



## An Analysis of Cinematic Moments in the Film *Rockstar*

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### Abstract

The film, *Rockstar* (2011) has associations both with cultural kitsch and a romanticized imagination in relation to how it's remembered. *Rockstar* poetically blurs the boundaries between commercial and critical cinema. It's almost as though the film belongs to a third realm of liminality which lacks a suitable label. *Rockstar* was directed by Imtiaz Ali and its soundtrack was composed by A.R. Rahman and Mohit Suri. Ranbir Kapoor plays Janardhan Jakhar, who is a student at Delhi University. Nargis Fakhri plays Heer Kaul, a Kashmiri girl who also studies at Delhi University. Janardhan who is later also known by the alias, 'Jordan' is from a poor and dysfunctional family. He is cheaply dressed and speaks bad English. But he is also artistic as he has a talent for music. Heer is attractive, sophisticated, rich and elite. It's not clearly mentioned what subject Heer studied. But she is seen in a classroom where a lecturer is reading lines from *Odysseus* which suggests that perhaps she was a student of Eng. Hons at St. Stephens, Delhi University. The following paper analyses the film, *Rockstar*.

**Keywords:** Romance, abstract, cultural, lived-experience

### Introduction

The mixing of romance and kitsch is pretty commonplace in Bollywood cinema and *Rockstar* too follows that template to a certain degree before taking a departure from it. Both Indian cinema and Indian audiences have taught each other the superstition that is attached with romance. The idea that a woman who is chased enough number of times and with the right passion will then succumb to the man's desire are what constitute this cultural kitsch which sits at the heart of how romance is perceived in popular culture. At first Jordan shows courage in walking to Heer and telling her that he loves her. After being rejected he chases and serenades Heer playing out a traditional cinematic trope which is bothersome rather than romantic. But his attempts are not aggressive or masculine or even sexualized. He is mostly very clownish in his attempts to get Heer due to which there is an absence of malice. However it is clear that Heer has rejected him and his advances. She doesn't want to talk to him. But even within Jordan's failed quest, we see a moment of indulgence from Heer. After having rejected him, she is approached again by him for the final time where she gets both angry and serious in a more revealing way. As he stands next to her asking for a conversation at 0:24:29 she indulgently holds his hand forcing him to face her and repeatedly asking him to start talking suggestive of an opposite quality which is a mark of a more personal confrontation. This leaves Jordan too embarrassed to say anything. Here the implication is not to say that Heer secretly liked Jordan's behaviour. She rejects Jordan and she knows this and so does Jordan. But by becoming indulgent and expressive in the act of rejecting him she personalizes this

space which totally diffuses the toxicity within the wooing sequence in a way cleansing him of any wish to bother her anymore. Although she scolds him and makes it very clear that she doesn't want him, it looks a bit personal and obsessive from her. Jordan cannot anymore approach her. And that is what the film shows. Jordan stopped chasing her or talking to her. Heer doesn't want him in his life. In fact every time, he sees Heer, he just gets embarrassed and disappears from the frame which then prompts Heer one day to walk up to Jordan and reopen the conversation thus culminating in their friendship. A girl who was clear-headed about rejecting a guy cannot give herself the liberty to reopen conversation with him but here Heer breaks this code after the concluding event of rejection. Perhaps Heer became sympathetic towards Jordan when he ended up respecting her wish to not be bothered. He was fearless in not wanting to engage with her and somewhere it is this fearlessness and independence which made Heer feel safe and unbothered. And this perhaps created an urge to re-engage with him in a new space of friendship even if she didn't plan any of this. And to live in a way where he no longer wants her. And only a very few men can claim a space like that. Jordan does reclaim this space of dignity and autonomy where he exists without Heer for some time. It is only after Heer has seen him in an independent space that she feels a renewed sense of safety where she is no longer bothered that we see them striking an eccentric friendship or rather a companionship and that is when we see her approaching him.

There is an eerie quality to Heer's appearance in comparison to other girls at the campus as we see them in the frame. It's

almost as though Heer with the most usual dress and normal acting assumes an enigmatic status even in the spectator's gaze. Prior to the shot where Heer approaches an embarrassed Jordan, at 0:25:58-0:26:11 she is shown with another girl, very briefly, who is otherwise as beautiful but next to Heer she just becomes ordinary and too 'real'. As though this other attractive girl like every other person is living too much in reality and Heer in some way is living on a different plane engulfing her in a halo of curiosity.

It is with Jordan that Heer feels she can be herself. She wants to go to cheap pubs, semi-porn theatres, strip-shows, she wants to feel herself liberated with all these cheap experiences which is a space that she can only share with him. Jordan becomes the companion that she wants as we see them walking thrilled and intoxicated at Hauz Khas Fort in Delhi which represents a historic space associated with historical rulers and serves as a secular bastion for young couples across diverse lines who meet at evenings after finishing their colleges. Jordan and Heer's trip of cheap alcohol and the thrill of intoxication is not simply a romantic date or a clownish act. It is loaded with socio-cultural signifiers because of the place in which the event occurs. Because people experience life in respect to their surroundings. While residential areas remain generally conservative, Hauz Khas Fort or places like Tughlakabad Fort are signifiers of secular space allowing socio-cultural engagement which is absent in settled colonies. It also becomes a grand socio-political backdrop to every new personal experience that every new couple makes in such spaces. That is how we remember each other. We remember each other not always directly but through indirectness. We create memories in respect to place and time. So the place and time end up becoming socio-cultural signifiers where the personal and the cosmological mix. Time is inclusivist. It is for this reason that we cannot airbrush the cultural significance of a place or context like the Hauz Khas Fort out of Heer and Jordan's life because after all they exist in these cinematic frames not in isolation but in relation to their surroundings. So when they are intoxicating themselves with cheap alcohol near historic monuments they are in a sense creating their earliest lived-experience. It is the thrill that they cannot have in residential areas. And that is how we see them evolving not in an empty romance or friendship but in different spaces in respect to different environments that actually have intellectual markers. At times, we see them as a couple culturally engaging in university-campus, at urban spaces and at times near snowy mountains in Kashmir. These surroundings add connotations of social and cultural significance to their personal spaces thus making them like flâneur lovers or cosmic lovers.

Heer likes being as local as she can be in Delhi. She wants to live in the dichotomy of being at campus of Stephens and also meet Jordan at the gate near some tea-stall and discreetly go on bike rides with him like young couples go on cheap-bike rides to places like Tughlakabad Kila etc. It is at this point that we see Heer donning dresses and assuming a localized behaviour slightly altering her from how she is seen earlier. We see her more in local delhi clothes that girls have a subterranean taste for. She seems very comfortable in a hybridized attire made up of loose track-pants and an expensive black leather jacket. Heer's attire is like a cultural mixing of cheap/local clothes and expensive clothes which is very common and a matter of local fashion in universities across Delhi and which is also something that we see a lot of women stop dressing like that once they are married in conservative families where they have to dress more

cohesively. Because in domestic or residential spaces the sense of fashion is more linear whether it's a saree or a gown whether it's a poor or a rich family. Heer's sense of fashion defies such cohesiveness and aligns more with local flavours of Delhi. It's suggestive of the way in which her hybridized attire is itself a symbol of freedom and also a rebellion against homogenizing spaces. It's no coincidence that when Heer is experiencing the thrills of urban life that it is all a part of a song, "Katiya Karoon" which begins with the line "tinglingtingling" at 0:33:51 which phonetically has a very localized quality to it and the same sound also bleeds when they are in Kashmir and then Prague as if both new regions are being culturally infected with the same localized phonetic marker or as if they have transported local delhi itself to Kashmir and Prague.

Their friendship is followed by a fluid montage of scenes and moments which constitute a cultural kitsch of emotions and silly dialogues as this space fills very fast thus nearing them to Heer's wedding in Kashmir, an event of a dooming separation which neither wants but cannot avoid anymore. At Kashmir, prior to introducing Janardhan to her elite class of friends, at 0:38:14, Heer coins the name, 'Jordan' for him. Jordan is both a phonetic extension of Janardhan as well as a departure from known Indian terms of endearment. It's a western sounding alias. It is significant because of how Heer as a lover looks at Jordan. She respects him immensely. She understands that being confined to Indian roots won't ever bring him the space of fame that he deserves. She somewhere has recognized that Jordan also wants to liberate himself from his roots. Because if he has had such a sublime friendship so far with a west-ward looking girl like her then it means he is not a territorial person but someone who wants to be in artistic spaces. And so she looks at him also in a west-ward looking gaze which is internally an inclusivist gesture that blurs social or hierarchical barriers between them. Which is why he is not at all offended to be losing his old identity. On the contrary he feels very liberated and elevated in Heer's inclusivist renaming of him which aligns with her western instincts. She recognises that Jordan should transcend social and national boundaries because that is the ultimate form of an artist that she wants to see him in. As is usually the case in Indian romance where lovers end up consuming each other's dreams and ambitions, reducing them only to a domesticated status of being a couple. Heer's romantic indulgence with Jordan has in no way shrunk her tastes or tamed her aloofness from her immediate surroundings. She still is as alienated from the commonplace and the crowds as she was in university. It is also why she doesn't choose a known or an Indianized name of endearment but an alias that is dreamy and wishful.

Sometimes, very banal acts open ruptures like in *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) or also in the film, *The Hours* (2002) where Clarissa agonizingly says "I will buy the flowers myself". It becomes a life-sensation because everytime she speaks the stated line, it is then that she feels intensely alive or reliving life very close to death. In *The Hours*, Laura Brown who plays a contemporary reincarnation of Clarissa relives one such life-sensation when the screen fills with waters and crashing waves signifying the flooding and rupture within her mental space as a metaphor of an independent state of existence placed in a death-wish. Prior to her wedding in Kashmir, Heer eccentrically asked Jordan to hug him. The peculiarity is not in the banality of hugging but lies in the way she asked him abruptly and enigmatically for it as though it was not simply a physical act but some life-dimension that

she wants them to enter. Like when one feels a shudder in a jet-plane. As though it's a life-jerk which pushed many spaces of what it means to live in front of her eyes. Her sudden urge to hug Jordan is a rebellion of her mental state against a marriage bound to return things to order into her life. It is an early language of love which signifies the implicit nature of romance. And that is how we see Jordan and Heer returning after years in Prague when she asks him again to hug in the same emphatic manner just like 'Mrs Dalloway wanted to buy the flowers herself'.

Rockstar is a film which has an appearance of being too erratic for conventional understanding. Heer loves Jordan but she doesn't explicitly say that in the film. She loves him but then she marries the wrong man. Then her reunion with Jordan is also too non-linear and defies any conservative logic of how a committed lover behaves. She doesn't commit linearly. She behaves erratically. Even within times of reunion with Jordan, she keeps saying that she will never see him again, she keeps staging separations. She keeps challenging these separations because ultimately she feels she cannot live or exist without him. But we also don't see them getting married or settling in any social space. The closest form to a marriage that we see them in is when Heer is dressed in red bridal attire and has a part playful, part serious conversation with Jordan which is like a romantic distortion of the idea of marriage. In the crucial hour of wedding she is not looking at her husband but at another man as if he was her husband. It's almost as though they are playing out their desire to be married in a space of fantasy. It's like a Freudian transference where an intended object is given an altered or a false place to fit the wish of the dreamer. There are four very brief moments (0:41:58-0:43:47) where Heer implicitly tells Jordan that she loves him. First she flirtatiously proposes elopement and few seconds later says 'yes' cryptically without any context. The 'yes' is followed by enigmatic silences and expressions. Perhaps she was saying 'yes' to a question that Jordan never asked her or in other words staging a question which was never asked but answered by Heer herself. Jordan clownishly responds by telling Heer that men have erotic fantasies for the bride which then she reciprocates by asking him flirtatiously and innocently whether he too will have erotic fantasies of her. It is then followed by a final coquettish reference to elopement where she asks him whether they should return as lovers after years or whether they should just elope right then. In the space of these intimate insinuations while Heer seems ripe for a possible escape from the wedding it is Jordan who remains oblivious. It seemed as though the very innocence and obliviousness of this moment prevented them from creating an alternate reality where they elope and get married. A universe of love incepted but uncreated. Jordan too was very much in love with her yet somehow Heer's intimate play of words open and close elusively like ephemeral portals. It's as though the universe was teasing them with a conception of life as married lovers inside a moment's elusiveness. Such a romantic exchange is cinematically a leap in terms of how declarations of love are usually portrayed within Indian cinema. Firstly the mix of innocence and coquettishness in Heer's intimate talks is a rebellion against how love is often expressed either aggressively or melodramatically on Indian screens. In fact the very interpretive openness of the romantic moment between them is also a rebellion against the fixed or hard nature of how love-propositions are traditionally made. Heer's elusive insinuations are open to interpretation. They are complex. They are not linearly decisive. She was not unidirectionally asking Jordan to marry her or even run away

with her. She was both insinuating and diffusing these possibilities in her love-talk. She puts on display a complicated love-lingo in a fluctuation of being flirtatious, playful, intimate and enigmatic. Because who could possibly predict what would have happened had Jordan jumped and agreed for an elopement. Then the film would have told a different story. It is also possible that Heer herself could have not been as prepared to break her wedding in reality as poised as she was for it in her words. It seems that the romantic exchange between them was a wishful state in which they didn't know how to exit and come out to live it out in reality. In a way, they married each other right there in their transgressive words. The un-demanded 'yes' from Heer was extremely intense as though she had tossed at him many sensations of the lived-life of loving him leaving behind no unanswered questions. As if her unconditional 'yes' pierced through the very fabric of physical reality into a sensation of the otherness of living and loving. It was both an invitation to marry him right then as well as a loving substitute for the life that she cannot have with him. It was also a call for return in another location of time.

When Heer and Jordan return as lovers after several years there is a romantic intensity which again is not cohesive in form. It's a broken romance. It's non-linear. They express love through indirectness. But they also remain intimate. While Jordan is now a rich and successful rockstar who has achieved international acclaim, we also get to know that Heer in the space of Jordan's absence for these many years is living in a marriage with which she doesn't emotionally connect and has been inflicted with a fatal illness called, Aplastic Anemia that brings to her an appearance as though she is always on the verge of dying. It is here we see the reunion of Jordan and Heer playing out very much on an edge of living. There is one such moment in the film's song, "Hawa Hawa" at 1:18:08 when the moving bike stops and a close-up of Heer's face resting on Jordan's back suddenly lights up under sunlight syncing with a new sound that emerges as the song ends. The moments that we see her in with Jordan are emphatically and feverishly earthly moments that represent a state of life which is brighter than usual, almost as though the life here is just too brightly lit in some ethereal luminosity. As though these moments of earthly life or earthly romance have an usual intensity suggesting that they are living with a death-wish. At another moment in the song, "Tum Ho" at 0:2:27-0:2:31 in a flashback dating back to Kashmir and time before her wedding, Heer emerges in the cloudy and frosty mountains and again it's her face which is highlighted and in appearance is cloudier than usual, as though her face has no muscle but it's the stuff made from fog or dreams suggesting that what we are looking at are earthly moments which have an opposite charge of a haunting or a dream-like quality.

When they meet in the green field as shown in the song, "Hawa Hawa" at Prague many years later after her marriage they keep teasing for a first kiss (1:20:00-1:20:36). They kiss twice but she also pretends to restrain. At (1:20:20-1:20:30) Heer very much wants to be kissed but she stages to diffuse the kiss and in doing so she intimately brings her face very close to Jordan and agonizingly gestures protruding lips as though she is kissing the nearest space between them which then culminates in a third full-blown kiss. Heer makes an identical gesture when Jordan returns to meet her after their 2nd separation in Prague. She stands in her balcony and looks below at Jordan as she utters the word 'Jordan' at 2:05:58 emphatically in a syllable again agonizingly gesturing provocative lips creating not a real kiss but a space or a model



of kiss. Loving Jordan or kissing Jordan is something she wants deeply but it is also unbearable for her. And it is this unbearable quality that elevates their kisses on an enigmatic plane where suffering and love attain a poetic or a tragic oneness.

The nature of the romance is such that Heer keeps creating events of separation to save her marriage and reorganize her life. After one such separation at Prague, Jordan tried to meet Heer without informing her when they were caught by her husband and the guards near the gate. It led to a chaotic confrontation where we see Heer very angry at Jordan and shouting at him for scandalizing her in front of her husband after which she tells him that she will never see him again and as she says this and turns towards her husband to face him she gets unconscious and falls in the lawn as Jordan is taken by the cops. But the film later opens a space for a reinterpretation of the event when the moment of separation this time accompanied with music is shown in a chaotic form in a flashback at (1:56:52-1:57:12) which then alters meaning and perception attached to it. Because that is what flashbacks do, they redefine and reinterpret or assign meaning differently in respect to an initial impression or a conventional understanding of a specific moment. In the flashback, Heer's collapse doesn't seem to be a conclusive gesture of an unloving separation. It is also not merely an omen of bad health or fatality because she was anyways very sick prior to Jordan's re-entry into her life. Heer's collapse is rather an intoxicating uptick of the feverish romance that she cannot openly express for Jordan but very much wants to and so it is in this chasm that her body just switches off. As if to convey that she loves him so badly that she has to fall into a subconscious realm to best express that. If at all she cared deeply about her failing marriage and her suspicious husband then she won't have collapsed like that. On the contrary, she would have resisted any spontaneous gesture and assumed a reasonable and stoic response to the situation so that she doesn't look bad in front of her husband or make her husband look bad. But precisely it is in her collapse that she defies rationality and social accountability to her husband and marriage. Notice how she collapses to the ground at (1:56:52-1:57:12) in the flashback. There is an intoxicating quality to the fall she takes. It's slow and aesthetic as opposed to being traumatic. She spins on an axis of her feet and then her eyes roll off as Jordan's chaotic guitar-strings are heard sonically muscling with the scene. And then her body dips into a down-voltage. It's almost as though she is selling the move or gesture choreographed by her subconscious desire to defy her marriage and to announce her love for Jordan. It's a fall that she takes very much in a revolution of love around the axis at which she falls.

Heer and Jordan strike another romantic reunion starting from Prague to India where Jordan is due to appear in concerts. When we see them in a private jet on the way to India there is a cinematic interplay of cultural signifiers that allude to icons and imageries within western media evoking a memory of how Rockstars and their wives or girlfriends react to fame, wealth, and a certain wonder around them. When Heer boards Jordan's private jet we see both lovers very liberated and happy. Here, they seem to be playing out examples of famous lovers/couples such as John Lennon and Yoko Ono. Heer and Jordan subconsciously mimic these cultural examples of loving couples. And in these simulated spaces their love doesn't get tested or compromised but instead grows. It's almost as though artistic spaces, even the ones that money can buy like houses or planes or yachts or beaches simulate a

utopia of love which the lovers can never really have in real life except ephemerally. These spaces do not last long. That is why in these spaces the girlfriends become more playfully loving in their behaviours not just in respect to the lover but to the lover's aura as well. It is there that they mimic being a wife or being a girlfriend. They imitate or simulate these patterns as behaviours of romance. In fact these spaces are also spaces of escape for the lovers from the real world where they know that socially people don't have a taste for such freedoms. Heer simulates these romantic behaviours as she for the first time starts taking interest in Jordan's musical and commercial endeavours. As much as she is consumed in her illness, at (2:12:17) she sits down with Jordan's friend/coach and engages herself even in practical aspects related to his concerts. She learns about the dates, and the venues. As Jordan starts resisting the idea of doing another concert at (2:12:17-2:14:02), she playfully starts telling his coach to not listen to Jordan because she wants to go to his concerts. She teases commanding Jordan's life and in doing so she simulates a behaviour of romance. Inside the jet, Heer again playfully starts teasing him about how she finds herself in awe of his wealth and stardom. These light comical moments between them imitate how Rockstars and their girl-friends in the hippie era were living as romantic couples. Back in India, when Jordan is mobbed by journalists, she doesn't get stressed but is rather happy in a childlike expression. We see them return in another flashback inside a white blanket symbolizing an escapist love-valve where they almost recite John Lennon's "Imagine" (1971) at (2:29:19-2:30:43) as they talk about a utopia for lovers and artists without rules, marriage, disease, hospitals, police, doctors, morality, nationality, obligation, contracts and court-cases. These romantically infectious moments are again intertextual reminders of John Lennon and Yoko Ono in private moments as lovers. Such iconic images of the union of creative and romantic endeavours within popular culture were at one time also socio-political signifiers of dissent and freedom. It also means that Heer and Jordan are not simply portraying an empty Bollywood romance but actually are imitating love-spaces through cultural imageries that are loaded with political and intellectual connotations.

They signify culturally a resistance to regression that eccentric people experience at homes, in their families, in their marriages, in their workplaces, in their societies and within their nations. Heer and Jordan as lovers are political signifiers of cultural resistance against authoritarian symbols. In a politically loaded song, "Sadda Haq" at (1:41:06-1:41:30) a lone girl in the capacity of an individual steals herself out from house and goes to buy a cd of Jordan's musical album. The girl's discreet act of buying the cd signifies a cultural defiance against regression that she may be facing at her home which is juxtaposed with the plethora of political signifiers in the song. Being introduced to radical music in one's life is like being injected with drugs. It alters perceptions. It stimulates an otherwise complacent and a cornered conscience. It is an act of dissent. The girl who buys the CD is very young. It is perhaps her first ever exposure to an intellectual taste for music and therefore the act is her very first lived-experience. It's somewhat like buying a novel or a film. Books, music and films become markers of lived-experience and critical thinking.

We see a series of distortions of social customs through which Heer and Jordan keep redefining their love. We don't see them getting trapped within such social spaces and this too brings to them a certain freedom due to which they love more in implicitness rather than in structures that are socially

recognized. We don't see them getting materialized in harder spaces of life or living. Instead we see a series of images which are subliminal. It means these images have a visual and an emotional language. There are moments in the film, where Heer boldly reverts back to her erratic form conveying less in commitment and more through signs, feelings and her presence as if she is non-linearly talking back both to Jordan and the audience corroborating her love for him. The closest that we see her reaching to a serious commitment is when she finally tells Jordan "come back to me after your concerts" at (2:15:40-2:16:12) prior to boarding the jet. Heer's sentence is an abstract way of expressing a desire for a reunion. It's a distortion of a serious declaration of love. It's a line that is not spoken casually by her. On the contrary, it seems that this serious line was very sacred to her. As though it was something that she wanted to say to him before death takes her. Jordan couldn't even register what the line meant like it was mostly with him, where he would decipher Heer's gestures not when they were made, but much later, after she is gone, in a different time, in another time because of which he always has flashbacks filling the screen that are like life-sensations. When Heer climbs the stairs of the jet, she again looks enigmatically at Jordan at (2:16:20-2:16:34) as a strange background sound plays where music seems dilated suggesting a slowing of the time. She wasn't saying anything hard but her face is highlighted subliminally as though she didn't have any vocal agenda for words or logic but only some eerie expressions suggestive of an abstract emotion.

Heer also is not always capable of knowing the events surrounding her when they happen as they happen. She starts comprehending things after an extended duration or after they have transpired. On her way back at her home in Prague when she is watering plants, at (2:16:47-2:17:14) she has a series of quick flashbacks filling the screen with images of her resting face on Jordan's back that we first saw in the film's early songs which this time return to hit her like life-sensations when she experiences a jerk within her body leading to a coma followed by her death. The repetition of images suggests that the film is remembering itself through flashbacks. There is memory within the film which seems to be repeating or spitting out on the screen information which it had first created thus explaining things not when they happen but after they have transpired or in another duration of time. It is as though now in the flashbacks she conceives best how much she loved Jordan and it is this which kills her. The flashback is the moment where she best knows that she loved Jordan too much to live. And that now with the experience of loving him and being loved she has been elevated to such a height that she cannot any longer live which is anything less. In the eccentric nature of the way scenes are shot, there is a non-linear repetition of images. Most Indian films do not do this because there is a commercial pressure to keep a fresh economy of new images rather than repeating things and also the fact that the average audience is not really trained in non-linear moments. It is also more difficult to associate non-linearity with *Rockstar* because the film is not really trying to tell a story which is non-linear as opposed to a film like *Ghajini* (2008) or even *Memento* (2000) where people are already prepared for a non-linear story. Because the film doesn't have an explicit logic of telling a story non-linearly. It is not a film about memory. Which is why the non-linearity within *Rockstar* is not a thing in itself but rather an extension of the mood of the lovers or an extension of the eccentric and abstract romance of Jordan and Heer. And it is in this region that *Rockstar* especially in the Indian context is pushing the

boundaries of romance at times also threatening to resemble from a distance European films such as *Jules et Jim* (1962) or *Je t'aime, je t'aime* (1968) which were also abstract and tragic love-stories.

The film didn't take any serious effort to medically show what really happened to her. Something bad happened to her which Jordan unscientifically and romantically associates with his absence. It's almost as though the film just wanted to somehow place Heer in a region nearing fatality. The film doesn't really explain clinically what happened. But poetically the film does explain what happened to her. After Heer's death, her sister, Mandy ominously shouted at Jordan saying that he was Heer's disease and in doing so she actually predicted something which precedes this event and redirects to the inception of the romance dating back several years to the early spaces at Delhi University when Heer and Jordan were first seen in their initial forms. It meant that Jordan personifies Heer's sickness right from the time they met in college. It is here that we see flashbacks of the swift passing of ordinary moments between the lovers which were then obliviously played out and which only now have come full cycle back to the beginning of romance thus reinterpreting what earlier seemed to be a montage of cultural kitsch was actually a series of life-sensations filling the screen. The significance of the placing of the montage in a flashback is to perhaps poetically show that within our experiences we don't conceive what we are going through until they have become memories.

Jordan was what happened to Heer years ago when she first met him at Delhi University. Meeting him was what personified her sickness. Meeting him itself incepted the seeds of fatality in her life. Before meeting Jordan, Heer was a sound and healthy girl who was routinely engaged with college-activities. She was part of a routine on her way to a conventional marriage. Had Jordan not invaded her spaces she wouldn't have known even a trace of what a life of radical experiences is like. She was a status-quoist in her university. Attractive but clinical. Beautiful but surgically organized. She was socio-culturally and economically aloof from not just Jordan but very much from Delhi too.

Jordan's provocative entry into her life opened to her the first gaze at a reckless state of being which initially sent shockwaves across both inside her body and across her life as she had otherwise planned to live had she never met him. These ripples bent and twisted her notions of how she could have lived. He shocked her with his mix of innocence and recklessness. It is almost as though she had never seen innocence in a man before this. She felt she was hit with something which she couldn't then decipher. It was like her first such ever experience of being inside a storm. That is what he was to her. He was not merely a man to her. He was a series of life-sensations to her which altered the complexion of her life. The engagement with Jordan ended up redefining and reshaping her. Heer's sophisticated sense of self and her alienation from commonality was what attracted Jordan towards her as signs of intelligence and eccentricity. He perhaps implicitly liked these qualities because of what he himself lacked. So what we see happening is a cultural mix of disparate ideals. But there is also something enigmatic about Heer's background standalone. She was not just a white void wanting to be filled with colours. She has an individuality which is enigmatic in form. The film by partially eclipsing Heer's background teasingly leaves behind a space which is open for imagination. She is Kashmiri which brings a certain otherness to her in the way she is looked at by boys. But her

otherness is not confined to the male gaze that she is part of. Her true otherness actually stretches elsewhere.

In one of his concerts, in the song, "Sadda Haq" at (1:43:38-1:44:25) Jordan defiantly stops singing and starts talking performatively to the audience about old forests and wild birds that were tamed to bring order into the civilization. He talks of the lost freedom of wild birds in a historic sense to shock his audience into a memory of the past. He has a longing for a certain form of anarchy. New Delhi has an identical history. In the backdrop of partition a lot of Punjabis, Muslims and Hindus migrated from Lahore to New Delhi as refugees. And so New Delhi in a way became a hybridized and tumultuous region of unrest. Within many other states of India that have a more homogenized culture there is an inert perception that Delhi is a city of refugees, of 'others', and is associated with a kind of lack of oneness or a decadence of conservative values. And sometimes Delhi is also considered as a cultural extension of Pakistan. Because of Delhi's somewhat radical past, its dynamic forms, its diversities, its liberalism, it is seen as a region of chaos and otherness. It's like Delhi is a smaller and milder metaphor of how Kashmir is viewed in the popular perception of Indians living in more heartland states. But what does a place like Delhi have to do with Heer? Can a place be historically glued to a person's state of being?

It is almost as though there is within Heer a space of identity which itself is metaphorically a tumultuous region of repressed primordial instincts that she secretly longs to uncage and free like the wild birds who once ruled the skies. Perhaps Heer has ancestral ties to the very roots of time all the way back to Pakistan or Lahore or someplace like that. Perhaps she was born of such a soil or maybe the fact that she came from an intensified region like Kashmir but otherwise lived a very peaceful and complacent life actually triggered inside her a vacuum which became an inner calling for disruption. Perhaps she was subconsciously waiting for an event like Jordan's arrival in her life through which she would liberate her deepest primeval instincts in a wild flight which won't last long but which for her is still worth dying for. And so she had traded her health with what she implicitly had wanted a long time back. She wanted a flight of brief flashes of brilliance in her romantic endeavours with Jordan at the ultimate cost of her life.

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