergence of parent-child organized music classes and how these classes highlight the shifting gender roles and beliefs about childrearing among a growing proportion of contemporary Indian parents.

Where

My fieldwork research focused on urban India in part because I felt I had greater and easier access to this context. Urbanization was also a process that was frequently mentioned by my research participants as the cause of so much social upheaval and cultural change in their country. Many of my younger research participants had grown up in India’s megacities, but still felt a connection to rural India largely through visits to extended family members who still resided in smaller villages. In contrast, many of my older research participants, particularly those born in southern states such as Kerala and Tamil Nadu, spent their childhoods in smaller villages before moving to larger cities for university studies or employment. In this section, I will

describe how urbanization is changing the way people relate to each other and their environment. I will highlight differing experiences of living in India's major metropolitan areas and show how these changes are affecting family interactions, and impacting contemporary childrearing and lullaby singing.

India is experiencing incredibly rapid demographic and technological changes which are predicted only to accelerate in the future. While India's population has doubled in the last 50 years, its urban population has grown by almost five times and the country will be home to the largest number of mega-cities (more than 10 million inhabitants) in the world by 2021 (Chakrabarti 2001). Additionally, India's smaller cities are experiencing even faster growth rates with uncontrolled, complex urban sprawl at the city's periphery and a re-densification of the urban core (Taubenböck 2009:187). These demographics trends have dramatically influenced the way people live their lives, and will continue to shape their interactions in years to come. The daily intensity of living in an urban mega city is hard to describe to those who have not experienced it firsthand. Everywhere throughout Delhi there are massive construction projects; enormous traffic jams that make the worst of Los Angeles traffic seem trivial. The city's footprint is expanding outward and upward. This is no more apparent than when visiting Gurgaon, a city less than 30 kilometers south of Delhi. Up until the 1990s, Gurgaon was a small farming town whose development and population exploded with the reformation of tax laws and an influx of corporate development. Like other cities across India, Delhi is not only growing from its center outward, but is also seeing construction at its periphery (such as Gurgaon) that is leading to a polycentric, complex urban landscape. To put these changes in perspective, Delhi's population immediately following partition in 1947 grew from under one million to a present day

metropolitan population of nearly 22 million. The decade of 1991 to 2001 alone saw a population growth rate of 47%.³

Most of my research participants were concerned about the changes in lifestyle brought on by intense urbanization. In an interview I conducted with Shubha Chaudhuri, she reminisced about her childhood and stressed the differences she saw between her experiences and those of her now 18 year old niece:

It's very different times. For my niece growing up in a South Delhi neighborhood it is very different... When we were growing up, you tried to be outdoors as soon as you could... We could be in the next neighborhood, we could be anywhere. There was no sense of danger... It is very different from children today, the consumption of culture is different... We used to say holidays, mangoes, and swimming, these were the three big things about summer. I would say the connection with seasons was so strong. I remember my niece having never seen a green mango. And for us who grew up chucking stones into trees and getting green mangoes... she had never seen a mango tree! There are mango trees in Delhi, but maybe you have to point them out. The whole connection to trees and flowers and open spaces is not there. (Chaudhuri 2012)

Similar sentiments were expressed by most of the research participants over 30 years old. Many were concerned that their children had little access to safe outdoor spaces. Almost all my research participants, irrespective of age, also expressed concern over the growing social isolation brought on by urban living and technology. In their views, children spent an excessive amount of time in front of television and computer screens and spent much less time outside interacting with peer groups. One research participant actually preferred that her children stay indoors and on the computer. She felt that Delhi was simply too dangerous for her children, particularly for girls, to spend unsupervised time outside of the home or school, a tragic fact that has become increasingly more apparent in recent years.⁴

³ According to figures from the 2011 Indian census found at http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/data_files/delhi/2_PDFC-Paper-1-major_trends_44-59.pdf

⁴ The recent spate of beatings, gang rapes, and violent crimes occurring in India has received substantial news coverage world-wide. Even though Delhi officially ranks very low in terms of worldwide violent crime statistics, among my research participants there was a palpable sense that the city was not a safe place for women or children.

Improvements in electrical utility services in Delhi have also altered social dynamics in recent years. Despite being the site of the India's largest electrical blackout in history, where for several days in July of 2012 over 620 million people or nearly 9% of the entire world's population was affected, access to reliable electricity in Delhi's metropolitan areas has steadily increased (Yardley and Harris 2012). Fewer lapses in electricity, and an increase in household diesel backup generators, means that air conditioning, fans, and evaporative coolers have become more widely adopted,⁵ people are forced outside to seek fresh air less frequently because of blackouts; television and internet service are more consistently available, and sleeping habits have changed. In the past, it was common for families to sleep outside in the summer, pre-monsoon months, either on a veranda (*baramda*) or on the rooftops (*barsatis*) of their homes. The author Madhur Jaffery, famous for her writing on Indian food and cooking, recalls times she and her siblings would sleep side-by-side on the veranda of their Delhi home, exchanging stories, playing games, and singing songs (Jaffery 2007). Many of my research participants from smaller villages told me of similar times with their siblings, enjoying the night air and the company of family. One younger participant recalled evening electrical outages cutting off the ceiling fans and forcing his family out of their home in a small village near Shikaripur, Karnataka. This group of children would engage in back and forth singing contests with other groups of children from other homes, all situated around a small lake. He described how they would sing into the darkness, at the top of their lungs, songs they had learned from All India Radio music programs to other children across the pond. This game would go on until with the power came back on, or the adults got irritated enough and called the children to bed.

⁵ While the penetration level of air conditioners across India is low, between 5-10%, the number is higher in Delhi. The sales rate of air conditioners is growing between 10-25% per year according to the Center for Industrial and Economic Reform (CIER) and Industrial and Technical Economic Services (Intecos), both private Indian data organizations. See Mamgain and Mukherjee 2011.

Electrical services are far from the only phenomenon affecting how people socialize in urban India. The increasingly crowded spaces in India's mega cities alters movement patterns, lengthens commutes, hinders the ability to visit with anyone outside the local neighborhood, and affects where children play. During my fieldwork in Delhi, my apartment was one block from the confluence of Ring Road and Lala Rajpat Rai Road, more aptly described as highways with four to six lanes of traffic in each direction, depending on drivers' ferocity in establishing unofficial lanes-within-lanes. Not only was the noise and air pollution from the auto rickshaws, cars, and commercial trucks overwhelming, the road created a physical barrier that was not easily crossed; even when walking with traffic and other pedestrians, crossing the streets to a nearby Metro station was a harrowing experience. As housing density and auto traffic increases, children are left with fewer safe places to play outside, and everyone will experience increasingly challenging commutes to distant neighborhoods to socialize with friends and family.

While increasing automobile ownership may have enabled longer distance travel for many,⁶ it has been accompanied by a tremendous increase in the time spent traveling for nearly everyone.⁷ Many of the middle-class office workers I interviewed described twelve-hour days, door-to-door, four or five days a week as the norm. This has led to a decrease in the available time parents have to spend with their children in the evening. Many research participants told me they are also pressured to continue work from home, leaving a scant hour or two to eat, relax, and interact with their children in the evening. The time families do spend together is also dense

⁶ From 2006-2009, the number of commuters traveling up to 5 kilometers one way increased by 8.07%, while the number of commuters traveling 5-10 kilometers increased by 11.68%. See report from the Government of NCT of Delhi "Housing Conditions in Delhi 2006 and 2009 reports: <http://www.delhi.gov.in/DoIT/DES/Publication/socio/hc58.pdf> and http://www.delhi.gov.in/wps/wcm/connect/bc39778045a9bf58ab0debc48d1dcb6e/Housing+Condition_65thRound.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=bc39778045a9bf58ab0debc48d1dcb6e

⁷ The ongoing construction of the Metro mass transit system in Delhi has the potential to lessen commute and travel times, especially when it is fully completed, but only if the system's already severe overcrowding can be alleviated, which seems unlikely.

with the distractions of the television, the internet, and increasing homework loads for children. Parents reported they were increasingly likely to let their children watch television, listen to recorded music, or spend time on the computer because they were stressed for time, and the practice of telling stories and singing lullabies to younger children was given lower priority. Nearly all of my research participants fondly reminisced about the days when frequent electrical power cuts forced everyone outside to play, when homework for school children was nonexistent, and when families sat together interacting, telling stories, and making music. While this may be a nostalgic romanticizing of the past, my research participants expressed palpable concern for decreasing face-to-face, meaningful interactions between children, their peers, and their family as a result of modern economic pressures and urban realities. Physical space in Delhi and Kolkata's newer constructed housing has been altered from "traditional" village designs. Nearly gone are the courtyards that have been considered as the "womb of the house" for traditional Hindu homes (Khambata 1989). Multigenerational family homes with courtyards, which were the locus for family gatherings, chores, and socialization, are being replaced by high rise apartment buildings which enable greater population densities but discourage the open flow of and interactions between family members (Sharma and LeVine 1998). High density housing is especially common with new construction in Delhi. Courtyard-style housing still exists to a degree within the confines of Old Delhi, parts of Kolkata, and a handful of other locations (see Figure 2.1).



Figure 2.1: Older style home in Kolkata built around a central courtyard, and built closely to neighboring properties. This picture was taken from fifteen stories high, in one of the city’s newly constructed high-rise apartment buildings.

Other cities have differing patterns of growth and development according to their environment and historical foundation. Kolkata for instance is still largely spread out, with high rises mostly being constructed at the city’s outskirts (see Figure 2.2). Many of my Kolkata-based research participants still reside in homes with courtyards and communal spaces. One participant’s family home was over 300 years old, with a complex mesh of new and old construction overlapping each other, constricting the home’s interior spaces. However, because of the extreme housing pressures in most Indian cities, older homes such as this are increasingly being torn down and converted to “modern” high-rise apartments or other types of single building, multifamily but independently spaced dwellings.⁸

⁸ The percentage of independent dwellings (which often house multiple families) is declining by approximately 3.21% per year. The number of “flat type” dwellings is less than 20%, and “other” types account for approximately



Figure 2.2: Older, lower slung core of Kolkata with a view to the new, multistory construction taking place on the outskirts of the city.

With the shift in housing architecture has come a change in the way children are raised and watched after. A joint family home complete with a central courtyard or communal space facilitated multiple caregiving of children by mothers, aunts, and grandparents. Multiple or collective caregiving and the nature of the relationships a child develops with their caregivers is considered by some psychologists to be central in an Indian child’s ontogenesis of self (Sharma and LeVine 1998:62). Unlike in the US or Western Europe, “dependence and interdependence are far more valued and cultivated than autonomy and separation” (Roland 1988:232). In my experience, dependence and interdependence are still certainly strongly held values in urban India. When interacting with other parents during my research, my wife and I were often told

30% total housing market according to the 2006 and 2009 “Housing Conditions in Delhi” reports from Delhi’s Directorate of Economics and Statistics, found at www.delhi.gov.in/.

how our parenting styles were very “American,” particularly in our reluctance to leave our child in the care of household staff, nannies and maids. We eventually became more used to virtual strangers picking up our child and whisking her away. At the annual South and Central Asia Fulbright Conference in Kerala, the head chef at the conference hotel would take our daughter away into the kitchen every morning we had breakfast, something that would be unheard of in the US, let alone legal. No one ever asked if this was appropriate, they would just pick our daughter up and walk away. Of course, the first few times this happened we ran after them in a panic, but eventually this kind of caregiving began to feel more normal, although never we never completely relaxed.

This type of multiple caregiving based largely on joint family dynamics and a family’s physical living arrangements is in peril as both family nuclearization and housing developments affect urban India. Changes in physical housing spaces and the subsequent shift in the shape of familial interactions, the growing independence of women, and the growing influence of Western ideas and diversification of ideologies brought on by access to education and information will inevitably alter family psychology and values and modify the way children are raised. These processes are at the heart of my research into the practice of child-directed music.

Who

The population I worked with in Delhi, Kolkata, and Mumbai was diverse in age, income level, and ethnicity. Delhi in particular was an ideal location to gather data on child-directed song practices from across India as so many individuals and families migrate to Delhi for work and education. The individuals with whom I worked in Delhi were born and raised in nearly every state in India and had often moved around the country either with their family or as individuals in search of employment. Several research participants came from military families,

and their experiences were affected by their lives in Indian Army cantonments and by the broader military culture. As a result, the data from these Delhi interviews represent a broader picture of lullaby practice from across India. Similar to Delhi, my research participants in Mumbai often hailed from diverse regions and ethnic backgrounds. In contrast, most of my interviews in Kolkata were with natives of the city and from Bengal. Thus, my research in Kolkata produced data more narrowly focused on local musical practices. This multi-sited research gave me a better understanding of how certain regional and cultural variations operate as India is changing, modernizing, and urbanizing.

As I said in the introduction, the research participants with whom I conducted interviews ranged in age from their early 20s to late 80s. Many, if not most, had children or grandchildren, although having children was not a requirement for participation in the research. My research participants' socio-economic status varied widely, from household nannies and maids, middle-class employees at the offices of the Centre for Chronic Disease Control and the Centre for Knowledge Societies, hereditary musicians, academics, one politician, to wealthier business owners and entrepreneurs. Most all of my research participants spoke some degree of English, and I was able to communicate with the exclusive Hindi speakers myself or with the help of an interpreter. Several exclusively Bangla-speaking participants were interviewed with the help of an interpreter.

The “who” in who does the majority of singing to children and who is remembered as the primary or most influential singing figure when those children grow up is not always congruent. What is clear from my research is that lullabies are performed by both sexes, with more women singing to children than men. The gender of the singer is particularly dependent on which generation was recalled as the primary singers; mothers and fathers (and aunts and uncles)

seemed to sing to children in nearly equal numbers, with slightly more females singing than males. However, only in a few instances did my research participants' grandfathers participate in lullaby singing and general childrearing. In contrast, grandmothers were most often remembered as the primary singers and storytellers of the family, demonstrating the different gender and generational roles in childrearing. However, these distinctions were only apparent when my research participants were raised in joint or extended families, a type of family structure that is declining as India urbanizes.⁹ The sexual orientation of my research participants was not something I inquired about during my field research. The topic of homosexuality is complex and fraught with stigma in Indian society. I can only assume that majority of my participants were heterosexual. The impact of a child's parents' sexual orientation on their musical upbringing, the raising of children by same-sex or transgendered parents, and the potential differences in lullaby practice within India's openly transgendered or *hijra* communities remain fascinating topics for future research.

A portion of my research was devoted to the changing nature of rituals surrounding birth, with an emphasis on sohar songs (discussed in chapter 4) that are an exclusively female practice, songs narrated from a distinctly female perspective. There are examples of lullabies that are sung, or "written" in a distinctly female voice, but overall this was not an especially conspicuous feature of the lullabies practiced by my research participants. Even if the voice represented in the lullaby was explicitly female, or even implicit in the kinds of activities described, male research participants still reported singing these songs. Unlike many genres such as *pakharu*,¹⁰ Kangra

⁹ Joint family structure is on the decline and is being replaced by nuclear and "supplemented nuclear" families (generally in which an unmarried adult family member lives with the core nuclear family). In urban and rural environments, 51% and 48% of families are considered nuclear respectively, and around 20% for both areas are considered supplemental nuclear families (Saggurti and Nair 2005:9-10).

¹⁰ See Narayan 1997.

folksongs detailing the burdens of married life from a women's point of view, or *banni kit gīt*,¹¹ songs of a new bride, genres sung exclusively for or by women, the lullabies I encountered were not so strongly gendered in their lyrics or performance. I believe this is partly a result of context; economic liberalization, education, and globalization, processes most prominently affecting metropolitan areas, have begun to break down traditional gender segregations and change gender relations (Abraham 2001). There did not seem to be any solid correlation between income level, the sex of the singer, and frequency of lullaby singing. Research participants from lower-income families seemed to recall male participation in child-directed songs as frequently as participants from higher-income backgrounds. There is however an emerging phenomenon of whole family (mother, father, and child or children) participation in organized music groups that is exclusive to the wealthiest of those I interviewed. I will elaborate on the growing place of these parent-child music classes in the "How" portion of this chapter.

On the whole, research participants approximately 30 years and older recalled being sung lullabies with more frequency than younger participants, but experiences were highly individual. Before the large scale adoption of radio and television, music making, and storytelling were a larger part of a family's home entertainment.¹² Much as in the United States near the turn of the twentieth century with the introduction of the player piano, wax cylinders and records, and later radio and television,¹³ entertainment in urban India has moved from being a participatory process to a more passively enjoyed commodity. Children were sung to by their parents and

¹¹ See Raheja 1997.

¹² Until 1975 only 7 cities in India received television broadcasts, and until 1984 only 28% of the Indian populace could receive television signals from the 42 largely low power transmitters with a broadcast range of 10-20 kilometers. After 1985, television access grew dramatically (Singhal, et al. 1988:224).

¹³ See Tim Taylor's "The Commodification of Music at the Dawn of the Era of 'Mechanical Music'" (2007). In his article, Taylor shows the historical, social, cultural processes by which music is commodified. According to Taylor, "Music is never simply a commodity...it is made into a commodity by a variety of processes that are dependent on its social uses, its industrial production, its brokering...that are part of the infrastructure of consumer capitalist cultures" (302). Likewise, child-directed songs and lullabies didn't simply become commodities, but were and are continually fashioned as commodified products in conjunction with India's expanding consumer capitalist culture.

grandparents, who drew their repertoire from popular music and songs learned during their childhood, as well as lullabies passed down within the family. Due in part to the greater prevalence of extended or joint family living situations in the past, older research participants recalled being sung to by their grandparents or an older aunt with much greater frequency than younger research participants. Participants over 30 years old recalled being sung a mixture of Bollywood tunes from the 1950s and 1960s in addition to traditional,¹⁴ local, and familial songs learned from family members or friends. Younger participants also recalled being sung film songs from the 1950s and 60s, but reported non-film songs with less frequency. The subtle break I observed between those older and younger than 30 can be seen as a testament to just how recently and rapidly many cultural and technological changes have swept across India.

The role of parents and grandparents in the raising of children has been historically very important and recently altered by the demands of India's changing economy. With increasing frequency in middle-class urban India, both parents are working outside the home. In rural areas or with the urban poor, the percentage of both parents working is much higher, depending on the region examined and how the term "work" is defined (Singh and Hoge 2010). Many families migrate long distances from their extended families in search of employment. These developments, coupled with the increased rate of family nuclearization¹⁵ have led to many children being watched after by young, often poor, and marginally educated nannies or maids.

¹⁴ I use the terms "tradition" or "traditional" with some hesitation. I find these words useful as shortcuts to describe music that is perceived by my research participants as either common or ubiquitous in a particular region or with a certain ethnic group, non-commercial, non-westernized, or somehow closer to folk music or customs that some perceive as more "authentically" Indian (yet another term that continues to vex scholars in every discipline). However, describing a music as traditional is not an attempt on my part to strictly define or delimit a musical practice. Many well-known songs began in or were altered (i.e. westernized) to fit the Indian film industry's needs, but are still considered "traditional" by many, even those who normally make an effort to differentiate between film and non-film, Western and non-Western in their classifications of music. The words tradition and traditional were used so frequently by my research participants it would seem artificial or problematic to exclude these words altogether from my descriptions. I will use these words to describe musical practices loosely in line with the descriptors listed above, but want to emphasize the malleability of this definition.

¹⁵ See Sagurti and Nair 2005.

This trend interrupts, to a degree, the possible transmission of lullabies from generation to generation within a family, but it is not necessarily an entirely negative phenomenon. Although children may spend less time with grandparents, aunts, and uncles and consequently cannot experience the types of songs and stories unique to their older relatives, they are experiencing some “brought in” by the caregiver. I disagree with some scholars’ beliefs that the patterns of infant socialization and “family jointedness” are retained when nuclear urban families replace familial caregivers with peripheral caregivers such as babysitters or neighbors.¹⁶ In my experiences, particularly in Delhi, peripheral caregivers operated with greatly reduced social authority over children. Rather than contributing to the sense that a child was still a part of a joint family, peripheral caregivers, often full-time nannies and maids, were often not allowed full or equitable control over a child’s behavior or lifestyle. The nannies and maids I observed were sometimes treated poorly and relegated to simple household tasks. Children often ran roughshod over these peripheral caregivers, with the knowledge the employee might be fired from their job if the child was treated too harshly or complained too loudly. These hired domestic staff did not or could not contribute as meaningfully to the psychological structure or sense of “family” as could a grandparent, aunt, uncle or cousin.

In generations past, hired domestic staff may have had a more integrated and respected role in a family, and thus may have been able to contribute to the musical upbringing of their employer’s children in a more meaningful way. Historically, the majority of household domestic staff in India have been men (63% in 1971), although this gender composition has shifted to a majority female workforce since 1981 (Ray 2000:694). Sociologist Raka Ray notes that loyalty and a willingness to put the employer’s family above their own were crucial attributes of

¹⁶ An argument made by psychologists Sharma and LeVine in their study “Child Care in India: A Comparative Developmental View of Infant Social Environments” (Sharma and LeVine 1998:65-66).

servants in the past, and that a male servant's perceived independence or *swadhin* contributes to a culture that values male staff more highly, leading to male servants being treated with greater respect (Ray 2000:697). Conversely, perceptions concerning the diminished value of female domestic workers have remained, despite their increasing numbers and, now, majority status. As Ray writes, "With smaller families and apartment living has grown an increased acceptance of and even preference for women servants...[However] the fear of women's sexuality is such that there is an increasing drive to recruit young prepubescent girls from the village and send them back when they reached puberty" (Ray 2000:698). This situation is quite common. During my fieldwork in Delhi, my landlords sent a young female domestic worker back to her village a few months after my family and I arrived. We later heard from other workers that she was "causing problems" with some of the other male servants, "problems" no doubt related to her youth and attractiveness. As the employment dynamic for household staff shifts to one of younger, "temporary" workers, any musical contributions domestic staff may have made to a child's lullaby experiences is diminished accordingly.

Some research has also shown that despite an increase in family nuclearization, families are attempting to locate physically close to relatives, a situation I term "near-joint" families, in order to approximate the joint family model of childrearing (Kurtz 1992). I found this to be the case with many of my research participants who were 40 years and older, those with children now in their early teens or older. However, many of my younger research participants had moved multiple times to different Indian cities and internationally over the past decade or more. According to the Indian Census, there has been a significant increase in rural to urban migration during 1991-2001, and long distance rural to urban and urban to urban migration are predicted to be the dominant patterns of future Indian population migrations (Parida, Keshari, and

Madheswaran 2010:17).¹⁷ Population mobility is increasing, a phenomenon that is facilitated by, and generates, the nuclear family, disrupts joint family practices, and is motivated by changing economic and educational demands.

The absence of grandparents from the daily care of young children can conversely *increase* the likelihood of those children learning specific lullabies from their elders. When grandparents do visit their grandchildren and are not part of an extended family living arrangement, the time can be seen as unusual. The stories and songs shared during these times may take on a specialness and memorability for the child. Pandit Vidyadhar Vyas described his granddaughter learning the words to one version of the lullaby “Bala jo jo re” and requesting it be sung to her every time her grandmother came to visit. This is especially relevant as the granddaughter lives with her family in the United States, and her links with Marathi culture and the songs of her grandparents is influenced by both physical and cultural distance. According to Vyas, his granddaughter learned the palna (lullaby or cradle song) in Marathi, and sang it back to her grandparents in person and over the phone. The child was able to participate in some of her parents’ and grandparents’ musical culture, and the lullaby took on special importance precisely because of the infrequency of her grandparents’ visits.

The younger participants in my research, those in their twenties, provided a distinct view on the role and type of lullabies in their childhoods. Nearly all of those who recalled music or lullabies from their childhood spoke of commercialized music from film, radio, or television. Even if they were sung to by a relative or caregiver, as opposed to having recorded music played for them, the songs were most often from India’s various film industries. This was particularly true when the participants were born and brought up in urban environments. The television

¹⁷ In 1991, 97.13 million Indians migrated from rural areas to urban areas. By 2001, this number had increased to 121.9 million rural to urban migrants (Parida, Keshari, and Madheswaran 2010).

station Doordarshan, showing film and music programs like *Rangoli* and *Chitrahaar*, figured prominently in their memories of childhood and music. Film songs, like the Hindi-language Bollywood lullabies mentioned above were the primary lullabies sung to these participants, but even some exclusively Hindi speakers knew, or could hum, songs from the Malayalam or Telugu film industries, such as the famous Malayalam lullaby “Omanathinkal kidavo” originally written by the 18th century Carnatic musician Irayimman Thampi. These younger participants had much greater access to recorded media than their parents, a trend that is only accelerating. Yet, nearly all participants, young and old, were either unhappy or ambivalent about the increasing presence of technology in their lives. I discuss the interaction of technology on culture and music later in this chapter but suffice to say, the perceived negative effects of the increasing use of technology for communication, socialization, entertainment, and work were remarked on by nearly every person I interviewed during my field research.

In addition to age and generational affiliation, a person’s economic status influences the types and content of lullabies sung to children. Particularly in middle-income families in Delhi, lullabies and children’s music are often seen as a vehicle for English-language instruction. In families where the dominant language is Hindi, many parents used English-language CDs to help bolster their child’s speaking ability, as a fluent grasp of English, with a proper accent, is seen as a marker of education and wealth, and positions the child for greater social mobility. Several parents I interviewed bought CDs for their children with the express purpose of education in mind. There are many stores selling Hindi-language lullaby CDs, but in some of the most expensive mom and kid stores in Delhi’s malls, English-language CDs are sold exclusively. For example, “The Learning Store” in the Ambience Mall in Delhi’s suburb of Gurgaon had a prominent display of English-language CDs, with no Hindi material in sight. Not only are these

types of stores selling expensive baby and toddler toys, bedding, books, and CDs to higher-income Indians, they represent an ethos of wealth and imported quality to those middle-income people passing by their windows. Despite lacking the financial capacity to frequent high-end stores like those in Gurgaon's Ambience Mall, middle income parents are doing all they can to provide their children tools to advance in the increasingly competitive social, educational, and work environments in urban India, including purchasing English lullabies and playsongs.

A number of scholars have examined the role of English and vernacular language education in India (Ramanathan 2005). The role of language in the politics of voice, representation, and power is also standard fodder for postcolonial theorists (Said 1978; Appadurai 1988). Examining how English and other European lullabies inform cultural identity prior to formal schooling offers insight into the postcolonial dynamics of language in contemporary India. I elaborate on the role of recorded lullabies, identity, symbolic power, and English-language songs more in chapter 3.

What

Describing what an entire nation's population sings to their children as they drift to sleep is an impossible task. There are simply too many songs, and each person sings them differently. Additionally, caregivers make up their own songs, and a single researcher could never collect enough data to accurately describe the habits of a billion-plus population. However, I will attempt to describe the broad outlines of child-directed musical practice in urban settings, highlight some of the best known and most frequently sung tunes, locate historically some of the lullabies that have been recorded or analyzed by scholars, and examine some of the lullabies collected during my research that illustrate the process of cultural change. In this section, I will

restrict my focus to more “traditional” or “folk” lullabies, as I will discuss contemporary media and child-directed music used in the film industry in chapter 5.

Before proceeding, I would like to propose eight categories derived from a song’s theme or lyrical content in which I believe most Indian lullabies can be grouped. One danger of categorizing songs by their lexical content lies in the possible obfuscation the song’s function or social usage. However, in this chapter I am largely limiting discussion to songs that function as lullabies, and therefore their social usage is nominally prescribed. These songs are sometimes used outside the context of childcare, and this multi-functionality is one reason I believe lullabies offer unique insight into a variety of cultural processes.

Songs can evoke different memories and meanings depending on the context in which they are sung and the intentions of the performer. Previous scholars have recognized the difficulties of classifying songs by literary content and instead use stylistic musical qualifiers for lullaby categorization (Brakely 1950; Lomax-Hawes 1974). Lomax-Hawes uses the stylistic qualifiers of rhythm, preferred phonemic choice, and the relationship between singing and overall pattern of social dialogue in her analysis of American lullabies (Lomax-Hawes 1974:143). Other scholars note that classifying a lullaby by lexical content is “peculiar,” especially since the lullaby’s text is incomprehensible to the child listener (Trehub and Trainor 1998). However, since my research focuses on child-directed music from multiple languages and cultural groups, as practiced in urban India, the categories of preferred phonemic choice and the song’s relationship to patterns of social intercourse are not particularly useful. A song’s lexical content is also often related to its origin and can provide clues to its intended purpose. For example, the differences between the songs “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” and the “Alphabet Song” (the ABCs) are lexical and intentional, not musical. One song is playful and fantastical

while one is generally intended as a lesson on the rudiments of language. Given that I am primarily examining songs that function as lullabies, it seems most efficient to group songs by lexical content rather than stylistically, despite the problems or peculiarities with such a categorization.¹⁸ The lullabies I encountered during my research generally fit one of eight categories:

- (1) Songs that say something such as “hush, hush, go to sleep, everything is ok”
- (2) Songs that have nonsensical wording or lyrics that are improvised
- (3) Songs that are used to teach something moral, religious, or linguistic
- (4) Songs in which a caregiver complains to or about the child
- (5) Fantastical or mythological songs
- (6) Songs that attempt to bribe the child to sleep
- (7) Songs that describe the child’s anticipated future
- (8) Songs that implore divine beings, forces of nature, or other individuals to intercede and help the child sleep

Obviously many songs fit more than one category, such as lullabies that teach morality through mythology. Alternately, a lullaby’s predominant theme and subsequent categorization may be blurred in practice. For example, I regularly sang “Hush, Little Baby,” a classic American model of a “bribery” themed lullaby, to my daughter during my fieldwork in India. In practice, my daughter often responded positively to the word “Hush,” so I would often alter the song repeating “Hush, hush, hush,” and dropping all references to the things “papa’s going to buy...” Lastly, some lullabies sung in contemporary India do not have fully developed or elaborated lyrics. It is possible a more complete version of the lullaby has been forgotten, or the song only

¹⁸ I have borrowed several categories suggested by Lomax-Hawes in her discussion of American lullabies (Lomax-Hawes 1974) and added several that better fit themes in Indian lullabies.

consisted of a single line to start with. In these cases, categorizing a lullaby by lexical content is not very helpful. However, I believe these eight categories are still useful in organizing the majority of lullabies used in urban India today.

One of the earliest Indian references for lullabies is found in Sarangadev's thirteenth century treatise on music and dance, the *Sangeet Ratnakara*.¹⁹ Sarangadev uses the Sanskrit term *loli*, meaning lullaby or a more general composition, but *loli* also has distinctly gendered connotations. Borrowed from Persian, *lolī-ē-falak* is Urdu for the planet Venus, and *luli* or *loli* is also a term for a dancing-girl or courtesan (Platts 2007:970). A more widely recognized Sanskrit term for lullaby seems to be *alola*, which also means to gently sway.²⁰ The Hindi term *lori* seems to have been a more recent linguistic variant of *loli*.

The nineteenth century music scholar A. H. Fox-Strangways sought the origins of the word lullaby, believing it stems from the Kashmiri *lali* or *lalo* as in to rock or cradle a baby, and *bhai*, the Hindustani term for brother. While the evidence for such a claim is thin, and Fox-Strangways's search to find the ancient origins of European art or ideas in contemporary (and therefore implied as static) India betrays a common Orientalist trope, his transcription and discussion of two lullabies is one of the earliest in Western scholarship. Fox-Strangways's work provides a valuable historical reference point, particularly the translation of the well-known Malayalam song "Omanathinkal kidavo" and his discussion of the lyrical content of lullabies from the court of Trivandrum and the Marathi song "Nirguna's Lullaby" (Fox-Strangways 1975:62-72).

¹⁹ This is far from the earliest reference to lullabies worldwide. Farber (1990) examines the role of lullabies in Babylonian and Assyrian magic rituals, and "Lilith-abi" is an ancient Hebrew term for "away demon," a phrase sung to infants for their protection.

²⁰ Several dictionaries list *alola* as a translation of lullaby including the online versions including those by Apte (1957-1959) and Macdonell (1929) from the University of Chicago's Digital Dictionaries of South Asia website (<http://dsal.uchicago.edu/dictionaries/>), and Monier-Williams dictionary found at the spoken Sanskrit website (<http://www.spokensanskrit.de>). Interestingly, none of these Sanskrit dictionaries list *loli*, or *lori* as translations for lullaby.

Many of the earliest lullabies often deal with hopes for protection and wishes for the child's future. This is a common theme found worldwide. In "Nirguna's Lullaby" we also see the inclusion of sentiments of complaint where the caretaker, presumably the mother, protests the difficulties raising her child. Fox-Strangways's translates "Nirguna's Lullaby" from the original Marathi as

Celestial carpenters have fashioned thy cradle.
My hand is tired of pulling the string.
My throat is dry with singing.
I cannot go about my work because my baby is not yet asleep.
The cradle is covered with flowers, &c. (Strangways 1975:67)²¹

Musicologist Na Vanamamalai notes that in Tamil folk lullabies, the sex of the child dramatically influences the content of the lullaby and the expected future of the child. Songs for boys universally celebrate their birth and future prospects, while lullabies sung to baby girls tend to focus on their expected life of hardship (Vanamamalai 1981:87). Economic station and class differences also affect content and tone of these lullabies; an envisioned life of fortune and prosperity is often portrayed in lullabies sung in wealthier families, while a life of toil and hardship is the described lot for children of less advantaged parents (Vanamamalai 1981:90).

One of the most common topics in folk lullabies from across India is the story of Krishna, particularly those concerning his childhood antics. H el ene Stork writes that in addition to the rituals Tamil women practice for protection or out of religious duty, they sing Krishna-themed lullabies to express their tender affection, to sooth their child, and as entertainment. She writes

²¹ It is interesting that a lullaby expressing complaint would be titled with "Nirguna," the Sanskrit term for the formless supreme deity that is characterized as "without qualities" (the opposite being *saguna*, or possessing qualities, such as virtually all deities in the Hindu pantheon). It is unclear if the subject of the lullaby is the supreme formless deity, if it is addressed to Nirguna, or if Nirguna is perhaps the name of the woman's mortal child. If the supreme formless deity is the *subject* of the lullaby, then it is rather comical that the mother is complaining about her duties caregiving for a god. It would be equally interesting if the mother was addressing her lullaby to the formless Supreme Being as relatively less attention is given to this divine figure in contemporary Hindu religious practice. Either way, this is a classic example of the "complaining" type of lullaby that remains open to multiple levels of interpretation.

that these lullabies are “chanted according to a special musical mode (raga nīlampuri), the whole of which is quite soothing” (Stork 1991:104, in Leslie 1991). Defining any lullaby by a certain mode or rāg should be taken lightly, or applied narrowly to the specific case in question. Several times I was told how one lullaby should only be sung in a specific rāg, only to hear the same lyrics and general melodic shape sung in a completely different rāg by separate individuals. Lullabies are also sung in a variety of temples to saints, gods, and goddesses as part of the day’s ending rituals.²² An example of this is the popular lullaby directed to the god Krishna, “Jo jo Krishna Paramananda,” which is sung both to children, as entertainment in concerts and singing competitions, and for devotional purposes.

The lyrics and thematic content of lullabies can be largely improvised. Junghare notes that Maharashtra palna songs (cradle or lullaby songs) are improvised and sung on informal occasions (Junghare 1983), and Vidyadhar Vyas confirmed the general improvisatory trend of the palna in interviews with me. It has been observed that lullabies from villages near Surat in the state of Gujarat also tend to display simple themes, are sung informally, and generally lack the rich metaphorical language present in other genres of folk song (Patel 1974). Folklorist Sanjay Sircar’s defines Bengali folk nursery rhymes as “traditional, variable, oral, ‘spontaneous,’ communal, and rural” (Sircar 1998:33) which may be an acceptable definition for Bengali folk nursery rhymes but cannot be applied outside this context. Sircar sets up a dichotomy between Bengali folk nursery rhymes, ones that describe bathing in the river, playing with cowrie shells, and chewing betel leaves, with the modern *Kunstmärchen* or art fairytales of Europe which tell stories of “parrots, hawks, toads, and otters in the sunny trees, fields, and waters” (Sircar 1997:83). Rather than describing a version of a rural “reality,” literary lullabies having been

²² See Kersenboom 1991 in Leslie 1991.

written down, formally composed and learned or passed on through writing present imaginary worlds directed to urban, educated children.

However, the distinction between “folk” and “literary” lullabies is somewhat arbitrary. This is not to criticize Sircar’s work, rather to point out a common dichotomy that other scholars²³ have also relied on, a distinction that breaks down when examining lullabies in India (and I imagine in many other cultures across the world) *as practiced*. None of my research participants admitted learning a lullaby from its written form; all these songs were learned orally from family members, films, or other recorded media. Even if the song or rhyme was originally a formally composed, written down “literary” lullaby, all of my research participants said they learned them orally. A large majority of songs were described to me as “traditional,” even if they were made famous by their use in film. The entire concept of “traditional” is not particularly useful in determining a lullaby’s history, origin, content, or function. There are a variety of songs that are highly stylized, complex, and composed of metaphorical text, which may follow the rules of *rāg* and *tāl* from the Hindustani or Carnatic classical music traditions, but might still be classified as “folk” songs because they are variable (improvised), assumed to be traditional, performed in rural locations, communal in their presentation, and orally transmitted. The highly classicized and instrumental *halariya* performed by hereditary musicians in Rajasthan is a perfect example of the inadequacy of a folk-literary distinction. “Literary” lullabies composed by Tyagaraja such as “Jo jo jo Raama,” and “Jo-jo achyutananda jo-jo mukunda,” and Rabindra Sangeet lullabies such as “Ghumer boodi,” to songs composed for India’s various film industries all contain elements of “folk song,” and can take on folk-like attributes in practice. I believe the

²³ For example, see Lomax-Hawes 1974; McDowell 1977; Ebeogu 1991; Koljević 1991; Emeksiz 2011

folk-literary distinction has lingered in the lexicon because of its genre defining simplicity, not because of any real classificatory utility.

During my interview with musician and scholar Pandit Vidyadhar Vyas, he reminisced about his mother singing a popular Marathi lullaby tune beginning with the words “Bala jo jo re.” Vyas’s version is markedly different from the versions done by singers such as Ashe Bosle and many amateur renditions posted on the internet. Versions of the lullaby appear in Marathi, Konkani, and other languages, and have been published in numerous music albums and films, most notably in the 1950 Marathi movie *Bala jo jo re*, directed by Datta Dharmadhikari. Vyas described the lullaby lyrics of his version as largely improvised and the tune quite simple, using the notes of rāg Sarang. “Bala” is an affectionate term for child, and “jo jo” is a nonsense phrased representative of the motion of a child’s swing but is phonetically related to words for swing such as *jula* in Hindi or *jokali* in Kannada. The phrase “jo jo” is often found in lullabies in Marathi, Hindi, and many other of the subcontinent’s languages.²⁴ Apart from this line, according to Vyas, the lyrics often differ according to the singer’s needs or the wants of the child [7. Bala jo jo re.mp3].

A second example of songs passed down in the family was related to me by an employee at the Centre for Chronic Disease Control (CCDC) in Delhi. This women’s lullaby was taught to her by her mother, who had learned it from a cook at the family’s house in Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh. The song, in a rural language related to Hindi, begins with the lyrics “Goo goo payan kanka manaya kehlata kehlata gori payan,” meaning, according to this research participant, that a child is playing in the countryside and has found a stone. The song goes on to describe how the child places the stone in the holy river Ganga (Ganges) and the pebble becomes the mud of the

²⁴ For example, Tyagaraja composed the famous Telugu lullaby “Jo-jo Achyutananda jo-jo mukunda” (Rao 1994: 385).

river, which is made into a bowl by a potter, who in turn trades it for food, and so on, until eventually the child receives the pebble back transformed. This song's lyrics exhort the child to be kind and remember that everyone is connected in an ecological and spiritual circle. At the same time, the chain of people and professions through which the transforming pebble is passed, I believe, subtly reinforces a sense of social and caste hierarchy; the potter passes his creation on to a person slightly above his caste or social station, until it reaches the child who is, not surprisingly, described as a prince. This is a clear example of how lullabies operate in the socialization of children and symbolic representation of society and its subtle moralistic code is characteristic of many of the songs my older research participants recalled from their childhood.

Religious songs, such as *bhajans*, have long been used to sooth children to sleep and were often mentioned by research participants when recalling their childhood experiences. A larger percentage of research participants remembered their fathers and uncles singing bhajans as opposed to more standard lullabies, but this was not an exclusively male phenomenon. One participant from a village near Bangalore spent much of his childhood at his maternal family home in the Shimoga district, Karnataka. There his grandmother would sing to him and play recordings of poems written by a popular nineteenth century Karnataka Sufi saint, Shishunala Sharif. The saint is fairly widely known, even outside Karnataka, and has been described as the Karnataka's own Kabir.²⁵ The song this participant recalls most fondly is the Kannada lullaby "Tooguthide nija bayalali" (The truth is swaying in the courtyard), in which the saint rocks the truth to sleep in an open courtyard, figuratively treating the truth as a baby. The lullaby describes how the truth is innocent, fragile but available for all to experience, hence it is rocked to sleep in the open air for all to see. The spirit of this lullaby fits with saint Shishunala's general

²⁵ See the online version of *The Hindu* newspaper at <http://www.hindu.com/2007/07/04/stories/2007070462010400.htm>

message of inter-religious harmony and the reasons for its use as a morality tale for children is self-evident. The lullaby's popularity, a function of the popularity of the saint, also shows the importance of local and regional religious traditions in their interaction with lullaby practices.

While this research participant recalled the Sharif lullaby with fondness, he also described how many across Karnataka would be awoken with, in his words, an “anti-lullaby.” A recorded version of the *suprabhatam*, sung by the renowned Carnatic vocalist M. S. Subalakshmi, would be played every morning in nearly every temple and household in his village, particularly Brahmin households. The *suprabhatam*, which has different versions depending on the deity to be awoken, is a highly religious set of poems in Sanskrit written by different bhakti saints, the most famous being the Venkateshsuprabhatam for the goddess Venkatesh. I found other examples of songs used to wake children, some explicitly religious and some not. I will discuss one Punjabi family's lullaby used for both sleep and waking later in this chapter.

Another example of traditional or local mythology presented in a nursery rhyme and lullaby comes from Bengal.²⁶ The lullaby “Ghum parani mashi pishi” (The Sleep Bringing Aunts) and its related mythology are widely known throughout Bengal and the song was mentioned by all of my research participants in Kolkata, and Bengalis I interviewed in Delhi. Throughout Bengal, a mythical figure or fairy-like woman, a maternal or paternal “aunt” figure (*mashi* and *pishi* respectively in Bengali) is commonly described as bringing sleep to children. The woman or women are understood not as literal aunts, but more of a “sleep fairy” figures. Sometimes possessing a magical rod of gold and silver, this woman can cause a child to either sleep or wake depending on which side of the rod touches the child. There are several

²⁶ In Bangla, the term *chhara*, which is understood as a rustic or unpolished verse sung by mothers to children or by children themselves, is a rough equivalent to the English nursery rhyme (Sircar 1997:81). These verses are also sung as lullabies.

commercial examples of this lullaby, each demonstrating small variations in text and larger variations in melody, but the Bengalis with whom I spoke tended to learn the rhyme and song from family members. Most versions I found ask for the “aunty” to come into the home, saying there are no table or chairs for them to sit, so please rest on the child’s eyes instead. Alternate versions describe the child’s mother giving *paan* (betel leaf) to the aunty and asking her to bestow sleep on the child before she leaves. A translation of “Ghum parani mashi pishi” by Basu and Datta is representative of the versions presented to me by my research participants, and presents the basic features of the sleep bringing auntie’s story in English:

Maternal Aunt, Paternal Aunt, Sleep-Givers, oh come hither,
We’ve no hard bed, nor soft instead, so sit on these eyes thither.
I’ll give you trays of betel leaves, to fill your cheeks and eat,
In Laddie’s eyes there is no sleep, give him your sleep so sweet.
(Sircar 1997:85)

This is a classic example of a lullaby imploring mythical figures for help in getting a child to sleep. Another well-known Bengali lullaby, “Aye brishti jhenpe,” (Oh Come Rain) implores a force of nature, the rain, to help a baby sleep. This song, in which a mother welcomes the rain so that it may bring a good harvest and cool the earth to help her baby to sleep, is used in a variety of films, recordings, and children’s books to express joy and anticipation for the coming of the monsoon rains to Bengal [6. Aye brishti jhenpe.mp3]. Both “Ghum parani mashi pishi” and “Aye brishti jhenpe” request help for a sleepless child, and show characteristics of the “bribing” song category. Rather than bribing a child to sleep, they instead seek to tempt the rain and the “sleep-bringers” with gifts of *paan* and food.



Figure 2.3: Reviewing a performance. Research participant Parthapratim Chattopadhyay reviewing his performance of “Aye brishti jhenpe.”

Another Bengali lullaby and fantastical rhyme I encountered tells of a frog, fishing in a river of condensed milk. This rhyme, “Khoka jabe machh dhorte,” (The Little Boy Goes to Catch Fish) is known almost as widely as “Ghum parani mashi pishi,” and was mentioned by most of my research participants in Kolkata. Although not specifically a lullaby, it was sung as one by my research participants, and presents some characteristic imagery found in many other Bengali nursery rhymes and lullabies. The song describes a little boy, or *khoka*, who goes fishing in a river of condensed milk (*kheer*)²⁷ only to find that a frog has stolen his fishing pole and a kite (the bird or hawk variety) has taken the fish. In other rhymes and songs mentioned by my Bengali research participants, images of anthropomorphized animals, water, rain, marriages and marriage processions, and the interactions between a mother and son are common. The

²⁷ While *kheer* is most often associated with a sweet rice pudding dessert made of milk, rice and spices, my research participants uniformly translated it as “condensed milk” in the context of this lullaby/rhyme. Similar translations can be seen in the fairy tale of *Kheer-e-Putul* or “The Condensed-Milk Doll” by the Bengali painter and author Abindranath Tagore, nephew of Rabindranath Tagore. (Sircar 1998).

lullaby/rhyme about a boy, a frog and the river of condensed milk plays on several of these themes. Kheer is common motif throughout Bengali literature and art, a dietary staple, and used in a variety of religious offerings. The lullaby/rhyme “Khoka jabe” combines anthropomorphized animals with scenes of innocent childhood imagination (such as fishing in a river of kheer) and offers contemporary Bengalis of urban Kolkata a fantasy-nostalgic association with a rural life and a link to a mythology that is being clouded out in contemporary globalizing Kolkata. As I observed during my research, and as brought up by most of my Bengali research participants, children in Kolkata regularly watch contemporary Japanese cartoons dubbed into Bangla, have access to and desire nationally and internationally manufactured toys and other material goods, and are, according to many research participants, losing their grasp of the traditional Bengali culture, language, and music that many older Bengalis hold dear. In the face of these outside pressures, rhymes and lullabies such as “Ghum parani mashi pishi,” “Aye brishti jhenpe,” and “Khoka jabe” are integral to the cultural education of young Bengalis, particularly those from families who recognize a value in preserving the unique language, culture, and art of Bengal.

The songs and rhymes covered above are widely known and have been largely orally conveyed to succeeding generations. Many have also been published in booklets accompanied by illustrations. Treated much like children’s coloring books, these booklets are not so much a way to preserve or communicate the rhymes and songs (although they do), but to entertain children. The examples I encountered seemed similar in purpose to the *Chharar chabi* (illustrated nursery rhymes) that were printed as early as the 1950s which were used for reading and writing education in Bengali primary schools for Class 1 aged children, the equivalent to kindergarten or 1st grade in the US (Sircar 1997). Similar booklets are still used by my research participants’ children and are filled with fables and rhymes such as “Khoka jabe.” One booklet in particular,

Chhotoder chhara sanchayan (The Infants Collected Book of Nursery Rhymes) a compilation of traditional and folk rhymes, was heavily marked up with crayon and pencil drawings from my research participants' children, showing the booklet's continued use since its original publication in 1969 (Prabhat and Datta 1969).

Several other traditional Bengali lullabies were sung to me by research participants in Kolkata that display themes similar to “Ghum parani mashi pishi” and “Khoka jabe.” Most often these lullabies describe sleep coming and going softly to a sleeping boy. Lullabies directed solely at girls are less common, but are not unheard of. In “Aye aye chand mama” (Come, come, uncle moon), the child is either a boy or girl and the song evokes the imagery of the protective “uncle moon” character popular throughout India and found in various language contexts from Bengali to Hindi and other regional languages. Employing imagery similar to “Khoka jabe,” the lullaby “Aye ghum jaye, ghum Bhagdi para” (Come sleep, come for the fisher-boy of Bhagdi), tells of a fisherman's boy from the Bhagdi community in the former East Bengal (now Bangladesh) sleeping under a fishing net blanket. Through the use of fishing imagery and directly referencing local place names, these lullabies impart a distinctly Bengali cultural ethos unlike more generic songs concerned with the moon and sleep.

A popular lullaby from the neighboring state of Assam also provides a distinct sense of place derived from images of the natural world or rural Assam. “Amare moina,” a hauntingly beautiful lullaby, was sung to me by a young Assamese woman who had recently moved to Delhi to work (however, the following audio example is taken from the 1955 film *Piyoli Phukan* as my field recording was severely marred by automobile traffic noise in Delhi) [4. Amare moina.mp3]. The lullaby describes a child sleeping and a *bogori* berry tree is being planted;

when the berry falls from the tree, then it will be sweet and the child can eat it. The first verse is transliterated as follows:

Amare moina xubo e,
barite bogori rubo e,
barire bogori poki xoribo,
amare moinai butoli khabo.²⁸

Similar to the lullaby examples from Bengal, “Amare moina” describes natural and cultural scenes characteristic of Assam. The bogori or jujube tree native to Assam and much of South and Central Asia, is a traditional source of food and medicine and is integrated into the folklore and myths of the region. The metaphoric language of the lullaby attempts to inculcate patience in the listener as it describes how the bogori berry ripens in its own time. My research participant described how many of the houses in her village would have small plots of land where they cultivated vegetables and grains for the household and that a bogori tree was often planted alongside these crops. Folkloric tales that weave descriptions of the natural flora and fauna of Assam with morality tales are quite common. While not specifically part of the famous collection of Assamese folklore, the *Burhi Aai'r Xaadhu*²⁹ or “Grandmother’s Tales,” the lullaby “Amare moina” expresses a similar mythology and morality. The lullaby was made further famous in the 1955 melodramatic film *Piyoli Phukan*, directed by Phani Sarma, which was the first Assamese film to receive the President’s Certificate of Merit, the highest award given by the Indian government for a regional film (Manoj 2013).

The melody from the film version of “Amare moina” differs slightly from the lullaby sung to me by my research participant, who learned the song from her mother and grandmother.

²⁸ Transliteration from *The Telegraph*, newspaper from Calcutta, India www.telegraphindia.com/1111115/jsp/northeast/story_14750727.jsp. This transliteration matches the lyrics related to me by both of my Assamese research participants.

²⁹ The Assamese poet Lakshminat Bezbaruah compiled the “Grandmother’s folktales” and published them as *Burhi Aai'r Xaadhu* in 1911. An English translation by Deepika Phukan was published in 2012.

As I discuss in chapter 5, the use of traditional melodies and lullabies in films, with or without adaptations in melody or lyrics, was commonplace in films of the 1950s and 60s but became less prevalent from the mid-1970s onward. Recently, there has been much lamenting in the Indian press about the disappearance of these traditional songs and stories from the book and music stores, and from the public's awareness. A January 2012 article in Calcutta's *The Telegraph* newspaper announced, "Amare Moina isn't there, but Jack & Jill sure are – Book fair misses nursery rhymes and lullabies in Assamese on CDs, producers blame non-viability" (Konwar 2012). The article describes Assamese lullabies are being buried under a glut of English and Hindi recordings, hindering the transmission of traditional mythology and lessening interest in the Assamese-language. Many of my research participants who spoke Assamese, Bangla, or languages other than Hindi or English were concerned about the perceived degradation of their mother tongues. Some of my Bengali research participants lamented that "Banglish" (Bangla and English) was quickly becoming the only language younger people knew. The use of English words was both a marker of "coolness" and of the speaker's social class (actual or desired) but, much as with many Hindi speakers in Delhi, English has become so engrained into the lexicon, it was almost impossible to speak more than a few sentences without using some English terms or phrases.

The lullabies I have described thus far are fairly widely known in their respective cultural and language regions. They all express some aspect of traditional regional mythology that is the basis for other children's stories and nursery rhymes. Before briefly addressing newer and widely distributed recorded media, I would like to highlight some examples of lullaby traditions that represent hyper-localized or familial traditions. The first example comes from Dr. Shubha Chaudhuri, Associate Director General at the American Institute of Indian Studies, Archive and

Research Center for Ethnomusicology in Gurgaon outside of Delhi, and my faculty adviser during my Fulbright-Nehru fellowship. Chaudhuri grew up in Baroda, while her father was from East Bengal and her mother was a Gujarati-speaking Parsi from Bombay who studied at Santiniketan and therefore knew Bengali well. Both her father and mother sang lullabies to her, mostly songs by the late 19th and early 20th century polymath Rabindranath Tagore. Chaudhuri half-jokingly felt that her position as the eldest child in the family (she has two younger brothers) meant her parents made a special effort to expose her to “high” culture.³⁰ Apart from regular doses of culture as represented by Tagore’s music, one song Chaudhuri recalled from her childhood exemplifies the ways in which music and family narratives are brought together. She described the song as a kind of chant her mother would sing as she attempted to lull her young daughter to sleep. The lyrics were simply names of family relatives strung together with a gentle rising and falling melody. This was an attempt to teach the young Chaudhuri the names and relations of her various family members, and is also an example what so many parents do in their attempts to deal with a sleepy child: drone on with whatever comes to mind. It seems quite common for parents to make up simple songs, or sometimes just to repeat nonsense, in their quest to help their young children sleep and stabilize their own sleep-deprived sanity. During my dissertation fieldwork in India, I too made up several songs to help my own daughter sleep and block out some of the cacophonous soundscape penetrating our apartment in south Delhi.

In Chaudhuri’s case, this family name lullaby also helped provide a sense of belonging by locating her in a broader family network. These somewhat incidental or nonsense songs were long thought to have little meaning or research value, as evidenced by the general paucity of lullaby research to date. However, there is increasing evidence demonstrating the psychological

³⁰ Recent research also suggests that parents also engage female children about family narratives with more elaboration and evaluation. See Bohanek, Marin, Fivush, and Duke 2006. See also Fivush, Berlin, Sales, Mennuti-Washburn, and Cassidy 2003.

benefits of self-reliance, competence, and confidence that manifest themselves in children who are provided a sense of family history and understand their location in an intergenerational family (Bohanek, Marin, Fivush, and Duke 2006). Chaudhuri's family name song and lullaby can be understood as one part of an ongoing conversation about family connections, a narrative constructed to help create a cohesive family identity, one that brings together two distinct ethnic and religious communities. This is a clear example of a lullaby's multi-functionality: lulling a child to sleep, providing distraction or a type of meditation for the parent, and creating a narrative important for the child's development. This last function operates both at the cultural level, as seen with the Bengali and Assamese lullabies, and at the level of individual family, as with Chaudhuri's lullaby.

I encountered other lullabies that were specific to one family. One research participant living in the Delhi suburb of Gurgaon was very excited to hear about my work on lullabies and invited my family over to tell me of the importance of one song her father sang to her. Originally from Punjab, this research participant described how her father, a Punjabi Hindu, ordinarily did not sing anything besides the occasional religious bhajan on holy or festival days. He did sing one lullaby to her when she was five and six years old, a song he improvised with simple lyrics such as "*baba para ider ja raha*," meaning something like "daddy, dear child is going there" in Punjabi.³¹ Just before my research participant moved to the United States for graduate school, her father revived this lullaby, singing it to his daughter around the house. According to my research participant, her father was becoming more sentimental in his older age (she described him as previously a very serious man, not jovial or otherwise social) and he was distressed at her prospective move away from India. Coincidentally, this research participant's niece was born two months before her move to the US, and her father began singing the same lullaby to the

³¹ The actual meaning is somewhat vague; however, this translation was offered by my research participant.

newborn child along with his 26-year-old daughter. The family took to calling the daughter and granddaughter “big baba” and “small baba,”³² linking the two together through the use of a lullaby. This provided a sense of continuity between generations and across physical distance; one daughter was leaving India while one was just arriving. This lullaby was also sung by my research participant to her niece as a morning waking song. By increasing the tempo and giving the lullaby a more upbeat feel while keeping the same lyrics, the song functioned differently in two contexts, while retaining its emotional resonance. Functioning similarly to Dr. Chaudhuri’s names-of-relatives lullaby and despite its almost nonsense lyrics, improvised nature, and use in both sleep and waking contexts, the song helped create and maintain intergenerational emotional ties and family identity.

Thus far, I have detailed several specific examples of lullabies that are significant in the lives of my research participants. However, there are a variety of traditions that I heard about during my research that I was unable to investigate thoroughly enough to be able to present detailed findings. These traditions were either too far outside my focus on urban practices or, in most cases, I simply did not have the time to travel to the region to investigate them more fully. A few do bear mention here as suggestions for future research. One prominent tradition in Rajasthan the afore-mentioned *halariya* can be loosely categorized as a lullaby, although it is more aptly defined as a birthday song sung throughout an individual’s lifetime. This repertoire is highly stylized and incorporates various musical instruments like the *sarangi*, *dholak*, ankle bells, and harmonium, in addition to vocals. Hereditary castes of musicians known as *Manganiyar* and *Langa* are the primary practitioners of the *halariya* genre (Kothari 2001).

Several famous *Manganiyar* musicians such as Lakha Khan, Rana Khan, Dariya Dina and the

³² In this usage, “baba” is a term of affection, probably meaning something like “dear little one.” It seems doubtful that it is related to “baba” in Hindi meaning “father” or “grandfather” in this case, (and the song was sung in Punjabi).

famous female musician Rukma Devi have been recorded performing halariya songs by several scholars.³³ Much of the scholarly focus on the Manganiyars and their music has focused on the social structure, the supporting *jajmani* patronage system, and the problems of class mobility of these hereditary musicians (Kothari 2001).³⁴ However, apart from the recordings mentioned above, there is little published scholarship specifically addressing the halariya genre.

Another prominent, if non-musical, tradition that is particularly developed in Rajasthan, but also common elsewhere, is the practice of storytelling before a child's bedtime. During interviews with Suneera Kasliwal, sitarist and scholar of Rajasthani folk music at the University of Delhi, she emphasized the importance of bedtime stories told by her parents, and particularly her grandmother, in her childhood and that of her siblings. The stories ranged from sections of the *Panchatantra*, ancient moral and philosophical animal fables, to portions from the great Indian epics the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, to stories from her grandmother's younger years. Shubha Chaudhuri also remarked that while she was sung to, her younger brothers were more often told stories before they slept. Many of my other research participants recalled as children being told a variety of mythological, religious, and family history stories. I believe bedtime stories operate much as lullabies do: as vehicles for the transmission of culture, tools of intergenerational emotional bonding, and are integral in the formation and maintenance of personal and familial identity. I briefly reference both halariya and bedtime stories because of their importance to my research participants, and to suggest them as viable topics for future research.

³³ The American Institute for Indian Studies, Archive and Research Center for Ethnomusicology houses recordings by scholars such as Shubha Chaudhuri and Daniel Neuman. At least one recording of Dariya Dina's halariya, recorded by Daniel Neuman, is distributed by Smithsonian Folkways, see <http://www.folkways.si.edu/musician-communities-of-rajasthan-the-manganiar/india-world/music/album/smithsonian>.

³⁴ See Neuman and Chaudhuri 2006; Ayyagari 2009.

How

The developments covered in the previous section are largely a result of the intensification and concentration of urban development. This has led to a change in how children interact with their peers, has affected the availability and quality of time parents have to interact with their children, and impacted the habits of daily living. There have been other developments that have specifically influenced *how* lullabies are practiced in the home. The technologies of sleep such as swings, cradles, and electronic music players, shifting parental and gender roles, and changing attitudes towards children and music all influence how lullabies and other child-directed music is practiced in contemporary urban India.

One technology that appears to have largely disappeared from contemporary urban India is the swing. Most of my older research participants, and those younger participants who were born in more rural villages, described how they and their siblings were often lulled to sleep as infants in a swing. The old style swing made of cloth and attached to a hook in the ceiling, or tied at the corners to poles or other objects, was kept in motion via a string that was gently tugged on while the caregiver performed other household tasks. Scenes like this have been immortalized in many old Bollywood films such as *Beti Bete* (1964) during the famous lullaby “Aaj kal mein dhal gaya” (Today is transformed into tomorrow). The deity Krishna is often depicted as a baby in a cloth or wooden swing. None of my research participants recalled being swung in carved wooden cradles often depicted in other films such as *Shehnaai* (1964) during the lullaby “Pawan more angna mein” (The wind in the courtyard) [15. Pawan more angna mein.mp3].

The incidence of parents using cradles or swings of any make seems to have dramatically decreased. Of all my research participants who have young children or had young children within the past 20 years, none reported using the types of cradles or swings described by older

research participants. With only one exception, my research participants' infant babies all slept in the same bed with their parents. Rather than using swings to lull children to sleep, it seems that contemporary parents are more likely to hold their children and either rock them to sleep on their shoulders or place the child face up in their lap and gently bounce the baby while patting or touching their forehead. Holding the child in the lap and patting the forehead seems to be a culturally specific Indian practice. It has been observed that American parents frequently swing or rock their children side to side, and Japanese parents are more likely to bounce their children vertically when holding the children in their arms while attempting to lull them to sleep (Otaki, et al 1986). My research participants described holding the baby in their arms against their shoulder and laying the baby across their lap and patting the child's forehead with equal frequency. The lap method of soothing the child seemed to be slightly more prevalent with research participants from South India, but this was not exclusive.

Scholars note that the holding of infants reflects direct parental investment in childcare, and is central to attachment relationships developed between a parent and child (Bowlby 1969). Past studies have examined how often an infant is held and what type of interactions take place between the parent and child, not how the child is physically held and what this might say about a culture's child-rearing philosophies or culture. My guess in this case has as much to do with the Indian habit of sitting on the floor cross-legged as anything else. Bouncing a child in one's lap when seated cross-legged is an easy and natural movement. I am unsure of what the rhythmic patting on the forehead may mean, what it might symbolize, or why it seemed so common with my research participants. This is not a practice I have observed in the US. It may be something that developed in conjunction with cross-legged lap bouncing, as in this position, a person's hand would have to cross over either an infant's head or lower body to touch anywhere besides the

head or feet. However, both of these practices may be shifting as chair sitting becomes more common and even preferred.

My research participants with younger children generally did not report using other physical tools such as cradles, bassinets, other types of swings, and cribs. Infants were typically placed between adults in the parental bed until they were old enough to sleep by themselves. Even then, co-sleeping remains far more frequent and is practiced until the children are older in India as compared to the US. In fact, only one of my research participants described regularly placing their child in a separate room to sleep. The cost of housing in Delhi necessitates that lower-income children co-sleep with their parents, as homes and apartments with two or more bedrooms are quite expensive. Co-sleeping is also more culturally accepted and less vilified in India as compared to the US. Cross-cultural psychologist Alan Roland notes that Indian cultural standards have been influenced by the idea that “separation and aloneness are to be avoided at all costs in Indian family relationships. Dependence and interdependence are far more valued and cultivated than autonomy and separation” (1988:232). The prevalence of co-sleeping with infants in urban India can thus be understood as both a cultural and economic phenomenon.

The apparent declining use of traditional cradles and swings in daily urban life has, conversely, not yet led to their disappearance from song lyrics. The terms *lori*, *palna*, *thallattu*, *jogula*, from Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, and Kannada respectively, are often translated as “cradle song” or lullaby. From the Marathi lullabies for Rama and Nirguna cited by Fox-Strangways in his 1914 publication, to Hindi cinema lullabies such as “Chandan ka palna, resham ki dori” (Cradle of the sandalwood, cord of silk) from 1954, to more recent children’s CDs, the cradle and swing remain stock images in lullabies. In films, even if a swing or cradle is not referenced

in a lullaby's lyrics directly, it is almost invariably shown onscreen.³⁵ It remains to be seen if the apparent disappearance of swings and cradles from use in infant care by the general urban population will modify the imagery presented in lullabies and onscreen. Just as many "Mother Goose" nursery rhymes are still performed to and by young children in Europe and the US, depicting activities and lifestyles long since disappeared from the 21st century industrialized reality, it seems likely that swings and cradles will remain in the lullaby lexicon long after their disappearance from the Indian home.

Recorded media from records, tapes, CDs, to digital have all made their way into Indian children's bedrooms for entertainment and substitute for sung lullabies. Lullabies, nursery rhymes and bed-time stories were some of the first records produced in 1946 by G.N. Joshi and the Gramophone Company of India in a failed attempt to fight illiteracy and improve the education of India's rural poor (Joshi 1998). The vast majority of CDs now available marketed for children offer rereleases and retreads of Bollywood or other regional film industry lullabies, but a number of artists are producing work specifically for children or are singing more traditional songs. Well-known classical singers such as Bombay S. Jayashri and Alpana Banerjee, along with playback singers such as Sadhana Sargam and Anuradha Paudwal, have contributed to recordings of traditional and newly composed lullabies. Jayashri's recent work for "Pi's Lullaby" was nominated for a 2012 Oscar in conjunction with the film *Life of Pi*. Her collection of traditional Indian lullabies, *Vatsalyam*, was widely recommended to me by many research participants. However, Lata Mangeshkar and her sister Asha Bhosle are still the reigning queens of recorded lullabies, considering the sheer number and iconic status of the Bollywood lullabies they produced, such as "Nanhi kali sone chali" and "Chanda mama dur ke."

³⁵ See the "Aye meri ankhon ke pahle sapne" lullaby scene in the film *Man Mandir* (1971) and "Duniya ki har maa apne bete ko" from *Maalik* (1972) for examples of lullabies without reference to swings or cradles in the lyrics but are still pictured onscreen.

All of these artists and songs are still played regularly by my research participants for their young children. CDs represent the most common media format now; however, mp3 downloads played from a computer or on a mobile phone are fast becoming a preferred format. When I asked my research participants if they would mind singing the lullabies they remembered from their childhood or ones they sang to their children, a common refrain was “Sure, I have it here in my phone.”

A number of previous studies have elaborated on the differences of role and responsibility in childrearing between mothers and fathers in the care of infants generally (Roopnarine, Taluder, Jain, Joshi, and Srivastav 1990). The role of Indian fathers in day-to-day infant care has traditionally been seen as peripheral, their attitude sometimes described as one of “cultivated incompetence” (Roopnarine et al. 1992:294). While attitudes such as this are still common, especially in single wage-earner families, as the education level, financial security, and international travel experience of my research participants increased, so too did the likelihood that fathers were more actively involved in early childrearing, participating more fully emotionally and physically in their children’s upbringing. In addition to interview data from parents, I was able to observe changing child-parent interactions first-hand during my participant-observation of emerging family music groups in Delhi. These classes often provided the foundation on which parents based their lullaby repertoire, and presented a fairly standardized collection of Indian and Western lullabies and nursery rhymes.

Over the past five to ten years, several models of paid children’s group music classes and informal child-parent music groups have sprung up in Delhi. Both types of amateur and professionally run groups represent a distinct break from past attitudes towards children and music education. There has been a long history of wealthy urban families hiring private music

tutors to teach Hindustani or Carnatic classical music and dance, and a minimum-level of musical training has been thought of as an essential part of a young person's education. This was particularly true for young girls; the ability to sing and play, dance, or play a musical instrument was a sign of proper upbringing and an asset for marriageable young women. However, the newer children's group music classes expanding in popularity are not part of this tradition but modeled after general music exploration classes, the *kindermusik* movement and music curriculum developed in Germany in the late 1960s, and the international children's music program "Music Together" started by Kenneth Guilmartin and Lili Levinowitz in the US in 1987.

During my fieldwork, I attended an amateur-led music group that met weekly in different parks around Delhi or in participants' homes when the weather was uncooperative. I also interviewed the leaders of several newly established child-parent music classes that met in private studios, storefronts, and repurposed grade school classrooms. One of the most defining features of all these music groups was their emphasis on the importance of parent-child interaction during classes. The amateur group I attended with my year-old daughter was led by a husband and wife who had recently begun to help organize the group after the original organizers moved away from Delhi. Each week around six or seven families would meet, sit in a circle with their children and sing lullabies and playsongs with their infants for around thirty minutes. The previous organizer had collected lyrics for lullabies and nursery rhymes in a reference notebook. Euro-American songs such as "The Wheels on the Bus," "Mmm Blah Goes the Little Green Frog," Hindi film songs like "Chanda mama dur ke," or nursery rhymes like "Macchli jal ki rani hai" (Fish is the Queen of Water) were regularly covered. Both mothers and fathers were generally in attendance, and, although it was not explicitly mentioned, the expectation was that

both parents participate in the activities. Nannies or other domestic staff often accompanied the families, but were expressly not allowed to participate in the group singing; instead, they were instructed to sit at the side of the room for the duration of the class. This requirement was implemented in response to many parents sending their children with their nannies to the song groups and never attending themselves. The domestic staff sat outside the circle and helped organize the pot-luck style food that was shared after the more formal activities concluded. Once the singing was finished, the domestic staff often took care of the children while the parents shared food and chatted with each other. The stark divide between focused parent-child interaction time and the time when the nannies took care of the children after the organized activities concluded highlighted the intentional nature of the group. Parents attended the group to have a musical interaction with their children and to learn songs to sing later, but most parents still relied on domestic staff to care for their children when not engaged in the musically motivated interactions. Despite the group's emphasis on creating positive musical parent-child experiences, once the formal activities ended the domestic staff once again took over caring for the children. After the singing concluded, many of the fathers would take out their cellphones and return to what appeared to be activities related to their employment. The mothers would chat among themselves and casually help the domestic staff look after the children for approximately another half hour before everyone departed.

Some of the more professionally organized groups growing in popularity are centered on the child learning or experiencing music and less on parent-child interaction. One program called "Mozartsy" operated in several neighborhoods in Delhi (and has since expanded to Amritsar, New Zealand and Norway); it was founded by Sonam Saini, a young music teacher and entrepreneur. Mozartsy classes encouraged parents to attend, although nannies were not

specifically disallowed. Different classes were intended to introduce children under five years old to Indian and Western musical instruments and musical concepts. Parents were encouraged to attend so they could learn the material and repeat the songs and games at home with their children, but they were only passively involved during most of the class. The children sat in the center of the room near the teacher or performer, while most parents and nannies sat to the side or back of the class interacting directly at appointed times during the instruction. Many of the songs were European or American folk tunes, and the so called “Rhyme and Chime” musical concept classes were focused more on Western musical concepts of melody and harmony rather than Indian rāg and tāla. The instrument exploration classes were evenly divided between presenting Indian and Western instruments.

There are several other professionally organized groups now appearing in Delhi attempting to capitalize on the desire of educated and wealthier parents to engage with their children and provide them with enriching activities and experiences before their formal schooling begins. The “Music Together” classes, run by Priya Irani in Delhi, follow a much more regimented curriculum, with CDs, songbooks for the parents, along with teacher licensing by the Music Together international program. In my interview with Irani, she reiterated the core Music Together beliefs of the importance of early childhood music education, of developmentally appropriate music instruction, and the necessary, active role of parents or caregivers in this process. She concurred with my observations that the growing popularity these types of music classes in India demonstrates a changing attitude towards parenting, at least for younger, wealthier urban Indian parents. Irani noted that middle-class and wealthier families have a number of activities and requirements that press on the time of parents and children. Between the rigorous academic competition, even starting with young children, the draw of sports, and the

distractions of modern media, the choice that parents make to engage with their children in a Music Together class series shows a particularly deep appreciation of the value of music education.

The three different music groups discussed above are indicators of a major cultural change taking place in urban India. The attitude of “cultivated incompetence” of some fathers in previous years is giving way to an understanding of the importance of direct parental involvement in the childrearing process and early childhood education. These music groups are also notable in that they all teach a *mélange* of Western, Indian, and other globalized songs and musical concepts. The new economy and information technology have given Indians incredible access to global products and ideas, and children are increasingly being raised and educated in a multicultural environment. Indian nursery rhymes are sung after American folk songs, Japanese cartoons are dubbed into Bengali, lullabies are used to reinforce English-language learning, and traditional parental gender roles are under pressured to change. All of these developments have accelerated in the last twenty or thirty years and this has created a sense of unease among many of my research participants. The dizzying pace of change generated by urbanization, technology, and connectivity has left many pondering their past, contemplating their sense of identity and belonging, and wondering how these dramatic cultural shifts will affect the lives of their children.

Chapter 3

“I Remember a Song...”:

Lullabies, Habitus, Technology, and the Transmission of Identity

Introduction

In this chapter, I examine how the practice of child-directed songs is influenced by various technologies that fundamentally shape the way music and cultural knowledge are transmitted, remembered, and reproduced. Technology is both a preservative and disruptive force. Lullabies preserved in film and audio recordings continue to be part of the popular consciousness often decades after their first recording. New media technologies are being inserted into the child-caregiver relationship, disrupting person-to-person musical experiences, while simultaneously creating a new dynamic in the transmission of songs and cultural knowledge. Songs created as lullabies, as opposed to songs that functionally occupy this role, often reinforce kinship ties, behavioral norms, and beliefs that can be specific to individual families. These songs can also convey regional or ethnic cultural values. Lullabies are some of a child’s first musical-cultural experiences, and can become a seed for a child’s developing sense of self. Lullabies can consciously, and unconsciously, establish a child’s relationship with their parents, grandparents, or caregivers. These songs and experiences inculcate culturally acceptable ways of treating young children and help shape a child’s understanding of their broader cultural surroundings. Lullabies are often heard repeatedly throughout a child’s early life, they are sometimes revisited during adolescence, and they are refreshed again when an adult begins singing to their own children. Throughout this process, the memories associated with these lullaby experiences can be re-lived and re-embedded in the mind. The refreshing and re-living

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potentials of lullaby songs and their associated memories helps establish an individual's musical and cultural identity.

In this chapter, I will draw on Bourdieu's theory of practice, a theoretical approach that helps situate the individual within a complex web of agency and power created by culture and society. Practice theory offers powerful analytical tools to help tease apart the role of lullabies in the transmission of values and formation of identity. Analyzing child-directed songs in a habitus-field framework will be useful to establish the importance of these lullaby experiences in the lives of individuals. By using a habitus-field framework, I show how regional and national identities, and socio-economic class influence, and are influenced by, child-directed songs. According to Bourdieu, "the habitus – embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history – is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product... The habitus is a spontaneity without consciousness or will" (Bourdieu 1990:56). Lullabies sung during childhood are musical embodiments of personal and cultural histories and values that often "reappear" spontaneously later in life when an individual sings to their own children. Lullabies, and the practices of lulling a child to sleep, are products of history – products of a person's habitus that are subject to the economic conditions and symbolic practices surrounding the parents or caregivers. While habitus is generally used to describe a person's entire embodied social knowledge, for the purposes of this discussion of lullabies and singing to children, I am limiting the scope of the concept. Rather than a totalizing habitus that directs all of a person's social behavior, I will promote an idea akin to a "little" habitus that is produced and reproduced at the finer scale of the family and individual, yet one that is still affected by forces emanating from broader society. While its scale is somewhat circumscribed, the function of this "little" habitus operates similarly to Bourdieu's more comprehensive model. In this chapter, I show how

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the habitus surrounding lullabies and child-rearing help establish an individual's sense of identity. I also examine how lullaby practices transmit social-cultural values and the role of social change and technology in this process.

The narratives and senses of identity attached to, and germinating from, lullabies are not always “forgotten as history,” as with Bourdieu's habitus. Parents and caretakers, in many cases, are conscious of the memory, values, and history carried by lullabies, particularly the personal memories and values that are closely associated with one's identity or self-narrative. As discussed in the previous chapter, English-language lullabies can be a tool consciously used for social advancement. Other aspects of lullaby performance may remain unconscious, or at least are not at the forefront of the singer's mind when performing these songs for a child. This includes how lullabies subtly stereotype the roles of the mother, the children, and other family relations, particularly those of the maternal uncle and grandparents. The performance of particular lullabies also help establish a national or pan-Indian sense of identity which is reinforced by various commercially produced lullabies, and much of the commercial media in general. A budding sense of pan-Indian identity is emerging with urban Indians, but is only slowly taking hold alongside more common regional and ethnic identities, identifiers that were commonly mentioned by my research participants as essential to their sense of self. Lullabies and other child-directed songs are products of a standard Bourdieuan habitus, i.e. unconscious durable dispositions, and are consciously performed aspects of one's identity and social class. Lullabies can also be used by parents and caregivers in a conscious effort to foster particular identities or traits in young children. As the product of unconscious and conscious practice, lullabies also offer an example of how change can occur within the habitus-practice theory model, a model that has been criticized by some scholars as circular, bounded, or static.

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In this chapter, I show how music and memory serve as vehicles for the transmission of socio-cultural values. As part of this discussion, I examine how Bourdieu's notion of habitus can help explain the functions of lullaby singing, and how practice theory needs to be reformulated to better accommodate the processes of dramatic change brought on by technological development and urbanization. As part of this analysis, I examine closely how different technologies shape child-directed song practices. In this discussion, I use the term "technology" to describe a wide range of tools and developments, from recorded media and mechanical baby swings, to changes to urban living brought on by the reorganization of physical space. I discuss how child-directed songs help establish an individual's identity and sense of belonging to their family and other groups bound together by religion, ethnicity, and language. I conclude this chapter by linking the broader theories of cultural and musical change to the particularities of lullaby singing in metropolitan India. By exploring the way lullabies express, modify, replicate, and embody these social, cultural, and psychological processes, an answer emerges regarding the holdover question from the previous chapter regarding "why" lullabies are sung.

Transmission

Lullabies are unique in that they are a musical practice directed at a child, a practice begun before a child can even comprehend their native language, a practice that continues for several years, and generally stops before the child turns six years old (although several examples that do not fit this age-determinant pattern are covered in the previous chapter). Beginning between the ages of three to six, many parents continue their children's the bed-time routine by telling stories or reading books, often after the child self-identified as "too old" for lullabies, or they express a preference for other forms of entertainment. Some research participants described lullabies being sung well into their adult years, albeit not at "bedtime," but throughout the day.

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For example, in the previous chapter I introduced one Punjabi Hindu research participant who developed a special connection with her father and niece through a shared lullaby practice.

Despite examples such as this, my research participants most often described the main period of lullaby practice with children under the age of six. The songs sung, and memories encoded, during this window of active performance are further reinforced throughout an individual's lifetime by hearing these lullabies sung for younger siblings, or on commercial recordings. The total lullaby "experience" finally comes full circle when the former child dips into their well of memory and draws out these songs, music embedded with memory and emotion, to sing to their own children or grandchildren.

The process of a lullaby's transmission, from passively received but tied with intimate and often powerfully affective memories, intermittently reinforced throughout an individual's life, to an actively performed and consciously utilized practice, is the primary means by which lullaby practice cements cultural knowledge, memories, and socio-cultural values in a person's mind. Lullaby repertoire and style remain fairly stable between successive generations; they are less susceptible to temporarily fashionable music trends that breeze through popular music with such regularity. For example, the song "So ja rajkumari" has remained a popular lullaby in India since its airing in the 1940 Hindi-language film *Zindagi*, despite substantial changes in Bollywood musical styles over the years. Many of my research participants, especially those in their thirties and older, noted "So ja rajkumari" as one of their favorite lullabies. In comparison to the US, the lullaby "Hush-a-bye baby," ("Rock-a-bye baby") first written in *Mother Goose's Melody*¹ around 1765, and is still "regularly crooned in hundreds of thousands of homes at nightfall" (Opie 1997:70). These cross-cultural examples demonstrate the relatively slow drift in

¹ Some scholars think the words for "Hush-a-bye baby" may have been written as early as the 15th century, by a passenger on the Pilgrim vessel *Mayflower* (Opie 1997:70).

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lullaby preference. When a song is sung by a parent to their child, and then to the child's child, each generation attaches meaning and memory to the song giving it staying power, while simultaneously creating a sense of continuity between generations. When a young child hears a lullaby repeatedly, sung in the presence of a loving parent or grandparent, and later sings the same song to their children, that song and act of singing carries emotional importance that serves as a well into, and from which, powerfully affective memories can be poured. These memories are bound to the act of singing, of reproducing, and remembering. Sociologist Ron Eyerman identifies memory as *the* key aspect of cultural transmission and identity formation. Memory provides an orienting "cognitive map" that is central to individual and collective identity (Eyerman 2004:161). Although quite different from the types of trauma Eyerman analyzes in his work, the relationship between lullabies and memory is also central to the process of identity formation. Given the relative stability in lullaby preferences and practices over time, it is even more important to analyze lullaby practice during times of rapid change. Interrogating memory itself provides insight into the mechanism and effects of rapid change in lullaby practice, and urban Indian society more generally.

In contemporary metropolitan India, lullabies are both an incorporating and inscribing practice. In *How Societies Remember* (1989), sociologist Paul Connerton distinguishes these mnemonic practices in relation to the presence and activity of a human body. In essence, an incorporating practice requires the presence and interaction of actual humans, while an inscribing practice relies on technology "as a means of recording something that traps and holds information, long after the human organism has stopped informing" (1989:72, cited in Buckland 2001:10). Incorporated memory is thus dependent on personal interaction, while inscribed memory utilizes some form of written or recorded information. The differences between these

two types of memory provide a theoretical spade that helps excavate lullaby practices (sung and mediated) from their social, cultural, and economic fields.

For centuries, if not millennia, lullabies have been transmitted person-to-person. One party sings to another, who then incorporates this musical and cultural knowledge into their memory. Only in the last half century or so, has the technology to inscribe lullabies and their associated knowledge been available to a significant portion of the Indian population. Yet in the early 21st century, as the urban Indian populace relies more on recorded media in addition to, or as a substitute for, in-person singing, the cycle of transmission that makes lullabies so effective at conveying culture, memory, and values is being disrupted. Incorporative memory is necessarily disrupted by the increasing reliance on media technologies. The diminishment of incorporative memory is a symptom specific to modernity, an age where “the destruction of the past, or rather the social mechanisms that link one’s contemporary experience to that of earlier generations, is one of the most characteristic and eerie phenomena of the late twentieth century” (Hobsbawm 1994:3, cited in Connerton 2009:3). In the case of lullabies, the degeneration of incorporative memory is a result of the cessation of the practice of singing to children. It is the loss of this caretaker-to-child practice that ultimately disrupts the traditional cycle of lullaby transmission, a disruption that degrades the potential of lullabies to transmit affective memories and cultural values. When the practice of lullaby *singing* no longer occurs, the *embodiment* of values once transmitted by song, incorporated into an individual’s mind and body, and made powerful through associative memory, must be applied in other ways, or not at all. As music is not the only method of incorporative cultural instruction (although it acts on the body and mind in unique and powerful ways), parents and caretakers may attempt shift the transmission of

cultural values to young children to other practices such as storytelling, or hope that inscriptive media such as sound recordings, television, or books, will accomplish similar ends.

However, the move from repeated personal interactions in the form of lullaby singing with infants and young children, to the use of inscriptive media (CDs, books, television), represents a fundamental shift in how infants and children acquire, develop, and reproduce their habitus in regard to music and culture. Lullabies and their associated cultural artifacts, memories, and values become detached from the process of bodily learning or incorporative memory and become more objectified knowledge products, and, as such, are therefore more consciously used, altered, or disregarded. Quoting Eric Havelock, Bourdieu writes about this change from practical *mimesis* to more objectified learning and the impact this has on the acquisition of habitus, practical mastery, and reproduction of culture:

It could be shown that the shift from a mode of conserving the tradition based solely on oral discourse to a mode of accumulation based on writing...are accompanied by a far-reaching transformation of the whole relationship to the body, or more precisely of the use made of the body in production and reproduction of cultural artefacts [sic]. This is particularly clear in the case of music, where the process of rationalization as described by Weber has as its corollary a “disincarnation” of musical production or reproduction (which generally are not distinct), a “disengagement” of the body which most ancient music systems use as a complete instrument. (Bourdieu 1990:73, quoting Havelock 1963)

The question thus becomes, what effect does the disincarnation of knowledge have in relation to lullaby singing and the transmission of social and cultural values? I argue this shift does two things. First, it moves the production and reproduction of culture (as transmitted by lullaby singing and accompanying physical interactions between caregiver and child) onto a more conscious level. By making transmission more conscious, the entire process becomes more open to interpretation, and potentially more likely lullaby practices will be altered to fit contemporary fashions, or the inclinations of the parents and caregivers. An example of this can be seen in parent’s use of English-language lullaby recordings in the hopes of positively

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affecting their child's language ability and, consequently, the child's future economic prospects and social mobility. Second, by making the transmission of cultural values a more conscious act, by moving from incorporative to inscriptive modes of learning and memory, individuals rely more on consumer products and technologies that are external to the body. The transmission of cultural values and markers of identity thus becomes less a part of a person's habitus, less capable of being unconsciously internalized. Bourdieu writes that for habitus, "the process of acquisition...and the process of reproduction ...tend to take place below the level of consciousness, expression and the reflexive distance which these presuppose" (Bourdieu 1990:73).

When a person sings a lullaby recalled from their childhood to their child, they are continuing a practice that itself was generated by previous practice. They are very likely treating the child in a manner consistent with their own upbringing – bouncing them on their knees, patting their head, and cooing to them in ways their parents or caregivers did before them, a pattern of behavior that has been, more or less, internalized. The choice of what to sing, or how to sing lullabies to a child, lies at the edge of the conscious-unconscious spectrum. The choice of whether or not to sing a lullaby is open to conscious evaluation or determination. Yet, parents or caregivers generally have a sense of what feels "right," or what seems appropriate, when singing to a child. This unconscious sense concerning the "rightness" of a behavior is one's habitus. I contend this sense is developed during the parent's own childhood through repetitive behavior, by the singing of a lullaby to a child many times, over many years. Can an unconscious sense of "rightness" develop when a parent or caregiver plays a recording for a child? Can the use of technology to sooth, entertain, and impart language or other cultural values create or reinforce habitus? The answer to both these questions, I believe, is yes. My reasoning behind this answer

touches on two concepts that, when integrated into the structures or “rules” producing habitus, help sooth one of the strongest critiques of Bourdieu’s habitus system, namely that it is a closed system which makes real social change difficult or impossible.

Bourdieu certainly allows for spontaneous choice to be part of the overall habitus system of a group, as long as the outcomes of this spontaneity are understood to be initially conditioned by the habitus. However, Wacquant (1987) and King (2000) (among others) point out that a strict interpretation of Bourdieu’s habitus does not allow for the possibility of social transformation, and that social change is made almost impossible by the circular nature of the habitus’s structuring structures. According to King:

Social practices would be determined by *a priori* dispositions, embodied unknowingly by social agents, and consequently, their flexibility and creativity in the face of changing situations would be curtailed. Since the habitus imposes itself upon “willy nilly,” they can never construct new strategies for new situations because they are not aware of their habituses and, therefore, cannot begin to reinterpret them. (2000:427)

King’s critique of habitus is flawed in that it assumes that an individual can never become conscious of their internal dispositions. On the contrary, Bourdieu writes that habitus is not always embodied “unknowingly,” but is “internalized as second nature and so forgotten as history” (Bourdieu 1990:56). I believe the difference between “unknowing” and “forgotten” is essential in reconciling King’s static interpretation of habitus with one that accommodates the possibility for social change. To put it in slightly Rumsfeldian terms, for an individual, what is unknown will forever remain unknown without some outside intervention, but what is forgotten can be recalled. The difference between a static or behaviorally restrictive habitus and one that can accommodate change is that in the former, the dispositions behind a person’s habitus remain unconscious or “unknown,” while in the latter an individual can become conscious of their internalized dispositions and set about to change them. Bourdieu points to this type of conscious

manipulation of dispositions in his descriptions of how a “virtuosic actor” is able to have a “sense of the game.” Individuals are conscious of the ways in which their dispositions are influenced by accumulated history, social structures, or other external forces, and, therefore, are capable of modifying their own behavior.

The idea of a conscious or virtuosic actor relates to the discussion of lullaby singing and the reproduction of habitus in that it provides for a parent or caregiver’s agency when singing to a child. Obviously, a parent is not strictly bound by their traditions or history to sing only a certain song or in a certain way; the process is open to individual choice. Yet, the singer is also guided by their past experiences, guided by a sense of what is appropriate, what works, or what sounds or feels “right.” Conscious decision and internalized intuition combined during the process of lullaby singing exemplify the influence of habitus and the actions of a conscious actor. This helps explain, to a degree, the relative stability of lullaby practices and repertoire. When a child is exposed to lullabies repeatedly and over many years, a sense of how to sing, how to act, a sense of what feels right, and even a specific repertoire are internalized. This production and reproduction of a habitus is particularly durable since, as Bourdieu notes, “unlike scientific estimations, which are corrected after each experiment according to rigorous rules of calculation, the anticipations of the habitus practical hypotheses based on past experience, give disproportionate weight to early experiences” (1990:54). That is, because lullabies are engrained early in a child’s life, they are often attached to, and themselves form, deeply affective memories. They are internalized and incorporated through repetition during childhood, and again when an adult reproduces them for their own children. The end result of this process is that lullaby practice tends to be relatively stable, unless something, such as technology, intercedes in this cycle.

Technology: Shaped and Shaping

The discussion thus far has focused on how the transmission of lullabies and cultural knowledge are embodied through repetitive behavior. The behavior can be conscious or unconscious, and the knowledge of these practices can be learned through incorporative or inscriptive processes. I now turn from the embodied characteristics of lullaby transmission to discuss the role of disembodied technologies and their influence on lullaby practice.

Technologies such as cassette and CD players, computers, and cell phones are being used to supplement or supplant live singing. The use of these media technologies as stand-ins for live lullaby singing, and in child-rearing more generally, was cited by many of my research participants as one of the more dramatic and troubling changes affecting children in contemporary urban India. However, new technology does not simply alter social behavior; there is a complex interrelationship between the introduction and evolution of technology, how people perceive and use technology, and how technology is modified to fit social needs. Many social theorists have sought to explain the role technologies play in shaping the modern world, and their arguments can generally be grouped into one of two streams – theories of technological determinism (for example Ellul 1964; Habermas 1970; Adorno and Horkheimer 1997 [1944]) and those concerning the social construction of technology (for example Berger and Luckman 1966; Latour and Woolgar 1986; and really most postmodern theorists rely on social constructivism as a theoretical base). In the following section, I attempt to reconcile both of these approaches towards technology and social change within a practice theory model. In doing so, I aim to show that neither theory should be rejected outright and that practice theory offers a holistic field in which these theoretical approaches can meld. This combination of social,

cultural, and technological theory will be helpful in framing the discussion of how the lullaby practices influence the transmission of culture.

Despite some confusion in regard to the definition of technological determinism,² the general idea that technology influences the direction and nature of society is prominent in academic and popular literature. Put simply, technological determinism is a belief that technology influences society by changing the material conditions of human existence, or that technological developments are *not* socially or culturally determined (Bimber 1994:84). Historically, this has been exemplified by grand shifts in technology such as the invention of the printing press and the subsequent changes wrought by increased access to information, the spread of the railroad across the United States, or the invention of the steam powered technologies. Karl Marx's oft quoted phrase that "Social relations are closely bound up with productive forces...The hand-mill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill, society with the industrial capitalist" (Marx 1955:49) has rightly or wrongly³ been used to characterize Marx as a technological determinist.

The Marxist tradition of technological determinism continued in the work of both Walter Benjamin and Theodore Adorno, as they wrestled with the role of technology in modern society. For Benjamin, the mechanical reproduction of art had the potential to liberate the masses from a dominant bourgeois ideology. In "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936), Benjamin posits that the reproducibility of a work of art is essential to its wider dissemination, emancipating it from the realm of regulated ritual into a realm of public

² See Bimber's (1994) "Three Faces of Technological Determinism" for a concise discussion concerning the lack of precision in the use of technological determinism in scholarly literature.

³ Many scholars argue that Marx is not, in fact, a technological determinist, despite such statements. They argue, in essence, that Marx's "forces of production" are social rather than technological in nature. See Miller (1984) and Bimber (1994) for arguments against Marx as a technological determinist, and Shaw (1979) for arguments for Marx's technological determinism.

exhibition. In contrast, Adorno saw the culture industry as contributing to the degradation of taste, of destroying the sensuousness, individuality, and authenticity of “real” art. The culture industry is enabled by modern technology, and only provides amusement as relief from mechanized labor. As Adorno writes, “mechanization has such a power over man’s leisure and happiness, and so profoundly determines the manufacture of amusement goods, that his experiences are inevitably after-images of the work process itself” (Adorno and Horkheimer 1997:137). Thus for Adorno, technology fundamentally *determines* amusement.

Viewing the impact of technology slightly differently, Heidegger observed that the essence of technology “enframes” the individual, bracketing what is possible, or as he writes “Everywhere we remain unfree and chained to technology, whether we passionately affirm or deny it” (1977:4). Later scholars have relied on a technologically determinist framework to varying degrees, although the analysis of technology itself does not always hold center stage. Daniel Bell predicted the further rationalization of society would accompany the shift to a post-industrial economy as a result of intellectual technology, the computer, and increased productivity. Bell believed the goal of intellectual technology was “neither more nor less, to realize a social alchemist’s dream: the dream of ‘ordering’ the mass society” (1973:33). A starkly deterministic position if there ever was one! Other scholars advanced ideas such as the “Global Village,” (McLuhan 1989) explored the transition from modernity to postmodernity (Baudrillard 1995), examined the implications of a networked age (Castells 1996), and looked at the role of internet video (such as YouTube) as a repository for personal and cultural memory (Hildebrand 2007). All of these concepts are predicated on, and shaped by, modern communication technologies. They represent some of the ways technological determinism has spread through a large majority of contemporary social theory.

A more recent competing theory concerning the interactions of technology and society has gained traction over the past thirty years. The social construction of technology (SCOT) takes a stance opposite from that of technological determinism. SCOT theorists, also known as social constructionists, assert that technology does not exist somehow separate from the forces that shape society, but it is shaped by social attitudes, misperceptions, and temporary fashions. Technology is shaped by human action rather than some sort of deterministic law. Social constructionists see technology as designed, interpreted, and inseparable from the context in which it operates. Different groups of people adopt technology for various purposes, a technology may “succeed” or “fail” regardless of its objective or technical merits, and people may attach different meanings to technology irrespective of a designer’s original intention. Bijker’s work on the Penny Farthing bicycle, Hughes’s work on the evolution of large technological systems, and Pinch’s examination of Bakelite plastic are some of the first examples of the application of the SCOT perspective that demonstrate how technologies show the mark of not only the actors involved in their construction, but also the socio-cultural environments in which they were developed (Bijker, Hughes, and Pinch 2012 [1987]).⁴

Social constructionists have most often focused on technology itself, and have focused on the “beginnings” of technology – its conception, invention, and initial adoption. The use of technology after this formative period is generally not discussed by these scholars. Social constructivists have been criticized for not establishing a solid ethical framework for their scholarship from which to advocate. While the concerns of the working class and downtrodden often motivate traditional Marxist scholars, social constructionists are criticized as following a

⁴ Several scholars have explicitly applied SCOT theories to sound and music. Some prime examples are of this thinking are Bijsterveld’s *Mechanical Sound: Technology, Culture, and Public Problems of Noise in the Twentieth Century* (2008) and Thompson’s *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America 1900-1933* (2004). Pinch also applied a SCOT theoretical perspective in his work on the development of the Moog synthesizer (Pinch and Trocco 2002).

“hollow” or sanitized academic philosophy with little concern for the effects of the technologies they study on human society (Winner 1993). The consequences of technology have largely been left to social theorists and scholars for whom technology is just one factor influencing social behavior and culture.

The modern field of ethnomusicology was founded on the notion that music is socially and culturally shaped. It is, therefore, understandable that most contemporary scholars’ work more easily fits with a social constructionist perspective rather than a technologically deterministic one. However, there are some examples of the latter. Lysloff and Gay note that earlier comparative musicologists such as Hornbostel (1933) and Wachsmann (1961) saw certain musical technologies as indicative of a society’s cultural development, technologies that would inevitably advance as the group continued to socially evolve (Lysloff and Gay 2003:19). For comparative musicologists, musical change was a result of “discoveries and inventions in the realm of sound, and the diffusion of styles brought about by the contact of different cultures” (Blacking 1977:9). Later, Alan Lomax attempted to show the correspondence of a song’s style and, among other things, a society’s “political level” (which may be considered a technology of knowledge or social control), or how a culture’s dance style could be linked to physical movements necessary for labor which is itself technologically enabled or determined. Ultimately, Lomax conceded the “social base” of musical style (Lomax 1968). However, his method of analysis was essentially deterministic; music was a *reflection* of a culture’s ethos. These examples demonstrate something like SCOT in reverse. Rather than seeking to identify the social conditions that give rise to the innovation of technologies, they are more concerned with the aftereffects of technological development. They attempt to understand what a society’s artifacts or system of governance can tell us about their musical-cultural system.

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Several more contemporary scholars demonstrate a technologically determinist perspective in their work. In *Recorded Music: Performance Culture and Technology*, James Barrett shows how recording technologies such as multi-track recording, overdubbing, and other sound manipulations have influenced jazz style, enabling the radical sound of Miles Davis's *Bitches Brew*, and other influential jazz albums (Barrett 2010:89-106). Despite explicitly denying his work is technologically determinist, Mark Katz consistently demonstrates the role of technology in producing conditions that materially determine a music's production and reception. In *Capturing Sound: How Technology Has Changed Music*, Katz attempts to soften his technological determinism by declaring that "it is not the technology but the *relationship* between the technology and its users that determines the impact of recording" (Katz 2010:3). This statement follows an example describing how Igor Stravinsky explicitly composed *Sérénade en LA pour Piano* (1925) so it could fit the duration limits of ten-inch, 78rpm records. In this example, the *relationship* between technology and user, or the impact Stravinsky's composition, is important but largely irrelevant. This is not to say that social relationships or human agency are absent or inconsequential to the story. Rather, this is a clear example of how the technology of the 1920s recording industry *literally* determined the length and structure of a piece of music; if magnetic tape had been invented there would have been need for record executives to request the *Sérénade*'s movements be limited to three minutes in length. However, Katz's semantic moves away from language such as "determine," towards ones such as "influence," "relationship" or "impact," does put some distance between his work and that of hard technological determinists by acknowledging that individuals and society affect how technology interfaces with our lives and music.

Another similar example of technology literally shaping the form of musical expression can be seen in the three-minute recording limit imposed on early phonograph recordings.⁵ The early recordings of Hindustani classical music forced performers to severely truncate their renditions of classical rāgs. The often hours-long format of traditional Hindustani performances was compressed down into three to four minute chunks so as to fit on a single side of a 78 rpm phonograph disc. Famous examples of this can be heard in the first recording of Hindustani classical music in India made in 1902, of the singer Gauhar Jaan and her rendition of rāg Jogiya, and other early recordings of famous artists such as Jankeebai, Mustaribai, Fakre Alam Quawal, and Imdad Khan, the first sitarist ever to be recorded are similarly technologically determined.⁶

The lack of solidly technologically deterministic scholarship, or a softening⁷ of theoretical positions by some, may lead one to believe that technological determinism is an outdated theory or one that lacks real explanatory power. However, it is obvious that, to at least a certain extent, technology can determine the course of human action. The story of Stravinsky's *Sérénade* above is just one of many similar incidents. Piano technology and tuning offer another example of sound being technologically determined. While the instrument was designed, adopted, and flourished as part of a specific Western, upper class sociocultural matrix, the piano also undeniably determined the sound of a vast quantity of music throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Before the standardization of the piano, heated debates raged among musicians and composers regarding equal temperament, well temperament, just intonation, and the

⁵ In his 1977 dissertation, A. J. Racy explores the limitations on musical expression imposed by technology in the early years of the Egyptian recording industry. See Racy 1977.

⁶ See Joshi 1988. The three to four minute recording limit lasted until the invention of the LP (long play) record in 1948, but its lingering effects can be heard in the (now) virtual standardization of popular songs' approximately three minute duration "limit."

⁷ Robert Heilbroner's well-known essay "Do Machines Make History" (1967) explores the processes of "hard" technological determinism throughout history. He later proposes a "soft" technological determinism that is more a "heuristic for interpreting capitalist economic history" (Bimber 1994:84) or one that allows for a greater degree of social/cultural influence on the operations of technology throughout history (Heilbroner 1994).

“naturalness” of any tuning system. While the piano did not necessarily settle these debates, its standardization and widespread adoption effectively restricted the sound of Western music by only offering a select tonality to a vast majority of players and composers.⁸ This normalization also provided a foundation for musicians and composers to push against. For example, the affective power of “blue notes” in jazz and the blues is only made possible by pushing or pulling away from such a technologically enforced standard.

In short, hard technological determinism has been largely abandoned as a productive paradigm in contemporary scholarly literature, despite its continuing life in popular media. This is partly a reaction against grand or totalizing paradigms fueled by the postmodern trend in academia and partly due to a reasonable suspicion towards any process that supposedly operates according to natural “laws” outside of social influence. However, I argue that there is a type of technological determinism at work in the daily lives of my research participants (and I believe in all of human society). It is not somehow isolated from human action; it is ultimately motivated by human decision, preference, and even fashion. Yet there are clear instances where technology has directly influenced the ways individuals experience their culture, and how this culture is transmitted from generation to generation. Technology is sculpting the contour of human relationships, modifying behavior, and changing how parents and children interact. Specific to my research on child-directed music, I found certain technologies are beginning to shape lullaby practice, changing how parents interact physically and emotionally with their children, altering how songs are incorporated into memory, and establishing a rough trajectory for future actions. I

⁸ This is not to say there have not been alterations to piano tuning, experiments with alternate tempering, or that the piano is the source of equal temperament. Rather, for a large proportion of pianists, composers, and singer-songwriters who use the piano as a compositional aid, the standardized tuning could be seen as some type of restriction, albeit one that can be circumvented if desired. While the feasibility of harmonic modulation generally motivated arguments for the adoption of equal temperament, the piano (and other instruments) helped reinforce something like a tonal habitus for a large portion of Western musicians once these debates had been “settled.” In this light, the continued dominance of equal temperament has been, in part, technologically determined – a technologically reinforced habitus that is part of a tonal knowledge system.

will now highlight several technologies that are sculpting lullaby practice in urban India and may over time “determine” or strongly influence how the music and its attendant cultural values are transmitted and reproduced.

Lullabies, Technology, and Transmission: A Cause for Concern?

When asked questions regarding technology in general, my research participants gave thoughtful responses about the benefits and drawbacks of new technology in contemporary Indian society. The benefits of technological advancement and a growing economy are obvious to anyone living in one of India’s expanding cities: cheap and reliable cell phone service, a dizzying array of television channels, greater access to information, social networking, entertainment on the internet, better access to air conditioning, improving medical care, and generally improving city services (water, electricity, and sewer) were all mentioned as recent, beneficial improvements. When I asked about technology, children, and the family specifically, most of my research participants expressed concern about the detrimental effects of technology. Some believed technology made children less social and more isolated, even while acknowledging technology’s facilitation of communication. Some participants were concerned that excessive computer time was causing their adolescent children to become less socially interactive, but were simultaneously astonished by how even young children today seem comparatively much more aware and knowledgeable about the world.

During two interviews with Arpita Chatterjee, the themes of technology, cultural change, and lullaby practice were at the forefront of our conversation. Her comments capture how many of my research participants felt about technology and change taking place in India today.

Chatterjee is a vocalist of the *Agra gharana*, former head of the Academic Research Department

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at the ITC Sangeet Research Academy, a radio and television performer, founder of a school music appreciation program in Kolkata, a music teacher, mother, and grandmother.



Figure 3.1: A group interview facilitated by Arpita Chatterjee (second from left). Kolkata, April 12, 2012.

In our interviews, she repeatedly expressed concern over developments in Bengali society affecting children and childrearing, and the dramatic changes taking place throughout India due to increased use of technology for entertainment. While television may have been a boon to performing artists in the short term, Chatterjee felt it had a “long term negative impact” on people’s creativity and intellect. In my final interview with her, Chatterjee succinctly articulated her concerns about technology, the family, and human versus mediated interactions.

In Bengal today, young children are not half as aware of culture as they were 50 years ago...children are much more focused on doing things that are achievements.... Apparently leisure activities, which have very long term positive influences, are not so popular now. Music is one of them. I don’t know where we are heading because I don’t think there can be a replacement to human touch. The point about the lullaby is that it had an entire culture where the mother or the grandmother was with the child, so there was a

very human involvement with the entire process of growing up. Now if you are going to use television, or a CD, what are you replacing it with? Where is the feeling? Where is the bonding? ...*Filmi* lullabies are popular because they are easy; you just go and switch them on. The lullaby is a vehicle by which you can see the attitudes of an entire generation...Urban India has lost its connections to its roots. (Chatterjee 2012)

Chatterjee is concerned not just about an increased use of technology for entertainment, but also about the corresponding lack of human interaction, of feeling and bonding, that accompanies this shift in technological dependence. Most of my research participants expressed similar concerns, even if they felt resigned to the inevitability of both these trends. Chatterjee took pains to point out that the decline in personal interactions between caretaker and child were developments not limited to lullaby practice, but were befalling society in general, developments that signal a shift in Indian culture generally.

Another research participant, Aditi Sircar, a documentary film-maker living in Kolkata, expressed equal ambivalence towards India's changing technological landscape, particularly in regard to pervasive media technologies. During our interviews, she repeatedly brought up the problems of growing peer pressure to conform to materialistic ideals broadcast on television and film. Sircar expressed consternation about the increasing pace of modern urban living, and how increasing family nuclearization was limiting a child's potential interactions with their extended family. Sircar recognized some of the benefits of a modern consumer economy, but was equally concerned about the increase of "want" in society. In her words, "People might not have money to eat, but they have a refrigerator, a television is a must. Previously people didn't want all this, they didn't know. The media is damaging [our] lifestyle" (Sircar 2012).



Figure 3.2: An interview and performance facilitated by Aditi Sircar (second from right). Kolkata, April 14, 2012.

Sentiments such as those held by Sircar and Chatterjee were common with a majority of my research participants. Given the drastic change urban India has experienced over the last decade, it might be natural to assume an ambivalent attitude towards some changes and even glorify the past as simple or romantic. However, both Chatterjee and Sircar were quick to point out how they had made their living in the new media culture, one on radio and television and the other in documentary film making. Their work has given them intimate insight into how media technology is influencing Indian society. They pointed out that technology itself was not inherently the problem; rather, it is how technology fundamentally alters the dynamics of interpersonal relationships that gives them cause for concern.

Thus far, I have discussed how lullabies are transmitted through practice, how musical knowledge and attendant cultural knowledge is incorporated into memory by repeated person-to-person interaction, and how the incorporated knowledge is reinforced during childhood and is

reproduced in adulthood. I then covered two competing approaches to understanding the role of technology in society (technological determinism and social constructivism or SCOT), and have detailed the concerns of several of my research participants about technology and its negative effects on Indian society and interpersonal relationships. What does this all mean? I contend that the technologies surrounding lullaby singing in contemporary metropolitan India have the potential to interrupt the transmission of musical and cultural knowledge by changing the way knowledge is encoded in memory during infancy.

It is well established that infants learn through imitation and repetition, and that human acts (including facial cues, touch, and singing) are the starting point of social cognition (Meltzoff 2002). All songs, including lullabies, carry coded social values, musical knowledge, and linguistic patterns that are engrained into infant minds by repetition and practiced through imitation as the child grows older. Scholars suggest that imitation gives rise to pleasure and is one of the ways children and adults build empathic relationships with each other (Leman 2007). The imitative, intimate, empathic experiences of lullaby singing are a full sensory experience. When singing a lullaby to a child, a caretaker will sometimes pat the child's back or head, bounce them on their knees, or hold them in their arms. The sum of these (and other) actions is *embodied* just as much as it is held in the mind. When a lullaby is sung by a caretaker to a child, the totality of the experience is incorporated into memory. This knowledge is incarnated by the child creating a type of habitus uniquely bound with lullaby practice.

Albeit in very different contexts, ethnomusicologist A. J. Racy finds similar, multiple processes at work with his research on *ṭarab*. Racy writes that “ecstatic evocation is not confined to a single structural principle or grand design, but rather realized through a variety of affective tools and maneuvers” (2003:219). While I am not suggesting that the lullaby experience is

directly akin to musical ecstasy, it is a musical-emotional experience which relies on a many “affective tools and maneuvers.” The repetitive singing of soft melodies often imbued by a caregiver with emotional pathos, sung in intimate physical closeness with accompanying physical stimuli such as a caregiver bouncing the child, patting their back, or stroking their head, are intuitively combined to create an affective musical-emotional experience. The summation of physical, musical, and emotional experiences are at the core of the affective, embodied memories which lullaby practices engender.

In contrast, the use of media technologies supplementing or supplanting in-person lullaby singing do not enable the same type of embodiment, and thus the knowledge created by or reproduced during the lullaby experience is encoded differently in child’s memory. An infant does not have the same motivation to imitate a recording, and receives none of the rewards (pleasure and empathic social communication) that they would receive when a human caregiver is singing. When a song is played on a CD, cassette, radio, or cellphone,⁹ the child experiences a disincarnated music, and the entire character of lullaby practice is affected. The embodied experiences that accompany in-person lullaby singing are absent. Some of my research participants did describe playing a song on CD, cassette or telephone, while simultaneously holding, rocking, patting, and cooing to their children. This combination of embodying practice and technological reproduction of music complicates the picture somewhat. However, I believe that even this modified lullaby practice still fundamentally changes the way lullabies and their attendant knowledge is encoded in memory, but further research is needed to better understand this practice specifically. However, all of my research participants who had strong memories of lullabies from their childhood recalled experiences when a parent or caregiver was actually

⁹ Although not necessarily “smartphones,” most cellphones in India have the capacity to “stream” music through an inexpensive pay-per-listen service (called “CallerTunes” or mobile download) offered by nearly all the country’s cellular telephone companies.

singing. Not a single participant mentioned having the same deeply affective memories associated with songs *only* heard as recordings.

Even in the cases where songs made famous by Bollywood films or other popular tunes from their childhood stood out as somehow special, my research participants always recalled the instances in which a parent, grandparent, aunt, or uncle was singing to them. Even in the cases where recorded song was blended with caregiver interaction, it seems the “human element” is paramount in the transmission and reproduction of affective, embodied, cultural and musical knowledge. Despite this decidedly negative interpretation of the use of media technologies and lullabies, the picture may not be so bleak. Recordings can help preserve lullabies for future use as media products in themselves, or can be “rediscovered” and used to teach individuals to sing these songs once again.

Many scholars have shown interest in the effects of recording on tradition and the process of transmission. “Recorded transmission,” an idea discussed by Bruno Nettl (2005), aptly describes how many contemporary urban Indian lullabies were “relearned” by my research participants. Lullabies such as “So ja rajkumari” made popular in the 1940s remain so today because of the quality of the original performance and the accessibility of the recordings. This is just one song of a dozen or so Bollywood lullabies that were regularly sung by my Hindi-speaking research participants. While many of my research participants’ parents sang these film lullabies, the ubiquity of the recorded versions helped solidify the melodies and lyrics in my research participants’ memory; rather than existing as fragments of a song recalled from their childhood, my research participants could continually re-experience the recorded lullaby and more easily commit the entire song to memory.

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However, my research suggests that caregivers are increasingly using recordings in place of live singing. Even though recorded media may preserve a lullaby for future generations, if that song is not then learned by a parent and reproduced for the child the transmission of embodied knowledge is altered. John Blacking touches on a similar problem in his discussion of musical change. He writes that

the laws of human nature lay down that man can only become human through association with fellowman...In so far as music-making is a technique of the body (cf. M. Mauss 1936) that by repetition can halt change in a predictable way and transcend time and place, *but only so long as its makers are involved and experiencing it, it has special expressive power that routine technological processes lack* [emphasis added]. (Blacking 1977:6)

The involvement of music makers, in this case caregivers, singing to children endow lullabies with a “special expressive power” that helps create powerful memories and emotional associations with the lullaby. Blacking also writes that “to qualify as musical change, the phenomena described must constitute a change in the structure of the musical system, not simply a change within the system” (Blacking 1977:17). The changes I have been detailing are precisely changes in the “structure of the musical system,” insofar that the “system” includes the reproduction and transmission of the song between generations. The method of transmission, the way in which musical, cultural, and personal memories are encoded, and the behavior of caregivers towards children are all being altered by technology and the changing socio-cultural patterns of a modernizing, urbanizing India.

The revelation that technology is increasingly altering the patterns of modern life is news to none. However, I agree with most of my research participants that this development needs to be examined carefully. In the discussion above, I have shown how changes in musical performance, personal interaction, and the encoding and transmission of knowledge are being influenced by technology. Technology changes the way lullabies are perceived, practiced, and

reproduced, but not in a strictly deterministic way. The widespread adoption of cellphones has enabled virtually anyone to have mobile access to music. Newer architectural styles are literally and figuratively changing the shape of contemporary Indian families. International trade and the globalized flow of goods and information enables greater use of “technologies of sleep” such as infant swings with soothing musical recordings – made in China, using European-American lullabies, and marketed to middle and upper class Indian parents with a message that these commodities signify wealth and modernity. Yet, the picture is not always uniform. Many shops are also selling Indian folk and classical lullaby recordings, simultaneously preserving a musical tradition and inevitably canonizing certain recordings and songs above others. Technology both helps preserve a musical practice but can also reduce the amount of time caregivers and children interact, potentially degrading the possibility of deeper affective memories to be encoded by the body and mind, which is made possible by close human interaction.

The Influence of Technology: Urbanization, Architecture, and Technologies of Sleep

India’s megacities are undergoing urban development that is qualitatively different from the development of previous decades. Urbanization in Delhi, Mumbai, and Kolkata has a distinctively modern or even hypermodern and international flavor. Large high-rises and steel and glass towers are replacing older style, lower slung, houses and apartments (see Figure 3.1 and 3.2). In these cities, the population is quickly increasing and, due to the design of current and projected developments, population density is expected to follow suit. Urban development has profound influence over the flow of personal interactions within the community, the functions of public space, and more importantly for this study, the way the space of the home influences familial interaction. These “technologies” of physical urbanization are both deterministic and socially shaped. They influence action and are an expression of shifting socio-cultural values.

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Other technologies such as musical infant swings, CD, cassette, and mp3 recordings, cellphones, also influence behavior and lullaby practice. In this section, I draw on several examples to illustrate how these technologies are changing the way lullabies are practiced in contemporary, middle and upper class, urban Indian families.



Figure 3.3: Older style shops and homes in Old Delhi, just outside the Jama Masjid.

Physical urbanization and its influences on family dynamics were not topics I initially considered when beginning my fieldwork. However, an off-hand remark during an informal conversation with friends in Delhi about the parenting habits of Indians and Americans with young children made me rethink the issue. During my fieldwork, my wife, infant daughter, and I attended several musical play groups for parents with young children (discussed in chapter 2). Some groups were organized by expats whose spouses worked at the various foreign embassies in Delhi, while others were more neighborhood-based. At one group I was talking with an Indian couple who lived one of Delhi's more exclusive neighborhoods, and had spent considerable time

living abroad. I mentioned how I usually helped my daughter fall sleep every night, holding her while gently bouncing her on a large exercise ball and singing to her. Our friends remarked that they were glad to live in a flat with enough space so that their son could have his own room in which to sleep. Their child had slept in a separate room every night since he was around four months old. This came as quite a shock to me because my wife and I were so used to our daughter sleeping between us in bed. Equally revealing was that, in all of my interviews up until that point, every parent had mentioned that they kept their infant children in the same room to sleep, and most often slept in the same bed until the children were several years old. Our friends went on to say that, “We think it’s better for our son, and certainly better for us, that he sleeps by himself.” Undoubtedly bleary-eyed after a usual night of half-sleep, I was jealous of how refreshed our friends seemed and looked forward to the day our daughter would finally sleep in her own bed through the night (two-and-a-half years later, this is still an intermittent dream). It was only after this conversation that I began to think about changing cultural practices in relation to physical space and the raising of children.

In the previous chapter, I briefly discussed how increasing family nuclearization is influencing housing design for urban Indians, and according that “separation and aloneness are to be avoided at all costs in Indian family relationships” (Roland 1988:232).¹⁰ However, in today’s Indian megacities, new architectural design and urban development are creating spaces that determine public and private spaces, spaces that, by their design, physically regulate the privacy and interactions of individuals and families. This has bearing on the practice of lullabies by both encouraging and enabling certain types of social interaction, movement, and orientations to the

¹⁰ This traditional aversion of aloneness in India and a contrasting desire for privacy in the US was brought up by my sitar teacher Shujaat Khan during a sitar lesson and one of our conversations on the differences between Indian and American cultures. He mocked the idea of “private” music lessons in the West after I mentioned I would need to practice a newly taught technique at home before I could play it again. Instead, he had me sit with him and exhaustively work out the musical phrase over the course of fifteen minutes.

exterior world. Conversely, architecture can limit social interactions. Home design has been shown to influence the dynamics of family interaction. In a study of Rajasthani courtyard homes or *havelis*, anthropologist Inga Bryden details the tensions between inner and outer space, gendered spaces in the home, and adaptations modern Indian families make to the space of the older style *haveli*. Bryden's primary aim is to show how the Hindu philosophical and architectural principle of *vastu vidya*, or science of construction, still influence modern home design, albeit in different and diminished ways than in the past. She concludes that "the *haveli* can be viewed as a kind of articulating structure, delineating the interaction of the inhabitants with the space of their home and with what lies beyond it" (Bryden 2004:390). In essence, *haveli* design influences perceptions of inner and outer, public and private space, and of the spaces in-between.

Contemporary construction in urban India, for the most part, does not incorporate traditional *vastu vidya* principles, and courtyard style housing is a rarity in modern construction.¹¹ Mumbai and other Indian cities are being redeveloped according to hyper-modern global aesthetics. This aesthetic transformation is impacting people across the socio-economic spectrum. Gleaming steel-and-glass apartment and office buildings fashionably house India's middle and upper class elite, but tenement (*chawl*) and squatter settlements (*jhuggi-jhopri*) are also being replaced by high rise complexes that express Western and global aesthetics of space. Chalana finds even though the "rehabilitation" of *chawl* and *jhuggi* neighborhoods may offer residents better access to services, "the drastic rearrangement of life in a vertical high-rise has great potential to lead to social isolation and the breakdown of community and economic networks...often the residents are unable or unwilling to organize their lives in vertical urban

¹¹ Even though contemporary housing design is not incorporating courtyards or hybrid public-private spaces, many Indians still incorporate *vastu vidya* principles in the layout or internal organizing of their homes. Bryden notes that there are many television commercials advertising *vastu vidya* consulting (2004:35).

forms with partitioned internal spaces, and feel uncomfortable in those spaces” (Chalana 2010:33). The partitioning of space directs the flow of familial interaction, and the family members’ relationship to the outside world. Unlike the inside, outside, and in-between flow engendered by the courtyard and haveli style housing, many recently constructed and slated future developments are partitioning social spaces into smaller and smaller units that create a sense of physical separation and psychological aloneness, a state seen as anathema to traditional Indian family relationships. Changing housing styles may also influence associations made in lullabies such as “Pawan more angna mein” (The wind in the courtyard), making these songs’ lyric allusions to physical features of a home referents to an historical past and not contemporary lived reality.

The new hypermodern sense of design is evident in most large Indian cities. In Delhi, this process is largely taking place to the south of the city core, in suburbs such as Gurgaon (see Figure 3.4). In Kolkata, most of the new development is taking place on the outskirts of the city to the east, leaving the beautifully dilapidated, stylistically colonial core intact. The



Figure 3.4: Newer, multistory glass and steel construction being built in Gurgaon, Haryana. Image courtesy of the Free State Initiative (<http://freestateinitiative.org/gurgaon-the-singapore-of-india>).

developments in Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and elsewhere are marketed to overseas Indian communities (NRIs, or “non-resident Indians”) and the local elite with a “self-consciously global aesthetic” that is emblematic of the “‘new India’ heralded by much of the dominant political and cultural discourse” (Bose 2007:113). On the one hand, Indians on the lower rung of the socio-economic ladder are having a globalized, modern aesthetic of space and privacy effectively forced on them by government and private urban developments. On the other hand, developers and marketers of more expensive housing and office developments are responding to the perceived desires of NRIs and other wealthy elites that value a global, hypermodern aesthetic.

In light of the newer architectural and aesthetic developments occurring in India’s megacities, the question thus becomes what relationship does lullaby practice have with the reorganization of physical (and psychological) space? I contend that these changing aesthetics both accompany and precede a shift in the way families live together and interact with one another. The large majority of young children across the world sleep alongside their mother; however, this trend is noticeably less common in the US and Europe (Morelli, Rogoff, Oppenheim, and Goldsmith 1992). The case illustrated earlier, of friends feeling it was better for their baby and themselves to sleep in separate rooms, is an example of the shifting beliefs surrounding space and child rearing in India. Rather than having infants sleep in the parents’ room, children are moved to a separate space. Rather than being in the direct proximity to the parents during the night, a time when the child might need to be bounced or sung back to sleep, they are removed from the immediate vicinity. I believe this type of change marks the shift away from a customary practice of parents and children sleeping in the same room (and often the same bed) to a more westernized aesthetic practice emphasizing notions of individual space. Of course, placing a child in a separate room requires there be a separate room in the home available

for such use. For lower-income urban Indians, this is not generally a reality. Yet, the trend in new housing construction I observed in places like Delhi's suburb of Gurgaon, developments to the east of Kolkata's core, and research by urban development scholars such as Chalana, suggests that, India's urbanites will be increasingly living in houses with multiple internal partitions. Vertical housing and a shrinking housing footprint are becoming increasingly necessary to cope with the influx of migrants into India's megacities, marking a departure from previous modes of living.

Having a child sleep independently also necessitates a separate bed or cradle, and might include other technologies such as a mechanically driven baby swing and music player. These types of furnishings also represent a shift in cultural aesthetic related to the rise of India's new middle class. Following economic liberalization in the 1980s and 90s, the "new" Indian middle class¹² began to embody a "cultural standard associated with a globalising Indian nation. The consumption of commodities such as cell-phones, colour televisions, washing machines, and cars form some of the status markers that distinguish this group" (Fernandes 2004:2418). I would add infant swings, CDs, books, and toys for a child's intellectual stimulation and English-language development (products similar to the "Baby Einstein" family of merchandise), and new types of child music and movement classes to this list of "distinguishing" commodities. These technologies can be seen as markers of the new middle class aesthetic, and a desire by parents to showcase their globalized awareness of trends in child development. Just as the changing organization of physical space influences a family's internal relations, recorded music, and

¹² The "newness" of the new Indian middle is related more to the "discursive process of production of an image of the Indian middle class rather than the entry of a new social group to this class" (Fernandes 2004:2418). The new middle class draws from established urban middle classes, but produces a "new" image for itself through the consumption of consumer commodities and association with westernized aesthetics.

technology such as automatic baby swings also pattern the way parents and caregivers interact with children.

Only a small number of my research participants mentioned using mechanical baby swings with their children. I believe this is largely due to the age of my research participants (most over 30), and because these technologies were not widely available in India before the economic reforms of the 1980s and 90s. Some participants, particularly those brought up in more rural locations, recalled using cloth baby swing hung from a ceiling hook with their children, or having been swung in these types of manually operated swings themselves. Yet, my research participants in Kolkata noted that this type of cloth swing was disappearing due to the lack of space in modern housing. The cloth or manual swing requires a caregiver or family member to be close by to keep the swing moving, either by hand or by gently tugging a string tied to the swing. Many of the most iconic Hindi film lullabies are set to scenes of mothers rocking their children to sleep in these types of manually operated swings.¹³ The technologically “enforced” routine of rocking a child in a swing provides the space for the caregiver to sing lullabies or gently hum to help the baby to sleep. Contrastingly, newer mechanical swings are not as conducive to lullaby singing. They do not require constant attention or physical closeness to operate, and many now come with prerecorded lullabies built into the mechanism.

Unlike homemade cloth, the mechanically driven baby swings now for sale alongside CDs of English-language lullabies and storybooks in the higher-end malls and retail shops around Delhi are a sign of the changing aesthetics of urban India. Recently, a research participant of mine in Delhi posted a video online of her infant son swinging contentedly in a yellow and blue mechanical baby swing as it chimed out “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star.” These types of

¹³ For centuries, the image and associated swaying motion of the swing has been associated with specific rāgs in the Hindustani tradition. For example, in the medieval Indian miniature painting tradition known as *ragamala* in which various musical attributes of rāgs are visually depicted, the swing is the defining icon associated with rāg Hindol.

mechanical swings that play music can be seen as both a marker economic success and of globalized aesthetics: they are (for now) generally available in shops catering to wealthier clientele and are marketed as objects that modern, busy parents need. Mechanically driven swings or bouncy chairs simultaneously provide increased freedom for caregivers so that they can carry on with work without the persistent need to keep the swing in motion, but may reduce the amount of social interaction between child and caregiver. Advertisements for baby swings and bouncy chairs stress freedom for the parents and distractions for the babies in proclamations such as “Most babies get bored of lying on the bed and looking at the ceiling. Make your little one’s day more interesting by putting them in this Chicco Jolie Bouncer” and “Keeping your baby engaged and comfortable while you are busy with various other tasks is quite a tedious task. Get your little one this Bright Starts Blue Pebbles Bouncer. This bouncer has been designed to ensure your baby is involved in fun activities and at the same time is at ease.”¹⁴

Mechanically driven swings that have recorded music functions obviate the need for caregivers to sing or provide extra distraction for a drowsy child. The music played by these swings is generally a generic, globalized fare such as “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” to “Mary Had a Little Lamb.” During my fieldwork I was unable to find mechanical swings with audio for sale in Delhi that played anything *but* Euro-American lullabies. Mechanical swings are just one of many technologies that help support the childcare needs of families as the Indian family structure becomes increasingly nuclear and fewer people are available to take care of “mundane” tasks such as keeping a cloth swing in motion. Technologies like cellphones, swings, and washing machines are certainly useful, time-saving, and convenient technologies. They can also be understood as expressions of a globalized or Western oriented, middle class, consumerist

¹⁴ Quotations taken from Flipkart.com advertisements, a recently established online “megastore” in India. This type of advertising language was common in brick-and-mortar stores I visited in Delhi and Kolkata as well.

aesthetic. In the case of certain mechanical baby swings, this aesthetic is audibly broadcast in the form of softly chiming Euro-American lullabies.

All of these technologies (urbanization and architectural design, infant swings, and recorded lullabies) pattern human behavior. The patterns of how a child is held or placed in a swing, what music is sung or played for them, where in the house a child is placed to rest, and how space shapes a family's social interaction are directly influenced by the use of technology. It is not the case that this technology strictly determines action – a caregiver can still sing to a child in a mechanical swing, and the internal organization of a home does not necessarily force a family to socialize in one particular way. However, these technologies strongly pattern human behavior by facilitating certain actions, and making others more difficult or unnecessary. A mechanical baby swing with recorded lullabies can be used as a substitute for in-person lullaby singing. The same is true for recorded lullabies on CD or cellphone. Although CDs or other recorded media will not *always* substitute for in-person singing (and a caregiver is free to sing along with a recording), recordings can, and do, substitute for the human voice, consequently changing how children and caregivers interact. Some scholars view technologies as “subsets of habitus” (Sterne 2003:370) that organize physical movement, and influence the current of social interaction. According to this perspective, “technologies are just particularly visible sets of crystallized subsets of practices, positions, and dispositions in the habitus” (Sterne 2003:386). That is, technology is not particularly special itself, but is part of the overall operation of habitus. This integration of a social constructivist perspective with practice theory relies on an understanding that technology is akin to habitus in that it is “forgotten as history,” and therefore unconsciously influencing behavior. I do not disagree with this approach, and I accept the assertion that technology is not ontologically special or rigidly deterministic of human behavior.

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However, technologies influence social and musical practices profoundly and, like habitus, they are “forgotten” yet guide or limit action in a way as to be nearly deterministic, without the rigidity ascribed by hard technological determinists. Acknowledging the extent to which technology is so deeply embedded in social practice as to be forgotten and yet, like other aspects of habitus, can be consciously recognized and therefore changed, charts a useful path between the extremes of technological determinism and the social construction of technology through the use of Bourdieu’s logic of practice.

Technology not only patterns human behavior, it reflects changing socio-cultural values and aesthetics. Technology influences lullaby singing by changing the practice from a performative human action to a passively mediated experience. The most important aspect of this shift is the lessening of interpersonal contact. The use of technology replaces the empathetic, intimate human interactions that take place when a caregiver sings to a child, with a hybrid human-technological practice. As the manner in which the music experienced by the child changes, so changes the entire relationship between caregiver and child. This experience has been shown to be vitally important for the development of language, empathy, socialization, and a variety of other cultural and social skills, experiences that are increasingly being deemed essential for normal development by a number of scientific studies (e.g. Gerry, Unrau, and Trainor 2012).

Socio-cultural Values Reproduced in Song

Apart from personal meanings and memories cemented during lullaby singing and the entire process of putting a child to sleep, lullabies express a variety of socio-cultural and religious values in their text and are selected by caregivers in an effort to impart these values to their children. Many of my research participants mentioned that these historical, ethical,

religious, and moral dimensions to lullaby songs were part of their motivation to continue singing to their children. They felt that singing lullabies was an effective way to transmit values and beliefs to their children without having to directly lecture their children. In this section, I detail some of the socio-cultural values present in different song texts that served as parables for a child's right action or appropriate behavior.

In the previous chapter, I examined how Assamese lullabies (*nisukoni geet*) such as “Amare moina” help create a distinct sense of place through allusions to regional landscapes and local flora such as the bogori tree. By singing about an idealized Assamese landscape, songs such as “Amare moina” help establish a sense of what is familiar, natural, or common. The performance of these songs helps establish a sense of “Assamese-ness” for the songs’ performers and listeners. “Amare moina” is also used to help inculcate the values of patience and bravery, and to convey a sense of safety to the child. In addition to “Amare moina,” many other lullabies and stories from the *Burhi Aai'r Xaadhu* or “Grandmother’s Tales” promote the virtue of patience or the appropriateness of action at a certain times.¹⁵ In later verses, my research participant recalled that the singer tells the child to be brave and that wolf in the forest will bring them no harm. I have been unable to find any documentation on these later verses, and my research participant was unable to recall their exact wording, but she made it clear that “Amare moina” was a parable both about patience and bravery.

This same research participant also recalled drifting off to sleep hearing her grandfather sing revolutionary songs from his days as a freedom fighter against the British colonial authority

¹⁵ My research participant mentioned another “Grandmother’s Tale” that concerned the appropriate time for harvesting the fruit of the *bogori* tree, such as only eating this fruit after the Saraswati Puja which is celebrated in January or February in parts of eastern India such as Orissa, Bihar, and Assam. If eaten before this time, the fruit is said to be injurious to one’s throat, but if eaten after, to be healthy for the body. Many of these children’s stories follow prescriptions set out in traditional medicine, generally in accordance with the homeopathic Ayurvedic tradition, but with some variability depending on regional beliefs and practices.

in Assam. Bishnu Rava *sangeet*, popular revolutionary tunes composed by the artist Bishnu Prasad Rava (1909-1969), explore themes such as the peasant uprisings against the colonial rulers in Assam, and the general socialist revolutionary spirit of Assamese nationalist freedom fighters. However, the importance for my research participant was not so much the content of the revolutionary songs, but that she felt they were emblematic her grandfather's moral character. She admired his strength and perseverance and sought to emulate these qualities as she led her in her life as an independent young woman in what she felt was the patriarchal society of Delhi, far from her home, family, and the more matriarchal culture of Assam.

The way my research participant integrated “Amare moina,” freedom fighter songs, and the memories of their performances into her worldview exemplifies how music accomplishes more than simply *convey* previously established cultural messages; lullaby performances help create, recreate, and transmit socio-cultural values between generations. As my research participant described, “when I shut my eyes even though I have been away from Assam, there are these specific tunes which come to me instantly. Even though I don't remember the songs the lyrics, I can hum the tune forever...It's there in my blood, the memory of remembering” (February 17, 2012). On one hand, this participant pinpoints the values of patience and bravery that are embedded in “Amare moina,” and recognized the independence and strength of character represented by her grandfather and his revolutionary songs. On the other hand, even though she had forgotten much of what was sung to her, the music, cultural values, and a sense of Assamese identity remain “in her blood.”

A second example of socio-cultural values conveyed in lullabies can be heard in “Chanda mama dur ke,” a popular lullaby made famous in the 1955 Hindi film *Vacchan* [9]. Chanda mama

dur ke.mp3].¹⁶ In the song, *Chanda mama*, or “uncle moon,” gives a child all manner of sweets to eat, from fried sweet breads soaked in sugar (*puaa*) to boiled sugary milk (*malai*), before playing hide-and-seek with the stars in the sky. The over indulgent figure of chanda mama relies on stereotypical beliefs regarding a child’s relationship to their maternal uncle,¹⁷ a relationship in which the uncle is expected to be protective, indulgent, and second only to the mother in terms of affection given to the child.¹⁸

The *chanda mama* figure is popular in a variety of children’s song and literature throughout India. While the 1955 *Vacchan* song version of “Chanda mama” is perhaps most iconic, the uncle moon “character” appears in a number of other forms. In the 1979 film *Kartavya*, the song “Chanda mama se pyara mera mama” (Uncle moon, from my dear uncle) represents both the happiness and love between an uncle and his niece, and later poignantly accompanies scenes depicting the child’s tragic death and funeral. Chanda mama has remained a standard trope in children’s song and stories, appearing in recent recordings such as *Lori: Mother’s Lullabies* (2010). Just as in numerous Euro-American lullabies and children’s stories, the moon is a common literary allusion; however, the uncle moon character figures much more prominently in North Indian songs, stories, and a variety of advertising for children’s products on television. Beginning in 1947 and publishing Indian mythological stories and cartoons in 13 languages, *Chandamama* is also the name of the longest running (although now seemingly defunct) children’s magazine in India (Ghosh 2012). All of these examples help reinforce the

¹⁶ I have heard from two sources that “Chanda mama” was a popular children’s rhyme before it was adopted as a song in the film *Vacchan*. I suspect many lullabies composed for films borrow their text or tune from earlier compositions. However, pinpointing the “true” origin of these songs/rhymes is, in most cases, exceedingly difficult.

¹⁷ *Chand* is the Hindi word for moon, and *mama* translates as mother’s brother, or maternal uncle.

¹⁸ The role or function of the maternal uncle relationship varies across Indian society. In some communities in South India for example, marriage between maternal uncle and niece was, until at least the 1960s, a preferably marriage arrangement, while in other communities this type of relationship is taboo (Krishnamoorthy and Audinarayana 2001). In other geographic regions, there are a variety of cultural expectations of maternal uncles, among them to perform specific roles in marriage, death, and other life-cycle ceremonies.

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associations between chanda mama and a protective, generous, and loving maternal uncle, it perhaps represents a mythological foil for the evil stepmother, another stereotypical figure that appears in mythologies across the world.

Many lullabies composed for films often present idealized domestic spaces in which men and women play out stereotypical roles such as the protective maternal uncle or the loving, suffering mother. In the 1952 Tamil film *Paraskathi* a recently widowed woman sings a lullaby to her child, expressing longing for the return of her brothers while simultaneously describing the stereotyped gift-giving maternal uncle as an essential part of an idealized “authentic” Tamil family. The widowed mother sings

You have three maternal uncles little boy
They will come to give you a good life
They'll come to kiss you on your cheeks fleshy like a mango
A milk-feeder made of precious stones
A cradle of emerald
Even a white-elephant for you to ride
Your uncle will offer as *stri-dhan*
With silver slate and a diamond pen,
Your uncles will come to put you in school to learn pure Tamil.
(Lakshmi 1995:311)

In this lullaby, several tropes common to lullabies composed for film or more “literary” lullabies, such as Rabindra *sangeet* or those composed by Tyagaraja, are expressed. Here, the maternal uncles bring gifts and the promise of a “pure” Tamil education, alluding to a better life ahead for the child. Similar to Tamil lullabies discussed in the previous chapter, this song reiterates the trope of celebrating a male child with expensive jewels and gifts fit for a prince, even as the mother, a widower, is financially and socially incapable of “properly” providing for her children and must look to her brothers to do so.

The above examples, from the patience, bravery and safety in “Amare moina,” to the idealized figure of chanda mama, to the adoration of male children and powerlessness of widows

in Indian society, are all examples of socio-cultural values embedded in the lullaby text and reanimated through performance. Apart from these more secular values, there are many examples of religious or spiritual values expressed in lullaby songs. Many of my research participants recalled spiritually oriented bhajans and Christian hymns being sung to them as children. These songs were so common that many participants rarely recalled which songs were sung specifically, only that their parents or grandparents sang or played recordings of these types of religious songs often.

Bhajans, devotional chants generally falling under the *bhakti-sangeet* category of performance, a personalized musical-devotional style of worship, were by far the most common type of “religious” song my research participants remembered from their childhood. Bhajans are sung by Hindus, Sikhs, and practitioners of various different spiritual faiths, and along with *qawwali*, and *kirtan* constitute the primary religious activity of South Asia (Henry 2005). Some bhajans have elaborate texts, and some are simple repetitions of the names of divine figures in Hinduism. Commonly, bhajans have simple, repetitive melodies and simpler “catchy” rhythms that broaden their appeal and accessibility (Ranade 2003). Capitalizing on their mass appeal, bhajans and their performances have also been used as a tool of political motivation and instrument of social division (Shultz 2013).

For my research participants, the content of the bhajans they recalled from their childhood was less essential than the sheer prevalence of their performance. It was memorable simply that they heard their parents or grandparents performing these devotional songs, or that recorded versions were played in their house. Songs about the baby deity Krishna are by far the most popular, which comes as no surprise, as Krishna is the most ubiquitous Hindu deity in contemporary India. An avatar of Vishnu, Krishna is the central figure in Vaishnavite Hinduism,

has been incorporated into Jain, Buddhist, Baha'i faiths. Krishna is also a prophet in Ahmadiyya Islam and is revered by many "New Age" spiritual movements. Lullabies about Krishna are particularly prevalent as the mythology of Krishna's childhood is well-developed and the topic of many television programs, illustrated comics, and oral and literary stories.

The Marathi lullaby sung to me by Pandit Vidyadhar Vyas is a prime example of how the figure of Krishna can be incorporated into pre-composed lullabies and improvised songs. The lyrics of "Bala jo jo re" are largely improvised and Vyas was fond of working his granddaughter's name into the song as he sang her to sleep. He also added lines such as "gule bushena deva ki nandana" or "gule bushena dashara tanandana" in reference to Krishna (*deva ki nandana*) or Ram (*dashara tanandana*). This type of improvisatory allusion to Hindu deities is, according to Vyas, still common, even as the tradition of singing these songs is disappearing. It was something Vyas's mother did when singing to him decades prior. These lines do not necessarily add any serious spiritual depth by themselves, but are important nonetheless. Much like how most of my research participants did not recall the exact bhajan or devotional song their parents used to sing, but did remember the songs were spiritual in nature, the improvised allusions to Krishna and Ram add a general tone of the sacred to the lullaby practice. This may be seen as a reflection and reproduction of the common belief in India that "Jahan bhi jao, khuda to sab jagah hai" or "everywhere you go, god is everywhere." Historically speaking, Robert Simon even notes that, "Traditional South Indian composers had no concept of music that was not religious" (Simon 1988-89:135), and the distinction between the sacred and secular, often quite sharp in Western music, is less defined in South Asian folk and classical music generally.

A small number of my Christian research participants (who accounted for approximately 15% of my total research population) recalled their parents singing or humming Christian hymns

as lullabies. However, more often these participants reported that popular Malayalam or Hindi film tunes made up their childhood lullaby repertoire. I interviewed only a few Muslim research participants during my fieldwork, a contrast to my previous visits to India when most of my time was spent with Muslim hereditary musicians in Delhi and Mumbai. Unfortunately, this meant that I collected no real data on how, or if, Muslim families may practice distinctly Islamic lullaby songs. Paula Richmond has written about the Tamil children's literary genre known as *pillaitamil*. Richmond elaborates on the poetic structure and religious themes of Islamic piety that constitute the genre (Richmond 1993). One section of the *pillaitamil* takes the form of a Tamil *thallattu* (lullaby) sung to the prophet Muhammad. The imagery in this *pillaitamil* section is strikingly similar to other lullabies sung to male children that are not explicitly Islamic in nature. The prophet's cradle is described as crafted from gold and jewels, or as a chariot flying through the star filled sky. The poem ends with repetition of the words "talelo," a nonsense word that concludes most Tamil lullaby verses (and functions much like "jo, jo" does in Marathi), which is said to invoke a sense of gentle swaying. The subject of Muslim lullabies and child-directed songs remains a topic ripe for future research.

In addition to lullabies that express and help inculcate more generalized socio-cultural and religious values, my research participants recalled several songs that relate the deeds and lives of historical figures such as Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, and the Marathi folk hero Shivaji. Songs concerning these figures are still sung in Maharashtra, although none of the Marathi research participants with whom I worked recalled these lullabies being sung to them personally; they did however know of their existence and had heard them being sung by others. Both Ambedkar and Shivaji remain important figures in Marathi historical consciousness, and songs relaying their accomplishments and importance to Marathi society are common.

Ambedkar was a political and economic reformer who played a central role in drafting of India's constitution following the end of British colonial rule. He is possibly best remembered as an opponent of the Hindu caste system, as an advocate for the Mahar "untouchable" caste (the caste to which he was born), and for his conversion to Buddhism which provided the impetus thousands of untouchables to follow in his lead. The Ambedkar lullaby was mentioned by music scholar Vidyadhar Vyas, and by several musicians whom I interviewed in Mumbai and in the Maharashtra city of Pune (an important site in Ambedkar's biography). These participants recalled the lullaby focused on the biography of Ambedkar, although none of my participants could remember the precise wording and only one could hum the melody. Linguist and Indian literature scholar Indira Junghare has transcribed the lyrics of an Ambedkar lullaby (palna in Marathi) in her article detailing Ambedkar's valorization through song. I can only assume the song recalled by my research participants is similar Junghare's transcription. In this song, Ambedkar's biography is detailed from his birth in 1891, his education in Bombay and the United States, and his struggles for the uplifting of the Mahar caste. The lullaby is formally composed and highly politicized, "quoting" Ambedkar with lines such as "I'll destroy the kingdom of rich merchants and priests. / Ending all oppression / I will raise the banner of equality" (Junghare 1988:107). However, it seems the only reason this song might be classified as a lullaby or palna, is due to the repetition of the characteristic Marathi palna phrase "Jo bala jo re" (Sleep baby sleep) after each verse, as it contains none of the other imagery common to more traditional lullabies.

One other example of a historical and politicized Marathi lullaby was mentioned by my research participants. Like the Ambedkar lullaby, this song is a valorized biographical tale of the Marathi warrior-emperor Shivaji, whose exploits battling the Mughal Empire and conquering a

sizable portion of South India are memorialized by various statues, military forts, and repeated reimaginings on film and television.¹⁹ Folk songs pertaining to Shivaji are more commonplace than those for Ambedkar. The most famous Shivaji lullaby was written by the poet Jhaverchand Kalidas Meghani, who based his composition on Marathi folk songs, a song that has become incorporated back into the folk song repertoire throughout Maharashtra. Like Ambedkar's lullaby, this song offers a romanticized account of Shivaji's life and deeds through verses such as "Sleep, my lad! / Sleep today to your heart's content! / Tomorrow black battle will rage / And no time will you get to sleep! / Sleep will not embrace Shivaji / Mother Jijibai rocks the baby" (Meghani and Gopalan 1972).

Both the Ambedkar and Shivaji lullabies were recognized as lullabies (palnas) by several Marathi research participants, even if they were not central to these participants' childhood musical experiences. There are no doubt other examples of lullabies focused on the biographies and exploits historical or political figures, even if these songs are only functional and do not fit into any formalized lullaby category. The Ambedkar and Shivaji examples are the only lullabies any of my research participants recalled that specifically dealt with historical biography. The Ambedkar lullaby follows a typical pattern of Marathi palnas in its inclusion of the phrase "bala jo jo re." In contrast, lacking any of the common lullaby tropes present in most Marathi lullabies the Shivaji "lullaby" seems to be so only in name, but may still function as such. Based on this limited evidence, I am inclined to conclude that overtly historical or politicized songs are not frequently sung as lullabies in the contemporary urban Indian context.²⁰ These songs were specifically composed to relate public history and historical knowledge, unlike some examples from this and the previous chapter which narrate more personalized values or familial

¹⁹ There have been at least 50 films made in India concerning Shivaji's life and exploits, in addition to innumerable television serials, live theater productions, children's cartoons, and printed material of all kinds.

²⁰ In other cultures, the teaching of history through lullabies is common. See McLean 1961.

relationships.²¹ Despite the popularity of the characters described in the lullabies, the songs are known by few and are peripheral to common practice.

Lullabies and Identity: Marking Boundaries and Performing Narrative

My fieldwork in the multicultural crush of Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, and smaller cities forced me to consider the question of identity differently than if I had situated my study in a more rural location, or with a more culturally homogenized group of people. At the same time, I grappled with how best to dissect the broader processes of cultural and musical change taking place in urban India. Concerning both of these issues, it became clear that, despite a general dearth of scholarship relating child-directed music and socio-cultural dynamics, lullabies and other child-directed songs play a vital role in the formation of identity as a marker of regional, ethnic, and linguistic boundaries. Expanding on some of the issues Timothy Rice presents in his “disciplining” of ethnomusicology (2010), in this section I show how lullabies help establish personal, familial, and group identities, ones based on cultural and linguistic differences that often supersede an emerging pan-Indian nationalist identity. The topic of pan-Indian or national identity will be explored in chapter 5, as part of my analysis of lullabies composed for India’s influential film industries.

Rice identifies three areas that might provide the “theoretical moisture” necessary for the overall health of ethnomusicology’s intellectual garden: general meta-theories or paradigms borrowed from anthropology and sociology, studies of identity from outside the field of ethnomusicology, and ethnographic studies done within ethnomusicology. I began this chapter with a discussion of lullabies and their practice in early childhood. Heeding Rice’s call, I have

²¹ For example, Shubha Chaudhuri’s “family tree” lullaby, the improvised “baba para ider ja raha” which served as an intergenerational lullaby connection in a Punjabi Hindu family spread across continents, and the more generalized socio-cultural values many parents desire to transmit to their children through lullaby practice.

borrowed from Bourdieu's "grand theory" and detailed how lullabies help develop a habitus in relation to music, language, and the behavioral relationship between caregivers and children. Lullabies, incorporated into a child's consciousness through repetition and early introduction, help establish a sense of what feels and sounds "right." These songs are often tied to powerful affective memories that can be recalled later in an individual's life, a linking that accounts for some of the impetus adults feel to perform these songs for their children. This process, in turn, helps create a stable chain for the transmission of lullabies and associated cultural knowledge. I provide a number of examples of this associated cultural knowledge, such as the values of patience, the expected protective and loving role of the maternal uncle, and stories of various religious or political figures such as Krishna or Ambedkar, thereby interleaving portions of my ethnographic research with the larger dialogue concerning music and identity.

Rice further urges scholars studying music and identity to address the relevance of Thomas Turino's claim that "music is a powerful sign of identity because it is a sign of 'direct feeling and experience'" (Rice 2010:322; Turino 1999:250). Turino's claim needs to be modified to include musical experiences that are both mediated by language and music that is "direct feeling and experience." In fact, the same piece of music can be significant for the development of identity when it is experienced directly in infancy *and* when it is mediated by language later in childhood. As part of the developing habitus of early childhood, lullabies are quintessentially direct feeling and experience. They facilitate caregiver-child bonding, language development, and the transmission of cultural knowledge. A habitus or social theory approach explaining the transmission of music and culture is being increasingly validated in studies by neuroscientists and developmental psychologists. Recent research has shown the widely asserted, but never fully understood, relationship between infant learning and imitation. Through electroencephalogram

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(EEG) readings of infant responses to adult action, scientists have isolated brain processes that occur as an infant learns physical movement by imitation (Saby, Melzhoff, and Marshall 2013). Other neuroscience research has shown the powerful, long term effects of prenatal music exposure on the brains of infants. Exposed to “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” five times a week during the third trimester of pregnancy, infants exhibited significant neuronal responses to alterations in this melody even up to four months after the initial prenatal hearing (Partanen, Kujala, Tervaneimi, Houtilainen 2013).

Neuroscience is beginning to precisely image the operations of “direct feeling and experience” and music in the minds of children. In the case of lullabies and infants, music unmediated by language helps develop a habitus of musical tonality, and provides a space for the emotional bonding between infant and caretaker. As a child develops, lullabies play an important role in language development, and are integrated into the child’s self-narrative. This narrative ultimately contributes to the child’s growing sense of self, their identity, by establishing a sense of difference. The child’s individual identity emerges (in part) out of their childhood narrative, out of the memory of events or practices that differentiate the life of one individual from another. Lullabies also help establish a shared family narrative and practice. Similar conclusions have been found by other scholars in the United States working with children and family conversational narratives.

Through narrative interactions about the shared past, parents help shape children’s understanding of who they were, who they are now, and presumably who they will be in the future, both as individuals and as members of the family. Thus, although family communication and interaction in other contexts and settings is clearly important, the role of family narratives may be particularly critical for children’s developing sense of self. (Bohanek et al. 2006:50)

Lullabies that are specific to a regional, ethnic, religious, or linguistic group, such as the Assamese bogori tree lullaby or the “Gumparani” lullabies that relate Bengali specific

mythology, help establish a sense of belonging to these larger regional groups. Thus, returning to Rice's questions about the role of music in the formation and maintenance of identity, lullabies establish the psychology of individual identity through the formulation of a childhood narrative. They also help individual's identity with broader socio-cultural or ethnic groups by establishing and reinforcing sets of shared symbols and narratives.

Unlike the musical preferences of adolescents and adults, lullabies rarely, if ever, function as a "badge of identity" (North and Hargreaves 1999) by which a person might broadcast their identity. Lullabies are not generally chosen by a child, although children certainly influence the frequency of their performance. Rather, lullabies are chosen by adult caregivers based on the adult's previous experience, memory, religious, and aesthetic preferences. Because of this lack of choice on the child's part, lullabies are a musical foundation on which an individual's "essential" identity is built. They also help "suture" (to use Rice's terminology) an individual to a larger social group, again by establishing both a set of shared symbols and a sense of difference. This is not to say that the "essential" nature of the child is somehow unchanging or outside the child's conscious control as they age. Rather, lullabies, child-directed songs, and similar early childhood musical experiences provide a base of musical-cultural experience and, due to the repetitive performance of these songs at a stage of development when the child's mind is truly a metaphorical sponge, these songs create an indelible foundation that is a referent for future experience. They are a musical beginning to a child's narrative of self; they help formulate and maintain an individual's identity.

The relative inability of young children to control which lullabies are performed for them differentiates the experience of lullabies during early childhood from later musical experiences which are more reflexively chosen. Drawing on Anthony Giddens's ideas about the development

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of self-narrative in high or late modernity, Rice argues that while tradition gives people their habits, roles, and societal status, modernity knocks these down and “requires all of us to construct reflexively our biographies from a wide array of choices not available in traditional societies. Lifestyle choice becomes not a trivial accoutrement of the bourgeoisie but crucial for everyone living in modernity” (Rice 2003:158). The “unchosen” aspect of lullaby practice during childhood distances these experiences from such reflexive constructions of biography.

Viewed in this light, lullabies and child-directed song practices become products of tradition or traditional society, aspects of an individual’s identity that are chosen *for* them rather than malleable products of a self-reflexive narrative. Lullabies operate as incognito cultural artifacts, persistent musical memories and habits which are vehicles for musical and cultural transmission. Lullabies are powerful triggers for more general memories of childhood, family, and home – memories which help answer some of the fundamental questions surrounding identity such as “who am I,” “where do I come from,” and “what is my story.” They are part of an individual’s narrative of the past that helps create a sense of history and belonging to family and community. Ethnomusicologist John Baily remarks about similar processes working with music and Afghan national identity. He writes that, “Music is a potent symbol of identity; like language...it is one of those aspects of culture which can, when the need to assert ‘ethnic identity’ arises, most readily serve this purpose” (Baily 1994:48). Baily cites Alan Lomax’s work on the effects of music and memory in relation to the development of a person’s individual identity.

The child begins to learn the musical style of his culture as he acquires the language and the emotional patterns of his people. This style is thus an important link between an individual and his culture, and later in life brings back to the adult consciousness the emotional texture of the world which formed his personality. (Lomax 1959:929, cited in Baily 1994:47)

Lomax's description of musical and cultural memories returning to adult consciousness is directly analogous to how I have conceptualized lullabies as incognito cultural artifacts. However, rather than just bringing back the "emotional texture" of memories that form a person's identity, lullabies are intertwined with specific personal memories, with specific religious, moral, and cultural values and stories, and with defining moments in an individual's childhood narrative.

In this sense, lullabies help form an individual's sense of self through the mechanisms of tradition; they are "unchosen" aspects of a person's history generated in performances during some of childhood's most intimate moments that form powerfully affective, long lasting memories that constitute an individual's biography. One may argue that an adult is free to choose any song to sing to their child, not just the lullabies they learned from their childhood, and that this breaks the hold of "traditionalism" on musical-cultural transmission. This is partly true. However, the performance of lullabies is most often tied to poignant and positive emotional memories from an individual's childhood, a fact confirmed by every one of my research participants,²² and confirmed in psychological studies of American parents (Custodero, Britto, and Brooks-Gunn 2003). This association with positive memories facilitates the re-performance of lullabies from an individual's childhood for their own children. Thus, despite the degree of freedom parents experience when choosing what to sing to their children, the transmission of lullabies remains relatively consistent. The practice is, in effect, self-renewing and somewhat insulated from the process of "modern" self-reflexive construction.

²² Every research participant I interviewed recalled positive associations with lullabies and memories from their childhood with the exception of one woman whose mother had very recently passed away. The emotional toll of this event caused this participant a deep, abiding sadness whenever songs from her childhood were mentioned or heard. Yet even in this example, the memories of childhood lullabies began with positive emotional connections that were only later brought low by the death of this participant's mother, and the subsequent emotional trauma and distress tied to her passing.

However, lullaby practice and transmission can accommodate the rewriting of narrative, biography, individual and group identities.²³ Unlike some other aspects of traditional behavior, lullabies are not overtly public or socially governed. Their performance most often restricted to times and spaces where only the child, close members of the family, or certain domestic household staff are present or within earshot. Unlike more public performances bound by social conventions, this relative privacy frees an individual from external social pressure, allowing the caregiver a degree of choice in lullaby selection. As covered in the previous chapter, the singing of lullabies can offer a space to “sing the unsayable,” and songs that complain about an absent husband or express the hardships of a young mother, topics that are normally restricted by social convention, have been well documented. In this way, the performance of lullabies is open to the type of self-reflexive narrative revision, if complicated by the fact that the caregiver rewrites their “narrative” largely in private and only for the ears of a young child. The playing of English-language lullaby CDs for children in an attempt to further their language comprehension and social mobility illustrates how parents attempt to (re)write the biography of their children. In effect, parents attempt to transcend the limits of their own narrative (i.e. their possibly limited English) and mold the narrative of their children’s lives.

The English-language lullaby CD example also illustrates another aspect in the construction of identity through the performance of lullabies. I return to the questions Tim Rice raises in his “disciplining” of ethnomusicology, where he asks (1) how many identities an individual can possess, and (2) if the possibilities for multiple identities are open for everyone in a society or are restrained by social, economics, or political inequalities (2010:322). My

²³ Identity as a concept is culturally dependent (Eisenberg 2001). From my conversations with my research participants, there seems to be a stronger sense of familial identity as compared with individuals in the US, and this is confirmed by the generally more dominant role families play in the lives of most Indians. Research participants who were raised outside of India often noted an increase in family involvement in their daily lives on returning to live in India. The practice of arranged marriage in India is just one example of this difference.

discussion of lullabies, tradition, modernity, and the “writing” of personal biography hints at an answer to the first question. Because lullaby practice and transmission relies on both the traditional, “unchosen” aspects of identity *and* the choices parents and caregivers make as part of their modern, self-reflexive construction of narrative, it follows that individuals possess at a minimum two streams of musical “biography” from which to base the performance of their identity according to the demands of the social moment. For example, as a child, one of my younger research participants was raised on some of the traditional lullaby songs of from Bengal such as “Gumparani mashi pishi” and “Aye brishti jhenpe,” and on sung English-language lullabies. These differing experiences, one distinctly Bengali and one a result of her parents’ level of education and the social groups in which they moved,²⁴ helped formulate part of this participant’s childhood musical narrative.

The experience of Bengali and English lullabies allowed this participant the opportunity to perform aspects of her personal identity according to the demands of the social situation. These two streams of identity or biography were not antagonistic, they could (and did) readily coexist during most of this participant’s daily personal interactions. The ability to emphasize one over the other, to perform her identity according to perceived needs, can either be conceptualized multiple identities, or, more fittingly in this case, different shades of a singular identity. If a person’s identity or identities are conceived of as malleable and not static, if they are understood as performance rather than inheritance, then the problems of defining or reconciling multiple separate streams of identity existing in a singular individual effectively cease. Everyone has the capacity to emphasize desired or socially appropriate aspects of their identity is understood as a continual performance that draws on personal history to best fit the demands of a social situation.

²⁴ Her father was educated in England, and her extended family had political and/or familial connections with the British in colonial India, although this was never made clear in our interview.

Thus, to return to Rice's second question about whether identity can be constrained by economic, political or social factors, I would again point to the example of English-language lullabies for one possible answer. I have argued that individual identity is dependent on individual narrative and biography. I have given examples of how my research participants use experiences and music from their childhood to help construct a sense of belonging to regional, linguistic, ethnic, religious, and other groups. The stories we tell about ourselves are bound to our social lives and to relationships with others. The factors that influence our social lives (class, politics, religion, economics, etc.) are also part of our biography, narrative, and identity. The English-language lullabies my Bengali research participant recalled were made possible by her parent's education level, their family history, and their socio-economic status. Other research participants recalled distinctly religious songs sung as lullabies, songs that helped form their identity as Hindus. While every individual has some degree of freedom in how they perform their identity, and even some freedom to invent narratives, political, economic, social, and religious differences unequivocally guide the formation of self-narrative and the performance of one's identity.

Because lullabies are rarely the central focus of one's performed adult identity, I do not want to overemphasize the idea that childhood lullaby experiences are even a primary source of an individual's identity. However, the way in which lullabies are transmitted and how people emphasize or de-emphasize their childhood narratives and musical experiences helps illustrate a larger historical process taking place in India. The ability to consciously control the performance of one's identity by emphasizing different aspects of lived experience, in tandem with the fact that most of this lived experience was not a self-reflexive choice but the (partial) choice of a parent or caregiver, exemplifies the reality that traditional society and modernity exist side-by-

side and are comfortably embodied by people in India every day. Lullabies, the narrative or soundtrack of childhood, and the use of these experiences in the performance of one's identity is perhaps one of the clearest examples of Simon Frith's contention that, "Music, like identity, is both performance and story, describes the social in the individual and the individual in the social" (Frith 1996:109). Childhood lullabies are not just expressions or reflections of culture (although they do this to some degree); they help constitute an individual's social identity which, in turn, is one link in the chain of social knowledge production, maintenance, and transmission. As Frith puts it, "Self-identity *is* cultural identity; claims to individual difference depend on audience appreciation, on shared performing and narrative rules" (Frith 1996:125). Self-identity depends on narrative, on the creation and performance of difference through narrative, and lullabies are one way the narrative of childhood can be heard.

Cultural and Musical Change

I would like to now turn to the topic of musical and cultural change, questions that have been at the heart of the field of ethnomusicology since its inception, and explore how a deeper understanding of lullabies and their practice can productively complicate broader theories of change. The topic of musical and cultural change has been a central focus in ethnomusicology. Merriam, Blacking, and others looked to points of active musical change or cultural shift to explicate the interconnectedness of human artistic and social practices. Merriam believed that the study of musical change and the corresponding cultural dynamics pressuring such change to be "one of the most potentially rewarding activities in ethnomusicology" (Merriam 1964:319). Blacking held that "musical change must be given a special status in studies of social and cultural change, because music's role as mediator between the nature and the culture in man combines cognitive and affective elements in a unique way" (Blacking 1977:5). Bruno Nettl

suggests that the potential for change in a musical system or tradition is dependent on the degree of conservatism within that tradition or its surrounding culture. For Nettl, musical system changes occur through one of four ways: (1) one system being wholly substituted for another; (2) radical change brought on by new technologies, resources, political developments, or the vision of an especially influential musician; (3) incremental change brought on by the ongoing development of musical styles or the fusion of different styles; and (4) the changes naturally introduced by successive generations of musicians who maintain the stylistic conventions and values of preceding generations (Nettl 1983:178).

Unlike Nettl's formulations of change, which point to broad social or technological interventions as the main drivers of musical system change, Blacking finds that individuals create meaning through music making, and it is this intersubjective practice that maintains a tradition or ushers in changes to the musical system. He writes that "Music is too deeply concerned with human feelings and experiences in society, and *its patterns are too often generated by surprising outbursts of unconscious cerebration*, for it to be subject to arbitrary rules [emphasis added]" (Blacking 1973:x). Later scholars developed individualized approaches that combine the broader "rule based" changes similar to those advanced by Nettl with nuanced interpretations of how individuals embodied knowledge and the create meaning through interpersonal musical communication and contribute to change of the musical system as a whole (for example Guilbault 1993; Taylor 1997; Rice 2010). In general, however, contemporary scholars tend to relegate issues of musical system change, hybridization or syncretism, and the impacts of generalized forces such as technology, globalization or westernization to the background of their studies. Daniel Neuman has found the shift in scholarly attention away from these issues is the result of modified perceptions concerning the nature of change itself. Change

is seen as a “natural and expected process rather than the aberrant interlocution of unnatural forces acting in unsuspecting ahistorical societies” (1993:276).

I agree with Neuman that musical and cultural change is something that should be seen as “natural and expected.” During my field research I found that the forces of globalization, westernization, urbanization, and technology pervaded every aspect of the musical practices I investigated. Most of my research participants specifically pointed to these forces and marked them as, in essence, “unnatural” or at least so profoundly influencing the contemporary practice of singing to children that it would be impossible *not* to foreground them in this study.

Musical and cultural change is occurring with unprecedented speed throughout India. The contentions of Blacking and others that music and meaning is created in the interactions between individuals and often subject to “unconscious cerebrations” of the mind aptly describes contemporary child-directed song practice today. Lullabies, sohars, and other child-directed songs are, by their nature, intimate expressions of sentiments that are emotionally resonant because of their associated personal memories, the history of their use within families, and their formalized or composed musical and poetic features. The practice of singing to children, what is sung, and how it is performed, is influenced by the forces of technology, globalization, westernization, and urbanization. Nettl’s four types of musical change can also be seen operating on child-directed song practices in urban India. The vast majority of changes in lullaby practice over the last few decades exhibit the characteristics of Nettl’s first two categories of change, namely whole system substitution, and the influences of technology and resources. Young children are being sung English-language lullabies in order to further their English comprehension, a clear case of Nettl’s whole system substitution, and an example demonstrating one aspect of globalization’s furthering of linguistic consolidation. Also discussed in this chapter

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is the pervasive influence of technology, in the form of infant swings, electronic recordings, and even the transformation of urban space. Child-directed song practices in urban India thus provide a picture of the complex confluence of the models of change Nettle, Blacking, and others articulate. Broad forces are changing musical (and cultural) systems and these forces act on, and through, intimate, interpersonal human relationships.

An examination of lullaby and child-directed songs also reveals some of the mechanics of globalization, westernization, and modernization occurring in urban India. Scholars continue to debate how these processes work and influence society. Globalization was first theorized by scholars such as Immanuel Wallerstein (1974) as a center-periphery world system, where information and power radiate out from the industrialized West. Far from homogenous, the world system was replete with differences in power, production, and capital. However, the flows of information that emanated from the center had the effect of homogenizing the periphery, incorporating the entire world into a capitalist system of exchange. Wallerstein and others argue that information, and the structure of knowledge in this system, is inherently Eurocentric.

Later theorists have recast the idea of globalization to include feedback from the periphery, re-envisioning globalization a system of many (and shifting) centers connected by reversible “flows” of information and capital. Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai’s theories of cultural flows organizing the world’s production and dissemination are perhaps the most influential re-envisioning of the process of globalization. Appadurai splits the process of cultural globalization into several streams or cultural flows, and reorganizes the center-periphery model to recognize the diminishing importance of national boundaries and the deterritorialization of the modern economy. Appadurai’s (1996) model for the flow of transnational information and capital, conceptualized as ethnoscaples, mediascaples, technoscaples, finanscaples, and ideoscaples,

help organize the difficult problem of understanding how information, culture, and capital operate on a global scale. Other scholars have built on Appadurai's network flow model to include consumer response and reception to cultural content. While reception theory adds a degree of detail to discussions of globalized information flow and consumption, Diana Crane argues it needs to be modified to more completely address the complexities of production, transmission, *and* reception of cultural commodities in today's complex global environment (2002:18).

One of the central tenets in the network-flow formulation of globalization is that globalization is not simply the imposition of Western or European values on a passive periphery. Rather, because of the linking of societies through trade and electronic communication, globalization should be seen as the diffusion and movement of information through a connected system and not necessarily a purely homogenizing force. However, the majority of child-directed song practices in urban India I studied illustrate a somewhat different story. Most of my research participants who sang to their children drew from a mixed repertoire, employing English-language lullabies, lullabies composed for India's film industries, and only a handful of examples of more traditional lullabies that were taught by their parents or represented more local or familial aesthetics. The vast majority of songs people mentioned as commonly sung lullabies were examples of commodified music, learned and often "performed" from electronic media. These are products of massive, globalized entertainment industries. I encountered only a few examples recorded media that might be considered a more local, or represent a more traditional aesthetic. These recordings were often religious in nature, such as bhajans or songs from the ethnic-religious group of Bauls in Bengal, but were marketed as children's music. The clearest examples of the hegemonic nature of globalization on child-directed song practice was the

singing of English lullabies for language comprehension and the songs taught in English-language schools prevalent across India.²⁵ New recordings of lullabies sung in English and marketed in chic urban shopping malls have been added to songs introduced during India's colonial period through English-language education institutions. In contrast, only a handful of Indian-origin, child-directed cultural products can be found outside India. Thus, in the case of child-directed songs, rather than showing a reciprocal or multi-directional flow, information and cultural products largely flow in one direction – from the English-speaking West to India.

At the same time, most families do sing or play a mix of English, Indian-language film songs, and songs specific to their family, region, or religious affiliation. This illustrates that, despite the largely uni-directional flow of information, in the case of child-directed songs the process of globalization is not absolutely homogenizing. While the incursion of English-language lullabies into the song practices of urban India is a product of globalization (and colonialism prior), the end result is a more heterogeneous practice. This critique does not even touch upon the colossal informational and capital flows *internal* to India. While not specifically “globalization,” the increase in information and capital exchange between India's regional cultures relies on the same technologies crucial to the process of globalization, leading to even more heterogeneous cultural practices within India. In all, examining the practice of lullabies, their transmission, socio-cultural values, and the use and movement of recorded media, provides a new perspective on the process of cultural change and global exchange. Child-directed song practice is being irrevocably altered by global cultural flows of information and technology while simultaneously preserving musical practices that connect disparate generations. In the face of (and even in step with) dramatic change, child-directed songs remain a source for powerfully

²⁵ These recorded English-language lullabies and English-language schooling are, however, generally available only to middle-income or wealthier Indians.

affective memories, provide a soundtrack for the childhood narrative, serve as metaphorical glue for individual and group identities, and transmit socio-cultural knowledge encoded in song.

Why

Finally, I would like to return to the question of why lullabies are sung, the answer to which has emerged throughout this chapter. Psychologist Laurel Trainor suggests some of the most fundamental purposes of lullaby singing are as follows:

1. Mothers may sing to their babies to get their attention and focus it on what is important in the world – the mother’s face, for example;
2. Babies’ perception of patterns in music may promote their perception of speech, which also relies on segmenting ongoing, changing patterns of sound;
3. Adults may use music for emotional communication, social bonding, and regulation of infants’ states: a crying baby often responds to rocking and singing. (Trainor 2002:32)

Lullabies are sung to help regulate the moods of both caregiver and child, and to encourage children to respond appropriately, in part, by creating a shared musical experience that is often soothing in tone, melody, rhythm, and content (Trehub and Schellenberg 1995). Lullabies are often sung in relatively private spaces, spaces that provide for a level of intimate emotional communication and, as discussed in the previous chapter, spaces that permit the expression of socially taboo feelings such as loneliness, sadness, or anger. Lullaby practice also offers adults a space to meditate on their past history, to revisit memories of their parents, grandparents, and own childhood, and, in the process, establish a sense of shared history between their ancestors, themselves, and their children.

For a child, lullabies are engrained in memory through repeated hearing. Musical dispositions are thought to be established early, even before birth (Custodero and Johnson-Green 2003). Lullaby practices are part of a child’s budding sense of self. Lullabies are often the first songs to which a child is exposed and thus become a musical referent as a child establishes their

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sense of personal and familial narrative. They establish a musical habitus, a disposition to certain types or styles of music, and a sense of what feels right or natural which a child carries into their adult years. This habitus, remains largely at the edge of a person's consciousness and helps guide behavior, particularly in relation to childrearing and the musical choices individuals makes with their own children.

Lullaby practice helps create a set of shared symbols, ones that operate at the levels of family, religion, ethnic and language group, and nation. These shared symbols – mythologies, cultural knowledge, stories about one's family, and the narratives made in the process of lullaby singing – help establish part of a child's personal narrative. They help establish an individual's identity, one that is reinforced as a child grows older and sings songs recalled from their childhood to their own children.

Thus, the answer to “why” are lullabies sung is complex. Put simply, lullaby practice is functional for the child and adult. Lullabies are sung for sleep, intimate emotional communication, and private expression. They offer space for meditation on one's past, help establish a child's habitus, serve as part of the narrative of childhood, as repositories of cultural knowledge, and as musical foundations for the establishment and maintenance of a person's identity. Lullabies operate differently than musical experiences of later life. They are incognito cultural artifacts that help maintain cultural practices, mythologies, and beliefs in the face of dramatic social change, and yet are not immune to change themselves. Far from frivolous, and despite their associations with sweetness or innocence, these songs and practices shoulder heavy functional and cultural burdens.

Chapter 4

More than Joy: Sohars, Childbirth, Modernity, and the Musical Rituals of New Motherhood

In this chapter, I move from my discussion of lullabies to examine the practice of ritualized pre- and post-birth songs known as sohars. As with lullabies, the style, content, practice, and meaning of sohars is being dramatically affected by India's modernization and urbanization. Thematically linked with a women's life journey through young adulthood, marriage, childbirth, and motherhood, the sohar practices provide yet another window through which people's attitudes and perspectives on the shifting course of India's culture and society can be explored. By analyzing previous scholarly research on sohars and the changing place of sohar performance in contemporary urban society, I intend to establish another index by which to measure the cultural changes taking place as India undergoes rapid urbanization and modernization. Sohars also offer a useful tool to analyze the fracturing and commoditizing effects of modernity on society and traditional musical practices.

Musically and functionally, sohars are quite different from the lullabies discussed in the previous chapters. I have chosen to discuss sohars separate from lullabies because of their distinctiveness and different functions, even at the risk of making this chapter feel "isolated" from the rest of the dissertation. While sohars are still "child-directed" in a way, i.e. their performances are motivated by the impending or recent birth of a child, unlike lullabies, they are not sung privately to a child. Also unlike lullabies, sohars are not repeatedly sung to children and therefore offer less of an opportunity for a caregiver or child to attach the same type of deeply affective memories as is common. Sohars are experienced publically and performed sporadically.

Despite these differences, the thematic focus of sohar songs, how and by whom they are performed, and the changes to other lifecycle rituals accompanying new motherhood and childbirth, illustrate, similarly to lullabies, the effects of urbanization, technology, and modernization on a traditional song practice. The practice of sohars has weathered various social upheavals in the past but, I believe, faces its strongest test of endurance to date. Despite these forces demanding change, sohars continue to allow the expression of deeply held feelings, memories, and perspectives on motherhood that enable family members to connect across generations. In short, even though sohars are functionally quite distinct from lullabies, the way urbanization, technology, music, and modernity affects their practice adds new perspective to the discussion of child-directed songs practices in India. While lullabies may show the effects of these larger societal forces on people's intimate lives, sohars illustrate similar effects on more public, ritualized behaviors and attitudes; sohars tell a different side of the same story. Thus, my analysis of sohars, in combination with lullabies, is an attempt to establish a more holistic perspective on music in early childhood in urbanizing India.

My interest in the rituals and music surrounding childbirth was, like my interest in lullabies, sparked by the birth of my daughter three months before I embarked on my dissertation fieldwork. Helping my wife prepare for a “natural” childbirth accentuated what I saw as conflicting philosophies, perceptions, and practices between a natural and the more “medicalized” norm of pregnancy and childbirth in the US. For example, while the rates of maternally elected Cesarean section in the US make up only 2.5% of births, the overall percentage of C-section is nearly 33% of total births, and the rate of C-sections grew by over 60% from 1996 to 2009 (Martin, et al 2010).¹ This is just one medical example of society’s changing attitudes towards childbirth in the US. The process of birth is becoming a hyper-

¹ The numbers for induced labor push the percentage of maternally selected birth due-dates even higher.

scheduled, commodified, and, often, surgically invasive procedure. An infant's due-date is chosen by parents (often with considerable pressure from the obstetrician) for maximum convenience. With this prevailing cultural attitude in mind, my wife and I discussed at length about what we perceived as a lack of non-commercial, meaningful cultural rituals and corresponding social support for the process of childbirth in the US.

Soon after arriving in Delhi, I sought out research participants who would be able to help me understand the shape and direction of contemporary Indian childbirth rituals and related musical practices. During our interviews, many of my research participants described tensions between what might be termed “natural” and more “medicalized” childbirth practices in urban India, similar to my recent experiences in the US. A large majority of births in India take place in the home, and even in developed cities such as Delhi over half of births are handled by *dais* (traditional midwives) (Chalwa 2012). However, there has been a sustained effort by the Indian government and NGOs to move childbirth into hospital settings and, in the interim, to educate *dais* on modern medical practices relating to basic sanitation and childbirth, both of which have met with some success.² The growing number of hospital births and the ascension of Western “biomedicine” more generally, the changing role of the *dai*, the emergence of a “new” midwife practice, and evolving pre-and post-birth ritual practices were discussed with many of my research participants. While I do not intend to examine childbirth, midwifery, or other non-musical childbirth rituals at length, it is important to situate the musical practice of sohars in relation to the changing cultural and medical practices surrounding childbirth in urban India. Before I do, a brief introduction to the sohar genre is warranted.

² With some regional variation, the number of hospital births is on the rise. In Bangladesh for example, the number of hospital births rose from 9% in 2001 to 23% in 2010 according to a one study using data compiled by the United Nations (http://www.dghs.gov.bd/licts_file/images/Health_Bulletin/health_bulletin_2010.pdf).

Musical and Textual Characteristics of Sohars

According to Srivastava, the word sohar derives from the Hindi *sauri* or *saur* for “a chamber where a child is delivered,” although K. D. Upadhyaya traces it to *sughar* or “beautiful,” a connection that Srivastava disputes (Srivastava 1991:274). However, I find both definitions incomplete. I believe it quite possible that the word sohar derives from the Hindi-Urdu *soh* for beauty, elegance, or grace, and may be equally related to the word *suha* or *soha*, which according to Platts, describes the color red, crimson, or saffron and is the name of a melodic mode or *rāg* (2007:403). Saffron and yellow are commonly associated with new mothers and children in South Asia. Post-partum mothers commonly wear or are gifted a yellow wrap or sari following their child’s birth. Anthropologist Ann Grodzins Gold’s work provides further evidence of the connection between the color yellow, childbirth, and sohars. In “The Song of the New Mother Queen,” a sohar from Rajasthan, the association between the auspicious color yellow and the threat of the evil eye takes poetic shape:

Order a yellow wrap from Jaipur city, Grain-giver
Order a yellow wrap from Jaipur city, Grain-giver,
Order a yellow wrap, my Heart’s Desire.
I’ll put on the yellow wrap.
Twenty-one hands, Grain-giver, twenty-five yards,
Twenty-one hands, Grain-giver, twenty-five yards.
So order a yellow wrap from Jaipur, my Heart’s Desire,
Order a yellow wrap.
The yellow wrap was ordered, and wrapped round her;
My New Mother Queen well seated in the courtyard.
So what evil eye struck her auspicious wifehood?
My Heart’s Desire, order a yellow wrap. (Gold 1997:114-115)

In some belief systems, forty days after a child is born marks the end of the post-partum period for the new mother, a point at which she is considered free from the pollution of childbirth. The forty day period, known as *chilla*, is also an important practice outside

childbirth.³ In regard to childbirth, for the first forty days it is common for the baby to have only clothes made from used or worn material. At the end of this period, the baby's maternal grandparents traditionally gift the child a first set of “new” clothes, typically colored yellow or saffron.⁴ The connection between the color of yellow or reddish-yellow saffron associated with a new mother and a newborn child, the word *soha* meaning beautiful and a melodic mode or *rāg*, and the word *sohar* seems hardly coincidental. Other names that refer to musical celebrations surrounding childbirth such as *sariya* (sung only after birth), *khelawana* (Bhojpuri celebration song), *mangal* (songs sung for weddings, births and other lifecycle events), and *badhai*⁵ (celebratory songs) are listed in the literature, but *sohar* was most commonly used by my research participants. The word *sohar*, if my speculation is correct, encapsulates the many allusions to childbirth and new motherhood with poetic simplicity.

When characterizing the musical and textual elements of *sohar* songs, it is important to differentiate songs “composed” as *sohars*, songs that now function as *sohars* but were not originally intended to accompany rituals such as the *chatti puja*, and those sung in more formal concert settings or those composed for the Indian film industry. *Sohars* originating in the folk tradition generally have simple melodies enabling easy participation by women with varied levels of musical experience. The songs themselves are typically structured in a dialogue format, in which the pregnant mother interacts with her husband or other relatives, or as “through-composed” narratives. These dialogues often describe concerns or fears held by the mother, requests by the mother for gifts or foods, or family relationship dynamics such as the soon-to-be

³ Many Hindustani musicians have been known to engage in *chilla* rituals in which they fully devote themselves to musical study, isolating themselves from the outside world to the greatest degree possible.

⁴ However, according to doula and natural birth practitioner Divya Deswal, this practice, like other child-related traditional rituals and practices, is fading from use in modern urban India (Deswal 2012).

⁵ Not to be confused with *bidhai git*, or songs sung for the departure of a new bride from her natal home to the home of her in-laws.

mother's displeasure or annoyance with her in-laws. Through-composed sohars often narrate more allegorical stories describing the pregnancy of Krishna's mother (Yashoda) or the activities of the deity Ram and his consort Sita. Other sohars enumerate gifts to be given to the child or descriptions of the child's anticipated future.

Regardless of the song's intended poetic form, sohars sung for chatti pujas and in other women's gatherings are frequently altered by the performers to produce a call-and-response format, where an older, more experienced woman leads a group of younger women or those less familiar with the song. The lead singer will often accompany the group on a double-headed drum such as the dholak or dhol, and the occasional use of small, heavy brass hand cymbals known as *jhanjh* or *manjira* is also common. In recorded media, and in the fairly rare instances where sohars are sung on stage at concerts or festivals, it is common to find the harmonium, tabla, sitar, *bansuri*, and other instruments accompanying the vocalists.

Traditional sohars have a limited melodic range, generally less than one octave, with most lines occupying the first fifth of the octave. As with Hindustani music generally, the tonic pitch is set by the lead singer or group to be centered comfortably in their vocal range. The melodies of these traditional songs are simple and unornamented and with metric cycles of eight or twelve beats. Folk-derived sohars exhibit only basic features of the classical Hindustani rāg melodic system, for example emphasizing the tonic and dominant pitches (in *sargam*, the syllables *sa* and *pa*) and, like all Hindustani folk and classical melodies, are not harmonically driven. Rather, like Hindi film song generally, sohar songs tend to be more modal in character, and deemphasize more "difficult" modal scales such as those derived from the Hindustani rāgs such as Todi or Shri (Morcom 2007:63). Sohars composed for the Indian film industry are more expansive, ornamented, and feature heavier instrumental accompaniment. In comparison to

sohars derived from the folk tradition, the range of film sohars often falls into the ultra-high-pitched female Hindi playback singer style, as exemplified by popular vocalists such as Lata Mangeshkar. These songs also conform to standard Hindi film song structure, alternating instrumental interludes with vocal verses and refrains.⁶

The accompanying audio clips of the main melodic lines from the popular sohars shows the extent of the extreme musical variety that falls under the sohar category. “Dhan dhan bhag lalanwa,” a Bhojpuri tune composed for the film *Sajanwa Bairi Bhaile Hamar* (1976), a more traditional sohar “AnkeN apane ki lale tere ho ne mei” as sung by my research participants in Delhi, and the sohar “Mili juli gaave” from Uttar Pradesh which occupies somewhat of the middle ground between traditional folksong and composed film tune with its slightly classicized bhajan-like interpretation by the vocalist Manoj Tiwari, are songs that were all heard during sohar sessions. See [12. Dhan dhan bhag lalanwa.mp3]; [5. AnkeN apane ki lale tere hone mei.mp3]; [13. Mili juli gaave.mp3]. In addition to illustrating the general melodic features of folk-derived sohars in comparison to those composed for film, these audio clips provide examples of the characteristic instrumental accompaniment differences between film, folk, and classicized sohar styles.

Contrary to Jacobson’s findings that film songs were never used in women’s gatherings in her study of women’s music in rural Madhya Pradesh (1975:46), my research participants frequently mentioned playing recordings of sohars, film songs, and other genres during women’s celebrations.⁷ Film songs were often played, or sung along with, and seem to have become the dominant genre of music played for these festivities. In fact, the practice of singing sohar songs *not* associated with the film music industry is largely disappearing. Other scholars have noted the

⁶ See Arnold 1991:138.

⁷ Completed nearly four decades prior, the difference between my findings and Jacobson’s demonstrates the extraordinary saturation of film music into both rural and urban life.

near complete disappearance of sohars and other types of women's group singing across India. Capila found a near total absence of *mangal* songs in the Garhwal region of Uttarakhand in north-west India and was able to record only one example faintly recalled by an eighty-year-old woman (Capila 1998:68). Henry speculates that the decline in women's unison singing in Mithila is due to the overwhelming prevalence of amplified music and the "urbane cachet" that Hindi-language cassettes offer younger, rural Indians living in areas where Hindi is not the standard vernacular. Not wanting to seem like "country bumpkins," rural Indians are abandoning song genres and group singing practices in favor of pre-recorded media (Henry 1998:438).

However, this process of abandonment is not complete, at least not yet. One group of research participants who sang a number of sohars and lullabies for me consisted of mostly older women in their sixties; however, two were in their early twenties (out of a total of seven singers). Tellingly, these younger singers were recent transplants to Delhi from villages in Rajasthan and Haryana, suggesting that younger women raised in urban areas were not participating in these group singing practices. Other urban born research participants expressed ambivalence towards some ritual practices surrounding childbirth, even as they felt pressured by their families to continue these traditions.

Situating Sohars: Time and Ritual

Sohars are closely tied to several early lifecycle celebration-ritual events, including the sixth and twelfth day ceremonies (*chatti-barhi*),⁸ the child's naming ceremony (*namkaran*) which is often held on the twelfth day as part of the *barhi puja*,⁹ and (less commonly) the giving

⁸ Alternately transliterated as *chathī*; however, I use *chatti* to avoid confusion for English speakers that might be misled by the combination "th," which in Hindi is pronounced as an aspirated "ta" rather than the softer labial sound as found in English words such as "theater."

⁹ The *barhi puja* held on the twelfth night after birth seems to be celebrated less often as the *chatti puja* in contemporary metropolitan India. Traditionally, a woman was considered to be rendered "unclean" by her

of the baby's first solid food (*annaprashan*). Most often, sohars are sung after the chatti puja,¹⁰ a Hindu religious prayer and celebration held on the sixth day (or fifth night) after birth. At the chatti puja, various offerings are made by the child's family to goddesses related to children, mothers, and childbirth such as Vidhata who is said to appear the night before the sixth day to write the child's destiny on their forehead, Shashthi the folk goddess of childbirth and children, and Chatti Devi, the goddess of the *jaccha*¹¹ or pregnant woman. Family members and friends are invited to the chatti puja, and celebrations involving food and music. While the performance of sohars themselves have been described as rituals (Tewari 1988), the songs are performed after what I would characterize as the more formalized rituals of the *puja* such as the lighting of an oil lamp, prayer offerings written with a red pen and paper, and the adornment and veneration of various deities.

One research participant and part-time *aya* (childcare provider) for my daughter during the last month of my fieldwork described her children and grandchildren's chatti pujas as festive, somewhat informal, occasions, yet events that still centered on important ritual and symbolic acts. This participant, Lali Sangeliya, was born and raised in Delhi and had spent her entire life around the neighborhood of Lodi Colony, only once traveling beyond the limits of Delhi to visit the shrine of a saint in Mumbai. She described the many chatti pujas she has witnessed to me during two formal interviews and during our many informal conversations as we cooked, cleaned, and entertained my daughter. In Lali's experience, on the sixth day following a baby's birth, friends and family (men and women) would gather to celebrate the chatti puja. Specially

pregnancy and childbirth. The ceremony on the twelfth day was held to mark the end to this time of pollution. I believe the diminishing importance of the barhi puja in urban India reflects the lessening of importance of pollution ideologies and traditional medical practices, which are being replaced by modern biomedical practices and more liberal attitudes towards the rights of women in general.

¹⁰ Not all Hindus practice the chatti puja; it is dependent on caste, socio-economic status, and other factors. The chatti puja is, however, one of the more common rituals related to the celebration of a child's birth.

¹¹ Alternately transliterated as *jachchā*, *jaccā*, or *jachchaa*.

prepared cow dung is bought from a vendor in Kotla, a neighboring market, and molded into the figure of the goddess Goi Mata. This local deity is likely related to another folk goddess Shashti, a benefactor of children and childbirth venerated in many regions across India. The figurine is adorned with in a piece of red cloth and placed on or at the base of a wall and surrounded by decorations made of chalk, and scatterings of flowers. Following this, sweet *halwa* (creamed wheat) would be given to all the guests and an older woman would sing to the figurine for the goddess's blessings. A feast was then held for the guests and, finally, the women (young and old) would then retreat to the veranda and continue singing and dancing to sohars and other recorded music. One of Lali's friends, a woman who played the dholak and helped lead the sohar singing, was paid ten rupees (about fifteen US cents) to sing five songs for these types of celebrations. The births of both male and female children were celebrated, although Lali mentioned the content of the songs varied according to the gender of the child (contradicting what her friend, the dholak player and knowledgeable sohar performer, would later recount).

Sohars are also sung apart from the chatti puja and other ritual contexts, both before and after a baby's birth. They can be sung by groups of women with or without the jaccha present in anticipation of the birth, or after birth for ritual purposes and for entertainment. These gatherings are sometimes referred to as "ladies sangeet" or a *bulawa*, meaning call or invitation (Srivatsava 1991). In nearly all the research literature, sohar songs are described as being sung exclusively in celebration for the birth of a son (Upadhyaya 1967; Tewari 1988; Gold 1997; Rao 2006).

Historically in India, the birth of a daughter was celebrated considerably less than the birth of a son, and a girl's birth often resulted in shame or ridicule being directed at the mother (Bahadur 1978). While it may *have* been that sohars were not sung in ritual contexts for female children post-partum, it is unlikely the gender of the child, being unknown *prior* to birth, had any effect

on their performance. In more recent scholarship however, the rigidity of this gender practice is called into question. Edward O. Henry notes other scholars' objections to the characterization of sohars as only being sung for males in the Maithil ethnic group from northeast India, and postulates the expansion of practice to include female children is the result of cultural change (Henry 1998:432).¹²

I found, at least in Delhi, that in sohars where the gender of the baby is mentioned or inferred, the child is assumed to be male. Scholars such as Jacobson (1975) and Henry (1998) acknowledge the possibility of sohars being sung for female children in a minority of circumstances. I inquired about the gender requirements for sohar performances while working with a group of semi-professional sohar performers in Delhi, and they told me that, while it is true most songs are composed with a male child in mind, it is trivial to change the gender in the song's lyrics. When specifically asked if sohars were permitted to be sung in ritual celebrations for a female child, and if there might be the problems in altering the song's lyrics, the leader of this group of five middle-aged women waved her hand dismissively remarking, "Koi bat nahiN, dono ke liye, larki ya larka," literally meaning, "It's not a thing" or "It's no big deal, [they are] for both, girl or boy." This reaction, coming from an older woman who earns a portion of her livelihood¹³ performing traditional folk music, and reiterated by the other women in the group, is an indication of the depth and speed at which cultural practices and attitudes towards stereotypical gender roles are changing. Rather than remaining a rigid practice restricted by

¹² Professor Amlan Dasgupta (Jadavpur University) notes that sohars were sung by Muzaffarpur courtesan singers, *especially* for the birth of female children (Rao 2006:82).

¹³ These sohar performers were women who worked in other capacities besides that of musician, a majority of the time as domestic house staff and ayas in the wealthier houses in south-central Delhi. The group of women with whom I worked were not full-time professional musicians but performed sohars and occasionally for weddings or other family celebrations.

religious and cultural patriarchy, the celebration of female children through sohars is now seen (at least by some) as “no big deal.”

Attitudes towards celebrating the birth of female children were more liberal according to the age, education, and income level of my research participants. Many of my younger research participants, especially those who had lived outside India and returned after marriage, felt ambivalent towards some of the rituals accompanying childbirth. Most felt it was important to at least “keep up appearances” for more conservative members of their extended families, even if they did not feel a strong personal imperative for the performance of these rituals. Several women in their early 30s told me how their families insisted on performing pre-birth rituals such as the *godh bharai*, a practice where female family members and friends visit to bless the unborn baby and mother by placing fruits and sweets in the lap of the pregnant woman. One participant described the *godh bharai* as a “funny, old custom,” but went along with it,

not because it’s part of my culture, but because I was living in Bangalore, and in the South they do it. So we had some friends over there that said we’ll do this. And it’s a fun one. You are at seventh month [sic] so you get to pick what you want to eat, and that kind of thing. But I didn’t end up having any formal ritual or anything.

(Interview with the author, 2012)

Other research participants acknowledged the declining popularity of pre- and post-birth rituals, traditional music, and substantial quality time spent with extended family as inevitable in contemporary India, but still felt some consternation or regret.

My research participants repeatedly framed their discussion of the changes taking place in Indian society as a conflict between tradition and modernity. It is critical to acknowledge that most participants expressed their views on Indian society and cultural practices in these polarizing terms; even as I attempted to avoid the use of such loaded concepts in questions I posed. However, it is also important to acknowledge that all my research participants live their

lives in between these extremes, embodying what they perceive as both traditional and modern values and practices in their daily routines. The sentiments of an Indian-American blogger for the *New York Times* aptly characterize the feelings shared with me by many of my younger research participants: “Being modern and American has always been integral to me, but during this emotionally vulnerable time [childbirth], it was a longstanding Indian practice which was my greatest source of comfort and strength” (Vora 2011). In this case, Vora’s descriptions of childbirth in the US are like a mirror image of the experiences of my research participants in Delhi, the sentiments are nearly identical. Traditional practices, religious rituals, and songs operate in tandem with modern beliefs and attitudes to help individuals connect with each other, connect with family, and forge ties across, as Gloria Goodwin Raheja puts it, the “fragmentations and absences brought about by the demands of modernity” (1997a:18).

Anticipation, Anxiety, and Celebration

Following the more formal puja activities of the chatti ritual and after food has been served to the entire gathering of family and friends, the women retire to a separate room or the veranda to sing or listen to recorded sohars and socialize. The new mother does not always participate in these gatherings following the puja for very long or at all in some cases. For those who did not have some member of the family to help guide the sohar singing, they might hire a local woman to perform songs with other female members of the family.¹⁴ These women musicians may be hired explicitly, they may be invited with both parties implicitly recognizing the obligation of some form of payment (often as little as ten rupees), or the musicians may just show up at the home of the new child after hearing of the birth through relatives or friends.

¹⁴ A majority of my research participants mentioned playing recorded sohars rather than holding organized sessions led by family member or hired professional.

Several of my research participants recalled inviting an older aunt or cousin who lived in villages near Delhi to help lead the family and friends in sohar performances at their apartments in the city. The actual relationship between my research participants and these women was not always made clear to me, but it seems they were often aunts or cousins from the new mother's maternal family, although female in-laws also regularly participated. Despite being relatives, there seemed to be some expectation by both parties that these visits were not entirely *gratis*, and the sohar "leaders" would at least have their travel costs paid for or would receive other gifts during their visit. Other scholars describe some performers as lower-caste *dom* or *mirasi* musicians who performed sohars in the *zenanas* of their patrons (Rao 2006:81); however, I did not encounter or hear of this level of professionalization with my research participants in Delhi.

It is telling that my research participants who held more organized sohar sessions after the chatti puja, rather than rely on recorded media for their entertainment, generally hired a semi-professional musician to lead the group. In other scholarly accounts, sohar performances are most often described as led by an elder female family member, not by hired semi-professionals (Tewari 1988). Other research participants told me of relatives they knew living in smaller villages that knew many sohar songs and who would have performed had they been in Delhi at the time of the celebration. This hints at two things. First, that the more traditional practice of sohars (i.e. singing by a group of women rather than playing of pre-recorded sohar songs) is at least surviving in the villages. Second, my research participants did not always travel back to their maternal family home to give birth as is still common with many first-time mothers across India. This second fact is indicative that most of my research population was raised in metropolitan areas, gave birth to their children in hospital settings, and was generally of a higher socio-economic standing than the average Indian population.

While sohar sessions are often led by an older family member or hired professional, the women who participate in the events are of all ages. Daughters, cousins, nieces, aunts, and grandmothers could all be found participating in these song sessions and in the talk and gossip that generally accompanies these celebrations. Men do not sing sohars or remain in the room for very long during the sohar celebrations; although, at the events I attended, there was not a strict gender separation. Henry notes one sohar sung by a group of Dusadh men in the Mithila region of Bihar (1998:433), but this seems to be an extremely uncommon practice. Men might listen in from outside the door, or hold their own celebrations in adjoining rooms. However, the women's music remained clearly audible to the entire household, and often to the neighbors as well. Weather permitting, sohar sessions are often held outside in the home's courtyard or on the veranda.

At the four formal sohar sessions I attended, I was the only male who remained in the room for the duration of the singing, and was definitely looked on as an oddity (male, foreign, white, researcher) by most of the women involved. My status as a foreign male music researcher smoothed over some of the cultural taboos that discourage the presence or inhibit the participation of men in sohar sessions. My research participants' generally socially more liberal attitudes were also undoubtedly a primary reason I was invited to witness the celebrations. However, I was still looked on with some suspicion by some of the family members and friends who did not know me. Once it was explained that I was researching child-directed music and (most importantly) accompanied in India by my wife and daughter, much of the unease dissipated. The taboo surrounding male participation in sohar sessions stems, in part, from a lingering cultural stereotype that brands men who sing sohar songs as potentially homosexual. Niranjana found similar sentiments among musicians in Trinidad who performed "Chutney"

songs thought to have derived from sohar tunes (Niranjana 2006:96). Moreover, it is also common for transgendered women or *hijras* to participate in various lifecycle celebrations, including singing sohars and other songs related to childbirth and marriage.¹⁵ While I was unable to ask the women participating in these events specifically about their opinions of men participating in sohar song sessions, I was able to ask the semi-professional sohar singers with whom I worked. However, they never gave me a straight answer and generally waved off questions of this nature by saying that men simply do not participate, although young boys are occasionally allowed to remain in the room among the women.

Even though it is generally culturally taboo for men to participate in sohar sessions, these events cannot be interpreted as separate or private spaces. Unlike lullabies, which can allow for a measure of privacy and thus the ability to “say the unsayable,” sohar sessions are public events that, at least in the urban areas and in my experience, operate within public earshot.¹⁶ Previous scholars have noted the liberating opportunities sohar sessions provide women to air personal or gendered concerns. For example, in her discussion of sohars and the imaging or singing of the female body, Vidya Rao cites one sohar in which the “shame” of pregnancy is described by a woman to her husband:

Laughing, playing you come home.
Where have you been playing my darling?
One foot on the threshold, the other on the bed
[He] held me in his arms [and asked]
“Where does it hurt my darling?”
“It’s a matter of shame. I hesitate to speak of it to a man.

¹⁵ The song “Oh Bibiji bidhai meiN” from the 1985 Hindi film *Rahem Dil Jallad* provides one entertaining example of hijras performing a badhai (celebration) song for a new baby. While I was not personally witness to hijra participation in sohar events, I did witness groups dancing for one wedding street procession near my home in Delhi. One group of hijras would regularly congregate at an intersection in my neighborhood to ask for money from passing motorists, and lavished “attention” on me during my frequent walks to a nearby metro stop.

¹⁶ I did attend one event at the home of a friend in Mumbai where the women gathered in a room on the first floor of a home while the men gathered on the rooftop terrace to eat and drink. However, there did not seem to be any hard restriction on presence of men or their overhearing the sohars (the door to the women’s room was left open, but this was the most “separate” sohar song session I attended.

What can I say my darling?
“My left side flutters, my right aches, my [swollen] feet are killing me.
I need a clever *dai*, my darling.” (Rao 2006:98)¹⁷

In this sohar, the female voice claims power over her body by speaking plainly and lovingly of the “shame” of pregnancy. Rao writes that sohar songs “give us – and the singing women – the opportunity to imagine and create a world where we are, where we can be, the confident serene *swadhinapatika*”¹⁸ (Rao 2006:99). Rao’s analysis is accurate if the sohar’s text is examined in isolation. Undoubtedly, it is tempting to read into the text of certain sohars and see them as allowing women some expressive space for the airing of gendered stories and sensibilities that might otherwise be restricted in traditional patriarchal Indian culture. While Rao’s analysis provides insight into the multivalent meanings that appear in certain sohars, it is crucial to account for the performance context and details of the actual practice in every analysis before drawing conclusions concerning a song’s liberating potential. Kirin Narayan cautions about the danger of ignoring context in her analysis of Rajasthani folksongs: “The standard scholarly approach to folksongs in the Indian context has been to present song texts, and then to extrapolate from them truths about the condition of a collective Woman in that particular regional context... Looking for cultural truths in songs, scholars are in danger of reducing texts to ethnographic artifacts, overlooking the subjectivity and agency of performers” (Narayan 1997:46). I would add that viewing sohars as a vehicle for the expression of alternative viewpoints or gendered sentiments runs the risk of extrapolating textual “truth” from a practice that must be understood as both text and context.

In practice, sohar performances in urban India do not present the same opportunities to privacy for the women performers as some performances might in more rural situations,

¹⁷ Quoted in Chaturvedi 1988.

¹⁸ The *swadhinapatika* is a voice or positioning used in classical thumri, one akin to a confident lover who is secure in her affections.

particularly in cases where men are absent from the home for extended periods of time for their employment. My research participants in urban India were not separated from their husbands for extended period as many rural women can be. It was common for my research participants to move between large cities in India with some frequency. However, unlike the situations described with women living in rural villages and coping with their husband's long absence described by scholars examining women's folksong practices (for example Jacobson 1975; Narayan 1997), my research participants retained their nuclear family cohesiveness during their movements between cities in search of employment and education. Thus, in a way, urban living and the demands of the modern Indian economy (and more liberal social values generally) have lessened the degree of gender separation within families. This is one reason I believe that the content of sohar songs popular in urban areas tends to focus on general celebration, praising gods and goddesses, positive allegorical stories, expectations for the child's future, and gifts to be given to the child. In contrast, songs that focus on themes such as childbirth difficulties or medicines used for childbirth (Bhagavat 1976), husband-wife separation (Jacobson 1975), or other "negative" allegorical stories were less commonly sung or mentioned by my research participants. Contemporary urban women are not experiencing the absence of their husbands and childbirth is medically less life threatening, leading to a situation where these "negatively" themed sohars have diminished relevance to their lived experiences and are performed or listened to less frequently as a result.

Apart from *dais* and their actions, more common sohar themes revolve around the actions of the pregnant woman's (jaccha) family and descriptions of the mother-to-be, in addition to songs detailing the celebratory actions following the birth of a child. Food is a common theme in sohar songs which can describe the cravings of a pregnant woman or the dishes made for post-

birth celebrations. One sohar sung to me by my research participants in Delhi described in mouthwatering detail the *chapatis* (flat bread), ghee, halwa (sweetened cream of wheat), and other foods that are shared with family and guests celebrating the baby's birth. Besides describing gifts and foods to be shared, the song tells of the application of *kajal* to the baby's eyes. The application of *kajal* (kohl) is a part of another ceremony also held on the sixth day after birth, which is now commonly combined with the activities of the *chatti puja* according to my research participants. In this previously separate ceremony, the new mother's sister-in-law applies kohl to the eyes or eyebrows of the baby (both boys and girls) for the first time.

Tewari provides another example of a song in which the pregnant woman demands special foods (out-of-season mangoes) from her husband even while the husband tries to satisfy his wife with less expensive and more available fruits (1988:258). In the example described above, halwa and other sweets are closely associated with celebrations generally. In yet another sohar, *urad* (a type of dal or legume) represents the desires of the pregnant woman for food, sustenance, special care, and its consumption "is not unconnected with sleeping with her husband and the resultant full (in more ways than one) stomach" (Rao 2006:104). Yet, of all the various references and symbols in sohars, the one that is most quickly disappearing from the lived experience of many urban Indians is that of the *dai*.

Several examples of popular sohars in contemporary urban India show this shift of thematic focus. Rather than emphasizing the problems of childbirth, separation, or other "negative" stories, popular sohars today are primarily celebratory. One such example, "Mili juli gaave," was popular with several research participants from Bhojpuri-speaking families or

backgrounds.¹⁹ With its flowing, ornamented melody, “Mili juli gaave” is more akin to a classicized bhajans than the more folk-derived examples sung to me by other research participants [13. Mili juli gaave.mp3]. In comparison to the language used in the previous example, “Mili juli gaave” describes the birth of Krishna and the musical celebrations in his home and village in comparatively sedate language:

Together let’s celebrate
Celebrate for this child is born
Let’s give thanks to the mother goddess
Together we sing in celebration

With this child
Will come wealth
We will give with an open hand

Who gives away the Dhenu [sacred] cow
And who gives away money
Who rejoices in the courtyard
From whose house echoes the sohar

Nand Baba [Krishna’s father] gives away the Dhenu cow
Mother Yashoda [Krishna’s mother] is rejoicing in the courtyard
In Gokul village today there is celebration
From Baba Nand’s house echoes the sohar²⁰

While this song illustrates some common features displayed in other sohars, such as the giving of gifts and money, religious symbols such as the sacred cow, and allegorical references to Krishna and Yashoda, its lyrics are comparatively less colorful and descriptive than another example from rural Uttar Pradesh.

Jaccā’s eyes are full of pride, somebody should look
Sāsa and nanada will make laddū for me;

¹⁹ It is also the most “viewed” sohar on YouTube that was not composed for the Hindi film industry. The vocalist, actor, and politician Manoj Tiwari has performed this sohar in concert and on television and his popularization of this song undoubtedly is a reason behind its use in my research participants’ chatti pujas.

²⁰ This translation is based on two sources, one found at http://www.beatofindia.com/lyrics_for_sale/manoj_tiwari/12-mili_juli_gaave-mt.txt and another translation accompanying Manoj Tiwari’s performance on YouTube found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R5LjtXdfuDo>.

I will make my husband take care of the house, somebody should look.
Jaccā's eyes are full of pride, somebody should look.
Sāsa and nanada will make khicaḍī for me;
My husband will pour ghī on it, somebody should look...
She gave birth to a boy-child, that's why she is sitting on the bed;
She is giving orders to everyone in the house, somebody should look.
Jacca's eyes are full of pride, somebody should look.
If she had given birth to a girl-child, she would be sitting on the doorsill;
She would have fallen from everyone's eyes, somebody should look.
(Tewari 1974:36-37)

In this sohar, important symbolic actions are also described (the care of the new mother by her mother-in-law and husband's sister, the new mother's ability to order her husband to clean the house, the shame brought by the birth of a girl, etc.) but with more evocative language. The new mother is full of "pride," special foods are made for the new mother, and the "shame" resulting from a daughter's birth is vividly articulated. Other traditional sohars use similarly charged language. Bahadur cites a sohar that describes a woman's fear of barrenness and the terrible treatment she receives at the hands of her family:

My mother-in-law despises me
for being barren,
my sister-in-law
contemptuously
calls me
an ascetic,
my husband
whom I married in childhood,
has also driven me out. (Bahadur 1978:30-31)

This sohar, sung in fearful anticipation rather than celebration, also employs emotionally charged language that appears to be far less common in more contemporary sohar songs popular in metropolitan India and those written for the Hindi film industry. Furthermore, sohar songs describing labor pains and the process of birth, sometimes categorized as *sariya* (a subset of sohars sung only after birth), songs that might seem to naturally invoke more descriptive or emotionally charged language because of the intense nature of their subject matter, are generally

declining in popularity, according to Tewari (1988:261), and a fact reiterated by my research participants. This may also help explain the apparent shift towards more celebratory songs and the movement away from those that describe more intense or negative emotions and stories associated with labor pains, fears of barrenness, and issues of shame or pollution.

Another reason behind the rise of generally celebratory sohars with families in urban India, in addition to increased family cohesiveness, may also be due to the diminishing prevalence of certain cultural and religious practices related to the treatment of girls and women. As illustrated in the examples above, the birth of a girl has not historically been cause for celebration among Indian Hindus. This may be attributed to the religiously proscribed necessity for a male child to perform funeral rites for their father and because of the hardships imposed by the dowry system on the family of a girl. Increasing gender equality and the (ongoing) attempts to eliminate the dowry system,²¹ developments that have only substantially taken hold in urban India, distance the topics of many older sohar songs from the contemporary lived experiences of many of my urban dwelling research participants.

Childbirth, the *Dai* and the Pressures of Modernity

Changing childbirth practices offer yet another explanation for the changing and declining practice of sohars in urban India. As urban families increasingly transition into hospital settings for the births of their children, older cultural-religious practices and birth practitioners have been pushed out of the picture. The traditional midwife or *dai*²² finds little place in modern

²¹ Despite being subject to (widely-flouted) legal restrictions, the dowry system is still practiced in many marriages throughout India, even while many middle-class women deride the practice as a “disease” or “blemish” on the face of society (Meyer 2001:108).

²² Traditional midwives commonly learn their skills informally through “absorption,” by attending other births in their community rather than formally learning their skills from specialists. As such, a woman’s “identification” as *dai* is fluid and not always explicitly acknowledged (Pinto 2008:54). Also, I use *dai* as a catchall term for traditional midwives but do not want to suggest that there is some “universal” model these women follow, nor do I want to

biomedical hospital settings. In addition to being repositories of traditional birthing knowledge, traditional midwives also help facilitate cultural practices and rituals, including sohar singing.

The place of the *dai* in urban Indian society today is fraught with stigma, misunderstanding, and caste politics that are too complex to fully detail here. Sarah Pinto's dissertation "Casting Desire: Reproduction, Loss, and Subjectivity in Rural North India" (2003) provides an excellent analysis of the politics, social pressures, and cultural shifts affecting reproductive practices and the role of *dais* in contemporary India. However, it is important to highlight the role of *dais* in the maintenance of the sohar tradition because they have been rarely or only peripherally acknowledged by scholars investigating sohar practices, their profession is declining or being irrevocably altered by the growing prominence of biomedical approaches to childbirth, they and their activities are common themes in sohar songs, and their plight illustrates how urbanization and modernity affect traditional practices and knowledge in ways strikingly similar to the processes affecting traditional child-directed song practice in general.

For centuries, *dais* have provided services to Hindu and Muslim²³ women during childbirth, helping women with pre-labor preparations including checking the baby's position within the womb, massaging the mother with oil, and even performing painful manual manipulations of breech infants. During and after labor, *dais* have been the primary caregivers aiding the mother, cutting the umbilical cord, washing the infant, helping deal with the placental birth and disposal (all tasks seen as "polluting"), advising the mother on breastfeeding, and giving post-partum dietary guidance. Not surprisingly, because of their close association with the polluting aspects of childbirth, *dais* are poorly regarded, they are drawn from low-caste groups

obscure the real differences between *dais* of different ethnic groups, castes, and technical or medical specialties. For example, Chalwa notes that there are differentiations between the castes of *dai* such as *sohi*, *baauri*, and *dom* that influence with whom they work and the types of birth related activities they practice (such as cutting the umbilical cord, helping clean the new mother, disposal of the placenta, etc. (2010:8).

²³ *Dais* serving Muslim women often come from the *ansaari jat* or "clan" (Sharif 1972).

(often part of or associated with the caste of leatherworkers), and are disrespected by new biomedical institutions despite their historically critical function and respect accorded to them in the community (Chalwa 2010:6). Many of the traditional medical practices of *dais* have remained unchanged for centuries. Writing about practices in the 1830s, Sharīf described some of the *dais*' practices such as the cutting of the umbilical cord with a piece of sharpened silver (1972:22),²⁴ traditions that are still followed today but are swiftly changing as a result of work by NGOs and government health agencies.

Because of their generally low-caste and association with the “pollution” of childbirth, I was surprised to hear that *dais* are regularly invited to post-birth celebrations and rituals to share their musical knowledge. In smaller villages this might be somewhat expected as the entire community is often involved these celebrations. In larger urban areas, the inclusion of *dais* in post-partum celebrations and rituals underscores the respect (and gratitude) these women still command despite their low caste. In her dissertation, Sara Pinto describes how a *dai* known as “Kailash’s Mother,” in addition to her post-partum care-giving skills, was a renowned singer who was one of the only people in her village of Lalpur, Uttar Pradesh who remembered older style sohar and *seriya* songs. Kailash’s Mother, Pinto notes, was treated with a mixture of respect, affection, prejudice, and disdain by the upper-caste women for whom she worked, a chaotic mixture relating to her low-caste “untouchable” status and her valued knowledge of older sohars (Pinto 2003:66-67). Other scholars also recognize the vital role *dais* have played in preserving sohar songs (Rao 2006:82). However, the *dais*' livelihoods and successful preservation of sohar musical knowledge is threatened by the Indian government and international NGOs efforts to bring *dais* in line with modern biomedical norms, effectively

²⁴ The silver piece was then kept as payment by the *dai*. However, due to educational efforts by NGOs and government agencies emphasizing sterile practices, today it is more common for the *dai* to use a razor blade to cut the umbilical cord and be paid in cash.

meaning the eradication of the *dai* profession. There has been some effort by organizations such as MATRIKA (Motherhood and Traditional Resources, Information, Knowledge and Action) led by Janet Chalwa, one of my research participants, to elevate the status of the *dai* and preserve their unique cultural knowledge and medical practices.

Besides being repositories of sohar song traditions, the figure of the *dai* and actions associated with the *dai*'s work are frequently integrated into the text of sohars. In one song, the laboring mother quips at her dim-witted husband to cease his futile attempts at soothing her pain and “bring me a clever *dai*” (Rao 2006:95). In other instances, the *dai* may be absent, but work specific to her profession is described. “In the wee hours of the morning, a son is born to her. The umbilical cord is cut with a golden knife and the baby is bathed in a silver pot” (Tewari 1988:260). Other songs describe the work of the *dai* and the process of labor in veiled terms. The song “Jachcha meri sharad pune ka chand” eloquently describes the laboring mother and *dai*: “My *jachcha* is the full moon of *sharad* / Beneath the *mahal* the *dai* waits / With all that’s needed for the *jachcha*” (Rao 2006:91). The laboring mother is described as a *mahal* or palace “under” which the *dai* waits to catch the newborn baby. In a Rajasthani sohar “Chhoti si nari, nariyal jaisa paet,” the *dai* is again called upon by the laboring mother to help with the baby’s delivery, “Tiny woman, belly like a coconut / My stomach aches / Latua, go call the *dai*.”²⁵

In the previous chapter, I described how changing development patterns and architectural styles in India’s megacities are influencing the shape of the family home. The courtyard style home is slowly being replaced by blocky high-rise apartments made of concrete, steel, and glass. I argue that these changes affect a person’s lived experience which, in turn, changes their relationship to representations of this lived experience present in songs. I asked how songs such as “Pawan more angna mein” (The Wind in the Courtyard) might be received in the future as

²⁵ Translation found at <http://www.matrika-india.org/Workshops/Songs/Delhi.html>

housing styles change to make the courtyard a historical memory rather than part of people's day-to-day experience. My reasoning behind this question flows from previous studies showing the effects physical space has on family relationships and communication patterns (Roland 1988; Bryden 2004; Chalana 2010). Following similar logic, I now ask how the disappearance of *dais*, brought about by a movement towards biomedical hospital births, will affect the emotional resonance of sohars that speak of non-existent professions and experiences increasingly alien to pregnant mothers.

Unlike lullabies, sohars are much more closely linked to ritual, such as the chatti puja and other pre- and post-birth rituals, and less associated with the intimate emotional expressions between a caregiver and child. However, an emotional or aesthetic connection to music is critical for its continued use and relevance to an individual's life. As McClellan argues, "music created mood environments to which we respond on a subconscious and non-verbal level. It is through our physical and emotional response to music that mental and spiritual attitudes develop which create, in turn, the basis for our aesthetic enjoyment" (1988:131). I contend that music's potential for creating emotional, metaphysical, or intellectual resonance is diminished if the song text has no connection to the lived experiences of its performers and listeners. Of course, the fact that a song speaks of professions and experiences that have diminishing resonance with the listener does not automatically make the song emotionally, intellectually, or metaphysically ineffectual. However, the absence of this connection to one's lived experience is one factor that reduces a song's potential resonance.

As aspects of sohars become disconnected from the lived experiences of its performers or listeners, as the stories and figures described in these songs become just reminders of an historical practice, it seems logical to assume that the performance of these songs might decrease

in frequency. Divya Deswal, one of my research participants, a natural birth expert and doula (trained in the US) who worked in metropolitan Delhi, remarked on a similar process affecting the godh bharai ritual discussed earlier. She observed that the loss of knowledge concerning the symbolism surrounding the ritual was one of the main reasons urban Indians were abandoning the practice or turning it into “just a party”:

One of the most significant ones [rituals] that I think is going away is called godh bharai. The modern name is baby shower...But intrinsically in the old tradition, there were certain things that were done as rituals – the woman was dressed up with symbols of fertility, like green sari, lots of bangles, things that say she is creative. It was reaffirming her state of creation when she was pregnant. And then five or seven women that had given birth would give her gifts, the gifts were symbolic of their wisdom that they were passing on to her. And I think that is gone too. Then they would have a young child sit in her lap, for her to feel how it feels to hold a baby, to not be afraid to cross that threshold, when she gives birth. To know how holding a child feels like. I think that is also significant. I’m not quite sure what it’s boiled down to now. Sometimes it’s just the rigidity of the ritual that you have to give gifts, you have to give this. We are just stuck in that, what kind of gift, what kind of jewelry, rather than the symbolism behind it. And I think that is what is being lost. (Deswal 2012)

Similarly, as the figure of the *dai* becomes just an increasingly obscure lyrical allusion to a person or practice alien to the lived experience of the sohar’s performer-listeners, these songs, if they are still practiced, become artifacts of a “rigid” ritual whose richness and depth of symbolism are lost.

Many sohars that do not reference *dais* or their work and songs referencing the joys brought by a newborn child, the process of labor, and other social aspects of childbirth will most likely remain resonant even as urban India shifts to a more biomedical, hospital-centered childbirth model. However, as repositories of sohar knowledge and as figures in the songs themselves, the *dai* presents a superb example of the effects of urbanization and modernization on cultural practices and the performance and content of traditional songs. Because the sohar tradition often relies on the knowledge and leadership of older women, whose participation, in

effect, buffers the speed at which the tradition changes. As a result, despite the rapid cultural changes of the last few decades, including modifications to the childbirth process brought about by urbanization, the introduction of modern medical practices, and the institutionalization of the traditional birth assistant, sohar practices are only now showing signs of dramatic change or abandonment.

In this chapter, I have suggested several reasons why sohars are being performed less often or are being replaced by recorded music. First, the experience of childbirth is changing in modern India. I have focused on some of the examples mentioned by my research participants and highlighted the figure of the *dai* in traditional sohars in an attempt to show how the intersection of modern healthcare practices, urbanization, and a move away from traditional birth practices is impacting the performance of sohar songs. *Dais*, women who have figured prominently in the birth process in rural India, who are both repositories of sohar knowledge and the subject of many sohar songs, are being replaced by modern medical institutions. Second, people's attitudes towards the rituals surrounding childbirth are changing. While many women and families still practice rituals such as the godh bharai and the chatti puja, a majority of my younger research participants did not find these practices vitally important. These rituals were described as "funny" and "old" by some and others felt many of these practices were rigidly performed without any attention to their symbolic importance.

Thus, it seems India's project of modernization and urbanization is affecting sohar and lullaby practices in similar ways. Once vibrant musical expressions are disappearing or being replaced by recorded media, while at the same time the perceived importance of the symbolic or ritual practices associated with these musical activities is fading. Contrary to other instances in which urban living, technology, and increased access to knowledge and communication have led

to more heterogeneous practices, at least in the case of sohars and lullabies, the project of modernity seems to be slowly erasing cultural-musical traditions. Apart from purely entertainment, sohars playfully express sentiments of love, hope, fear, frustration, anger, and resentment in a protected but not entirely separate or private space. Sohars have been, until recently, a figurative musical cap to ritual and spiritual behavior, a way to celebrate pregnancy and birth, a musical practice that helps reaffirm friendship and kinship ties of women as a community of recent mothers, experienced mothers, and mothers-to-be.

The disappearance of sohars and other ritual practices says something disconcerting about India's project of modernization. As Rachel Meyer writes, "Women stand as the primary agents in the formation of a modern nation... Women's poetic practices counter the discomfiting transformations of family in relation to the marketplace, one of modernity's more threatening incarnations" (2001:291). Yet, according to my research participants and consistent with previous scholarship, the communal, in-person musical-poetic practice of sohars is being replaced by pre-recorded music commodities, or is disappearing altogether. As sohars are lost to time, old age, the changing reality of urban childbirth, the forced irrelevancy of the *dai* by the advancement of westernized bio-medicine, and the preferences of the new generation of mothers, what, if anything, takes their place to counter modernity's "threatening incarnation?" Writing about similar processes nearly twenty years ago Henry asks, "In just a few decades centuries-old songs and singing institutions that unify social life and give it meaning and scope for creativity can be lost forever. So be it?" (1998:438). The question still remains.

Chapter 5

Film Lullabies and the Establishment of a Pan-Indian Identity

It is nearly impossible to overstate the influence film music has on the arts, entertainment, and culture of India. The faces of Indian film stars saturate India's media landscape, and the sounds of Bollywood, Tollywood, Mollywood, Kollywood¹ and the other regional film industries are unquestionably the most popular source for musical entertainment, comprising nearly 80% of the total music sales in India (Ganti 2004:78). A film's success is largely dependent on the popularity of its music. Most films from the "Golden Age" of Indian cinema (roughly the 1940s through the 1960s) centered on family drama and melodramas, providing a natural stage for the integration of children and child-directed songs into the film's narrative. The rise of more violent action films and romantic comedies beginning in the 1970s left comparatively less room for the inclusion of more sentimental lullabies. Over the last two decades, lullabies have been included in a small number of films, but tend to be more integrated with the film's background soundtrack rather than pieces used for the onscreen song-and-dance routines common in Bollywood cinema.

In this chapter, I briefly discuss the history of lullabies in Indian films and provide an overview of the stylistic trends affecting Hindi cinema over the past 70 years. I examine the development, narrative context, and musical features of the film lullabies most frequently referenced by my research participants. Most of the songs recalled by my research participants come from films produced from the late 1940s through the 1960s. This is due, in part, to the relative prominence of lullaby songs in films from those decades, but also because many of my

¹ The creation of "Bollywood" as a term for India's main film industry quickly caught on with other regional markets such as Tollywood for early Bengali films (now more commonly referring to Telegu-language films), for Malayalee films (Mollywood), and for the Tamil-speaking film industry located in Kodambakkam (Kollywood), to name a few. It is vital to recognize that Bollywood does not equal the whole of Indian popular cinema, but is simultaneously a huge and "alarmingly small" part of the Indian culture industry (Rajadhyaksha 2003).

research participants were young children in the 50s and 60s and thus heard these tunes replayed on the radio and sung by their parents as part of their bed-time routines. My research participants fondly recalled many “evergreen” songs from this period (and a few from later decades), and have integrated these songs into their “live” lullaby practices with their own children and grandchildren. Films are the source for the vast majority of lullabies sung and played in India today.² As such, this dissertation would be woefully incomplete if it did not address lullabies in the contexts of Indian cinema and detail the uses of these songs on and off screen.

Despite the music’s significant age and its seeming distance from the lived realities of contemporary Indians, songs from the 1940s through the 1960s continue to appear on newly released compilations of film soundtracks or as source material for new recordings. The re-singing of these songs to young children perpetuates their existence, refreshing their connection to the lives of Indians who may have been born decades after the song’s initial popularity. In this chapter, I highlight approximately a dozen film songs to show their musical and textual features, and locate the songs in their filmic contexts. I then address how these songs, as a result of their prominence in popular media and as living song practices, help establish a sense of pan-Indian identity that is superseding older notions of political nationalism and regional-ethnic identities. This discussion complements my earlier examination of how lullabies help craft an individual’s sense of identity in chapter 3. Here, my aim is to present a broader view of how film music and popular media helps integrate the individual with a more national, though not exclusively nationalist, cosmopolitan, and even global sense of what is “Indian.”

² There are several examples of the Indian cinema co-opting previously known folk lullabies or rhymes. See discussion of “Chanda mama” in chapter 2.

A Brief History of the Hindi Films and Lullabies

Until relatively recently, Indian film music has remained unstudied by Indian and Western scholars, who have generally preferred to focus their attention on India's art and folk music traditions. Alison Arnold's dissertation is one of the first comprehensive attempts to analyze Hindi film music, and remains one of the best scholarly resources focused on the first fifty years of Hindi film music (Arnold 1991). Lately, there has been a flourishing of scholarship analyzing representations of gender, modernity, nationalism and music in Hindi cinema (Morcom 2007; Sundar 2007; Booth and Shope 2014). My discussion here, while far from comprehensive in terms of the film music industry as a whole, is intended to draw attention to the place of lullabies in films, while providing some general context as to the history and general trends of the Indian film industry.

“So ja rajkumari” (Go to Sleep, Princess) (1940), is possibly the first and certainly one of the more popular lullabies to emerge from the Hindi film industry. Sung by one of India's most famous actor-singers, K. L. Saigal, in the film *Zindagi* (Life), “So ja rajkumari” is widely re-recorded by contemporary artists even seventy-five years after its composition. It was frequently mentioned by my research participants as a tune they recalled being sung by their parents and grandparents. The very first “talkie” film in India, *Alam Ara*, released in 1931, only nine years earlier than *Zindagi*, marked the beginning of the inclusion of songs and music in Indian films, a trend that has generated hundreds of thousands of songs in tens of thousands of films since. Until 1935, because of technological limitations (the film and sound were recorded simultaneously on a single tape) songs were performed live for the camera. After 1935, “singing star” actors lip-synced the music to their actions onscreen, and K. L. Saigal was one of the foremost stars of this

era. However, the singing star era lasted only a few years until the rise to prominence of “ghost voices” or playback singers, a production technique which began in earnest in the 1940s.

Prior to the 1940s, many films included dozens of songs, peaking in the 1932 film *Indrabasha* at an incredible seventy-one songs (Abbasi-Bhura 2001:27). These early films were advertised as “all-talking, all-singing, all-dancing” films in which music and dance were *the* central factors to the films appeal (Barnouw and Krishnaswamy 1980:69). Film style coalesced as time passed and the number of songs per film gradually shrank until a comfortable standard was established of around six to ten songs per film. Many of the most famous and widely recorded playback singers and song composers began their careers in the early 1940s and continued to dominate the field for over thirty years (and in some cases longer). Lata Mangeshkar and her sister Asha Bhosle, Mohammad Rafi, Geeta Dutt, and actor-singer Kishore Kumar profoundly influenced the style and sound of film lullabies, and their voices are still prominent in new releases of compilations today.

During the late 1940s and 50s, the storyline of Indian films often centered family drama (or epic family melodrama), a style that came to be known as the “social” genre (Sen 2008:43). These types of film, which center on topics such as Hindu-Muslim and inter-caste marriage, the tensions between wealth and poverty, and the neorealism of family relationship dramas, provided an opportunity for music producers to exploit lullabies for their sentimentality, their association with tradition and good parenting, and as a way to musically frame the innocence of childhood. There are many examples of lullabies from this era that remain in contemporary consciousness because of the film’s lasting popularity and due to the use of these songs in the lullaby routines of parents today. “Aaja ri a nindiya tu aa” (Come sleep, please come) from the internationally acclaimed film *Do Bigha Zameen* (1953), “Chandan ka palna, resham ki dori” (Cradle of

sandalwood, cord of silk) from *Shabaab* (1954), “Raj dulare” (Darling king) from the Pakistani film *Naukar* (1955), to “Nanhi kali, sone chali” (Little flower-bud is going to sleep) from *Sujata* (1959) represent only a few of the many successful, long-lived, and most loved lullabies from the decade of the 1950s. I discuss the impact, style, and film context of these and other songs later in this chapter.

Continuing the trend from the prior decade, the 1960s saw many lullabies produced for the last of the social genre films, although what might be called “peak lullaby time” was ending. Memorable lullabies such as “Chanda dhale pankha jhale” from *Piyar ki Pyas* (1961), “Aaj kal meiN dhal gaya” (Today has become yesterday) from *Beti Bete* (1964), and “Pawan more angna meiN” (The wind in the courtyard) from *Shehnai* (1964) among others. Even though the first indigenously produced color film, *Kisan Kanya*, was made in India in 1937 (a prior film, *Sairandhri*, was produced in 1934 but was made in Germany and imported to India),³ until the 1960s, most films were shot in black and white.

Beginning in the 1970s and continuing into the 1980s, the social dramas which focused on family stories were replaced by more action oriented films, romantic films where familial relationships played a diminishing role, and other genres that were produced to appeal to the film industry’s domestic and, increasingly, international audiences. The rise of superstar actor Amitabh Bachchan as the “angry young man” redressing the wrongs of society is widely recognized as signaling a tonal shift in Indian cinema. India in the 1970s was a place of dramatic social upheaval, culminating with Indira Gandhi’s declaration of a State of Emergency in 1975. Given this social climate, it seems natural that intimate family dramas would be left behind as audiences sought onscreen what real life seemed to lack, an “avenger, the common man’s hero, the righter of wrongs...a real hero who could redress all [society’s] evils” (Abbasi-Bhura

³ See Arnold 1991:114.

2001:40). However, family drama films, and the lullaby soundtrack potentials these settings offer, did not entirely disappear from the cinema. The lullabies “Lalla, lalla, lori” (Lalla, lalla, lullaby) from *Mukti* (1977), “Aaja nindiya aaja” (Come Sleep Come) from *Lorie* (1984), “Sapnon ke Ghar ki” (The Dream House) from *Daddy* (1989) are three notable examples.

The shift in tone in the late 1970s and the 1980s also coincided with what many of my research participants saw as a reduction in the quality and memorability of film songs. While the overall quantity of film songs continued unabated, the “Golden Era” of Indian cinema accompanied by their “evergreen” songs was at an end. Attributing this “gradual comedown” in musical quality to an over involvement of music producers stressing the business and commerce side of film production over artistic creativity, one author and journalist, only somewhat sardonically perhaps, dubbed the decade of the 1970s “Fizz and Pop,” while the 1980s were even more bluntly labeled the “Good, Bad, and Ugly – and Pretty Too” (Vijayakar 2009:54). Out of over seventy of my research participants, only one mentioned the late 1970s and 1980s as an era whose music they continued to enjoy today.

After the quality desert of the 1980s, film music began a period of revitalization in the 1990s, particularly following the rise of composing sensation A. R. Rahman. Almost singlehandedly, Rahman changed the stylistic norms of Indian film music, shifting focus from hummable, individual songs where lyrics and melody were paramount, to a more orchestrated and crafted style. Prior to Rahman’s appearance, critics saw the 1990s Hindi film industry as largely plagiarizing its music from Western and Middle Eastern films, from its own past through re-performances of old tunes, and the inclusion of regional songs into the larger Hindi film market (Vijayakar 2009:93). In the 1990s and into the new millennium, Indian film music increasingly removed the “song” from direct representation onscreen or from the film’s

narrative. Discreet songs and dominant vocal lines gave way to “pastiche of color, sound and embedded moods [that] took precedence over any one musical element” (Sarrazin 2014:48). Recently, “Western” rock, pop, and rap have been combined with regional Indian genres, probably most notably Punjabi bhangra, to continue musical fusion trend in Hindi cinema. The collaboration between Kolkata based music director Pritam, American rap artist Snoop Dogg, and the British bhangra band RDB for the soundtrack of the 2008 film *Singh is Kinng*, is one recent example of the Hindi film industry’s increasingly self-conscious orientation towards musical fusion.

Over the past three decades (1980s, 1990s and 2000s), a shrinking number of films have included lullabies as part of their soundtrack, but it speaks to the importance and affective power lullabies hold that they continue to be used in a contemporary film genre described as “Epico-Mythico-Tragico-Comico-Super-Sexy-High-Masala-Art” (Mishra 2002:2). The combined results of the narrative shift away from social dramas and neorealism associated with the “Parallel Cinema” movement of earlier decades (late 1940s until the 1990s), the decreasing prominence of the individual song, and the growing dominance of a soundtrack sound divorced from the film’s direct narrative, left comparatively less room for the performance of the types of lullabies heard during the “Golden Era” of Hindi cinema.

There are a few exceptions to the diminished inclusion of lullabies in film soundtracks. These examples are rarely represented onscreen in a straightforward, caregiver-singing-to-child manner more common in film from the 1940s, 50s, and 60s. “Lori” (Lullaby) from the Amitabh Bachchan film *Family: Ties of Blood* (2006) is one example of a Hindi film lullaby whose paring with the onscreen visuals shows a dramatic shift from the practices of films from previous eras.⁴

⁴ An even more recent example can be heard in the 2013 Hindi horror/mystery film *Aatma*, where a lullaby is used to accentuate the suspense of scenes involving ghosts, murder, a disturbed child, and a distraught mother.

Rather than show the love of a mother for her child, or as analogy for the romantic love between adults, “Lori” is set to onscreen flashbacks of Bachchan’s character’s blissful memories of his family and children as he searches the same deserted and dilapidated house for his family’s kidnappers who lie in wait, ready to kill. While the melody and lyrical content of the song itself may be conducive to singing a child to sleep, the arresting visuals associated with the lullaby onscreen might make such a performance disturbing if the caregiver learned the song from watching the film.⁵ Another lullaby, “Chandaniya (lori, lori)” from the film *Rowdy Rathore* (2012), further accentuates this pairing of a lullaby with themes of loss and death and is discussed later in detail.

Film Lullabies and their Musical, Textual, and Contextual Features

I will now highlight a series of lullabies and begin to illustrate their musical, textual, and contextual features. These examples are by no means comprehensive,⁶ but represent some of the best known film lullabies, examples that nearly everyone raised in India would at least recognize. These songs are were repeatedly mentioned by my research participants as the most famous, memorable, best sounding, and most emotionally affective; lullabies that their parents sung to them or that they sing to their children. Some musical and lyrical features of these songs have remained remarkably stable and prominent through the decades. Yet the film context of lullabies, how they are actually portrayed onscreen, has changed over time along with the evolving style of Indian cinema. Film lullabies are used to convey the essence of parental and romantic love, a contented family life, childhood innocence, purity, but are also linked with sadness, fear, and

⁵ Compact discs and online downloads of the film’s soundtrack offer another avenue by which these songs may enter into caregivers’ personal lullaby practice. If a caregiver learns these lullabies from a sound recording only, the lullaby’s associations with the death or sadness presented as part of the film’s narrative may remain unknown.

⁶ There are literally hundreds, if not thousands, of Hindi and other regional film lullabies that I could not hope to cover here.

death. Film lullabies are contrasted with other sounds and music to assert a particular sense of Indian-ness. Viewed in tandem with the film's visual images, these songs display shades of multiple meanings that enrich the film's story and emotional affect.

Kundan Lal Saigal's 1940 hit "So ja rajkumari" from the film *Zindagi* (Life) remains quite popular today. Composed by the Bengali music director, actor, and singer Pankaj Kumar Mullick with lyricist Kedar Sharma, "So ja rajkumari" serves as the perfect vehicle for Saigal's softer vocal style, derisively described as "crooning" (Ranade 2006), a style that nevertheless influenced subsequent male vocalists for decades afterward [16. So ja rajkumari.mp3]. The song makes use of both Indian and Western instruments such as piano, violin, sarangi, and tabla and is firmly diatonic in scale. The song employs both natural and flat 3rd scale degrees (ga and *komal ga* in Hindustani sargam) and may be based on the rāg Jhinjoti, although a direct correlation between a film songs and classical rāg's melodic material is often difficult. This first example shows the dual shadings of emotional content common with film lullabies, and lullabies generally. The text of "So ja rajkumari" shows many of the customary tropes found in most lullabies composed for the Hindi film industry: "Go to sleep, princess, go to sleep / Go to sleep, my precious one / Sleep and come sweet dreams, in the dream see your beloved / Fly to Roopnagar and be surrounded by maidens / The king will garland you and kiss you on the forehead." The rising melodic line could be described as pretty or even happy. On screen, however, Saigal is shown singing this lullaby at the deathbed of his lover, Jamuna. The pairing of lullaby with the themes of the death of a romantic lover is a phenomenon fairly common in Hindi cinema, a combination that has deep historical precedents.⁷ "So ja rajkumari" is the first lullaby in a film that marks the beginning of the "Golden Era" of Hindi film cinema.

⁷ See Farber 1990. Lullabies have been sung by many cultures as a way to ward off evil and death. For example, the Hebrew chant "Lilith-abi" (away demon) is considered as one possible origin for the term lullaby.

One of the most famous Hindi film lullabies was written for the award winning 1953 film *Do Bigha Zameen* (Two-Thirds an Acre of Land). Directed by renowned Bengali director Bimal Roy with music by Salil Chowdhury, *Do Bigha Zameen* is seen as one of the first Indian neo-realist films and ushered in an era later dubbed the Indian New Wave Cinema (Chakravarty 1989). The lullaby, “Aaja ri aa nindiya tu aa,” (Come sleep, please come) is depicted onscreen when the illiterate pregnant wife (Parvati) of the film’s protagonist visits a neighboring wealthy landowner to sell some water chestnuts to help pay for her ailing father [2. Aaja ri aa nindiya tu aa.mp3]. Parvati overhears this woman singing to her child, holding and rocking the baby girl to sleep in a swing hung from the room’s ceiling. Parvati is taken with the song’s beauty, later remarking to the woman that, “God has poured all the sweetness into your voice.” The film’s depiction of a mother sweetly laying her child to sleep is a scene that might be called archetypal of lullaby performances, at least in a contemporary understanding of how a lullaby is supposed to function. A mother lovingly sings her child to sleep, focusing her attention on the child, as opposed to using the song as a vehicle for expressing love for another adult, or lamenting her life circumstances. However, it is clear that many, if not most, film lullabies pair the sentimental with darker emotional content, a theme to be discussed later. “Aaja ri aa nindiya tu aa” also provides an example that counters older notions that lullabies were mainly sung or composed for male children, a topic discussed in chapter 2. Rather than lamenting a girl’s fate, the film actress embraces the child singing, “You are the queen of this world, you are my favorite / The world is in my arms, my dream has come true.” The girl is celebrated without any tinge of worry for her future, or regret that she was not born a male. “Aaja ri aa nindiya tu aa” is one of the first Hindi film lullabies made famous by Lata Mangeshkar, the Indian superstar

playback singer who began her career in 1942, became regarded as the quintessential voice of Indian film, and continues influence the sound of Indian film music today.

Several other famous Hindi film lullabies employ lyrics similar to “Aaja ri aa nindiya tu aa,” at least for their opening stanza. In the film *Zeenat* (1945),⁸ the actor-singer Noor Jahan sings the lullaby “Aaja ri nindiya aake na ja” (Come sleep, come, do not go) while rocking her child to sleep in a cradle. However, she keeps her back turned to the child much of the time, looking into the distance as she longs for a better life, a visual cue that shifts emphasis away from the child and focuses the viewer’s attention onto her. In the film, Jahan plays a woman forced to work as a domestic servant after her husband’s death to help support her young child. A more sorrowful lullaby than the song from *Do Bigha Zameen*, “Aaja ri aa nindiya aake na ja” displays more classical melodic movements and draws its material from several different rāgs (rāgmala). Jahan’s vocals are supported by the sarangi, bansuri, and tabla, eschewing the type of Indian-Western instrumental fusion that had become the virtual standard for Hindi film accompaniment. The piece sounds much more “classical” as compared to later film songs (and especially film lullabies). Beginning with Jahan’s solo voice, the instrumental accompaniment then closely mirrors her melodic line as is common in Hindustani classical performances, and several times the accompaniment stops to allow Jahan space to complete vocal acrobatics or *tans* [3. Aaja ri nindiya aake na ja.mp3].

The 1954 film *Shabab*, with music composed by the preeminent music director Naushad Ali,⁹ was an attempt to capture some of the residual success of *Baiju Bawra*,¹⁰ produced a year

⁸ Incidentally, *Zeenat* is the first film in history to portray a qawwali performance, and an all-female qawwali at that.
⁹ Naushad is famous for his renderings of classical music in the films *Baiju Bawra* (1952), *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960), and others.

¹⁰ *Baiju Bawra*’s is centered on the story of an unknown singer challenging the great Mughal musician Tansen to a singing contest to avenge the death of his father years earlier at the hands of Tansen’s guards. Naushad collaborated with some of the greatest musicians of the time – Lata Mangeshkar, Mohammad Rafi, Ustad Amir Khan, and Pandit D. V. Paluskar – to produce a landmark soundtrack that is still considered today as a pinnacle of Hindi film music.

earlier and a film that prominently featured Hindustani classical music in its soundtrack and plot. The lullaby “Chandan ka palna, resham ki dori” (Cradle of sandalwood, cord of silk) has, in practice, become a lullaby sung to children. In the film however, it is pictured first accompanying a beggar-musician, Ratan (sung by Hemant Kumar), using his music as magic to serenade a princess who had been cursed with the inability to sleep [10. Chandan ka palna resham ki dori.mp3]. The song presents several poetic themes that are common in child-directed and more romantically oriented lullabies. The sandalwood cradle (*chandan ka palna*), a garland of stars (*taaro ki maalaa*), sleep inducing fairies (*pariyaN*), the moon (*chand*), and swings (*jhule*) are common lyrical tropes that appear in a majority of film lullabies. The melody of “Chandan ka palna” is firmly classical in sound, with strains of the South Indian vina, tabla, the double-reed shehnai, and violin all accompanying the vocalist. Like “So ja rajkumari,” “Chandan ka palna” is associated with the romantic love between adults, and with death. The lullaby is heard a final time at the film’s conclusion. After Ratan has died, destitute and begging at the steps of his beloved’s palace, the princess hears his lullaby from beyond the grave. She follows the sound of her beloved’s voice but finds nothing, and so lies down to finally “sleep” to the sound of his lullaby.¹¹

In chapter 2, I discuss the lullaby “Chanda mama dur ke” (Uncle moon is far away) from the 1955 film *Vacchan*, and so will only touch upon it here. Despite its upbeat tempo, spritely rendered melody (sung by Asha Bhosle), onscreen comedic action, and dancing that seem intended to do anything *but* sooth a child to sleep, “Chanda mama” was one of the most widely cited Hindi film lullabies by my research participants [9. Chanda mama dur ke.mp3]. The song,

¹¹ It is insinuated that she lies down not just to sleep but join her beloved in death. Earlier the beggar-musician passes away to the sound of the princess’s voice as she sings to her new husband, even while longing for Ratan. The final rendition of this lullaby is sung as a duet between Lata Mangeshkar and Hemant Kumar, symbolizing the voices of the lovers that are ultimately united in death.

and the figure of chanda mama have spawned a host of reinterpretations on film, television, and in children's cartoons. The song's lyrics tell of the protecting uncle moon that will give the child all manner of sweets and will play hide-and-seek with the child and the stars in the heavens. Like "Chandan ka palna, resham ki dori" these are textual themes that are repeated in many lullabies. "Chanda mama" is one of the first up-tempo playful film lullabies, somewhat like "Lalla, lalla, lori" from *Mukti* (1977), that only have the potential to function as lullabies *in practice* if caregivers alter their performance to better fit the context of putting a child to sleep.

I round out my examination of film lullabies from the 1950s with a short discussion of "Nanhi kali sone chali" (Little flower-bud is going to sleep) from the acclaimed film *Sujata* (Of Good Birth, 1959), directed by Bimal Roy with music by S. D. Burman. The use of this lullaby and its juxtaposition to other music offers interesting commentary on the film's subtext, themes that center on issues of caste and untouchability in post-partition India. The film's story revolves around an upper-caste Brahmin couple (Upen and Charu) and their raising of an orphaned girl (Sujata) from the *dalit* or untouchable caste. Sujata is raised alongside the family's natural born daughter, Rama, with near equal acceptance and love. However, the family's full acceptance of Sujata is tested when a young man falls in love and asks to marry Sujata instead of Rama.

In the first few minutes of the film, the divisions between wealthy and the poor, and India's upper and lower castes, is visually and musically staged. Sujata's soon to be adopted family holds a party for India's elite. The wealthy, upper-caste people arrive in gleaming cars, wear glittering jewelry, and laugh the night away eating expensive ice-cream treats – displaying their wealth in all their mannerism and accoutrements. The scene's soundtrack is set to the twinkling sounds of a ballerina music box chiming the English Christmas tune "Noël," subtly

reinforcing the family's association with wealth and a blend of Western and Indian modernity.¹²

Immediately following the party, the family takes in the orphaned Sujata, giving her to a household maid to take to sleep in the servant's quarters. In the next scene, the wealthy mother sings "Nanhi kali sone chali" (voiced by Geeta Dutt) to sooth her biological daughter to sleep. The baby Sujata is heard crying through an open window but is likewise soothed by her recently adopted mother's voice and lullaby [14. Nanhi kali sone chali.mp3].

In *Sujata*, "Nanhi kali sone chali" represents the unconditional love of a mother for her child.¹³ Onscreen, it is staged to show the inclusion of the adopted infant Sujata in this umbrella of motherly love. At this early stage in the narrative, Sujata is still depicted as separate from the Brahmin family: she sleeps in the servants' quarters, alone and covered with rough-spun cloth, while her Brahmin adopted sister Rama sleeps in the home, under soft blankets, with her caring mother to watch over her. It is the lullaby, carried by the mother's voice through open windows that first bridges the emotional distance between adopted daughter and mother, and the social distance between upper-caste Brahmin and dalit child. Despite its onscreen symbolic associations with caste difference, "Nanhi kali sone chali" is a sweetly sung lullaby, one that is as close to a simple expression of parental love as one might find in a Hindi film.

Somewhat similar to the lullaby in *Sujata*, "Chanda dhale pankha jhale" (Setting moon, tinkering fan) from *Piyar ki Pyas* (A Thirst for Love, 1961) is used to show the parental love of a mother for her newly born daughter. The story revolves around an orphan young girl (Geeta) who is adopted into a wealthy family and showered with gifts until the birth of the couple's

¹² There are other visual representations of the family's Western or British inflected modernity. For example, during the father Upen's work as an engineer overseeing masses of lower-caste laborers, he takes on the dress of the previous British colonial authority in a khaki safari hat and shorts, while the laborers are shown in native *dhotis* and *kurtas*.

¹³ Other lullabies such as "Raj dulare" (*Naukar*, 1955) "Pawan more anga meiN" (*Shehnai*, 1964), "Aaja nindiya aaja nainan beech samaja" (*Lorie*, 1984) portray parental love without the intrusions of romantic love, tragedy, or other subtexts, at least not those obviously intruding onscreen during the lullaby's performance.

biological daughter, after which Geeta is neglected, abused, and eventually runs away to live at her old orphanage at Seva Kunj. After a series of twists and turns, her adopted family finally recognizes their parenting failures, and Geeta is reunited with her adopted parents at the film's close. "Chanda dhale pankha jhale" (sung by Geeta Dutt and Lata Mangeshkar) is first heard when the protagonist mother sings her biological daughter to sleep as the adopted Geeta, looking up from her menial household cleaning duties, witnesses the love and affection she no longer receives [8. Chanda dhale pankha jhale.mp3]. The lullaby is heard again as Geeta cries herself to sleep in a forest filled with dangerous animals after fleeing her adopted family's home. With only a rock for a pillow, Geeta pats her toy doll as she dreams of her adopted mother. "Chanda dhale pankha jhale" shows a mother's love for her child but, unlike the lullaby from *Sujata*, is a means through which Geeta recognizes the neglect of her adopted family. Rather than serving as a bridge between two castes, sentimentality of the lullaby and the neglect depicted onscreen display the rupture of the parent-child relationship. "Chanda dhale pankha jhale" is a poignant reminder of love lost and a young girl's yearning for affection.

Similar to the lullaby from *Sujata*, 1964's "Aaj kal meiN dhal gaya" (Today has become yesterday) from *Beti Bete* (Sister, Brothers) is a song that bridges distance and brings families together [1. Aaj kal mein dhal gaya.mp3]. The film tells the story of a widowed father who is blinded in an industrial accident and forced to abandon his three children. The children are separated and grow up in different homes of varying wealth and opportunity. The lullaby is heard four times during the film. In its first appearance, the eldest child sings her siblings to sleep after their abandonment, swinging the youngest in a cloth cradle while the other sleeps on a thin mat on the ground. The girl looks to the moon, with tears in her eyes, longing for her father. The second time the lullaby is heard, the children have been evicted from their home and wander

empty village streets soon to be separated from each other. The lullaby is heard a third time as a duet between the elder sister and brother (sung by Lata Mangeshkar and Mohammad Rafi). They are shown in cross-cut sequences singing in memory of their splintered family. In its fourth appearance, the eldest brother hears strains of “Aaj kal meiN dhal gaya” while taking part in celebrations leading up to his wedding. Hearing the lullaby and reminded of his lost sister, he chases after the singer’s voice to be reunited with his siblings as a result of hearing the lullaby.

More than other film lullabies, the depiction of “Aaj kal meiN dhal gaya” in *Beti Beti* hints at the power of lullabies to preserve childhood memories and emotional connections. It is used as a plot device to bring the family together and as a way to present the emotional connection between brother and sister to the film’s audience. As discussed in chapter 3, lullabies in real life operate in similar ways – as musical preservers of childhood memories and tools facilitating the emotional connection between individuals and generations. In this film, the poignancy of the song is amplified by the use of a violin and wind orchestra in the lush, melodramatic style common in films of this era, punctuated by the sound of the tabla and small *manjira* (hand cymbals). The song’s lyrics rely on some of the same textual tropes encountered in the lullabies discussed earlier: exhortations to sleep, the flower-bud, the garden, and the moon all make appearances in the song’s lyrics. Unlike the songs discussed previously, “Aaj kal meiN dhal gaya” is written to reflect the story of the film more closely. Lines such as “Repressed is the heart / with heaviness on every breath / still we are surviving”¹⁴ convey the essence of the story about a separated family longing to be reunited. “Aaj kal meiN dhal gaya” blends the beautiful and the tragic in its sorrowful but exquisite tune and text.

¹⁴ Translation found at: <http://nasir-eclectic.blogspot.com/2008/09/166-translation-of-sad-songs-of-rafi.html#axzz2zw0bpkTw>.

Later films, such as *Kunwara Baap* (1974), continue the trend of mixing a lullaby song with tragic onscreen narrative. In the lullaby “Aari aaja nindiya tu” (Come, come sleep), actor Mehmood, playing a rickshaw driver, lip syncs to the voice of the veteran playback singer Kishore Kumar as he sings his polio stricken adopted son to sleep. The father sings to his adopted son, “For you my dear, I will drink a thousand poisons / I will leave the world for you.” The lullaby helps to musically establish the depth of the father’s love for his adopted son and foreshadows the film’s final, tragic events. After giving up the boy to a wealthier family who is able afford the medical treatments necessary to allow the child to walk again, the boy returns to visit his adopted father only to see him murdered. The boy then sings (voiced by Lata Mangeshkar) the lullaby to his adopted father as the man lies dying in the street.

Jumping past the largely unremarkable decades of the 1980s and 1990s,¹⁵ I will close this section with an examination of one lullaby from contemporary Hindi cinema. “Chandaniya (lori, lori),” from the action-romance-comedy film *Rowdy Rathore* (2012), is emblematic of the way contemporary soundtracks are simultaneously divorced from the direct narrative (no actor performs the lullaby onscreen), yet central to the film’s plot and emotional context. *Rowdy Rathore*, despite being panned by most critics and widely recognized as a remake of the South Indian Telegu action film *Vikramarkudu*,¹⁶ is one of the highest grossing Bollywood films ever made.¹⁷ While the film’s plot is so convoluted it is nearly impossible to summarize here, the lullaby “Chandaniya” is used three times to highlight the themes of parental love in the face of death and degeneracy. In all three instances, the song appears as diegetic sound (visually

¹⁵ Films from these decades did not entirely abandon the lullaby, but none of my research participants (even those who were children during this time) readily recalled songs from this era. The lullabies from these decades also do not break new ground in terms of their use in film, their subtext associations, and do not stand out for the quality of music or text.

¹⁶ See <http://ibnlive.in.com/news/rowdy-rathore-music-borrowed-from-vikramarkudu/254999-62-127.html>.

¹⁷ See http://www.boxofficeindia.com/Movies/movie_detail/rowdy_rathore#.U1VmZ_muR8E.

represented, as opposed to off-screen or disembodied sound), emerging from a young girl's tape recorder as a lullaby sung by the girl's deceased mother [11. Chandaniya (lori lori).mp3]. Strains of the lullaby's *mukhra* (the "face" of a composition or its opening melody) open the film following the credits. A young girl, Chinki, sits alone in a darkened hospital corridor. A doctor approaches Chinki and asks about the song, to which the girl replies, "It's my mother's...my mother is dead." This first instance helps establish Chinki's vulnerability, associates the lullaby with parental love (love that transcends death in the form of recorded music), and, more functionally, begins to pull at the emotional cords of the film's audience.

The second appearance of the lullaby occurs halfway through the film when the protagonist Shiv, a small-time thief, returns home and drunkenly berates Chinki (who mistakenly believes Shiv is her father), after she has fallen asleep listening to the lullaby on her recorder. Shiv smashes the recorder against the wall only to realize he has destroyed the girl's one connection to her mother. He patches the recorder back together and begins his process of moral rejuvenation, inspired by his growing love for his "daughter." In this case, the sound of the lullaby, and its representation of Chinki's innocence and vulnerability, provides part of the impetus for Shiv to change his criminal ways.

In the lullaby's third appearance, Chinki's real father, Rathore, lying near death from injuries suffered in a fight with the film's antagonists, asks Shiv to look after his daughter. Shiv responds, "Chinki is now my daughter too." Following Rathore's death, Chinki enters the room as Shiv hurriedly covers the body and explains her "uncle" is merely sleeping. Chinki places the tape recorder on the hospital bed and plays the lullaby for her sleeping-dead-father-uncle as the other characters in the room silently weep. The lullaby sung in her dead mother's voice thus

accompanies the death of her biological father, while her “real” father has now transcended his criminal past to fully assume the role of good father and protagonist.

In its three of appearances in *Rowdy Rathore*, the lullaby “Chandaniya (lori, lori)” is persistently associated both with the sweetness or moral purity of children, and with death. As with other examples of a lullaby used in 21st-century Hindi cinema, the lullaby’s traditional association with parental love and childhood innocence is complicated. The texts of both “Lori” and “Chandaniya” are similar to lullabies from previous decades with phrases depicting swinging cradles, gentle breezes, and sleep coming softly to the child’s. However, if these recent films served as the source for a caregiver’s knowledge of these lullabies, I believe it would be challenging to decouple the images presented in the film and for the lullaby to enter into an adult’s lullaby practice with their children.

As explored in chapter 3, the importance of deeply felt, personal memories tied with, or evoked by, a lullaby’s performance is vital to its continued use by caregivers. While I contend the associations between lullabies and dark or disturbing onscreen action may influence the likelihood that future parents would take these songs and incorporate them into a personal or live practice with their children, this question remains open. Historically, lullaby texts from many cultures expressed feelings of sadness, anger, or feelings of violence toward the child, themes I discuss in chapter 2. Therefore, it is not altogether surprising that these more recent Hindi cinema examples pair the lullaby with images of anger, death, or danger in more explicit ways. There is a disconnection between the “simple,” “pure,” and “sweet” song lyrics and melodies with the darker visual narratives of more recent films. Many lullabies from earlier eras accompanied narratives that suggested sadness or death; however, this was generally only a suggestion and not explicitly visualized. In Hindi cinema from the 1940s-1960s, the lullaby was

still a chance for a character to present a musical soliloquy, a way for filmmakers to establish desired emotional qualities of the film's protagonists and thus help the film's viewers establish an emotional connection with actors. Lullabies were a way to humanize the characters by sonically depicting their expression of love, parental or romantic. Lullabies continue today to be used for cinematic and narrative purposes today, albeit in slightly altered form. The older style of musical soliloquy has disappeared as filmmakers now tend to separate soundtrack from narrative.¹⁸ Lullabies are still used to musically represent parental love and innocence, and their association with death and sorrow continues. However, the use of lullabies as soundtrack for more disturbing or violent narratives seems to have replaced the common older trope of the mother singing her child to sleep as she rocks them in a cradle, a scene so common in films from the middle of the 20th century.

Film Music and Pan-Indian Identity

I would like to shift focus and address the role of film lullabies, and film music generally, in the formation and maintenance of a pan-Indian identity. A national and, I argue, international, sense of identity is emerging out of a shared musical culture that is made more personally relevant by the intimate practice of lullaby singing. In this section, I briefly contextualize Indian nationalism as a political and ideological force and the role of film music in the creation of a national consciousness. Building on Jocelyn Cullity's term "global *desi*," I show how film music and film lullabies help to create a sense of pan-Indian identity that integrates historically important (and still current) regional and ethnic identities into a more pan-Indian, global consciousness not limited by ethnicity, religion, or national borders. The formation of pan-Indian

¹⁸ Some scholars also point out that more recent advances in computer aided soundtrack editing enable a tighter integration between a film's soundtrack and the onscreen action, while still acknowledging the general trend of divorcing a film's soundtrack from its narrative (Sarrazin 2014:46).

identity is ongoing and has not yet supplanted identities based on region, ethnicity, or religion. As discussed in chapter 3, individuals are not limited to a single identity and often choose to perform or broadcast aspects of their identities to fit the perceived needs of their social situation. However, because of inexpensive and fast international travel, the influence of non-resident Indians (hereafter NRIs) on cultural production in India and abroad, the internet, and the reach of global media and industry, an individual's insulated or local senses of identity are forced to reconcile with increasingly cosmopolitan social realities. Pan-Indian identity, as propagated through film music, provides a sense of belonging to a globally "recognized" group and provides a way to combat the potential anxiety or marginalization that individuals may encounter when operating in a global arena. "Evergreen" lullabies from the 1940s through 1960s provide individuals with a sense of nostalgia about a shared past largely unencumbered by political strife (or at least strife that is resolved in a film's narrative arc), a sense of the "good old days" that remains frozen in time by the recordings themselves, but relevant to contemporary life through their re-performance by caregivers for children.

Dual(ing) Nationalisms

Indian national consciousness began well before India's formation as an independent nation in 1947. Intimately linked to the industrialization and shifting economic realities that began in India's port cities of Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras, Indian nationalism was also a product of the residual feudalism remaining in the wake of the Mughal Empire's decline. As Guha writes, "Nationalism in India was both a challenge and a response to this semi-feudal, semi-capitalist colonial situation, and the anti-feudal, anti-caste and anti-imperialist struggles were various facets of the overall national movement" (1984:42). India's plethora of languages, religious traditions, and strong regional cultures produced various nationalist responses to British

colonialism – “little” regional nationalisms that stressed regional autonomy in the fight for independence, competed alongside the “great” nationalism of the pan-Indian state that stressed a secular integration of these regional and religious differences. These “great” and “little” nationalisms existed as dual national consciousnesses that operated at both the personal and collective level (Guha 1984:52).

During my field research, I frequently encountered this dual national consciousness with many of my research participants. Most participants identified themselves first and most vociferously by their regional ethnicity and only second as “Indian.” The duality of national consciousness is also publically displayed with pomp and pride during the celebrations of Republic Day, a national holiday that honors the adoption of India’s constitution in 1950. Delhi’s annual festivities showcase India’s military and regional cultures with huge parade along the Rajpath between the president’s house and the Gate of India. In 2012, I observed this display of regional consciousness within national unity on television, and at the house of a friend who had invited us over to celebrate the South Indian harvest festival of Pongal which coincided, that year, with Republic Day. Our friends, a Bharatanatyam dancer and her husband (Tamil transplants to Delhi who have lived across India and internationally), were excited to see the parade floats and describe the symbolism behind each state’s cultural display. Dozens of Rajput mounted camels and mirror-worked clothed dancers from Rajasthan preceded floats with paper mache fisherman and statues of Tagore and other famous Bengali figures were among the many state-sponsored floats showcasing the pride of India’s diverse regional cultures while constituting a display of national pride.

The dual Indian national consciousness is, according to Guha, Nandy, and other scholars, slowly being integrated into a pan-Indian identity due to the integration of regional markets and

the ethnic, linguistic, and religious mixing of the middle-income and working class in India's urban centers. Literature, music and films also play a "unifying role at the level of thematic and emotional contents" (Guha 1984:53). The nationalism promoted by Mohandas Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru,¹⁹ a brotherhood that stressed religious and ethnic equality, has been challenged by the rise of religiously conservative Hindu nationalism promoted by the Hindutva and most prominently by the political Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The rise of religious conservatism, fundamentalism, and aggressive forms of racism in India and elsewhere can be seen as a response to the declining power or importance of the nation-state in response to increasing globalization (Hall 1997:178). The use of regional folk music, such as Marathi *rastriya kirtan*, as tools for the promotion of Hindu nationalism is well documented (Schultz 2013). Other scholars working in other world traditions have documented nationalist movements and their use of traditional music to represent idealized, cosmopolitan, and imagined nations (e.g., Turino 1993; Rice 1994; Sugarman 1999). Still others have analyzed the role of music in a minority group's assimilation of an ethnic majority's musical-cultural practices in the contexts of a socialist state (Rees 2000). Entire dissertations have been written on Indian nationalism, and my intention here is only to provide a bare framework for the coming discussion of pan-Indian identity. I would like now to shift this discussion to explore Indian film music's promotion of Indian nationalism before examining some of the ways lullabies help promote the construction of pan-Indian identity that is beginning to override the current dual "great" and "little" identities to form a more globally oriented, but still decidedly "Indian" identity and sense of belonging.

¹⁹ The nationalism promoted by Gandhi and Tagore was not unconditionally embraced, but also "feared" as a result of their anti-imperialist struggles and fight to establish a concept of Indian-ness in a world where "the language of progress had already established complete dominance" (Nandy 2004:155).

Film Music and Indian Nationalism

A number of scholars have examined in-depth the formation, imaginings, and operations of nationalism in Hindi cinema (Chakravarty 1987; Sundar 2007; Sen 2008). The Indian film industry emerged alongside the Indian nation, and it is therefore unsurprising that nationalism is a prominent theme in the text and subtext of films from the industry's Golden Era. Social realist films such as *Do Bigha Zameen* (discussed earlier in this chapter) grappled with issues such as wealth versus poverty, and village versus urban life, issues central to debates over which form and direction Indian nationalism should take. Other films such as *Baazi* (The Gamble, 1951) and *Pyasa* (The Thirsty One, 1957) portray the conflicts that develop between the macro-nation and micro-region, and between modernity and pre-modernity, films that portray the “authentic” Indian villager as morally and physically under threat from modern, urban, capitalist forces (Sen 2008:32). Ironically, Hindi cinema, particularly films made for mass consumption by the Bollywood industry, were seen by some as escapist fantasies, a kind of utopian, “un-Indian” vision of social reality, rather than realistic visions depicting India's struggle for independence and nationhood (Chakravarty 1987:24).

As with any type of identity, national identities are reliant on shared practices, beliefs, and symbol sets. An individual's “membership” or identification with a national group is (re)produced through culturally specific consumption (Slater 1997:132). Films and film music are some of the most widely shared types of culturally specific media consumed today. The voices of popular Indian film playback singers have become, like Umm Kulthum in Egypt, voices of the Indian nation. Singers such as Asha Bosle, Mohammad Rafi, Kishore Kumar, and Lata Mangeshkar figuratively sound out the Indian nation. In particular, Mangeshkar's clear, high-pitched voice has become synonymous with the sound of Indian film songs and in the

process with the idealized Indian woman: chaste, innocent, modest, and self-sacrificing (Sundar 2007:31). Mangeshkar's vocal qualities lie in contrast to others such as Asha Bhosle and, in my view, particularly the voice of Noor Jahan. Bosle's voice has been described as having a "tinge of the *bazaar*" (Bharatan 1995:69) or a sexualized quality that contrasted to the "chastity" of Mangeshkar's voice. The qualities of Noor Jahan's voice heard in her lullaby "Aaja ri nindiya" from *Zeenat* present an even greater contrast [3. Aaja ri nindiya aake na ja.mp3]. Its lower-pitched richness has been described as "heavier" and "vibrant," despite Arnold's assessment to the contrary (1991:145). Popular perceptions of Jahan's voice show the ongoing entanglement of music with Hindu-Muslim politics and stereotypes. An exponent of *ghazals*, *qawwali* and to a degree courtesan culture, Jahan is routinely remembered as "Muslim" rather than Indian (Sundar 2007:73) and her vocal quality contrasts with the high pitched "purity" of Mangeshkar's (Hindu) voice.

Lullabies from the decades of the 1940s and 1950s illustrate these values, conflicts, and ideologies. They are musical displays of a woman's (and occasionally a man's) adherence to traditional family values. The actors' moral fabric and embodiment of tradition is displayed in the tender care they provide for their children accompanied by their singing of lullabies such as "Nanhi kali sone chali" and "Aaja ri aa nindiya tu aa," discussed above. Hindi film lullabies have also been used to highlight the absence of parental care due to the negative forces of poverty, modernity, and a breakdown of the traditional family. In "Aaj kal mein dhal gaya," from *Beti Bete*, the lullaby is first heard when sung by the eldest sister of three orphaned children who are bereft of the protections provided by a traditional family. The children's circumstances arise as a result of modernity (an industrial accident blinds the father) and a breakdown of the traditional

family (the death of the mother robs the children of the traditional protections afforded by a self-sacrificing mother).

Other films' use of regional folk music exposes the "little" side of the dual national consciousness. These regional identities, which arose out of anti-imperialist struggles, are used as audible representations of Indian cultural authenticity. Gujarati folk sounds are used as markers of Indian authenticity in the soundtrack for the 2001 epic sports drama *Lagaan*, set in British India's Gujarat of 1893.²⁰ In *Bunty aur Babli* (2005), a loosely Bhojpuri folk song style is used to represent a "pure" rural regional consciousness that exists within and in distinction to national, urban India (Sarrazin 2014:50). Thus, the dichotomy of regional and national dual consciousness is both seen and heard on film and remains a defining feature of contemporary Hindi cinema. More recently, a pan-Indian, globally aware consciousness has seeped into contemporary films. It can be seen in the types of musical fusion described above and in the Indian film industry's increasing attention to the economic influence of its global audience.

Lullabies and Pan-Indian Identity

Film lullabies are helping establish a pan-Indian identity that is less concerned with the duality of regional and national consciousness but manifests as a more cosmopolitan, globally oriented identity. Yet, this cosmopolitan identity still expresses, and relies on, a particular sense of "Indian-ness." This "global desi" identity is being driven by urban, economically empowered, middle- and upper-income groups that are emerging as the dominant producers and consumers of Indian culture. As Ashis Nandy writes,

Indian political culture is moving away from the pluralism that the culture of the Indian state was conceptually derived from and legitimized by a variety of political cultures or ways of life. The new culture of the state has come to depend more and more on the

²⁰ See Sundar 2007.

expanding pan-Indian, urban, middle-class culture, serving as an emerging mass culture. This mass culture is not the central tendency of the diverse popular cultures of the different regions of India but an identifiable, well-bounded culture like that of an American-style melting pot. (1989:8-9)

While the above passage was written over 25 years ago, I found a pan-Indian consciousness similar to what Nandy describes is still very much an emerging phenomenon with my research participants. In interview after interview, I asked research participants how they identified themselves, and regional identity nearly always ranked first. However, several younger participants in their early twenties bucked this trend and described themselves as “Indian” rather than by their regional family backgrounds. It was this disconnect, which appeared in some of my first interviews, which pushed me to examine the role of lullabies and film music generally in the formation of a pan-Indian, global identity.

One research participant pointedly brought up regional versus national versus pan-Indian consciousness during our interview, and her comments neatly summarize the positions held by many of my research participants older than thirty. This participant addressed an important factor influencing the formation of a pan-Indian identity in contemporary urban India – the influence of NRIs with overseas experiences that are then reintegrated into Indian society. Responding to my questions about how families retain traditions and the realities of living as a Hindu Punjabi in cosmopolitan, multicultural Delhi and Gurgaon, her comments show the complexity of an individual’s sense of identity as both a regional and ethnic sense of belonging, and a more pan-Indian identity emerging due to the influence of NRIs returned to India after living abroad:

Frankly, there is no notion of Indian national identity in India, except on occasions like these, when you have a cricket match going on, or the national holiday like our Republic Day or whatever, when you see all of these parades and you see people from different parts of the country coming together. In their daily lives, most Indians are pretty much living by their regional identities, whether it means doing small, small things even cooking things their way...So in India, most Indians don’t associate with the pan-Indian identity except on some special occasions. But they mostly live by some kind of regional

identity, whether it's religious, regional... Actually the interesting thing is all these kind of play together to form an individual's identity. So it's not only that I am only a Hindu, or whatever, I am Hindu from so and so background etc... I think one thing that make a difference is that when these Indians move abroad and they stay in these kind of environments where they don't have a clan of their own people, plus they have very homogeneous settings, they undergo an identity shift and they start identifying with other Indians. They are no longer Punjabis and so and so. They are all Indians. So a lot of those people have started moving back, especially to these metropolitan and tier one cities, I think that is going to bring a change (Interview with the author, February 26, 2012).

In this participant's view, the lessening of regional identities and the establishment of a pan-Indian consciousness due to the international experiences of NRIs who have returned to India was a positive development. Her comments also suggest that the creation of a pan-Indian is, contrary to Nandy's assertion, very much in progress.

I spoke with many participants who lived abroad for significant periods of time only to return to India for marriage, work, or to live closer to their families. The scale of Indian migration is staggering. Vast numbers of lower-income laborers migrate to Arab/Persian Gulf states seeking employment as construction laborers and domestic house staff. The participants I spoke with most often went abroad to pursue higher education and employment in technology and finance sectors in the US and Europe. Discussing the cosmopolitan and evolving Malayalee musical and cultural sensibilities in response to the dynamics of globalization, Kaley Mason writes, "Popular music is an evocative means by which Malayalees engage with these shared frames of belonging while locating themselves in the world as both uniquely Indian and reservedly cosmopolitan" (Mason 2014:92).

The comments made by my research participant regarding the importance of NRIs and their role in shaping pan-Indian identity, point to one way the "global desi" cultural is being shaped. Indians who have moved abroad are forced to reconcile their "little" regional identities with international expectations about what constitutes "Indian," a construction that may have

little to do with reality and is often based on popular media representations and stereotypes.

Writing on the construction of “Indian-ness,” one scholar remarks that the, “Indian immigrants’ creation of a unique ‘ethnic’ Indian community in the U.S. that overrides their differences (such as gender, region, caste, class, and religion) helps keep them from becoming further marginalized in the multicultural American community” (Ohri 2005:18). After the culturally necessary reconciliation of these “little” nationalisms with a more generalized or even imagined sense of what constitutes “Indian,” NRIs reimport their notions of identity back to India through travel, contact with relatives, or by returning to live in India.

The influence of NRIs is but one factor helping drive the formation of a pan-Indian identity that extends beyond India’s borders. Another powerful influence is the cinema itself. By creating products widely appreciated and shared, the Indian film industry is perhaps one of the most influential forces behind the creation of a pan-Indian national identity. The film industry’s role in creating a national consciousness has been well documented (Chakravarty 1987; Sundar 2007). The cinema took hold in India at a crucial time during the country’s fight for independence and its establishment as a nation. As writer, playwright, and activist Farrukh Dhondy writes,

It [film] came to a colonized India and developed its nationalist instincts against the colonizers. It continued through a “free” India looking for a national personality that transcended the histories – separate and distinct – of regions, castes, religions. It found its mass audience in an India which a settled way of life is giving way to a new settlement, in which a peasantry is being dragged into the influences of urbanization and the ways of the modern world. (1985:126)

Far from only establishing a sense of national identity due to its association in time with Indian nationalist struggles, Indian cinema is a source for a shared historical memory. Films such as the epic *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960) package and re-present India’s historical past to modern viewers. It is this “nostalgic evocations of selected pasts” that is harnessed to present particular

attitudes or narratives concerning India's history (Chakravarty 1987:186). The "social dramas" discussed in this chapter, films that featured some of the most memorable lullabies, re-present India's past to contemporary viewers. They present selected visions of the past that shapes people's perception of their history – their historical consciousness. The cinema's popularity and reach throughout India and abroad helps mold a pan-Indian consciousness that is becoming "not so much a statistical central tendency or a self-consciously chosen artifact as an empirical reality" (Nandy 1989:14). The increasingly prominent place of regional language films complicates my theory of pan-Indian identity emerging out of "Indian" cinema. Hindi cinema is the dominant film-culture industry in India, and Bollywood films are popular across nation. However, I believe regional language films complement, rather than fracture, the emergence of a pan-Indian identity. Quite often, regional films copy the content and style of Bollywood cinema and vice versa. The film *Rowdy Rathore* discussed earlier in this chapter is a prime example of this type of cinematic "overlap." Furthermore, many of my Hindi speaking research participants mentioned watching regional language films with friends born in those regions. Because the Indian population is becoming culturally more diverse due to increasing migration for education, employment, and marriage, and because film (even regional language film) is a widely shared and appreciated entertainment medium, the potential fracturing effects of regional language films on an emerging pan-Indian identity remains nominal. In fact, it seems that as regional language films are more widely shared, they may actually strengthen a sense of pan-India. Rather than entrenching local notions of identity, the dispersion of regional and Hindi films, and the experiences and mythologies engendered while experiencing this type of collective media, helps promote a sense of a shared, pan-Indian identity.

The establishment of a pan-Indian, national and globally oriented consciousness is a result of India's particular historical moment, a time when the nation finds itself operating on a global stage. Since India's economic liberalization in the early 1990s, the country has experienced remarkable growth and increased access to outside goods and ideas that have brought with them profound cultural changes, developments that inevitably influence the Indian consciousness and sense of identity. Increasingly, Indians are moving around the country for work and education; all except a handful of my research participants were transplants to Delhi. Marriage is increasingly common between individuals from different regions and who may speak different languages with only Hindi or English in common. Many of my research participants, particularly those with higher incomes, married into families hailing from different regions. Increasing numbers of NRIs are returning to India to pursue business opportunities.²¹ All of these factors are driving the creation of a more pan-Indian, globalized consciousness.

I see film lullabies supporting a pan-Indian consciousness by creating a nostalgic link to a shared past. Lullabies from the Golden Era of Hindi cinema, songs that remain popular today, link people to cinematic past and are songs which are sung by caregivers to children, a renewing or replicating practice that creates an affective connection with an individual's personal past. As children in India grow up in an increasingly multicultural, cosmopolitan environment, film lullabies provide continuity between personal and cultural histories. For the children of NRIs, lullabies create a shared set of cultural symbols with a place and society they may infrequently experience in-person. As "frozen" original recordings, newly released reinterpretations, and living practice, lullabies provide a bridge to a culture that is experienced irrespective of regional and national boundaries. Film songs from the past century, even though they exhibit "fusion"

²¹ See http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2011-06-27/news/29705996_1_start-ups-nris-job-market. See also <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/love-and-money-second-generation-indian-americans-return-india>.

elements in their instrumentation, choice of melody, and through other means, are not seen in the same light as contemporary more self-consciously globally styled music. Film lullabies are a link to an Indian past, cinematic and real, sung by voices (especially Lata Mangeshkar) that are perceived as quintessentially Indian.

Some scholars suggest that young people are increasingly forming bicultural and multicultural identities in response to the cultural pressures of globalization (Arnett 2002; Jensen 2003). Other scholars have explored ways globalization works to deterritorialize (Tomlinson 1999), delocate (Thompson 1995), or displace (Giddens 1990) notions of local identity. A person's ties to the place they live or come from are diminished as their sense of self takes on more global dimensions. In the Indian context, globalized identities compete with older regional and national identities. The continuing popularity of lullabies from the 1940s through the 1960s as both media products and as live practices helps create a link time and generations, and mediate between global and more local identities. Lullabies are simultaneously part of the public set of symbols that constitute Indian expressive culture and private practices that link this culture with an individual's personal history. This linkage may help ameliorate what some psychologists term "identity confusion" or "acculturative stress," psychological conditions caused by a disjuncture between global and local identities (Arnett 2002:778-79).

A few examples will help clarify how lullabies help create emotional connections and help constitute a pan-Indian identity or a sense of belonging to a community that is not restricted by place. In chapter 2, I discussed the one family's use of a Marathi lullaby "Bala jo jo re" to connect generations across the globe. Pandit Vidyadhar Vyas's granddaughter, who lives in the US, learned this lullaby from her parents and was especially fond of singing the song back to her grandfather over the phone. A little girl who lives in the northwest of the United States is able to

emotionally connect with her grandfather in India by participating in the musical culture of her parents and grandparents through the singing of a lullaby.

Another research participant, a thirty-two year old from Bangalore who grew up speaking Kannada and English, described learning the Malayalee lullaby “Omanathinkal Kidavo” (which he learned from watching a Malayalee film) in an effort to impress his then girlfriend. Whether he was ultimately successful is unknown. However, he then became fond of singing this lullaby to his young niece who, not knowing Malayalam, was still able to experience this shared musical culture. If one takes seriously that lullaby experiences like this can establish meaningful personal histories and affective memories (as I argue in chapter 3), one can see this lullaby experience as contributing to the young niece’s sense of identity that goes beyond her local region or native language. This is the type of pan-Indian personal history and identity that lullabies uniquely help establish.

I draw on the experiences of two friends in the United States for a third example. In 2010, just after the birth of their first daughter, these friends, knowing my passion for Hindustani classical music, asked me for a list of quality Hindustani classical recordings they could play for their daughter. The mother, an American-born woman whose parents had emigrated to the US in the 1970s from the Indian state of Gujarat, and the father, born and raised until the age of five in Jaipur, Rajasthan, before coming to New Jersey with his parents, both expressed some anxiety that they had only a fleeting familiarity with India’s classical music but nevertheless wanted their daughter to experience it from an early age. They were in a quandary about how to foster some connection to their parents’ culture, the culture of a place where their extended family lived and where they visited regularly, to a culture that was both familiar and foreign.

In the end I was of little help, as the baby vocally objected to my selection of Hindustani music. However, after our conversation the mother spoke with her parents and ended up learning a lullaby her grandmother had sung to her mother, a song my friend had not heard until after the birth of her child. She still sings this song to her daughter (and now to a second daughter) nightly. This is a prime example of the way lullabies can be purposefully used to engender cultural familiarity outside the bounds of regional or national borders. Americans of Indian descent (from two different Indian states and raised speaking different Indian languages) use a lullaby learned from Indian-born immigrants to the US to help establish their daughters' connection with the culture of their grandparents.

In this chapter, I have explored some of the most popular film lullabies coming from Hindi cinema and tried to tease apart their role in helping to create a sense of identity that is not bound by region, religion, or even nation. As both recordings and live practice, lullabies help create a connection with one's personal past and are a set of musical experiences shared through cinema. Film lullabies from the "Golden Era" of Indian cinema sound out a shared Indian history as portrayed or imagined on film. They are a set of shared musical symbols that help establish identity and create a sense of belonging to the "global desi" group. Other factors such as economic liberalization, globalization, the role of NRIs in India and abroad, and changing ideological paradigms all push and pull at Indian culture, cultural production, and formulations of identity. Yet, lullabies are points of common experience that remain, for many, deeply meaningful.

Chapter 6:

Conclusion

Summary

This dissertation is one of the first scholarly accounts detailing the role of child-directed songs in shaping individual and collective identity in the contexts of a rapidly changing urban Indian society. It is one of only a handful of studies that examines child-directed musical practices in their cultural contexts. These private and public musical expressions are being shaped by the needs and wants of parents and caregivers, urbanization, technology, shifting cultural values, and commercial media. Throughout this this dissertation, I endeavored to paint a holistic picture of child-directed song practices in urban India. I documented the musical and textual features of some of the most prominent songs and practices to show how they help transmit socio-cultural values, build connections between generations of people separated by time and place, and provide scaffolding for personal, regional, national, and global identities. There is no one simple tool or method with which to index the dramatic cultural changes taking place in India today. However, the analysis of child-directed music provides one way to subdivide a complex and evolving musical-cultural ecosystem and draw connections between the seemingly disparate historical, social, and technological forces that are affecting contemporary Indian music and society.

In chapter 1, I presented my hypothesis for the dissertation and reviewed the existing literature on lullabies. I posited that lullabies and child-directed music operate as musical-cultural conservators, passing down values, preserving histories, and enabling the formation of meaningful identities. Studies addressing lullabies or child-directed music generally fall into one of four categories according to their methods of analysis or theoretical inclinations: those

Chapter 6: Conclusion

concerned with song text or mythology, those focused on childhood linguistic or musical acquisition, child psychology and development studies, and studies that employ mixed ethnographic, textual, and musicological analyses. Child-directed songs have been the occasional subject of study by many notable scholars in ethnomusicology such as Herzog, Nettl, Lomax Hawes, Blacking, Garfias and others. However, the vast majority of existent literature comes from scholars working in the fields of child development, language acquisition, and early childhood musical enculturation. In chapter 1, I also presented the theoretical templates I used to help analyze my data. Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, theories of technological determinism, and the social construction of technology help frame my discussion of lullaby practice in the increasingly technologically mediated, urbanized, and globalized Indian society.

Chapter 2 provided answers to some of the basic journalistic questions of who, what, where, and how lullabies are heard, sung, and consumed. I began with an overview of India's metropolitan environment, one that has undergone dramatic change in recent decades and is altering the way people interact with each other and live their daily lives. Housing construction has moved away from traditional courtyard designs in which multigenerational families inhabited shared spaces, a style of living that facilitated intergenerational contact and communal child caregiving. I discussed how the rise of the nuclear family structure is being promoted by India's urbanization and changing economy. The move away from the joint family system towards a nuclear family structure fundamentally alters the pattern of social interaction and information exchange between grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles, and young children.

The increasing reliability of India's electronic infrastructure has resulted in a change in the daily habits of urban families. Air conditioning, television, computers, and other electronic entertainment contribute to a reduction in the time spent telling stories and making music outside

on the veranda or rooftop apartments, experiences so fondly described by my older research participants. I discussed some notable examples of lullabies and how they perpetuate shared cultural mythologies. Bengali songs such as “Ghum parani mashi pishi,” “Khoka jabe,” the Assamese lullaby “Amare moina,” and other lullabies relating to family histories or local fables were analyzed to show how they promote their respective regional-ethnic ethos. I discussed the role of these songs in establishing strong intergenerational family social connections. I presented an overview of how caregivers sing and play recorded lullabies to their children. I discussed how the culturally specific practices of how children are held, bounced or swung to sleep are changing with urbanization and shifting gender roles in urban India. I examined how English-language lullaby CDs are being used to provide children with vital skills for India’s competitive social, educational, and economic spheres where English proficiency is valued as a marker of social class and educational attainment. Chapter 2 concludes with an examination of professional and amateur-led parent-child music classes and how they affect the practice of lullaby singing and song transmission. These classes signal a shift in attitude towards childrearing and the role of parents in a young child’s development and education. The “cultivated incompetence” of fathers from previous generations is quickly disappearing as a child’s earliest years and preschool education are becoming to be seen as vital for later success.

Chapter 3 presents a more theoretical analysis of lullabies and the role of habitus, technology, and memory in the transmission and maintenance identity. I argued that lullabies and other child-directed songs are a musical embodiment of personal histories and cultural values, seeded during one’s childhood, which “reappear” later in life when individuals sing to their own children. I showed how lullaby practice is akin to habitus in that the songs and memories attached to them can unconsciously influence behavior, yet the lullaby transmission process is

not completely outside an individual's conscious control. I analyzed incorporative and inscriptive memory in regard to lullaby practice to reveal how child-directed song practices and media products impact the formation of lasting and affective memories. I discussed how traditional, interpersonal lullaby practices are being altered by the use of media technologies and argued that this leads to a change in how deeply affective memories and values are transmitted and retained. I argued that the use of media technologies in place of in-person lullaby singing may reduce the possibility of deeply affective memories embedding themselves in an individual's memory. Technology both ruptures the process of lullaby transmission affecting the historic stability of lullaby practice, while simultaneously preserving songs as recorded media.

I discussed two competing theoretical orientations to technology and find that lullaby practice is both socially constructed and partly determined by the use of technology. I suggested that the imitative, intimate empathic experiences of lullaby singing become embodied experiences for both children and adults, and that media technologies fundamentally alter the patterns of behavior between caregiver and child. Yet, media technologies are not singular in their impact on lullaby practice. Architectural styles, urbanization, and "technologies of sleep" such as electronically powered and musically enabled cradles and swings pattern human behavior, influence the caregiver-child relationship and the practice of lullabies, and are a reflection of changing socio-cultural values and aesthetics in contemporary urban India. I then detailed some of the values and histories that are transmitted through song, such as the prominent social role of the maternal uncle as alluded to in "Chanda mama" lullabies, or the portrayal of historic figures such as political reformer B. R. Ambedkar and the Marathi folk-hero Shivaji.

Lullabies help establish personally meaningful identities by creating a corpus of shared mythologies and experiences while simultaneously delineating, regional, and religious

boundaries. In chapter 3, I argued that lullabies are part of an individual's personal narrative and that these experiences and identities are selectively performed according to the needs of an individual's social environment. I explored some theories concerning broad level cultural and musical change as advanced by scholars in ethnomusicology to show how an understanding of lullaby practice in contemporary urban India productively complicates Nettl's theories concerning musical system change and Appadurai's theories of globalization. Musical and cultural change, rather than following impersonal "rules," is accomplished through intimate, interpersonal human relationships and musical practice. I argued that globalization is not absolutely homogenizing force, and flow of information between India and the rest of the world, in the case of lullaby songs, is largely uni-directional into India. Finally, I addressed the holdover question from the previous chapter of "why" lullabies are sung. I concluded that lullabies are functional for sleep promotion, intimate emotional bonding, private expression, and the transmission of cultural values. They help establish one's habitus and personal narrative, operate as incognito cultural artifacts that help maintain cultural practices and mythologies, and help create and maintain an individual's sense of personal, familial, ethnic, and religious identity.

In chapter 4, I departed from my discussion of lullabies to examine ritual birth songs known as sohars. My analysis of sohars and their changing practice in urban India provides a more holistic perspective on the musical practices accompanying early childhood. I began by discussing the origins of the term sohar and detail some of the practices and rituals that accompany sohar performances such as the chatti puja, godh bhara, and others. I then discussed the gendered nature of some sohar songs and of their accompanying rituals. Historically, scholars believed sohars were only sung to celebrate the birth of a male child. In chapter 4, however, I detailed several examples to the contrary. I provided examples of sohar songs which describe the

“shame” of pregnancy and, contrastingly, the power of a pregnant woman to demand gifts or command the actions of her husband. I argued that even though participation in sohar events is divided by gender, these song sessions do not, in practice, offer a segregated expressive space for women to speak plainly or musically air gendered sentiments or complaints.

Next, I discussed the role of the traditional midwife or *dai* as both a subject of sohars and knowledgeable repository of these songs and ritual practices. I suggested that the practice of sohars is under threat by cultural value shifts and the modernization (westernization) of medical practice in urban India. As the *dais*' livelihood comes under increasing pressure from modern bio-medical practices and institutions, their unique knowledge pertaining birth practices and rituals, including sohars, is threatened. Like lullabies, sohar practices are being irrevocably altered by the forces of urbanization, technology, and modernization in metropolitan India. Recordings of sohars composed for the cinema are increasingly taking the place of the communal music making that historically followed the chatti puja and other early childhood rituals. Unlike lullabies, sohars are not performed repetitively throughout childhood and generally lack the same ties with deeply affective memories. The tradition's maintenance is more reliant on rituals and professions being made irrelevant by cultural and technological shifts. The transformation and even disappearance of sohar traditions is a way to index Indian society's changing attitude towards birth. It is another indication of the broad and swift moving cultural changes affecting urban India.

In chapter 5, I returned to the topic of lullabies to discuss their use in Indian cinema. Lullabies created for or adopted by Bollywood and other regional film industries are by far the most popular, the most sung, and the most listened to lullabies in India. I examined some of the musical and narrative trends in Indian cinema to show the changing role and function of lullabies

in film. Chapter 5 details the flowering of “social dramas” during the 1940s through the 1960s and the place this genre affords to lullabies. I highlighted some of the musical and textual features of the most popular lullabies from the “Golden Era” of Hindi cinema and analyze how these songs are used as musical markers of innocence, an idealized Indian woman, parental and romantic love, general “Indian-ness,” and their continuing association with death and sadness. Lullabies continue to be linked with these themes. However, in contemporary cinema, lullabies are heard less frequently and are often part of a film’s background soundtrack rather its onscreen narrative.

I contend that Indian film lullabies, and film music more generally, can be implicated in the formation of a pan-Indian, globally oriented identity that is beginning to supersede older regional and national Indian identities. Film music and the “evergreen” songs and lullabies from the 1940s-60s sound out a nostalgic, imagined past. They are a shared set of musical memories and experiences that help create an Indian national consciousness that is decoupled from older political and religious pan-Indian nationalisms. I argued that the establishment of a more globalized Indian identity stems from India’s economic liberalization in the 1990s and is equally a consequence of increasing numbers of non-resident Indians returning to India and reimporting their changed perspectives on Indian identity. This pan-Indian, globally aware consciousness is further shaped by the global interconnectedness of Indian families. Children and grandchildren emotionally and culturally connect with relatives still living in India through lullabies and film music. They share a set of musical and cultural symbols across national borders and, in the process, create an expanded notion of what constitutes Indian identity.

Reflections

During my fieldwork in India, and back in Los Angeles as I completed this dissertation, I began to better appreciate the role my wife and daughter played in this project. Many ethnomusicologists go into “the field” accompanied by their spouses, significant others, and children. Some write about these experiences; some recognize their loved ones in the acknowledgements of their work. Other times, these people remain hidden, silent ghosts of the fieldwork experience. My research into child-directed music in India would have been completely changed if my wife and daughter had not been present. Now, having the benefit of hindsight, I am able to compare my fieldwork experiences both with and without the presence of my family. The differences are striking.



Figure 6.1: Curious crowds always loved to interact with my wife and daughter (foreground).

During previous trips, I always felt like I was seeking out research participants, striving to grab a hold of an elusive informant, someone who probably just didn't have the time or inclination to answer questions from a foreign stranger. Living in India with my wife and daughter, having them accompany me to interviews, and having our daughter strapped to one of us almost constantly for nine months, completely changed the way research participants and people on the street interacted with me and my wife (see Figures 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3).



Figure 6.2: A view of looking in, or how India often saw me and my daughter.

Fieldwork no longer felt difficult; I did not feel as if something was constantly slipping between my fingers. People were inquisitive, interested, and open. I became less of a strange, foreign “researcher” as my family became more a subject of curiosity. Of course, our time there was not without its challenges. Alone, I always felt like I could survive the heat, the cold, illnesses brought by annoying insects or foodborne pathogens, the crush of far too many bodies crammed onto trains and metros, or just the raw intensity of living in the constant churn and buzz of an Indian megacity. With my wife and daughter present, these difficulties didn't simply vanish; they just had to be overcome in different ways. The benefits outweighed the challenges.



Figure 6.3: A view looking out, or my daughter's view of India (notice the fingers squeezing her cheeks on the left of the frame).

As a result of these experiences, I would like to encourage others to involve their family and significant others in their research, and to acknowledge the vital role these people play in their fieldwork, research, and writing. This can be challenging. In my case, my wife was often behind the camera taking pictures while I conducted interviews, or keeping our daughter (moderately) quite while I recorded the songs of my research participants, so presenting photo documentation of her role in my research is difficult. Achieving a productive balance between scholarly distance and reflexive ethnography can be challenging. As ethnomusicologists (or any scholar of art and culture), we endeavor to include rich detail about our research participants' lives, cultures, and practices. This dissertation, and the fieldwork experiences leading up to it, have reminded me of the importance of writing our children, spouses, and significant others more fully into the stories we tell.

My dissertation has been preoccupied with the idea of change. One cannot visit India's megacities and not be overwhelmed by the profound transformations taking place across

contemporary Indian society. I have endeavored to show how child-directed songs and practices both resist this change and can be implicated in it. Child-directed songs transmit values between generations and help create deeply affective memories that are a part of an individual's personal and familial narrative. These songs help establish new feelings of belonging to groups not limited by regional, ethnic, religious, or national boundaries of affiliations. Child-directed songs in urban India are thus shaped by history, memory, habitus, urbanization, and technology, and are shaping of socio-cultural values, narratives, and identities. I have relied on my field research and the scholarly literature from a wide variety of academic disciplines to show how and why child-directed songs are important to those who sing and hear them. These seemingly "little" songs, music and practices that were once stigmatized as not worth the attention of serious scholars, can yield real insight into the "big" processes affecting human society.

Change can be difficult. The title of this dissertation, "Passing Traditions," alludes to an ongoing loss of certain song practices. Rather than present a depressing story of loss, I have attempted to show how caregivers are adapting their child-directed song practices to fit the realities and requirements of contemporary urban Indian life. Yet, aspects of lullaby and sohar practices are being lost. While change may be inevitable, the loss of tradition may too be natural. However, the story has not ended. This dissertation is just one of the first forays into the evolving world of child-directed songs in India. There is still much to discover.

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