



The Shifting Paradigms of Humanism on Celluloid: Exploring the Analogous Cinematic Visions in the Works of Abbas Kiarostami and Amit Masurkar

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Abstract: Counter-cultural positions germinate through acts of resistance against dominant ideologies, usually finding voice through mediums of popular culture. This study takes up two outstanding film makers whose body of work encompasses new-found positions of liberal politics that have subverted the normative framework of the cultural imaginary. Amit Masurkar is part of a group of idealistic artists whose film craft challenges the hegemonic practices in Bollywood. At a time when propagandist movies pander to the ruling class, Masurkar carefully curates a canon of films that deal with common men and women from the minority classes. A pioneer of neo-realism and a proponent of the Iranian new wave, Abbas Kiarostami is also a part of this investigative study, which places *Taste of Cherry* (1997) and *The Wind Will Carry Us* (1999) alongside *Newton* (2017) and *Sherni* (2021) of Amit Masurkar under the same radar of analysis. Both filmmakers have shown a fascination for the quotidian struggles of the masses against systemic marginalisation and for their powerful stance on empowering the subaltern. Their respective film crafts are also equivalent in representing the urban/rural disconnect, the severance of communication and the indeterminacy of knowledge.

Keywords: Hegemonic, Propagandist, Counter-Cultural, Communication, Minority Class

Introducing the Culturally Different Voices:

Cross-cultural currents have often challenged dominant cultural representations. This research study attempts to bring together two radical filmmakers whose crafts have left an indelible mark in the field because of their daunting cultural politics that run opposite to the established and conventional modes of film making. The body of work created by Amit Masurkar, an engineering dropout and self-taught independent filmmaker from Bollywood, is examined alongside one of the most experimental artists of the Iranian New Wave, Abbas Kiarostami. Against the backdrop of propagandist movies that have penetrated the fabric of mainstream Bollywood recently, Amit Masurkar is known for his meaningful cinema, intended to reclaim the voice of the marginalised. Since the debut of the BJP government, Bollywood has functioned as a soft power in peddling Hindu majoritarian sentiments (across the globe) through movies like *Panipat* (2019), *Samrat Prithviraj* (2022), *Kesari* (2019), or *Tanhaji* (2020), where the force of antagonism is always the Islamic Other. This fierce campaign of spreading Islamophobia has already stereotyped the craft of contemporary filmmaking, where the content is almost invariably manipulated to culturally interpellate every Hindu member in the audience as a subject of an ultra-nationalist discourse. Though such a backdrop is intensely jingoistic, Amit Masurkar's body of work has emerged with a different cultural agenda. In fact, his films are truly connected to the masses, their disempowerment and the quotidian coercion they are



subjected to by the bureaucracy. This study aims to examine two prominent films of Amit Masurkar, namely *Newton* (2017) and *Sherni* (2021), that deal with empowering the common man from the fringes (the minorities), who is more like a political tool puppeteered by the systemic machine. Abbas Kiarostami is a pivotal artist from another vantage point of the cultural spectrum (and from the past decade) whose filmmaking articulates a similar liberal philosophy. A graphic artist, painter, poet, and illustrator, Abbas Kiarostami, like Amit Masurkar, was a pioneer of independent films (Indie films), films that are subjective and yet intimately connected to objective reality. Connecting the macro and micro structures of power, Abbas Kiarostami glorified the common Iranian people with heroism and agency. *Taste of Cherry* (1997) and *The Wind Will Carry Us* (1999) are part of this research study, both engaging with the struggle of the common Iranian folk, and blurring the line between the reel and the real through their cinematic content.

Cinema of Scepticism and Experimental filmmakers:

This study aims to evaluate two filmmakers from two diverse cultural backdrops and separate timelines through the interface of their analogous worldviews. While Abbas Kiarostami (1940-2016), a pioneer of Iranian New Wave (the first wave starting in the late 1960s) lived in a milieu of censorship and rigid norms of cultural representation, Amit Masurkar (born 1981) burst into a scene of pro-establishment cinema that advocated, championed, and represented the sentiments of the dominant (Hindu) majority. Both these creative artists spearheaded their art against the prevalent established mode of filmmaking. Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell in their book *Film History: An Introduction* (2003) document the evolution of revolutionary cinema in Iran; "In the early 1970s the mass entertainment cinema was counterbalanced by the *cinema motefavet* ("New Iranian Cinema") ...The Ayatollahs' restrictive regime would seem an unlikely source of creative cinema, yet soon a series of imaginative, affecting films began to appear not only in Iranian theaters but at film festivals abroad" (669). Talking about Kiarostami, Thompson and Bordwell outline the features of his radical cinema that included "A realist, documentary style, poetic, allegorical framework with focus on rural lower class (670)".

M. Madhava Prasad in his book, *Ideology of the Hindi Film* (1998) hails the 1960s in Indian cinema as the space that birthed "a new cinema which dwelt with the travails of the urban middle class, social satire, agitprop, critiques of feudal power structures, conflicts of modernity and tradition (225)" and features "a character who is an intermediary, who is neither organically a part of the represented world nor completely alienated from it (245)" Drawing reference from this, one can therefore safely state that Amit Masurkar's work may reflect and simulate a similar brand of social commentary that characterised a certain past era in Bollywood, alluded to by Prasad as 'New Cinema'. Both Kiarostami and Masurkar's work deals with a quest, sometimes literal, or socio-political and often speculative.

Alberto Elena, in his book *The cinema of Abbas Kiarostami* (2005) dismisses "Western critics who culturally essentialise his cinema through Eurocentric lens (20)" and rather urges viewers to probe the "Kiarostami Ellipsis, the epistemological gap that the audience must work out (25)" Zigzagging roads, the famous signature style of Kiarostami (often self-cited and self-referenced multiple times in



his works to signify intertextual allusion), area philosophical statement that refers to the quizzical nature of the protagonist's quest and his non-linear journey. Knowledge is categorically denied to the audience in both Kiarostami and Masurkar's films; if the reason for Mr Badii's suicide is kept undisclosed in *Taste of Cherry* (1997), or the ending of *The Wind Will Carry Us* (1999) is enigmatic and baffling, both *Newton* (2017) and *Sherni* (2021) are open ended. One is unsure whether Newton's desire for fair elections is at all fulfilled (since the entire voting process was disappointing and only four voters turned up) or if Vidya Vincent could actually reform the forest bureaucracy or save the endangered species (the ending reveals a different scenario: after she could not save the tigress from being killed, Vidya moves to a new job).

***Newton* (2017) and the Trope of the Rural**

Newton (2017), the film that received several accolades at international festivals, was also India's official entry for Oscars in the foreign language film category. Framed like a thriller, it depicts the adventures of a duty-bound, banal government servant (a clerk) who embarks on official duty to monitor the execution of an election procedure (a vote) in a Maoist-dominated territory (somewhere in central India). As the tale advances, the simple plot turns into a spoof on Indian democracy, which preaches fair elections as the only political goal of any presiding government. Labelled a black comedy with a bent of political satire, *Newton* (2017) stands apart from the run-of-the-mill, overtly nationalist (propagandist) films of the time by exposing the true nature of Indian democracy and its pseudo-patriotism. Like the science genius, his namesake, the eponymous protagonist functions like Isaac Newton, insanely insistent on honesty and integrity and the core philosophy that only incorruptibility can sanitise Indian democracy. The trope of the rural (tribal) is deployed as a narrative strategy to juxtapose the gaze of the urban outsider vis-à-vis the rural insider. Much like his counterpart (Abbas Kiarostami) in this comparative study, Amit Masurkar represents the wild landscape as liberating for the native insider but limiting to the urban outsider. Both in *Newton* (2017) and *Sherni* (2021), the rural folk/tribals are often perceived as exotic others through the epistemological lens of the documentarian protagonist (Newton and Vidya Vincent), whose efforts at constructing the country space ethnographically is often devoid of constructive signification. As a consequence, the widening rift between the country and the city is further intensified and communication fails. In India, the class/caste divide has always been politicised by different political groups for different ideological agendas. Amit Masurkar (in one of his interviews) confesses that *Newton* (2017) is not based on any cynical philosophy; rather, it debunks the myth of an inclusive India through the actions of the central protagonist, who is more a buffoon caught in the crossfire of bureaucratic hassles (and excesses of alleged secessionists and ignorant villagers) than an idealistic hero. *Newton* (2017) exposes the hypocrisy of the state machinery and the superfluous nature of the electoral procedure with its paraphernalia that performs like a strawman to distract us from the hollowness of the whole idea of democracy. In fact, the colonised mind-set that post-colonial India grapples with is graver than the existential crisis of democracy, and *Newton* (2017), advocating against political neutrality urges the common man to gain political literacy. Only then can the widening rift between the intersectional classes collapse. Though the filmmaker places his trust in the native, tribal folk (the adivasis), victimised as political pawns in the faceoff between the state, its armed forces and



the alleged insurgents, the rupture of communication (between the urban outsider/rural insider) is still evident in the brief conversation between Newton and Malko, a block level officer:

Newton: Kya aap nirashawadi hai? (Are you a pessimist?)

Malko: Nahin, main Adivasi hoon. (I am tribal).

The literal translation of these lines (my translation) emphasise the grave disjuncture in apparent, quotidian communication. The inadvertent humour is intentional. Given Masurkar's training as a scriptwriter for comedy shows, this dark humour is also a scathing critique against Indian democracy, that lays down the machinery of the electoral process meticulously but is nonchalant about the reality of its staging. The humour is also a conduit, conveying the shadow of scepticism that further polarises the urban/rural rift to an eventual impasse.

Sherni (2021): A retrograde chase?

If *Newton (2017)* challenges the nationalist discourse of a democratic India, *Sherni (2021)* takes a step further in exposing the systemic policy of oppression on the minorities under the present regime. Apparently guised as an environmental thriller, *Sherni (2021)* evokes a lot of other concomitant issues along with ecology, predation and conservation of wild habitat. As an allegory of racial exclusion, segregation and persecution in an ultra-right Hindu nation, Masurkar's film ideology gently prods the liminal space of racial politics couched underneath the agenda of a fundamentalist Hindu Rashtra. The plot engages with the hunt for a supposedly 'man-eater' tigress and a team of forest officials spearheaded by a female officer Vidya Vincent who is assigned the job of tracking the animal down. The chase is however a straw man; what the cinematic sub-text actually addresses is the silent persecution of minorities under a BJP ruled Hindu dominated nation-state. Much like the non-sequential journeys of Kiarostami's protagonists, Masurkar too plots Vidya's expedition with randomness and chronological uncertainty. Not only is Vidya met with resistance in her professional space but also in her domestic arena that disrupts and fragments her mission with unprecedented highs and lows to the final aborting of it. The zigzag journey that Vidya embarks upon to seek knowledge takes her to the interior of the jungle, to bureaucratic offices and to the humble abodes of the jungle natives (as stated earlier one witnesses an equivalent epistemological crisis in journeys undertaken by protagonists in the films of Kiarostami).

Reflecting on Abbas Kiarostami's film craft with specific reference to *The Wind Will Carry Us (1999)*, Alberto Elena in his book *The Cinema of Abbas Kiarostami (2005)*, points out how Kiarostami displays an apparent disinterest in urban life "by charting traditions untouched by evils of modernity". (77). Likewise, M. Madhava Prasad in his book, *Ideology of the Hindi Film (1998)* evaluating the binary modernity/tradition observes; "The binary, whether it is employed to indicate conflict or complementarity, amounts to an explanation, a 'conceptual or belief system' which regulates thinking about the modern Indian social formation. This binary also figures centrally both thematically and as an organising device, in popular film narratives". (11) Prasad further points out how this "uneasy equilibrium coexists with the contrary drive to modernization". (15) *Sherni (2021)* appears to be an apparent study in cultural ethnography with the (female) urban outsider intruding into the unfamiliar space of a native habitat and their rituals. The clash of tradition and modernity is



evident not just in the segregated life style of the Adivasis tormented by the onslaught of bureaucratic projects of development and modernisation usurping their land, wild life and livelihood but also in the female protagonist's domestic space (the inter-generational, familial clash regarding Vidya's status as a married woman when her mother-in-law insists on her wearing customary jewellery in keeping with the norms of tradition).

Eventually, the retrograde chase; an inverted chase with Vidya chasing the tiger, the forest bureaucracy, the natives, and on the other hand she herself being chased by her own family/husband and the bureaucracy, ascends to the climax. The climax unravels through the solidarity between a Muslim man (a professor and environmental crusader who aids Vidya), a "lower-caste" Adivasi woman (read aboriginal/ tribal) and Vidya, a Malayali Christian woman, who together embark on this mission rife with bureaucratic hurdles and party politics. Masurkar carefully selects the racial position of his subjects and grants agency only to members of the minority class which is emblematic of how *Sherni* (2021) is a powerful statement against a regime that believes in Hindu supremacy and racial exclusivity. In an earlier work analysing *Sherni* (2021) I concluded that the dramatic tension is a natural cinematic response to the present ethnic segregation in the country; "The rapid and alarming marginalisation of minorities in contemporary India, fanned by ultra-right Hindu ideologues has led to inconsolable race riots and abhorrent identity politics. The Narendra Modi led Bharatiya Janata Party has diligently subscribed to Hindu fundamentalist (Hindutva) principles from the very germination of its power, which resonates in its majoritarian politics of appropriating historical discourses, manufacturing of counterfeit myths of origin to persecution of religious minorities like Muslims, Christians and Dalits, and this in its turn has become a permanent feature of Indian democracy" (Sengupta 80). The film transpires how a corrupt Hindu majoritarian class unleashes vigilance not just on the wild animals but also on the lower echelons of society inhabited by minority classes. Thus, social actors like those from the intelligentsia, namely Vidya Vincent (the female protagonist) and her friend, college professor Hassan Noorani have been either condescended or forced to concede to the dominant ideology. Like *Newton* (2017), there is an equal celebration of the underprivileged and their politics of resistance against the discriminating structures of power in *Sherni* (2021) through the unapologetic alliance of three members from minority classes who uphold the virtues of volition, agency and free will. As a consistent wave of Hinduization has gripped Bollywood through propagandist cinema premised on the reductionist formula of representing the force of antagonism through the figure of the racially different, Amit Masurkar advocates religious and racial tolerance through politically relevant cinema like the ones under the prism of investigation in this study. Like Abbas Kiarostami, Amit Masurkar's cinematic vision places equal reliance on the common folk, the tribal, the native, the subaltern, and the racial minority.

Abbas Kiarostami, the urban rural divide and the disjuncture in communication:

Abbas Kiarostami (1940-2016), a pioneer of neo-realism in Iranian film making was a trailblazer in more ways than one. A graphic artist and a poet, the world of cinema that he created was often compared to either illustrative art or profound philosophy in lyrics. Subsequently, though accused by his detractors of exoticising the third world in the global platform for recognition, the body of work produced by him over the years has been exclusive and phenomenal. *Taste of Cherry* (1997) that received the Palme d' Ore at the 1997 Cannes Film Festival is the first Iranian movie to



have garnered such an award. Both *Taste of Cherry* (1997) and *The Wind Will Carry Us* (1999) commence with a long shot of a car zigzagging a wild and rural landscape, which is a classic Kiarostami style, a frame of reference to his own work that keeps coming back like a text within a text. According to critics this superb intertextuality is indeed a Kiarostami signature, carefully incorporated in almost each of his work to convey a sense of meta-cinematic representation. Analysing Kiarostami's film philosophy and the nature of cinematic scepticism Mathew Abbott (2017) points out; "The meandering car is a giveaway that we are watching a Kiarostami film yet - deployed as it is with such deliberateness at the very beginning of *The Wind Will Carry Us* - it also gives away the fact that Kiarostami's signature is like any other signature, a technique that can be repeated, indeed mimicked or parodied. Importantly, however this self-effacing gesture is not simply ironic, and it is not only in spite but also partly because of its reflexivity that the opening sequence of this film (and all other films) is intriguing and gently funny" (33). However, the repetitive images of zigzagging roads incorporated by Kiarostami in his films are not just for banal self-citations but are intended for a more profound philosophical expression, a reflection on the chaotic journeys that all his protagonists engage in. *Taste of Cherry* (1997), a minimalist film, is a case in point. It follows a certain Mr. Badii as he is driving around a semi-industrial landscape in Tehran, encountering strangers and requesting help from them in arranging his own death. That Mr. Badii self-conspires to ingest sleeping pills to kill himself and is looking for someone who could check on him the next day in his self-dug grave to fill it up with earth or release him if alive, is revealed only through the conversations that he has with a couple of strangers. Labelled a "lifeless drone" by Roger Ebert, *Taste of Cherry* (1997) imbibes a slackened pace with long periods of ambient sound outside the captured shots which at the end is revealed to be the film crew recording. This abrupt distancing effect, often Brechtian in nature, not just convey the state of alienation of the protagonist, Mr. Badii, who is remote and alienated from the strangers whom he interacts with, this severance in communication is also evident in the subversion of our understanding of the real world through cinematic representations. The ultimate words of the film are symbolic: "Try to stay close to the tree. The shoot is over." As we keep deliberating whether Abbas Kiarostami meant the tree of life when he evoked the image of a cherry tree, we see the filmmaker himself sharing a light moment with the crew and the actor who plays Mr. Badii. The coda does not answer our grave concerns regarding Mr. Badii's suicide, it gives no clue either to the context or the reason behind such a drastic step, rather the ambiguity thrusts us to a deeper epistemological impasse that blurs the line between the reel and the real. The ending that is meant to frustrate and confound us, however grants us a philosophical liberty to conclude that we are forever displaced from what we want; simultaneously highlighting the predicament of a filmmaker regarding the philosophical problem of capturing the real through reel.

Taste of Cherry (1997) while being a humanist document that equates the motility of life to the physiological sensation of taste (of a certain fruit), is also about the precariousness of every single human life; how killing oneself might lead to killing others or vice versa. Like *The Wind Will Carry Us* (1999), *Taste of Cherry* (1997) too is about communication or the lack of it; and how all Cinema is eventually Meta-cinema in retrospect. Embodying a documentary-like texture, Abbas Kiarostami's creation casts spotlight on the quotidian Iranian life where significance or chronology of events or linearity of time is irrelevant or carefully ignored. Like Mr. Badii, most protagonists in a Kiarostami



film are unreliable narrators, and willing suspension of disbelief being non-existent, it is ultimately the members of the audience who have to account for their own epistemological loss or gain.

If Abbas Kiarostami in introspective films like the *Taste of Cherry* (1997) and *The Wind Will Carry Us* (1999) portrays the estranged relation between big city dwellers and country simpletons, he comes strikingly close to what Amit Masurkar does with his socially realist cinema in Bollywood. Both *Newton* (2017) and *Sherni* (2021) unfold tentative journeys of urban outsiders whose attempts at integrating into remote, rural spaces generally end in fiasco and an identical epistemological crisis. Stephen Bransford in his article, *Days in the Country: Representations of the Rural Space and Place in Abbas Kiarostami* (2003) delineates how three different manifestations of space- the space of social practice, mental space, and physical space intermingle in Kiarostami's films. He points out the fact that "the urban outsider's views of the country are socially constructed" and "Kiarostami debunks their various projections and fantasies of rural space" (Bransford). He further observes; "Of course Kiarostami acknowledges his own status as a privileged outsider in making films about rural areas, and he doesn't pretend that he is totally exempt from the negative ramifications of being an outsider. He knows that privileged outsiders often view rural spaces through a distorted lens of nostalgia and a whole set of cultural biases, including gender and class biases....and it encourages the construction of the villager as an exotic Other and perpetuates a relationship of exploitation and voyeurism" (Bransford). To borrow a further quote from him; "Class is often the element that connects or disconnects 'main' characters from other characters, and this is especially true of the various filmmaker/subject relationships depicted in Kiarostami's films" (Bransford). *The Wind Will Carry Us* (1999) is a cinematic representation of an ethnographic project where the ethnographer (and the film maker) attempts to capture the cultural life of a remote community. Nominated for Golden lion at the 56th Venice International film festival, *The Wind Will Carry Us* (1999) documents the arrival of a journalist with his crew to a Kurdish village with the intention of recording a local mourning ritual involving an old woman anticipating death; though the event of the death is digressed to observation of mundane activities of the villagers, the paramount question of the dissolution of the self and the other as subject and object in that observation remains a philosophical (existential) concern for the film maker and his craft. As Mathew Abbott reflects on Kiarostami's style; "I want to read *The Wind Will Carry Us* - with its reflexive critique of the desire to capture the authentic, pre-modern culture on film- as a rebuke to certain orientalist tendencies in the international reception of Kiarostami, and a riposte to his Iranian critics, especially those who see him as deliberately performing an ethnographically inclined 'Third world' exoticism" (Abbott 39).

Communication or the rupture of it is a meta narrative strategy that keeps trans locating from one film of his to the other; the protagonist who arrives with his crew to shoot a native mourning ritual soon realises the difficulty of capturing real life, and it is then that the directorial vision disperses to other insignificant objects of less concern (mongrel dogs playing around, stray cattle, a boy and his soccer ball, women drying clothes etc.). These off-camera spaces are the actual hotspots of true cinematic depiction, as Abbott rightly points out; "And again, what happens to the film maker happens to the viewer too: Kiarostami's strategy, in this film and in his work more generally, is to effect a breakdown in the viewer's ability to tell the difference between the real and the artificial, a signature and its citation, the original and the copy, the important and the peripheral, and so on. The



neat trick of his cinema is that it is only by paralysing our claims to knowledge in this way that he can bring us out of our scepticism" (40).

The village of Siah Darih in *The Wind Will Carry Us* (1999) is continuously referred to as 'nowhere' with the protagonist and his crew expressing concern over reaching their destination (We are heading nowhere). Sparsely populated, the remote village community with primitive technology and poor telecommunications forces Behzad (the protagonist) to run across the barren lands to reach atop a hill every time he needs a phone signal. Consequently, all forms of communication fail to register in this rural space, forcing the urban outsider to lose interest in his mission (of documenting a death ritual in the village and returning to the city with the images for cultural consumption).

In reference to communication and social transmission, it may appear that the filmmaker and his unseen crew keep meandering in the wild landscape with apparent purposelessness but the quest in *The Wind Will Carry Us* (1999) may not be utterly futile, there is perhaps an intangible bond forged between the material and the spiritual. As the protagonist keeps climbing up a distant hill for his cell phone communication, intermittently talking to an unseen grave digger and eventually finding a human bone as a talisman, the physical (human mortality) seem to sync with an unseen transcendental communication elsewhere up the hill, provoking almost a Hamletian deliberation about the plight of an urban intellectual attempting to record an ethnic, culturally divergent community life. During the course of the filmmaker trying to document a folk ritual, more than death or the philosophy of life, the moral dilemma of the elite ethnographer emerges; perhaps the same moral position that Abbas Kiarostami had to negotiate when filming human subjects (his objects) on screen. Kiarostami's body of work is replete with such cognitive conundrums, his codas are not conclusive but understood only in hindsight. This aspect of Abbas Kiarostami's film craft is quite indistinguishable from Amit Masurkar's vision; both *Newton* (2017) and *Sherni* (2021) have well-crafted codas offering the audience ample space for speculation in their epistemic turmoil. *Newton* (2017) ends with a snippet from the eponymous clerk's professional life after the completion of the dramatic electoral process (after a temporal gap), leaving the audience conjecturing about a host of issues. Has Newton gained any wisdom on the convoluted nature of Indian democracy after his own experience in the voting procedure? Has he accepted the liminal position he occupies in the giant electoral process? Are integrity and honesty worth inculcating in modern democracies or are they redundant virtues? Such queries remain unresolved. The coda that *Sherni* (2021) ends with, has a comparable pattern; it presents the female protagonist Vidya Vincent in a new context, a fresh start in a wild life museum, perhaps a rumination of, and a contrast to her earlier role as a forest administrator. The audience is again left questioning her failed idealism, no clues are given regarding the status of her previous mission, or why she succumbed to the bureaucratic stranglehold, or left her designated position to accept the transfer. These unanswered questions are further overwhelmed by the codas that are meant to push the viewers into a crisis of comprehension.

Conclusion

Amit Masurkar, a pioneer in parallel Bollywood space has created a world of cinema that champions the struggles of the subaltern (from an intersectional grid of class, caste, gender, sexuality and religion) in the backdrop of recent propagandist films. Both *Newton* (2017) and *Sherni* (2021) deal



with granting agency to the native, tribal, and the underprivileged. If *Newton* (2017) hypes the farcical nature of Indian democracy and its electoral process, *Sherni* (2021) exposes the nature of bureaucracy and its neo-liberal development programs. Both films also present an ethnographic projection of a socially/culturally marginalised community from the vantage point of an urban middle class (or elite) consciousness; and it is exactly that interconnecting cinematic space of Amit Masurkar and Abbas Kiarostami that this research study focuses on. Both these film makers are pioneers of cinema that subvert dominant cinematic practices, both have gained international recognition by representing and foregrounding the unrepresented native voices in their inclusive films and both deploy their cinematic gaze to de-familiarise the ordinary struggles of the common people. Abbas Kiarostami, a front runner of the second wave of Iranian New Wave Cinema, explored the real Iran, and its common population through a poetic prism and documentary-style story telling in his cinema. Both *Taste of Cherry* (1997) and *The Wind Will Carry Us* (1999) are poetic, philosophical and humanist. Apart from their common agenda of valorising the marginalised, both Abbas Kiarostami and Amit Masurkar also document the awkward confrontation between an urban outsider and a rural insider, and the resultant interplay that evokes disruption in communication, in their respective films. This study illuminates the comparable elements of both the filmmakers to examine how their films show but not tell, compelling the audience to embrace their own quest for knowledge in order to escape the cognitive maze represented on screen.

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