

MOOC on Hindi Cinema

Module-1

Historical Overview: Studios in India

ACADEMIC SCRIPT

In the 1930s the Indian cinema experienced the emergence of big production houses with well equipped shooting floors, new machineries and a group of expert technicians. These production organizations almost swallowed up smaller production houses and they brought an organized production-distribution-exhibition system. They employed expert professionals like writers, directors, technicians and actors on a payroll. This led to a new idea of professionalism and the rise of experts and skilled professionals. These transformations constructed a new studio system and a new film economy in Indian cinema. The studio system which came up in America between two World Wars was an important part of Classical Hollywood cinema. The biggest studios at that time were divided in two groups: 'The Big Five'(which includes MGM, Paramount, Warner Bros., RKO and Fox) and 'The Little Three' (which includes Universal, Columbia and United Artists). In Indian scenario Prabhat, New Theatres Ltd and Bombay Talkies- these three studios functioned as 'the big three' and along with them several other studios such as Madan, Wadia Movietone, Imperial etc emerged as important institutions of this period. Along with the big studios functioning from big cities several regional companies also came up and produced films expressing their regional identity. For instance in 1937 Madras had thirty six production houses, Bombay thirty four, Calcutta nineteen, Poona four, Kohlapur six, and so on. A major factor that had a strong impact on the studio system of Indian cinema was the arrival of film sound. This 'cinematic event' not only brought significant changes in film texts in terms of narrative logic and stylization but also drastically changed the production strategies, publicity logistics and the nature of film professional associated with a film production unit. .

In the studio era the transformation of the film medium brought changes in the production patterns and profit relations associated with it. Many studios hired foreign technicians to train

their employees and to produce 'quality' films. For instance Madan Theatres hired Lyford from the RCA and Bharatlaxmi hired Paul Juraschek and T Marconi on their payroll. Along with the newer technological systems and new professionalism economic conditions also changed. The focus shifted from the action to the dialogue and from the icon to the narrative (Mukherjee, 2009). The transformation in technology shaped the production relations and box office records in this period. Madan Theatres Ltd already had emerged as one of the important studio in this period and when J. J. Madan saw *Jazz Singer* (1927) he immediately realized the potential of sound in film business. Barnouw and Krishnaswamy aptly wrote "J. Madan caught the fever" (1980: 65). Madans imported RCA sound machines, designed sound studios recorded scenes from theatres like Shahjahan, Iraner Rani, Alamgir etc (Mukherjee, 2009: 10). Madan released two short talkies on 4th of February, 1931 at the theatres in Bombay and Calcutta. And on the next day Shree Krishna Film Co. released their talkie varieties (Bandyopadhyay, 1993). Shamik Bandyopadhyay described 14th March as the Red Letter Day in the history of Indian Cinema because on that day India's first full length talkie- Alam Ara (produced by Imperial) was released (1993: 17). Followed by Imperial and Shree Krishna Film Co. Madan released their first full length talkie Shirin Farhad and it became a major hit. Shirin Farhad beat Alam Ara at the box office and there are reasons for this success. Firstly dialogue by Aga Hasher Kashmiri and the songs by Kajjan and Nissar were popular amongst the viewers. And secondly good quality of recording done on the RCA photophone gave a distinct feature of this film. Imperial and Shree Krishna relied on Tanar Single system sound, whereas Madan used more costly Double System sound. And the sound recording was done by foreign technicians at the Madan studio. In the 1931 Mr. Darabashaw Kolha bought Audio Camex, a double system sounding machine. And Bombay producer Ranjit used this machine while filming Devi Devyani. With the advent of 'all talking, all singing, all dancing, all laughing' films and the arrival of new sound recording machineries the market of silent films was affected. And studio era's success with these talkies decided the future of film technology in India.

With technological advancement and the arrival of new film aesthetics a lot of other issues and concerns came up. Niranjana Pal wrote in the 1931 puja issue of the *Filmiland* – "with its (talkie's) advent old values went by the board and new values which would have been regarded as deficits in the old days took their pride. Principles which had been looked upon as almost sacred were scrapped without compunction. Even action- on which, and on which alone, the

silent pictures were built – was no longer a first essential. In place of action human psychology and characterizations have become very important factors in the progressive development of successful talkies” (1931: 90). In the absence of film sound the maker used to rely on speed and action. In silent films almost every action led to another action which made the film thrilling and enjoyable. But the arrival of talkies in the studio era showed the “value and importance of psychology and psychological actions in the building up of film scenarios and talkie dialogues” (Pal, 1931: 91). At the advent of the talkie concerns around actors and acting skills also became an important issue in the film industry. The industrial circuits and the discourse generated around film culture in magazines like *Filmland* engaged with this issue. The studio owners and filmmakers expressed the pressing need of actors with good articulation skills, proper accent and good command over language. Dhirendranath Ganguly popularly known as DG who launched a number of production houses and acted in and directed films wrote about the “lack of culture and education” and “the indulgence in excess” in the film actors in a *Filmland* issue (Ganguly, 1934: 95). Thus steady growth of studio productions on the one hand structured institutionalized atmosphere and on the other hand brought new issues, concerns and anxieties regarding this new phase.

Most of the important studios were established in the big cities- Bombay, Pune, Calcutta and Madras. And Bombay became an important centre for film production in this period. By the 1930s Bombay as a city had grown into a city with unprecedented growth of mercantile and entrepreneurial activities and had become an important city for businessmen belonging to Wadia, Tata, Thakersay, Walchand Hirachand, Currimbhai, Rehmatullah and Sassoon families. With developments in business activities the concept of entertainment industry had also attained a new phase in this city. And in this period Bombay experienced a sudden upsurge of cinema halls. The Regal was established in 1933 followed by the Plaza, the Central Cinema, the Broadway, and the Eros in 1935, 1936, 1937 and 1938 respectively. In the 1930s, Bombay had 85 film companies with well equipped studios. Among these were the Imperial Film Company, Ranjit Movietone, Sagar Film Company, Saroj Movietone, Prabhat Pictures, Wadia Movietone and the Bombay Talkies. This fascinated writers, technicians, theatre actors and musicians from north and north western India. The Pakistani film historian, Mushtaq Gazdar, wrote about this situation in Bombay – “Bombay filmdom lured men of substance into its folds, enriching itself and causing a brain drain at other film centres” (Lalit Joshi, *The Magical World of Bombay Talkies*). This

cultural landscape and mercantile activities in Bombay might have attracted many to establish their studios and production houses in Bombay.

Himangshu Rai and Devika Rani established Bombay Talkies, one of the major studios of India which became a training platform for many future stars of Indian cinema. Himangshu Rai began his career with stage productions in London and he went to Germany to explore the possibility of joint projects with German film makers. Devika Rani completed her study at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts and the Royal Academy of Music and she joined Himanshu Rai when Rai was looking for someone to help him in designing the sets for his debut project, *The Light of Asia*. Bombay Talkies was established by them in 1934 as a joint stock company and a mansion of a Paris based businessman F.A. Dinsaw served as a temporary office for the company. Lalit Joshi wrote that – “perhaps Bombay Talkies was India’s first film company that was established modern corporate business” (Joshi). The Urdu writer Sadat Hasan Manto wrote- “Himanshu Rai was an extremely hard working filmmaker... He laid down the foundations of the Bombay Talkies in such a manner that it would appear as an ideal production house.” (Manto, 2001: 30). Bombay Talkies attracted skilled technicians, writers, directors and actors across the India which included names like Shashadhar Mukherjee, N. R. Acharya, Ashok Kumar and others. Besides that Himangshu Rai used to interview every year hundreds of university graduates and hired the talented among them as the employees of Bombay Talkie (Joshi). Ashok Kumar debuted as a laboratory assistant, Raj Kapoor joined as a clap boy and Khwaja Ahmed Abbas as a script writer. There was also a core team of European technicians which included Franz Osten (director), Joseph Wirsching (cameraman), Carl von Spratti (set designer) and Len Hartley (sound recordist). Lalit Joshi wrote that “Never before in the history of colonial India had such a curious blending of global talent contributed to the creation of what has been described as a heterogeneous mode of production.”

Bombay Talkies produced quite a few significant films such as *Jawani Ki Hawa* (1935), *Janambhoomi* (1936), *Jeevan Naiya* (1936), *Mamta* (1936), *Miya Biwi* (1936), *Izzat* (1937), *Jeevan Prabhat* (1937), *Nirmala* (1938) and *Vachan Kangan* (1939), *Achhut Kanya* (1936), *Kismet* (1943) etc. Based on a short story by Niranjan Pal, Achhut Kanya tried to explore issue of untouchability. In the film Ashok Kumar played a young brahmin boy who falls in love with an untouchable village girl Kasturi (Devika Rani). The railway crossing was used in the film as a

metaphor for the caste system which only allowed selective mobility. This film became turning point for Bombay Talkies and also established Ashok Kumar as an actor in Bombay film industry. Following the success of *Achhut Kanya*, Ashok Kumar and Devika Rani featured in the next four productions - *Janam Bhoomi*(1936), *Izzat* (1937), *Prem Kahani* (1937), *Savitri* (1937). The major criticism that Bombay Talkies faced was- films made by Bombay Talkies had little or almost no reference of contemporary socio-political scenario of India. When Filmistan produced films like *Mazdoor* - a film on the sharp criticism of the inequalities between industrial labor and the owners of wealth in a capitalist society, the caste question figured in *Achhut Kanya* only engaged with an escapist romantic tale of two individual figures did not lead to the rejection of the caste system as whole. When other leading studios of this period made films which directly challenged patriarchy, the women's question was also treated with indifference in Bombay Talkies films.

If Bombay Talkies established itself with light comedies, distinct dialogue style and stars, Prabhat left its mark for making socially relevant and progressive films. Few self-taught technicians including India's one of the most talented filmmaker V. Shantaram established Prabhat Film Company in Pune. Prabhat produced *Ayodhyecha Raja* (director Shantaram) in 1932 which became a hit. And in 1937 with their production *Sant Tukaram* Prabhat created a milestone in the history of Indian cinema. *Sant Tukaram* based on the life of Saint poet of the Bhakti movement in India (1608–50) was directed by Vishnupant Govind Damle and Sheikh Fattalal and featured Vishnupant Pagnis in the lead role of the saint. The film received a Merit award in Venice Film festival and was screened in other prestigious film festivals across the world. *Sant Tukaram* was the first Indian film which ran in a single theater for more than a year. The film is significant in the history of Indian cinema not only because of the commercial success or the international recognition but also its unique treatment of devotional genre contrary to other contemporary devotional films. Its lyrical form brings song, dance, performance and technological skill together. Renowned film critic K. A. Abbas compared Prabhat's *Sant Tukaram* with Bombay Talkies' *Achhut Kanya* – “ *Tukaram* Flying away on the wings of a bird looked more natural than the obvious town bred hero driving a bullock cart in a certain very popular film” (Mukherjee, 2009: 14). Prabhat continued in producing socials like *Duniya Na Mane* (1938), *Admi* (1939) and socially relevant issues, realist film making style and a distinct

lighting technique influenced by Expressionist films made one of the most important film studios of this period.

In Calcutta Madan's control over film economy slowly declined with the Bengali Entrepreneurs' increasing interest in film production and especially with the emergence of Bengal's premier studio, New Theatres Ltd which acquired the reputation for producing films marked by a distinctive ethos of 'cultured Bengaliness' (Gooptu, 2010). In many aspects New Theatres (founded on 10th February, 1931) served as a pioneer studio and also provided a model for a 'national cinema'. Kalidas Nag wrote that,

New Theatres invested a fortune not in rewarding or capitalizing on 'artistes' but in building up new traditions for the technique of artist acting, direction, photography, sound recording etc. It is because of these that this pioneer Bengal studio has become a veritable institution and a promoter of talents that have largely influenced the whole course of Indian films. Bombay and Madras studios may have advanced further in some respects but the Bengal studio experts did the pioneering job on the technical side (Nag, 1956).

New Theatres was established by Birendranath Sircar, an engineer-turned-producer and it was mainly set up with family finance. The studio set up in the southern outskirts of Calcutta was modeled on Hollywood's studio complexes and had three fully equipped units. NT had its first big success with *Chandidas* (1932), directed by Debaki Bose. The film stylistically brought new standards and brought to cinema a new "lyrical intensity that was until then unknown to film audiences" (Mukherjee, 2009: 12). But the film that established NT as a brand was *Devdas* (by Pramathesh Barua, 1935) which was an adaptation of Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay's Bengali novel *Debdas*. *Devdas* is remarkable for its innovative use of parallel cutting, skilled and smooth camerawork and sound design, and noteworthy treatment of film music and esp. the use of orchestra. *Devdas* had a strong impact on contemporary audiences and as Sharmistha Gooptu argued "it ultimately made for a filmic equivalent of the Bengali literature" (2010: 77). Films like *Devdas*, *Grihadaha* (1936), *Barididi* (1939) and several others with literary origin became the trademark for NT. NT served for 25 years and its impact on Bengali screen culture was so strong that even after its demise the films produced by NT continued in influencing aesthetic standard for future years of Bengali cinema.

In spite of producing big hits and successfully establishing a new circuit of film production-distribution-exhibition logic, studio productions in India could not sustain themselves beyond a

point of time. In the midst of post-war crisis, a devastating famine, and the traumatic partition of India and Pakistan upon independence in 1947, the studio system in Indian cinema came to an end. The partition created a problem for the Indian film industries for the gradual closure of East Pakistan and West Pakistan market. Post-war financial crisis already had resulted in the shortages of raw film stock and black market racketeering across the country and in the post-independence period in addition to that a group of floating producers emerged in national and regional film industries. All of these major studios faced crisis and collapsed by the late 1940s – early 1950s. One can only conclude that the roots of this crisis of studio system might lay in the failure to keep pace with the new modes and methods in which capital, technology and human resources were being mobilized to make films. Statistical accounts prepared by the Indian Motion Pictures Almanac show that in the post 1940s, there was a sudden increase in the number of independent producers in the film industry. This indicated a new phase of Indian cinema and film economy. And with the unpredictability of new market economy and the emerging need for capital input, production strategies also changed in the film industries. Apart from these changes, film texts altered themselves to suit the new narrative economy and its rhetoric. In the post independence era on the one hand the optimism of embodied by the first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru influenced a group of filmmakers in their works to nurture the Nehruvian dream of a new born Nation state and National identity. On the other hand a body of films focused on the dark realities of this false independence (“jhutha azadi”) of India. This altogether resulted in the demise of an era in the Indian film industry and led towards a new phase of Indian cinema in terms of market economy, production relations, textual logic, and film aesthetics.

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MOOC on HINDI CINEMA

MODULE-10

GURU DUTT

ACADEMIC SCRIPT

Guru Dutt Padukone, or Guru Dutt as he is popularly known, is probably one of the most renowned and celebrated filmmakers of Indian cinema. His well-known film(s), particularly *Pyaasa*, 1957, is regarded as a landmark. Dutt, began his career with Uday Shankar's India Cultural Centre near Almora, and was associated with eminent dancer-actor namely Zohra Sehgal. One may therefore, propose that, dance, choreographed movements, uses of expressionist sets, and soulful music, were some of the elements of Uday Shankar's oeuvre which were drawn into his films. However, like many of the filmmakers of the period, Dutt was influenced by multiple genres, forms and styles. For instance, one may argue that his early association with Prabhat Film Company, Pune, left a telling imprint, and triggered a specific lighting patterns and the social reformist zeal in films some of his films. Moreover, he met his long time associate Dev Anand at Prabhat, and eventually they produced several films in the early '50s.

Baazi (1951) produced by the Anand brothers (Navketans), and directed by Dutt, practically introduced the Noir-style to Indian cinema, and a set of themes and actions (like gambling), settings (like the club) and character prototypes (femme fatale, club dancer, and the villain hiding in the dark), and songs, which underline the dark the side of Hindi melodramas and its multiple trajectories. Indeed, a number of films of 1950s, which are set in the city, introduce the subject of crime, crises, fear and portray contemporary prototypes like the pickpocket, thief, smuggler, loafer, along with taxi drivers, as well as lawyers, journalists, club dancers, women as professionals et al. Along with them arrive the mysterious figure of 'the villain in trench coat and hat' (tailed by his own shadow and an uncanny husky voice). In addition, 1950s marked the emergence of a group of young filmmakers and artists like the Anand brothers, Guru

Dutt, Raj Khosla as well as Raj Kapoor and the powerful Left brigade, who forged remarkable and distinguishable styles, and stressed upon a self-conscious dialogue with international genres. The Noir-style – elaborated through the darkly shadows on the faces of the stars, and on the uncanny streets - is evident in a number of films including in Guru Dutt's film like *Jaal* (1952), *Baazi* (1951) *Aar-Paar* (1952), and *Pyasa* (1957), and especially in *C.I.D.* (Raj Khosla, 1956), which was Dutt's production. Indeed, the classical Noir-style leaked into the body of popular Hindi melodramas. Thus, a Noir-type mise-en-scene, comprising low key lights and long dark shadows, silhouetted figures emerging from nowhere, or actors performing scenes totally in the dark, as well as disturbing close-ups, angular shots, and unclear reflections, craft an world of claustrophobia, disquiet, and despair, even in romantic situations. Besides, the intimidating mood was fabricated through extensive night shots and night shoots, as well through the sharp juxtapositioning of visual extremes between night and day; additionally, by way of meandering shots through undefined streets and mansions, which set against the black or 'noir' sky.

CID, for instance, opens with a series of close-ups of hands holding telephone, and silhouetted heads saying, "its me", thereby evoking the memory of a range of classical Noir films. While it is a story of a CID officer who is trying to solve the case of murder of a newspaper editor, the film narrates the plot through a typical Noir mode. For instance, shot 1 is that of hand dialling. Shot 2 (mid-shot) a silhouetted figure saying, "listen, its me". Shot 3 (close-shot) a hand moving (with a ring on one finger). Shot 4. Silhouette of a face. Shot 5. A woman back to camera, dialling. She also says, "its me." Shot 6. The face of the murderer (revealed). Following such (Noir-ish) invocation and the opening title, the story then shifts to the CID office where the officer receives intimation regarding the threats and a possible murder. However, before he can reach the place, the editor is killed and through the rest of the film the Shekhar (Dev Anand) strives to solve the case. More important, both the murder scene as well as the scene in which Shekhar/ CID officer arrives at the site of action is shot in the same style, while the soundtrack beams with genre music and effectively prepares the Indian audiences for a new mode of address. Nonetheless, between the murder and arrival of the officer there is a comic interjection, in which the comedian (played by Johnny Walker) enters to steal a typewriter, and whistles a tune from Guru Dutt's previous film, thereby quoting the actor's (own) song. Additionally, the film often includes 'light' romantic songs, shot is day or

normal light, thereby making it a complex field of styles and genre-mixing. Indeed, the shifting of codes, from melodrama to Noir (or even to horror) and vice-versa, is common to Indian cinemas.

I have examined elsewhere (2016), the ways in which a whole contingent of IPTA activists, from various fields, arrived at Bombay during 1940s, and Bombay (now Mumbai) in time became *the* significant centre for political-cultural movements. For instance, there were writers like Sadaat Hasan Manto, and especially Ismat Chughtai and Krishan Chander, along with performers like Balraj Sahni, Zohra Sehgal, poets namely Sahir Ludhianvi, Majrooh Sultanpuri, Prem Dhawan, Shailendra, Kaifi Azmi, et al. Moreover, some of them were active members of the (undivided) Communist Party of India (CPI). Zohra Sehgal for example, was one of the leaders of the Cultural Squad of the Communist Party of India, and acted in IPTA's first film production *Dharti Ke Lal*, 1946; additionally, she acted in Chetan Anand's radical film *Neecha Nagar* in the same year. Meanwhile, Sehgal was already working as teacher at the Uday Shankar India Cultural Centre, and in due course she performed in Shankar's remarkable modernist film *Kalpana* in 1948. Uday Shankar, as it is well-known, created his dance movements and gestures (especially hand movements) by referring to everyday actions, and also reworked the 'rhythmic movements' he identified amongst workers. His choreography thus, was a decisive departure from the classical dance films marked by ritualistic *mudras*. Moreover, Guru Dutt (would-be 'renowned' filmmaker at that time) was Sehgal's humble student at Uday Shankar's centre. Therefore, at the time Navketan produced films like *Baazi*, it was Sehgal who choreographed some of the dance sequences, and introduced to Hindi popular cinema a particular kind of performance style that was unprecedented. One may argue that associations with IPTA's culture of performance and their artists crafted radical new ways, which modified existing dance practices. Besides, Sehgal did choreography for a number of Hindi films including the classic dream sequence of Raj Kapoor's cult *Awaara*, 1951. Clearly, the Left revolutionary spirit and dialogues with inter-national artists and movements produced a cultural dynamism that eventually became a unique feature of the moment. A similar argument may be forged regarding the enigmatic poet and writer Sahir Ludhianvi, and his involvement with Guru Dutt's films. After his expulsion from the Government College, Ludhiana, in 1943, Sahir shifted to Lahore and began to write resolutely. He soon became a member of the Progressive Writers' Association (PWA), and quickly earned admiration of the readers

and ire of the Government of Pakistan's following his idealist writings in Savera. Eventually, this forced him to shift to India in 1949. In fact, Sahir's well-known words – "Yeh duniya agar mil bhi jaaye" (from *Pyaasa*) - do not merely echo the larger suffering; more important, these fabricate a flow of thoughts, which work via multiple registers.

While it is common-place to study great masters and their exceptional styles, I wish to show in what ways, especially in the case of popular cinema, multiple authorial perspectives, and especially their individual skills, operate to produce a multi-layered text. Furthermore, Dutt's crew, brought back in multiple films highlight such camaraderie. Regarding *Pyaasa* for instance, its distinguished cinematographer V K Murthy narrated the following in 2009. While Murthy was also the cinematographer of *Baazi*, *Jaal*, *CID*, and other Dutt films, and according to him:

Once, for *Pyaasa*, we even shot in real rain in Calcutta. My camera was in the car and Guru Dutt was outside in the rain.... I asked Guru Dutt, 'Do you want me to do it,' and he said, 'Yeh karenge yaar' (we will do it). So you see, it's a combination of director, actor, artist, cameraman. ...

He further added:

Take, for instance, the beginning of *Pyaasa*. Or the scene when Waheeda Rehman is introduced for the first time as a prostitute. We shot at night in Calcutta on the banks of the Ganga. In one place, there were a lot of pillars; we wanted the moon in the background. It was the 'original' moon, not a fake one in the studio. So I had to match the moon with Waheeda's face. I could not use heavy diffusers. Whatever exposure I gave for the moon was important, and naturally I could not use separate diffusers for the moon. That was one reason why I did not put any diffusers while shooting her.

In this interview, Murthy also narrates how he used 75 mm lens for the magnificent close-ups (even when the camera was moving), and 250 ASA film-stock for the night shoots. As for the captivating song "Aaj sajan mohe aang laga lo" (/embrace me ...) he retained the moonlight as the source light (which came from the back), and "this meant

that the character seems to walk into the light”, says Murthy. While Dutt preferred a fluid camera for this song, what was considered to be a lighting ‘mistake’ at that time, in fact, worked perfectly for the powerful dramatic sequence. Indeed, in many of these films, it is the cinematographer who explored a Noir visual style, even when the plot was borrowed from the landmark melodramatic film *Devdas* (P C Barua, 1935). In fact, it was not simply themes of such films, but the manifold impulses of the four – Guru Dutt, V K Murthy, Abrar Alvi (writer), and Sahir Ludhianvi - which produced a dense texts (like *Pyasa*) involving multiple stories, styles and political thought, and thereby effectively tackled intense narratives about (under) development.

Moreover, regarding *Kagaaz Ke Phool*, India’s first cinemascope film, Murthy said the following:

At that time, my idea was to focus a big spotlight, which was available in Shantaram’s studio, and use it to mimic the sunbeam. We tried it. The problem was, the highlight used to come, but it was a divergent light, it could not create a straight parallel shaft of light. One day I was sitting in the sun, thinking about this problem, and I saw a make-up man playing with a mirror. Reflecting sunlight on to a wall from his mirror. I saw that and thought, ‘Damn everything, I will use sunlight and mirrors. I got two big mirrors, each some four feet tall. From outside the studio we used one mirror to bring light inside and the other mirror was placed on the catwalk. The second mirror reflected the shaft of light on to the studio floor, creating that sunbeam that we had wanted. So, naturally, when the sun shifted, one had to keep adjusting the mirrors. But the shots were taken in just one hour. ...

Briefly, Dutt’s team – comprising his writer Abrar Alvi (who also directed *Sahib Bibi Aur Ghulam*, 1962), Sahir Ludhianvi (poet, lyricist), V K Murthy (cinematographer), and a group of actors – collectively produced forceful narratives, which not only complicate our understanding of social history, but, through their films they experimented and forged new techniques, deployed new technologies, and created an aesthetics for Indian cinemas that remains meaningful.

Dutt’s *Kaagaz ke Phool*, is set in a transformative moment in Indian cinema— when it

moved from the crumbling studio structure to a “one-film-one-contract” system in the wake of the structural changes caused by World War II and the riots that followed the 1947 Partition—and narrates the larger history of the studio era (with specific references to New Theatres Ltd.) and the ways in which the director, Suresh (played by Dutt himself), negotiates such transformations. Since *Kaagaz ke Phool* represents the loss of studio cinema, which disappeared during the transition from the colonial to the postcolonial period, Dutt quotes from films such as *Street Singer* (1938) and *Nartaki* (1940) in order to showcase them as products of a disintegrating studio system, while *Vidyapati* (1938) and Pramathesh Barua’s *Devdas* are presented as examples of the “glory” of the studio era and its visionary directors. These references become crucial signifiers, as *Kaagaz ke Phool* tries to narrate the film history of the period. To this end, Dutt produces complicated intertextual links between Barua’s *Devdas* and *Kaagaz ke Phool*.

Barua’s *Devdas* juxtaposes a timeless village with oppressive city life, replete with brothels, sex workers and dimly lit alleys. It also projects the iconic persona of the self-proclaimed drifter—a persona epitomized by Chattopadhyay himself (through his novels), Barua and others. Here, *Devdas* becomes the archetypal modern Indian youth of the early 20th century, who tries desperately to negotiate between his affiliations with the old moral order and his desire for a liberal social structure; this temperament arose during the reform movements of the period, and was exemplified by the *Bhadralok* politics and culture. In featuring this type of character, *Devdas* displays the formation of a new consciousness and the figure of an angst-ridden “modern” individual. The images that dominate Barua’s film—shots of murkily sinister streets, *Devdas* languishing in grief (which is reinforced by his bent body) and Chandramukhi taking him “home”—are alluded to in Dutt’s films *Kaagaz ke Phool* and *Pyaasa* through the deployment of lights, sets and a camera mounted on a crane. By intertextually referencing Barua’s *Devdas*, both *Pyaasa* and *Kaagaz ke Phool* draw on patterns in which the interiority of the characters is juxtaposed with public spaces.

While *Kaagaz ke Phool* specifically begins with the making of *Devdas* (the film within the film), *Pyaasa* contains one of the most memorable scenes in the history of Indian cinema, wherein Vijay (Guru Dutt), after an unpleasant confrontation with the courtesan whose ailing child cries in the background, rushes out onto the street (of the red-light district) and laments, “*Jinhe naaz hai Hind par, kahan hain? Kahan hain?*” (“Those who

are proud of the Land, where are they? Where are they?”). Vijay’s personal mourning for the death of his mother works as a metaphor for the nation, and is thus transformed into mourning for the devastated nation and the landscape that was lost through Partition. Additionally, the close-ups on Vijay’s teary eyes looking at the camera, and the later shots of him meandering through the streets with his face covered, emphasize his tragic love affair with the city and cinematic forms—wherein he is an unsuccessful artist who becomes a recluse, takes to drinking and walks the city. This distraught figure, with his face shrouded by shadows, becomes the face of the Indian flâneur, who journeys through the various stages of modernity and is comments on uneven effects (which become visible in certain pockets due to sporadic economic growth). While making *Kaagaz Ke Phool* and *Pyaasa*, Guru Dutt did not actually adapt from the novella (*Devdas*), but adapted and transformed images from Barua’s film. Thus, in *Pyaasa*, he forces a radical ending and makes a self-conscious allusion to Barua’s style. Accordingly, therefore, Vijay (or the Devdas figure in *Pyaasa*) returns to Gulabo the sex worker after he abandons his first love, Meena (Mala Sinha). A shot-by-shot analysis of the last sequence shows how Dutt reworked Paro’s flight toward the dying Devdas by producing a similar kind of *mise en scène*. *Pyaasa*, presents an excessively forbidding *mise-en-scene* of “our modernity” through its settings and fluid camera movements.

Ravi Vasudevan (2000) explains the modes of narration of Hindi films of the 1950s, and shows how the *darsanic* gaze produces a specific subjectivity for the spectator, as in the case of Bimal Roy’s *Devdas* (1955). In addition, he writes in length about the song *aaj sajan mohe ang laga lo* (/My dear, embrace me today) from *Pyaasa*, and demonstrates the manner in which the scene creates a complex subject position, while the film, according to Vasudevan, “refers to but in many ways controverts the narrative of *Devdas*.” With reference to this crucial reading of the relation between the narrative and the spectator vis-à-vis the *darsanic* gaze as well as continuity narration, one would like to draw attention to the last sequence of the film, in which, one contends, the *darsanic* circuit is finally completed, at the point Vijay returns to Gulabo, the prostitute. Furthermore, one proposes that, through this sequence Dutt also returns to *Devdas*’ (1935) concerns, and style of narration, even when *Pyaasa* contradicts the text (thereby, Vijay finally abandons Meena (or Paro) in order to “live” with Gulabo (/Chandramukhi)). Following Vijay’s rejection of the world (which includes his social standing, family and his beloved), he *en fin* appears at Gulabo’s doorstep. In this scene, the close-up of Gulabo’s

face evokes the memory of Barua's frames. Besides, as Gulabo senses Vijay's call, she enquires if anyone is calling out to her ("*Kisine mujhe pukara?*"). Yet, even when her friend warns her that no one would call upon her, Gulabo rushes out. A frame within frame portrays Vijay, who is waiting at her doorway. While the notes of the song (*Aaj sajan*) recurs too, the pattern of framing, lighting, camera movement, gestures, and Gulabo's approach towards Vijay, and highlight the haunting presence of Barua's *Devdas* and emphasize the ways in which specific visual codes created by Barua remained influential over decades.

More important, for our understanding of his authorial presence in his films, especially in *Pyaasa* and *Kagaaz Ke Phool*, one may consider how his persona functioned as a narratorial voice. Regarding the enigmatic uses of big-close ups of Dutt's face or eyes, or the figures in the dark, Murthy said the following:

He [Dutt] emphasized movements and that too in close-up shots. He used the 75 mm lens. In those days, it was very difficult to focus accurately with a 75 mm lens, in a close-up, in a moving shot. But that was the type of shooting he did. For me it was ok; for lighting also it was ok. I would always go to the light operators and tell them, when the actor goes to this side put this light off and put that one on.

Through such experimentations Dutt and his team produced some of the most enigmatic and influential films. One may hence, conclude by commenting on Guru Dutt's style, which percolates into films produced by him, and also into the films of the later period which have repeatedly quoted *Pyaasa*. Thus, in conclusion, one may particularly mention Dutt's production, *Sahib Bibi Aur Ghulam*, which was directed by his writer Abrar Alvi. A close-reading of the film shows the manner in which, through song picturization and framing of close-ups (of Meena Kumari for instance), his style and larger concerns surface through multiple registers.

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MOOC on HINDI CINEAM

MODULE-11

ANGRY YOUNG MAN

ACADEMIC SCRIPT

Introduction: A picture of the 70s

India has seen its share of socio-political turmoil through the 20th Century. The 1970s, in particular, was the period of large-scale political and social unrest, witnessed in such a scale for the first time post-Independence. Some major factors which contributed to this crisis involved unemployment, poverty, inflation, famine, food shortage, black marketing and the period of Emergency in 1975 among others. The optimism and euphoria of the post-independence period came to a standstill. Series of events in 1970s like the war with Pakistan, the burden of refugee relief, acute droughts in 1972 and 1973, and the world energy crisis in 1973, led to severe economic difficulties with food shortages and spiraling inflation. “The state’s attempts to control food distribution and prices resulted in large-scale hoarding and a major black market in food. The deepening economic problems were accompanied by an increase in political unrest as people took to the streets in wide-scale demonstrations and protests. Universities were closed for weeks at a time due to disturbances and unions increasingly went on strike” (Ganti 2004).

“During the 21-month period of emergency (1975-77) the Indian government assumed extraordinary powers. Civil liberties guaranteed by the Indian Constitution were suspended and over 100,000 people including intellectuals, opposition leaders, journalists, and political activists were arrested and detained without trial. Arrests were often arbitrary and people were not advised of the charges against them, nor were the police required to inform judicial authorities of the reasons for arrest. The press was rigidly censored and newspapers were barred from publishing the names of those arrested. Incidents of torture and even murder occurred in jails.”(Ganti 2004)

Thus deep rooted socio economic disparities became engraved in all cities across India, including the financial capital of India and home ground of India's largest entertainment industry vis-a-vie Mumbai formerly known as Bombay. Prior to 1990s, cotton mills were the backbones of this city giving employment to approx. 1,00,000 families. This was also one of the major causes for large scale migration to the city, in search of work in these cotton mills, making Mumbai one of the most populated cities in the world. Many of these workers were politically conscious and there was a strong presence of labor union in these mills. They identified themselves as working class and often were agitated with mill owners over wage issues. This eventually led to massive strike in 1982 under 'Bombay Mill Owner Association' with the leadership of Dutta Samant and eventually around 2 lakh mill workers lost their livelihood¹. The Nehruvian dream of a socialist framework collapsed and led to deep rooted anger of the common public on account of the harsh social inequalities. The general temperament of the city as well as the country was that of anger and rage and the same was deployed in the figure of the 'Angry young man', which henceforth became extremely popular.

These problems eventually led to large scale social and political unrest in the country. It was during such period that audience refused the romantic narratives presenting Rajesh Khanna as the romantic hero and praised Amitabh Bachchan who instead played the role of an 'industrial hero' working in narratives with proletarian themes. (Prasad 2000) The center of most Amitabh Bachchan films remains corruption and class difference. In 1973, the tremendous success of *Zanjeer* (Chain), a film about a police officer (played by Amitabh Bachchan) who works outside the bounds of the law, introduced the figure of the "angry young man," which completely changed the persona of the hero in Hindi cinema. *Zanjeer's* success was particularly striking because it came at a time when the reigning superstar Rajesh Khanna had achieved his success by playing soft, vulnerable, mostly middle-class characters in musical romances devoid of violence or action. The hero popularized by Amitabh Bachchan was of a disaffected, cynical, violent, urban worker/ laborer. Films in this period became markedly violent and shifted their focus from the family and domestic domain to that of the state, society and the streets. The state was frequently depicted as ineffectual in solving problems like crime, unemployment, and poverty. The inability of the law to deliver justice became more pronounced in films of this period and vigilante justice was valorized. Villains in films of this era were mainly smugglers and black marketers who frequently posed as wealthy, respectable businessmen. By the 1980s, corrupt politicians became the main source of villainy in films and frequently the only legitimate representative of the state was the police. In one such film of this era, *Akhree Rasta*, Amitabh would play double roles as father and son, teaming up to fight crime and avenge the murder of their wife and mother, who had been raped by one corrupt politician, and backed by a corrupt police officer.

Amitabh Bachchan

¹ However this was not the only strike. 1973 met a nationwide strike of railway workers putting Indian economy to a standstill.

“Born on 11 October 1942 in Allahabad (Uttar Pradesh), Amitabh Bachchan is the son of famous Hindi poet Harivansh Rai Bachchan. In his early twenties, determined to find fortune in the movies, Bachchan gave up his job in Calcutta and moved to Bombay. After a minor part in the 1969 film *Saat Hindustani*, he worked for years to prove his talent. His big chance came in 1973 with the role of an avenging police officer in *Zanjeer*. The unusually tall actor, with his deep and sonorous voice and powerful, majestic personality, brought unique intensity to the screen, instantly fascinating film audiences. By the mid-seventies, every Bachchan release attracted millions: *Deewaar*, *Sholay*, *Amar Akbar Anthony*, *Muqaddar Ka Sikandar* and scores of other hits showed him excelling in drama, action, romance and comedy. It is no surprise that the Indian press were quick to label him “the one man industry.”(Excerpt from Nasreen Munni Kabir)

Bachchan persona in *Deewar*, *Trishul* and *Laawaris* was a logical successor to the Birju of *Mother India*. Birju battles for justice against an entrenched order loss of 1950’s rural innocence while Bachchan fights in the ghettos of urbanizing and increasingly criminalizing society. Bachchan in his narrative often symbolizes the angsts of the archetype Karna from Mahabharata. Bachchan is a modern interpretation of Karna’s archetype, the disinherited son fighting for his moral and emotional legitimacy.

By the 1980s, Amitabh Bachchan had become the biggest star, India had ever known. In every country where Indian films enjoy a following, including Egypt, South Africa and Malaysia, he won armies of fans. After meeting with a near fatal accident on the set of *Coolie* in 1983, thousands across India prayed for him. In the early 1990s, when he decided to take a five-year break from film, people assumed his career was over. However he returned as a TV host in the Indian version of ‘Who wants to be a Millionaire’ known as ‘Kaun Banega Karorpati’ and soon became a national icon affectionately called the ‘Big B’.” (Excerpt from Nasreen Munni Kabir)²

Narrative traits of Hindi commercial cinema in 1970s

The narratives of 1970’s and 1980’s such as *Zanjeer* (1973), *Namak Haram* (1973), *Deewar*(1975), *Laawaris*(1981), *Kaalia* (1981)and *Coolie*(1983) moved away from villages and focused on the urban crisis such as large scale migration, unemployment, poverty ,lack of housing, increase in crime, social inequalities and lack of law and order amongst the urban population. Narratives often included large scale social protest and fulfillment of ‘revenge oath’ either from and individual³ or society in general. Factory workers, class conflict and problems with the mill owner become a recurrent theme in most Angry young man films.

² See <<http://static.bafta.org/files/amitabhbachchanbrochure-82.pdf>>

³ These individuals however always represented a class in the society.

Another aspect of narratives of angry young man was the legitimization of the criminal. After the period of emergency followed by social and economic crisis, the question of righteousness became irrelevant. Distinctions between good and bad, moral and immoral, legitimate and illegitimate, legal and illegal were increasingly becoming fuzzy in nature. For example the film *Deewar*(1973) revolves around a conflict between two brothers Vijay (Amitabh Bachchan) the rich gangster and the honest police officer, Ravi (Shashi Kapoor). The entire narrative is set in flashback when inspector Ravi Verma is awarded for his bravery. We go back to his childhood and learn about childhood experience of two brothers. Vijay and Ravi are two sons of a coal worker and union leader (Anand Babu) who deceives his co- worker in order to save his family. This makes him and his family victim of rage of his co- workers and Vijay is forced to make a tattoo on his hand with words '*Mera Baap Chor Hai*' (My father is a thief). We see childhood of both Vijay and Ravi and the overarching figure of the mother (Nirupa Roy) working as a construction site worker. Vijay turns out to be a boot polisher in order to support his brother's education and envisions the cruel brutalities of poverty and despair. Ravi on the other hand turns out to be a good student and remains oblivious to such issues. Vijay who turns out to be a coolie regularly sees oppression of the poor by the rich and seeing the futility of being a righteous man joins hands with gangsters. Ravi instead becomes a police officer which creates a conflict between two brothers. However the narrative instead of blaming Vijay for being a gangster focuses on the reasons and circumstances which forced Vijay to become a gangster. At several point of the film we are often sympathetic with Vijay instead of accusing him for his wrongdoings. The film in a way states that instead of the individual involved, it is the political and social order which forces young man like Vijay to take the law in his hands.

This is particularly portrayed in a scene of *Deewar* where Ravi the police officer shoots at a young man and realizes that all he stole was loaf of bread for his family. On encountering the victim's mother she states that it was circumstances which made his son steal and the police should instead arrest the rich and the powerful responsible for poverty and unemployment. In another scene when Ravi asks Vijay to become a police informer he claims that he should first blame people responsible in making him a gangster such as the man who made his father go against his co-workers or people who tattooed in his hand *Mera Baap Chor Hai* (My father is thief).

“Another obvious strand in the film is the representation of working class and a sympathetic portrayal of their issues. Vijay Verma the protagonist of the film is emblematic of this sentiment. At the very outset of the film, the beginning of the flashback, Anand "Babu," the protagonist's father, a trade union leader gives an impassioned speech to striking workers. He says they are fighting for a "new morning," when basic needs of workers are provided for — education, health-care and housing. However he is mindful not to overstep his limit when he says, they are not questioning why the rich have so much, rather, and they are asking why the food barrels are empty for the poor. The reference here is to the food shortage and to grain traders, who had

"hoarded" large amounts of grain to accentuate the existing shortage and created an artificial scarcity in order to make an extra buck. Throughout the Emergency, the State propaganda announced its task to bring these elements (grain hoarders) to book, maintain "law and order," while in fact there was unprecedented lawlessness, often perpetuated at the behest of state power." (Virdi 2006)

“Many of Bachchan’s films of the 1970s are also eminently city films. Signs of the urban landscape are unmistakably present in Zanjeer, even if the city is somewhat undeveloped as a character in its own right. The city must have its dens of vice, where Sher Khan rules supreme before an encounter with Inspector Vijay Khanna (Bachchan) sets him on the path to reform. Mala, the street performer, lives in Dongri Chawl; at the other extreme, the underworld don Teja lounges relaxed by the side of a luxurious swimming pool. Four years later, in Amar Akbar Anthony (1977), the city would have even greater visibility: many of Bombay’s landmarks and public institutions — Nanavati Hospital, Victoria Terminus, Haji Ali Dargah — feature prominently in the film. It is Deewaar, however, which carved out the space of the urban in a wholly distinct manner. Slowly but surely, the plot of Deewaar drifts into other ineluctable spaces of the urban landscape: high-rise buildings, five-star hotels, night-clubs, indeed the city streets themselves through which Ravi gives furious pursuit to Vijay. But the singularity of Deewaar resides in something quite different, namely that it is the first film in Hindi cinema which establishes dialectic between the footpath and the skyscraper, the two preeminent signs of the film’s urban landscape. The ubiquity of the footpath as home to the homeless, migrant laborers, and myriad others living at the margins of society is self-evident. One can think of it more imaginatively as a school where life’s lessons are imbibed: while Ravi goes to school, Vijay takes up shining shoes on the footpath. Soon enough, Vijay gravitates from the footpath to the skyscraper: he even attempts to gift his mother one. No sooner has he gained possession of the skyscraper than his fall commences, as if the footpath were beckoning him to return to his roots and plant his feet on the ground. The skyscraper holds no intrinsic interest for Vijay, indeed its very existence is refracted through the footpath. The footpath is literally that: the path where the foot trod, where every footfall becomes a trace of memory. At every turn of his confrontation with Ravi, Vijay seeks, unsuccessfully, to remind him of their shared histories on the footpath: *‘Ravi, tumey aadha in bachpan mein kitni raaten footpath pekhaali pet guzarin?’*”⁴

The messy industry of the 1970’s and 1980’s

These years were often known as the worst years for Indian cinema. In context of the industry the breakdown of the studio system led to a lot of chaos in the industry. The industry was highly fragmented with large number of individual producers making one film at a time instead of the studio model which made 5-10 films each and shared the risk factor. In case of the studio model one could recover the losses in one film from the profit made

⁴ See <<https://vinaylal.wordpress.com/tag/zanjeer/>>

in others. However, in case of individual films by individual producers, the risk factor became enormous. Madhava Prasad quotes it as the “dispersed mode of functioning of the industry” (Prasad 2000; 40). At this point there were two kinds of producers, few established producers and a large number of independent producers. Unlike studio era, film distributors bought film on commission basis. The distributor didn’t pay any money to the producer but released the film with his resources. The risk mainly lay with the producer. On success of a film, the distributor got a certain commission. On failure of a film, the producer lost most of the money. Thus the film business often was recounted as a risky business.

Until 1998, because of the lack of industrial status, Hindi cinema was deprived of government subsidies, institutional finances and bank credits. At this point of time the biggest challenge for a producer was to acquire the required finance. Apart from established producers who did not need outside money, most producers were dependent on individual financier and private money lenders, who charged extremely high rate of interest. “The interest rate that distributors and producers were paying on the money could range from 48 – 60 % per annum” (Khandekar 2011:142). As a result the industry had no option but to receive funds from gangsters to politicians looking for ways to launder their black money. A huge amount of black money was pumped into the industry. Bombay film industry got infiltrated with underworld black money. “Without underworld financing, the Indian Film Industry would have collapsed overnight” (Mehta 2009: 454). This association primarily stemmed from the financing needs of the industry. “However unlike the old financiers during the studio era, these financiers wanted to dictate their terms on every aspect of film making right from the script to the star cast”(Khandekar 2011:142). No formal contracts were signed and payments were mainly made in kinds and cash. Securing finance for film was extremely difficult and producers often were financed by a said investor for only a part of the film. This led to delay in production as producers often had to wait for next part of the film to be funded. As a result stars started working in five or six films at one point of time and acquiring dates from the stars was often a more difficult task than acquiring the finances itself. Hindi film industry was thus informal, unorganized and monopolized by big producers and ‘stars’.

“India has no large studios, and the industry is highly fragmented. Few in the business--writers, directors, or actors--ever see a written contract. Plagiarism is routine due to lax enforcement of intellectual property laws. The physical conditions can be primitive: An air-conditioned studio is considered a luxury. One producer tells how foreign crew members were horrified at the safety standards, with technicians wandering barefoot on floors crisscrossed with wires. Schedules are routinely flouted. Stars agree to make up to a half-dozen films at a time and never tell producers if they'll show up.....Star salaries typically consume 40% of a film's budget, leaving relatively little for scripts, preproduction planning, or sophisticated post-production digitization.” (Kripalani 2002)

‘On the distribution side of the business there was an absence of any sort of national distribution. Instead territorial distribution was common for the sake of which India was divided into five key territories south, north, Bombay and the western region, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh and eastern region. Foreign territory was recounted as a separate territory channeled through National Film Development Corporation.’ (Pendakur, 2008: 62).

MOOC on HINDI CINEMA

MODULE-12

RISE OF A NEW HERO

ACADEMIC SCRIPT

Even if one isolates and considers the portrayal of men within the hetero-normative category in mainstream Indian popular cinema, its intersection with class, caste and ideological underpinning makes it a problematic and unsettled category. Hindi cinema's narrative is customarily centered on a hero and heroine, who together constitute its fundamental templates in which masculinity is the flip side of femininity (Virdi, 2003). The unfixed nature of the Hindi film hero's subjectivity is evident with the changes in the construction of his subjectivity in response to the nation's history and the hero's role as a primary agent shaping that history.

In the films immediately after independence, invested with the responsibility of nation building, the figure of the hero is constructed with an idealized longing for a nationalist spirit, savior of his mother/nation, while the later films assume the nation as a natural political entity with its own problems that implicates the hero and which the hero tries to overcome. There is a typical idealism vested in the figures of the "happy peasant ... honest laborer, the idealistic school teacher, [and] the philanthropic doctor" (Chakrobarty, 1993). The conflict was predominantly between the traditional and the modern— with traditional almost always idealized through the resolution of the narrative. Even in the films in 1960s, Nehruvian influence and socialist ideas promoted by IPTA, often epitomized an utopian future, where the enemies against the nation state perish but the future remains uncertain— as in several film endings the protagonist along with the heroine walk away into an indeterminate murky place, an indefinite space visually represented by fog and mist.

The subjectivity of the hero in all these films is centered on the basic narrative structure where the unity of the feudal family, its control over its private property, is threatened by modern values. The era of the feudal family romance, the star image and the characters were linked by the prevailing Hindu code of iconicity. The roles of aristocratic or upper caste heroes were played by actors carefully chosen for their looks, which had to match a certain conception of manhood as well. This feudal order claims a divine sanction for its power and authority, a claim that is reinforced by the frequent allusion

to the epics and their semi-divine heroes, although historically, the power and wealth of the landowning class derives from the social order instituted by British colonial rule (Prasad, 2000).

The transition of the construction of the Hindi film hero towards a violent, irate, outlawed, dissatisfied 'angry young man' has its roots in the period of intense political upheaval beginning in the mid-sixties. This crisis has been explained by Madhava Prasad (2000) as "a deep disaggregation of the socio-political structure resulting in the delegitimation of the consensual ideology of the state" (p.120).

This period has been marked by, Indira Gandhi becoming the Prime Minister after Lal Bahadur Shastri's death in 1966 and she remained in power until 1975, when, amidst political unrest she declared a state of emergency which continued for eighteen months. The emergency was notorious for oppressive suspension of civil liberties, restriction on the freedom of press and indiscriminate detention of opposition leaders.

It was also infamous for Sanjay Gandhi's programmes of mass sterilization and destruction of urban slums which left deep scars in the mind of the marginal disposed. Particularly, mass sterilization of men or vasectomy was identified as a threat to their masculinity, which was being imposed vigorously by the state over the subaltern population. With the disintegration of the socio-political order, the middle class became open to the appeal of "a new identity based on disidentification with the 'socialist' programme in the national project" (p. 119).

The rise of the new hero in the 1970s and the formation of his 'angry young man' personality need to be understood within this context. This emergence of the 'new hero' is intrinsically associated with the series of characters, particularly scripted by Salim Khan and Javed Akhtar that Amitabh Bachchan played, and which became almost like a template. However, the Bachchan persona commonly identified with a subaltern anger and populist leadership was first portrayed as mild mannered middle class in Hrishikesh Mukherjee's *Anand* (1971) and *Namak Haram* (1973) & later films like *Abhiman* (1973), *Chupke Chupke* (1975), *Mili* (1975). As feudal family romance, was slowly fading away, it was only natural that the 'ordinary' heroes will enter into mainstream commercial films. Dockworker, mineworker, gang-leader, porter, police-officer, small time crook: these were some of the roles Bachchan portrayed in his acting career, roles that were predominantly lower class, located at the margins of the respectable society but at the same time positing a figure of resistance. However, the construction of this new hero, has been influenced not only by a shift to proletarian themes but also at the level of a transformative construction of an industrial masculinity, with the corresponding political, aesthetic and institutional values.

It is also interesting to note that the mass popularity of the Kung Fu films in India, with the release of *Enter the Dragon* (1973) also proved to be instrumental in shaping the aggressive masculinity of the hero. As Koushik Banerjee points out that in the decade of the authoritarian rule led by Indira Gandhi, the celluloid iconography of Bruce Lee's lean and mean stance against the villainous Mr. Han found sufficient residue in the angry young man persona of Amitabh Bachchan.

The construction of aggressive, proletariat & often criminalized masculinity can not be understood in isolation from the construction of the new narrative form. The evolution of the narrative form of Hindi mainstream cinema was at a crucial crossroad. On one hand, the old narrative revolving around feudal family romance, exuberating aristocratic, upper-caste masculinity, on the other hand, the middle class cinema, devoid of both the upper caste attraction and political concern of the proletariat was in demand for a compensatory mix of star value and narrative value. Amitabh Bachchan became a kind of personification of this scheme, with a certain amount of integration of star value within the narrative that was so far unattainable.

Although several contemporary stars were successful in forming a star-image, including Shashi Kapoor, Dharmendra and Vinod Khanna but Bachchan, who enjoyed unprecedented success, eventually evolved into a national figure. *Filmfare* magazine, in a special issue on cinema of 1970s referred to Bachchan as one-man-industry, who churned out hits with assembly line regularity. With exceedingly popular films like *Zanjeer* (1973), *Deewar* (1975), *Sholay* (1975), *Hera Pheri* (1976), *Akbar Anthony* (1977), *Don* (1978), *Muqaddar Ka Sikandar* (1978), *Trishul* (1978), *Kaala Patthar* (1979), *Laawaris* (1981), *Kaalia* (1981), *Namak Halal* (1982), *Andha Kanoon* (1983), *Coolie* (1983), *Mard* (1985), *Geraftaar* (1985), Bachchan became one of the foremost stars of popular Hindi cinema.

On one hand, the new hero's star-persona absorbed certain aspects of Bachchan's personal history and on the other hand, it also absorbed the characteristics of several characters played by him in the early part of his film career. Anger, self absorption, rebelliousness, devotion to mother, proletarian identity was some of the attributes that was absorbed into the star's persona. His personal relationship with the elite also contributed in the formation of his star persona while his proletariat identity in the roles he acted facilitated his acceptance to the minority population.

A closer look at some these films can be useful to identify certain tropes, which were purposefully employed and others emerged from the socio-political instability of that period that in turn constructed the new hero's physicality and made him an agent of national reconciliation and social reform, although often through the deployment of violence.

The construction of the subaltern subject as the hero through the narrative was a defining moment for Hindi popular cinema. This new hero's expression of masculinity was identified with a subaltern anger and an affiliation with the masses. In several films like *Zanjeer*, and *Deewar* as Madhava Prasad notes, the childhood of the new hero is represented as an orphan, a figure of marginality, deprived of the normal familial pleasure. His subaltern masculinity and the consequent violence are legitimized through the consent of other subaltern and dispossessed people. He acts with their support but also on their behalf, as their voluntarily chosen representative.

The subaltern, pathological new-hero acts in a way that contradicts the standard protocol of the law. He lacks the personal stability that permits him to act as a normal law enforcing agent. His personal need for vengeance is not sanctioned by the law; the figure of the new-hero exists in a gap between the law and legality, a figure whose ability to fulfill his role as a citizen is obstructed by the pathological history of the subject, which demands a cure that is extra legal by definition.

Sholay, released in 1975, which was also the year, when emergency was declared by the Indian government, became a phenomenon in its own terms. The film directed by Ramesh Sippy and written by Salim-Javed duo played continuously for five years in one cinema hall in Mumbai and eventually acquired the status of a modern classic. *Sholay* retains many of the formal characteristics of the film *Deewar*. The film constructs and employs the extra-legal figures with whom the proletariat audience could identify.

The petty criminals, Jai (Amitabh Bachchan) and Veeru (Dharmendra) acts as extra-legal apparatus, appointed by Thakur (Sanjeev Kumar) as representative of the law. By deploying the functional criminality of Jai and Veeru, the film manages to follow its political angle without alienating its primarily working-class audiences. *Sholay* shows the victory of the law over the unbending political order of the countryside, which threatens the dominant coalition's rural partner, the landed bourgeoisie.

The performance and legitimization of the 'new hero' rests on his position as a populist leader of the dispossessed, represented through the scenes of nominations within the narrative. This process also reinstates the figure as a star as well, who mobilizes the subaltern citizens to react against the problems of modern state. The lack of traditional authority is compensated by being a chosen representative of the subaltern and marks a shift from the feudal to democratic power. In *Sholay*— it is the Thakur and his widowed daughter-in law, in *Deewar*— it is Rahim Chacha, a Muslim dockworker, in *Zanjeer*— it is Sher Khan, a Muslim criminal with an ethical bent of mind, stand as the representative of the disposed or marginalized, who nominate the new-hero as their representative.

The subjectivity of the new hero is often characterized by the masochistic fantasy marked by eventual death of the hero and the resolution of the fantasy of an unattainable reunion with the mother. The political subtext of this masochistic fantasy is a paradoxical stance towards the state endorsed legal order, where the masochistic fantasy signifies both an ideological denial of the real and the acceptance of the ideal. The hero desires a reunion with the mother, a return to the state of infancy, but this reunion with the idealized mother's body is only possible through death. Hence, *Sholay* is often analyzed as an allegorization of the history of the nation state itself through the masochistic fantasy.

The new hero's relationship with his parents, at both actual and metaphorical level, has a formative influence in his constitution. Initially present, the father becomes absent, displaced, or avenged by the son, who ultimately positions himself close to his mother, successfully excluding the father. The pressure of large joint family created a diffuse sense of responsibility among its male members. That sense is altered as industrialization, urbanization and migration transformed it to a nuclear family.

The young male thus became overwhelmed by the responsibility of becoming the caretaker of a new generation of children as well as his parents. But with this shift in responsibility young males were also increasingly able to remove paternal authority. The son thus became the new figure within the system of patriarchal authority. The new hero portrays a distinctive masculinity in the popular Hindi films that essentially turn out to be a combination of maternal melodrama and gangster/action film.

The changing physicality of the new hero and his body becomes the site of historical and ideological 'citations', which produces specific meaning and engenders particular receptions. The body of the new hero becomes the historical body of the 'angry young man' marked by referential points of post independent, post emergency 'citations'. Thus the body of the new hero in general and the violent, self destructive 'angry young man' screen persona of Bachchan in particular becomes a site on which not only a construction takes place, but it is also an act of destruction on the through which a subject is formed.

This productive destruction of the body since both the body and the psyche are simultaneously formed and destroyed is represented in his tragic hero roles. The new hero's scarred, wounded body is central to his performative construction of 'angry young man'; the marks are pointers to his memory and his suffering becomes a performative trope, repeating in various films. Hence, the hero in these popular Hindi films of 1970s and early 80s, instead of simply being a natural historical production through pre-existing, historical-ideological referents, becomes a construction of new identity, a new subjectification— a disassociated subject adapting all the measures that goes against the nation state, thus making it necessary to destroy his body.

So, only cinematic codes cannot explain this construction; the relationship of the subject with the various institutional arrangements of the nation-state also exercised a formative influence on the emergence of the new hero in the 1970s. This also points towards the altering subjectivity of the popular Hindi film hero, with the shifting nature of political and ideological conditions. After the economic liberalization in the 1990s the construction of the image of the hero again changed considerably in the face of global capitalism, rising consumerism and globalization.

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MOOC on HINDI CINEMA

MODULE-13

BIMAL ROY

ACADEMIC SCRIPT

Before we discuss the works of Bimal Roy, one of the most significant filmmakers of Indian cinemas, we need to consider the popular films forms of the period. The widely circulated, all-encompassing style of the 1940s have been described as “studio-Socials” by scholars of Indian cinema. The “Socials”, according to Ravi Vasudevan (1989), dealt with themes of social reform. Broadly speaking, Social films were not always considering social ills; rather, set in the contemporary times, the genre generated social images that portrayed ethical problems of “identity, equality, honesty”. Moreover, in his reading of Hindi films of 1950s, Ravi Vasudevan (1989) argues that Indian melodramas were dominated by two basic plot types. First is the “renunciation” plot, in which the hero rejects authority, as in case of films like *Devdas* (Bimal Roy, 1955), and *Pyaasa* (Guru Dutt, 1957). The second type, involves “conflict” with the authoritative father figures, as evident in films namely *Awaara* (1951, by Raj Kapoor), or *Deewar* (1973, by Yash Chopra) etc. Moreover, according to M. Madhava Prasad (1998), the social spaces in such melodramas, and especially those from the 1960s, signify “a conflict between two ideologies of modernity, one corresponding to the conditions of capitalist development in the periphery and the other aspiring to reproduce the ideal features of the primary capitalist state”. In relation to such readings, I have discussed elsewhere (2016), how a number of films of 1950s, which are set in the city, introduced the subject of crime, crises, and fear, and portrayed contemporary prototypes like the pickpocket, thief, smuggler, loafer, along with taxi drivers, as well as lawyers, journalists, club dancers, women as professionals et al. Furthermore, the “conflict” with the law became one of the central issues in

the films of period, which draw attention to the struggles between people and the nation-state. Roy's films, however, while addressing such concerns and exploring engaging aural-visual motifs, seemingly continued with the reformist zeal, and dealt with characters of teachers, doctors and so on. Nonetheless, by the time Bimal Roy arrived at Bombay, "social melodramas" were the dominant narrative form, which were somewhat fragmented.

Bimal Roy had begun his career as a documentary filmmaker, and thus, I wish to draw attention to the style of British documentary that was foremost in India during 1940s or earlier. If we look into the Colonial Film Archive, and examine Roy's 1941 film, "*Tins for India*," one observes a particular style of filmmaking which emerged from British documentary practices; typically, the John Grierson style, marked by dramatization, creation of stylized images borrowing of a poetic tradition or imagery, uses of powerful music, as well as a specific polemical approach to the subject. In association to this, one of arguments I wish put forward is that, Bimal Roy's style of film making, staging of a scene, and editing were to a great extent, growing from such cultures and practices of (documentary) filmmaking prevalent in India. One may consider Roy's framing, uses of light, and rhythmic cutting, as well as concerns for realistic problems, characterization, which I suggest, were borrowing documentary styles. That many traces of 'realism' (location shooting and realistic settings, for instance) were integrated into popular melodramas, I contend, were achieved through such direct links with documentary projects. In addition, such style of filmmaking made Roy a significant figure in history of Indian cinemas. Moreover, Roy's legacy, as evident from the films of associates, namely Hrishikesh Mukherjee and others, is a significant issue to think through.

Bimal Roy began his (fiction) film career with the New Theatres Ltd., Calcutta. He began as a cinematographer for the pioneering Bengali/ Hindi film, Pramathesh Chandra Barua's *Devdas*, 1935. In his early career he was involved as cinematographer, and prior to that, as a documentary filmmaker. Therefore, as

we return to his one of his later, films, *Bandini* (1963) for instance, one locates a particular kind of image production, which is very unique or distinct in the context of Indian cinemas; and as argued earlier, it was probably drawing from or produced through an experience of working with the camera, specific lenses, tracks, or the intent to produce recognizable images, as well as working with P. C. Barua, who was influenced by European (Avant Garde) cinema. In *Bandini* for example, in its climatic (murder) sequence, Roy treats ambient (mechanical) noises to create melodrama and emphasise upon suspense, grief, trauma, and loss. As the suffering female protagonist, Kalyani, discovers the truth about her lover – that is the man she has been waiting for, has married someone else – her silhouette is juxtaposed with the screeching noise of the machine (which is emanating from outside). Kalyani (now a nurse) encounters a series of doubts before deciding to kill the woman who is both her patient and ex-lover's wife. This part of the story is presented through a dialogue-less sequence, and an unprecedented association of silhouette (close-ups) with noise. In effect, Bimal Roy's films are marked by such interesting (high contrast) imageries, and almost lyrical blending of image and sound.

Udayar Pathe, 1944, was Bimal Roy's first (fiction) film as the director, which was produced by New Theatres Ltd. Anup Lekhak's (literally 'unique author'), the protagonist of the film, identity as author, is central to the plot. Anup also works in a factory and writes revolutionary speeches for his employer. His boss's sister Gopa, and his own sister Sumita, are best of friends. Eventually, Anup gets romantically involved with Gopa, and politically involved with the workers. In the end, Gopa leaves parental security to move on with Anup towards the path where the 'new sun' will rise some day (or towards "udayer pathe"). On one hand, *Udayar Pathe* extended New Theatres "Literary" style, on the other, it was borrowing certain themes and formal experiments from theatre (particularly IPTA). Social reform, imagination of the (new) nation, its rebuilding through cinema, are predominant in such cinematic attempts. Particularly, crucial is its alliance with the workers issues, and the manner in which it posits the middle

class and the writer/ author as the vanguard of the working class. Furthermore, what is curiously engaging is the scene in which Anup and Gopa visit the workers quarters, and participate in a meeting. This scene, in my understanding, is derived from the Indian Peoples Theatre Association (IPTA) play 'Nabanno' which was written in '43. Thus, the film comprises interesting intercutting between two settings. One setup shows the rich people's house where there is excessive food, people are celebrating, over eating, and so on; the other space comprises the slum setting, where in the workers are uniting, and there is scarcity of food. These two situations are intercut, and evoke the memory '43 famine, during which people no longer begged for rice, but the water in which rice was cooked. One must also recall with regard to this that, Bimal Roy had shot a documentary on Bengal famine in 1943.

Following this intense (night) sequence, Anup Lekhak and Gopa walk out of the slum, and arrive at a "place" which has a pond, trees, tall grasses, etc., and is glowing beautifully under the moonlight and haze. While Roy was appreciated for his ability to create mist and moonlight effect, and transition from "reality effect" or realistic detailing and characterization, to the melodramatic mode, especially the use of the song (albeit Rabindra sangeet), highlights how there was a significant movement between realism and melodrama, a style, which I propose, was later expanded by Roy during 1950s. *Udayer Pathe*, thus, becomes a typical example of realistic detailing, meticulous working of the characters, and setting, which were intertwined with high pitched performances, rhetorical dialogues, uses of songs, studio settings, morally opposing characters and also co-incidences.

The other crucial aspect is, Roy's and others' journey to Bombay. During the Second World War the studios suffered considerably due shortage of raw film stock, which was initially rationed and later available only in the black market. The big studios also underwent a severe financial crisis as hired personnel were quickly "bought" by the new companies with free-flowing capital. The patriarchal and vertical control of the studio owners no longer seemed viable. The situation

was even more difficult in Bengal since partition meant that a large part of its market became a “foreign” market with the formation of (East) Pakistan. The removal of technical support from Europe as a result of the war, renewed control through censorship, the need to produce war propaganda films (which eventually flopped), the scarcity of raw film stock, and the lack of sufficient theatres to cater for the increased number of films produced all contributed to the disintegration of the studios. As for New Theatres, directors like Pramathesh Chandra (P.C.) Barua and Devaki Kumar Bose had already departed, and with the war even respected technician-directors like Nitin Bose and Bimal Roy left for Bombay. Roy along with his assistant Hrishikesh Mukherjee, writer Sachin Bhowmik, as well as Salil Chowdhury, the music composer, Hemant Kumar, singer-composer, and others, eventually arrived at Bombay for good.

In due course, by the 1940s, Bombay was the place to arrive at. Already in the previous decades Bombay had become a vibrant space for artistic encounters. Various groups and associations were established such as the Progressive Writers Association (1936), the Indian People’s Theatre Association (1944) and the Progressive Artists Group (1947) during this time; moreover, in 1943 the headquarters of India’s Communist Party was shifted from Lucknow (Central India) to Bombay. By the mid-1940s, there was a vibrant group of Left-wing thinkers contributing to cultural life including eminent writers like Saadat Hasan Manto, Krishan Chander, Ali Sardar Jafri and Ismat Chughtai, as well as performers and poets like Sahir Ludhianvi, Majrooh Sultanpuri, Prem Dhawan, Shailendra and Kaifi Azmi. The presence of such figures contributed to the production of progressive films like *Dharti Ke Lal* (1946, K.A. Abbas) and *Neccha Nagar* (1946, Chetan Anand). In fact, Bimal Roy became the IPTA president in 1953. Thus, this movement towards Bombay, from places like Kolkata and Lahore, is one of the most significant aspect with regard to both Bimal Roy’s style of filmmaking, and the growth of 1950s melodrama, alongside Bombay’s rise as the central film production location of India.

One may elaborate these points further, through a discussion of Roy's magnum opus, the 1953 film, *Do Bigha Zamin*. *Do Bigha Zamin* is well-known for its international recognition, moreover, it is crucial to note Bimal Roy's own involvements with international forms. Therefore, as we study the films or his films of the 1950s, one needs to forge such connections. So, on one hand, one may locate New Theatres' legacy, its specific style of storytelling, especially the practice of detailing and exploration of mise-en-scene, or what in Cinema Studies' parlance has been described as the "reality effect" in which there is particular imagination vis-à-vis the setting, characterization, uses of dialogues etc., briefly, a pronounced realistic detailing; on the other hand, Roy was also pushing of a particular melodramatic style, which included thoughtful uses of song and dance sequences, as well as coincidences, verbosity, hyperbole, and typified characters. Roy's *Madhumati* is a telling example of such style. Or for instance, the climax of *Do Bigha Zamin* that produces an intense scene by inter-cutting a fast moving car, which is racing against a hand-pulled rickshaw. This scene, is however, preceded by absorbing shots of the city, and emotionally powerful sequences shot within the studio settings.

Do Bigha Zamin was a loose and popular adaptation of the Italian neo-realist films like *Bicycle Thieves* and *Shoeshine*. Indeed, as mentioned in the monograph on Roy, Hrishikesh Mukherjee and Bimal Roy had watched *Bicycle Thieves* at the first International Film Festival of India, 1952, and were deeply inspired by it, and thus certain elements of the plot and thematic were adapted into Indian contexts. As a matter of fact, while influences of Neorealist films or the influence of Neorealism in India have been discussed in length, particularly with regard to Satyajit Ray and New Indian Cinemas, one may also consider the discernable effects of world cinema on the popular and mainstream Hindi films. Thus, at the time Bimal Roy joined Bombay Talkies, he effectively brought together two or more kinds of cinemas. Thus, New Theatres' literary trope and the "reality effect" were easily mingled with Bombay Talkies kind of melodramas, which were (also) about social reform. In point of fact, Roy's later films, for

instance, *Sujata* (1959), or even films like *Parakh* (1960) tackle questions of social reform, while its style of narration is unique. *Parakh*, for example, narrates a story in which there is a prize (money) for being honest and true. Therefore, in the village, in which the story is set, people suddenly turn honest. Roy was recognized for his directorial style for this film.

Therefore, the import of Bimal Roy's work, it is not simply the number of successful films he has made, rather, one would like to reinstate that, his style, which may be described as a "transitional form", presents the transition from studio socials to a melodramatic mode. In the process, Roy was both drawing from the studio style of storytelling, subjects of social reform, and also exploring the contestations of the post-Independence period, and dialogues with international forms. Consider a film like *Madhumati* (1958). Its story of "rebirth and revenge" has been referred to multiple times in popular cinema including in *Karz* (1980) and *Om Shanti Om* (2007). More important, *Madhumati* marked the beginning of Bimal Roy Productions. Indeed, Bimal Roy belonged to the "new generation" post-colonial filmmakers who started their career with the big studios, and later setup their own studios and production houses. This list includes maverick directors like Guru Dutt who set up his production company; as well as, Raj Kapoor and Mehboob Khan, who also built their own studio floors. Briefly, many of the filmmakers of the period, were forging a new style and imagination, and their active involvement as producers initiated a new industrial condition, which instilled fresh blood into Hindi and Indian cinemas, and encouraged active dialogues with international forms and popular styles. This shift from studio style of production to emergence of companies owned by individual directors-actors-producer (like Raj Kapoor) is imperative in the manner in which they were pushing different kinds of narration, and were eventually instrumental in producing and consolidating or establishing what we understand as the mainstream Bombay cinema or mainstream Hindi films. One many also deliberate upon the manner in which many of the progressive writers were also working in the mainstream industry, especially in Bombay. Again, the years '55-

'57 seem significant moments for Indian cinema. On one hand, in '55 *Pather Panchali* created history, on the other, in '57 some of the major Indian films including *Mother India* by Mehboob Khan, *Pyaasa* by Guru Dutt and also *Ajantrik* by Ritwik Kumar Ghatak were produced.

Consider, for instance, a film like *Devdas*, 1955. Roy's *Devdas* is perhaps one of the most "Literary" adaptations of the novel, just as, Bimal Roy had already worked as a cinematographer or the camera person of the 1935 *Devdas*, adapted by P. C. Barua. Hence, the vacillating nature of Bimal Roy's body of work, which I am emphasizing upon, makes him a filmmaker who belonged both to the past and the future. While Ravi Vasudevan (2000) has discussed the melodramatic mode of *Devdas*, Roy in fact, belonged to this particular moment of the '50s, which may be read as the "transitory" phase of Indian cinema. As a matter of fact, that a number of filmmakers were not only producing films, but were studio proprietors as well, it implies that, many of them – collectively – envisaged a definite direction, which would develop into individual streams, and become divergent at a later period.

Hence, to conclude, one would like reiterate, through various examples, Bimal Roy's distinguishing style, and the ways in which he pushed a unique mode of storytelling. This mode of storytelling, as I was arguing earlier, stems from the previous period, which includes the studio socials, as well as the documentaries circulating during that time. Roy was truly pushing the boundaries, pressing the limits so to speak, and forging a rather mixed mode. Moreover, as Ravi Vasudevan (2000) explains the modes of narration of Hindi films of the 1950s, he also shows how the *darsanic* gaze produces a specific subjectivity for the spectator, as in the case of Bimal Roy's *Devdas*. Roy's woman-character orient films, including *Sujata* and *Bandini*, not only dealt with relevant social concerns, it also established a new pattern that was enriched through his associations with international approaches. Therefore, Bimal Roy's design becomes recognizable because of the mise-en-scene, including setting, lights, camera movement,

performance, and execution of the scene. Furthermore, in his book '*Ideology Of Hindi Film*' (1998) M. Madhava Prasad he stresses upon the import of kind of cinema that Bimal Roy was popularizing. He draws attention to Hindi popular cinema's "overwhelming dependence on Bengali culture for its narrative and iconographic material", as well as, for the filmmaking talent. According to Prasad, the industry found in those narratives a ready supply of "difference", which could be represented and elaborated upon. In reality, Roy's films became a significant bearer of such tracks, identifiable through realistic detailing, as well as in terms of the settings, and overall mise-en-scene, a specific deployment of melodramatic devices and narration. Therefore, one may suggest that, Bimal Roy's films, namely *Parineeta* (1953), *Biraj Bahu* (1954), *Do Bigha Zamin*, *Devdas*, *Parakh* and many others, but particularly *Madhumati*, is more or less a definitive example of what Prasad's describes as the Bengali texture in the fabric of Hindi cinema, which have in fact, circulated in the public domain for many years, and have left a mark as it were.

I will like to end with a reference to Hrishikesh Mukherjee's film *Guddi* (1971), which evokes the memory and significance of Roy. In a particular scene in *Guddi*, which features Dharmendra (playing himself), we see him leading Guddi and her fiancé to a dilapidated studio, which, he claims belonged to Bimal Roy. As the camera tracks to draw attention to the remains of the past, Dharmendra's voice-over describes how they had shot landmark films like Roy's *Bandini*, *Do Bigha Zamin*, and *Madhumati*, in the same studio. "Who remembers those names," he laments, before adding, "our names will be forgotten too." Indeed, the film underscores Roy's impact and the new trajectories he produced. In effect, one may highlight Roy's legacy, which is visible through Hrishikesh Mukherjee, Basu Bhattacharya et al's films.

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MOOC on HINDI CINEMA
MODULE-14
HRISHIKESH MUKHERJEE

ACADEMIC SCRIPT

By Madhuja Mukherjee

Prior to our discussion on Hrishikesh Mukherjee, we need to address the question of middle class cinema in Hindi films. M. Madhava Prasad, in his seminal book, *Ideology of Hindi Film* (1998), elaborating on the crisis of the Indian state during 1970s shows in what way the film industry reconstituted itself 'formally' (or described as the "aesthetics of mobilization") during this period. Additionally, since the democratic revolution was (and has been) "indefinitely suspended", the textual form addressed this through "three distinct aesthetic formations- the new [state sponsored developmental] cinema, middle-class [commercial] cinema, and the popular cinema of mobilization." In relation to Prasad's reading of Amitabh Bachchan's super stardom, and his analyses of this "moment of disaggregation" with the state, Valentina Vitali (2008) points out how the study of (Bachchan) films have been limited to the question of star and has bestowed authorial status to him and stars. With regard to small budget action films vis-à-vis in which Bachchan performed, Vitali shows the manner in which the scene was "highly hybrid" and in what way parallel tracks of the industry present it as a "transnational category, [in which] the national and regional forms" retain their distinctive characteristics.

Prasad's complex reading of the state and cinematic forms call attention to other routes within the industry. For instance, writing about "Middle Class Cinema" of the period, he locates *two* dominant characteristics of the trope. Prasad suggests that the first type emerges from cultures of progressive realism (following Prabhat Film Co.'s films); while the second, he argues, works within a populist mode and reproduces a realist aesthetic (of New Theatres' kind) for the middle class. Therefore, there were two types of middle class cinema, one "asserting the national role", and the second, the attempting to produce "an exclusive space of class identity". More important, is Prasad's reading of middle-class cinema's "overwhelming dependence on Bengali culture for its narrative and iconographic material as well as filmmaking talent...[and the ways in which] the industry found in those narratives a ready supply of 'difference' which could be re-presented." One may suggest that, certain Bimal Roy's films as well as Hrishikesh Mukherjee's *Anuradha* (1960), *Anupama* (1968), *Satyakam* (1969), *Anand* (1971), *Bawarchi* (1972), *Chupke Chupke* (1975) etc., all belong to such practice. Furthermore, Prasad argued that the erstwhile 'feudal space' is relocated in these films 'in the space of modernity'; at the time the class learns to address itself beyond the community grid. While women's issues became crucial, problems of urban spaces, housing, jobs etc., that is the entire middle-class experience of the city with its uncertainties and prospects became crucial in these films.

Hrishikesh Mukherjee began his career as an assistant with Bimal Roy. While both Bimal Roy and Hrishikesh Mukherjee worked with New Theatres, they later shifted to Bombay at the point Second World War began, the political situation worsened in Calcutta, just as, the industrial conditions deteriorated. Moreover, as I have discussed elsewhere (2016), by this time, Bombay was truly a place to be, and was opening up with multiple opportunities. While Mukherjee is credited for giving a direction to the careers of superstars like Rajesh Khanna and Amitabh Bachchan, I would like to focus on his style of filmmaking and the enduring influences of his narratives. I would particularly focus on Hrishikesh Mukherjee's narrative patterns, via which he effectively became the epitome of middle-class

cinema in India. Crucial in this context, are the ways in which he dealt with middle-class characters, their concerns about the city, problems of job, issues concerning women, reform, and also the manner in which he imagined a middle-class audience and attempted to produce the same. A film like *Guddi*, 1971, becomes important in this regard.

To begin with, some of his early films, for instance, *Anuradha*, 1960 or *Anupama*, '66, are important, particularly if we deliberate on the fashion in which he tackled the subject of "gender", and relocated it within the realm of popular cinema. A film like *Anuradha* specifically, is unusual, since it is a loose adaptation of Gustave Flaubert's landmark novel 'Madam Bovary'. The film revolves around the woman, Anuradha, who is desirous, who loves her music, and her life in the city. As well, the choices she makes eventually turns the film into a seminal text. Played by Leela Naidu, Anuradha is a distinguished radio singer and a dancer who falls in love with an idealistic doctor, named Nirmal, played by Balraj Sahani. Nirmal decides to serve the poor in his village, and thus, urges Anuradha to not follow him or the hard life. And yet, she follows him, and after they are married and have a daughter, Anuradha realizes the difficulties of a village life. She also quits singing. Later, her father and her friend arrive in the village, and they remind her of her undue hardships, and thus, in the end, Anuradha is forced to choose between her love and her passion for music.

While *Anuradha* won a National Award, many of the films of the period, including popular films like *Guide* (1965), as well as Satyajit Ray's films like *Charulata* (1964), *Mahanagar* (1963) and Ritwik Ghatak's *Meghe Dhaka Tara* (1960), addressed the woman's question, and the problem of desire. Similarly, *Anupama*, repeatedly quoted in the film *Guddi* (1971), tells the story a girl who lives in and suffers trauma, anxiety and fear. In this film, a rich businessman after marrying late in life, unfortunately, loses her during childbirth. She leaves behind their little daughter. This girl is Uma, played by Sharmila Tagore, whom the father cannot tolerate, unless and until he is drunk. Uma grows up unattended and

leads a secluded life. At the time the father-daughter move to a hill-station to help him recover from failing health and alcoholism, Uma's marriage to Arun, the son of her father's friend, is arranged. However, after studying engineering Arun returns home, and joins them along with his friend, Ashok, played Dharmendra, who is an idealist writer and a teacher. While Uma and Ashok fall in love, and eventually Ashok helps her to emerge out of the shell, and blossom as a new person, nonetheless, Uma cannot take the call since she cannot risk her already complicated relationship with the father.

There are indeed, many such crucial interventions, which make Mukherjee a significant figure of Hindi cinema. Though perhaps not as stylish as Bimal Roy, through his choices of contemporary topics, and filmmaking, executed through detailing, location shooting, creation of familiar situations and situational dialogues, Mukherjee transferred the realistic aesthetics to the commercial sector. *Guddi* for instance, is the story of a young girl, who is infatuated by popular cinema, but particularly by the actor Dharmendra. Her obsession is so intense that, she apparently needs some cure. After she lands in Bombay, her uncle, a psychologist, helps her to "recover" by exposing her to the so-called make-belief world of cinema. Thus, the film takes both Guddi and the audiences of popular films through a journey in which the complicated mechanism of filmmaking are exposed, and eventually both the female protagonist, who is affected by popular cinema, and the general audiences (seemingly) become more rational and educated film-goers. Through a number of sequences, Mukherjee presents the procedure of filming, the play back system, the ways in which action scenes are shot, etc., and it is through a series of such scenes that Guddi is reformed in due course. Mukherjee's notion regarding the film industry is re-presented by means referencing certain visionary directors like Bimal Roy, just as, it comprises good-hearted actors (especially those who play 'villains'), and crew, and therefore, as suggested by Prasad (1998), the film "softens" the critique of popular cinema by portraying it as an enterprise. Moreover, the film draws attention to system of production, the role of the musicians, writers,

technicians et al. In effect, the scene in which Guddi arrives to Bombay, India's primary location of film production (and enigma) is emphasized by an interesting montage, comprising a range of hoardings of popular films that is juxtaposed with well-known dialogues of widely-held films. The aural-visual exploration highlights the manner in which "middle class" cinema was distinguishing itself from mainstream-popular.

In fact, a range of other films, which functioned with this framework, would often evoke (imaginary) scenes from mainstream cinemas, and use popular stars, as in the case of *Chhoti si baat*, 1975 (by Basu Chatterjee), for the song "Janeman Janeman" and underline the distinction. Indeed, quite a few films referred to mainstream cinema, and often recreated and subverted the same. The pronounced acknowledgement of 'difference' vis-à-vis mainstream melodramas is the pivotal aspect of middle class cinemas of the period. In addition, through the film *Guddi*, Mukherjee also aspired to produce an idealized "public" of the new nation, and thus, made allusions to his own reformist films like *Anupama*, as well as to Bimal Roy's *Madhumati* (1958); and through extensive scenes and intricate plotting drew attention to a longer trajectory of such aesthetics.

One may also mention, the film *Khubsoorat* (1980), which creates a motivating female character, who is also the protagonist of the film. The female lead of the film was played by the popular star Rekha. In the film Manju (Rekha) comes to visit her sister Anju after her wedding. The character of Manju is playful, fun loving, and even irreverent. During her stay, due to her errant behaviour, Manju earns the ire of the grand mother figure of the family (or her sister's mother-in-law). Meanwhile, she also gets close to her sister's brother-in-law, Inder. That Manju is pitted against a tyrannical figurehead is crucial considering it was made post-emergency or after the rule of decree (1975-77). Made in 1980, the film perhaps refers to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's towering presence, and her controversial policies. Nevertheless, one would like to contend that, the emergence of powerful female figures in popular cinema is obliquely connected to Mrs. Gandhi's larger than life persona. Thus, in the film, in a crucial scene, Manju not only performs a drama

about breaking rules (as she sings “Sare Niyam Tod Do...Inquilab Zindabad”), but she also involves the entire family in this transgressive act. While, the film resolves the problem by making Manju act responsibly in the end, this scene or the song (and the lyrics), not only disturbs certain social equilibrium, but also presents the woman as a significant agent of change. The same is true for another Rekha starrer, *Jhooti* (1985).

In fact both Bimal Roy and Hrishikesh Mukherjee, are to a certain extent full of contradictions. Thus, as in case of Bimal Roy one locates an overlap between various kinds of realistic tendency and melodramatic tropes, while in the process he historicizes both the past, and foresees a future, similarly, in case of Hrishikesh Mukherjee, whom I have described as an exemplary figure of middle-class cinema, eventually re-produces a specific middle-class ideology and taste, through the setting, mise-en-scene, characterization, their performances, or the way they speak and through gestures. In reality, Mukherjee’s treatment of the scenes, are recognizable by his middle-class audiences. And yet, catering to and by manufacturing the middle-class values, Mukherjee also triggered specific transgressive and subversive moments, since the protagonist oftentimes challenge the powerful figureheads. For instance, if *Khubsoorat* is questioning the authoritative figure through its narrative, then, films like *Anupama* question patriarchy. Even *Chupke Chupke*, as a matter of fact, derides “patriarchy” through comedy (especially produced via caricature of English language and etiquette), transgression (for example, through problems of [mock] bigamy, extra-material affairs, illicit liaisons and so on), and subversion (of class, social hierarchies, community values etc.), even when in the end doubts and apprehension are clarified.

Hrishikesh Mukherjee’s continued dialogue with (Bhadralok) Bengali cinema is decisive in this regard and is contrary to Nitin Bose’s career, who shifted from New Theatres to Bombay Talkies, and thereafter to Filmistan, and made blockbusters like *Ganga Jamuna* (1961). *Ganga Jamuna*, in fact, belongs to a

different trajectory of melodramatic films of Bombay or Hindi cinema. However, Hrishikesh Mukherjee often borrowed plots and narratives of contemporary Bengali films. *Chupke Chupke* for instance, is a recreation of a very popular Bengali film *Chhadmabeshi* (1971), and presents Amitabh Bachchan as an English Professor, and Dharmendra as a Professor of Botany. And again, *Bawarchi* (1972) was adapted from the widely held Tapan Sinha film *Goplo Holeo Sottyi* (1966). Therefore, many of these characters retain regional identities, and are located in real places, instead of the generic places or generic cities. Indeed, in place generic name (for instance Mr. Kumar or Dr. Kumar), in Hrishikesh Mukherjee's films such characters, locations, professions are specific. His films tackle identifiable middle-class homes, characters, and endogamy. Additionally, in time, Hrishikesh Mukherjee's oeuvre would be framed by the comic mode, and thus, there is also a film like *Gol Maal* (1979), which takes up typical a mainstream trope – that of “double role” – and turns it around by making the protagonist act as though he has two different identities. This plot is extended further, when an actress agrees to perform the mother, and ends up acting as both mother and aunt. The reform of the father figure (played by Utpal Dutt) appears to speak to the transformation of the “big bad Bureaucrat” in Mrinal Sen's *Bhuvan Shome* (1969). This dual relation with both alternative cinemas as well as the mainstream make Mukherjee's films a significant aspect of popular cinema in India. With regard to such ‘mixing’ one may also mention Mukherjee's widely circulated films, the Amitabh Bachchan-Jaya Bhaduri (nee Bachchan) starrer *Mili* (1975) and *Abhiman* (1973).

Hrishikesh Mukherjee, nevertheless, is probably is most well-known for his film *Anand*, 1971. *Anand* is a loose adaptation of a Japanese film. Thus, while *Anand* is remembered for the fantastic songs composed by Salil Chowdhury, through such associations Mukherjee was possibly extending Bimal Roy's legacy. Chowdhury, who was trained in Indian classical music, often infused Indian musical structures with Western instrumentations. For example, Salil Chowdhury's song “Itna na mujhse tu pyaar badhaa” (Don't Love Me as Much),

from Mukherjee's film *Chhaya* (1961), becomes imperative in this regard. Based on Mozart's symphony No.40, this song entered the Indian public domain to become an iconic composition that in a self-conscious way negotiated and popularized Western classical notes. In the process, they brought a different and distinct kind of musical energy to Hindi cinema. Moreover, the last scene of *Anand*, is curiously interesting in the fashion in which the recorded speech of Anand ("Zindagi aur maut uparwale ki haat mein hai/ life and death is controlled by God) or the "acousmatic" voice, is replayed at the point he has died, and "Babumoshai" or his doctor Bannerjee, played by Amitabh Bachchan, cries and urges the dead man to speak up. Truly, *Anand* is an "enigma" in which the solution to social problems is perpetually deferred. By reading such cinematic explorations one may suggest that Hrishikesh Mukherjee's films indicate the parallel lines of Hindi cinema. On one hand, there were the vibrant blockbuster model (involving multiple thematic and generic elements, and narrative prototypes), on the other hand, the 1970s and 1980s were the most productive years for New Indian Cinema. However, what has been generally described as the "middle of the road cinema" is effectively represented by Hrishikesh Mukherjee and a few others.

One would particularly want to discuss the 1973 film, *Namak Haraam*. The story deals with two friends, Somu, played by Rajesh Khanna, and Vijay/Vicky played by Amitabh Bachchan. Vicky's father owns a mill, and one day he is offended by the behaviour of the Union leader of his company. To avenge this, Somu joins the factory as a worker and later becomes the leader of the workers union. However Somu, a man with a middle-class background, and now living in the slums, is moved by the dire conditions of the workers, and is also eventually taken by working class ideology and the promise of social change. By the time Somu is actually reformed, Vicky's father exposes the truth that he is an intruder, and finally kills Somu for crossing the lines. Finally, Vicky takes the blame on himself in order to punish his father. This story alludes to rise of workers unions in Bombay's textile mills especially, and also to monetary inflation during the '70s.

Madhava Prasad (1998) suggests that these “narratives thus propose a non-political resolution of the political conflicts as middle class’s contribution to national cohesion.” This is truly, an important issue to understand Hrishikesh Mukherjee’s films. Certainly, what is central to *Namak Haraam* is the function and significance of the middle-class within the framework capitalist growth during the ’70s. One may as a matter of fact, compare *Namak Haraam* with Bimal Roy’s *Udayer Pathey* in which the role of the middle class as the leader or the vanguard of the working class is decisive. Briefly, Hrishikesh Mukherjee’s films were bearing the mark middle-class ideology, notion of the state, and citizenship. Thus, *Namak Haraam*, as elucidated by Prasad (also as in the case of *Udayer Pathe*, in which the father/ capitalist is in the long run redeemed) is in actuality more like a “reform” of the *capitalist class*, which was earlier aligning with the British values, and now has to refigure itself, and re-align with socialist Nehruvian ethos. Thus, Hrishikesh Mukherjee’s films represent a particular value-system and the dilemma of the class and times. Similarly, a close-reading of a film like *Alaap* (1977) shows the complexities and “a conflict between two ideologies of modernity”. *Alaap* portrays Amitabh Bachchan as a singer turned worker of sorts, who rebels against his father. In *Alaap*, Alok (Bachchan) deserts his father’s law firm in order to pursue his passion for music, which he learns from a courtesan, who lives in a slum. After the slum is demolished, and the Sarju Bala, the courtesan, is left homeless, Alok joins them. He earns his living by driving a horse-carriage (tanga), though his attempt to be independent is jeopardized by his father. However, this rebellion is not so much about the violence, which was portrayed by Bachchan’s persona in other films (like *Deewar* (1975), *Trishul* (1978), *Agneepath* (1990)), rather, it is about physical suffering, pain and anguish. A truly low-key film, *Alaap* presents an interesting visual language, and explorations through mise-en-scene, which was probably evoked in Mukherjee’s first film *Musafir*, 1957, however, and arguably, subsumed by popular narratives and tropes during the later period. To sum up, Hrishikesh Mukherjee’s body of work remain relevant particularly because of the ways in which it generated a specific trajectory, and the manner in which later generations filmmakers like

Basu Bhattacharya, and even more recently - a film like *Rocket Singh: The Salesman Of The Year* (2009) - evoked the memory of Hrishikesh Mukherjee's films.

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MOOC on HINDI CINEMA

MODULE-15

SHYAM BENEGAL

ACADEMIC SCRIPT

Shyam Benegal – A Story of Unfulfilled Promises

Like Mrinal Sen, with whose hugely experimental and interrogative 1969 film *Bhuvan Shome* New Indian Cinema is said to have begun, the Hyderabad – numbered, Bombay admin – fumed – film artist Shyam Benegal is counted among the pioneers of this important movement where ideas and images merged in varying styles and idioms to question many previously – held sacred texts relating to nation, state, caste, class, creed, community and gender.

Bengal came to proper filmmaking with a flash and thunder that is difficult to forget. After making hundreds, if not thousands, of advertising films and commissioned documentaries which when the trumpet enthusiastically for corporates and agencies, he apparently thought himself prepared to take on the film world. The subjects he chose for his first film was as different from the ones he did for years, as, to use a useful cliché, chalk is from cheese. However, on hindsight, it seems that he was preparing himself for bigger things even as he was earning more than just bread and butter from the early plethora of adulatory subjects which, on closer and sterner reading, could he said to be in a sense, justifying many a subject which he came to critique in his fictional features in worse of time.

A quote from an article written in the early 1980s by Zaidi, a close friend and a successful art director. Sharma can prove to be useful in understanding Benegal's background which came to his support when he made *Ankur* or *Nishant*, his first full-length features. Zaidi : "Shyam comes from a large family. He is one of ten children... His father, a professional photographer, kept an open house and reveled in having a stream of

visitors who would argue and debate the vital issues of that era. The place was Hyderabad. The Period : the '40s and the '50s. Shyam was fortunate is growing up in an atmosphere which allowed a cross-current of various influences. His father came from an orthodox Brahmin family, but was himself an agnostic who would not allow any ritual to be conducted in the house. He wa a Gandhian nationalist, one of Shyam's brothers who lives in Calcutta was a Communist sympathizer, another was for a time a member of the RSS." *Arthur Seedling* (1973) and *Nishant* (Night without End, 1975) provide chilling insights into feudalism at work in the remote interior of what used to be Nizam territory in what is now Telengana. The dark deeds of the landed gentry – economic, social and sexual – are juxtaposed in both the films are juxtaposed with the new – found courage of the peasantry which had been at the receiving end for eyes but did not know how to channelize their sense of revenge. These period pieces evoked the conditions that prevailed in the feudal State of Hyderabad a most obedient vassal to the British crown. The misdeeds of the landlords who, in their turn, never questioned the authority of the Nizam and his oligarchy, were woven into the narratives with impressive cinematic qualities with a political sense that brought to mind the director's readings of more in his university days.

One interesting thing about *Ankur* and *Nishant* is that where many an Indian director before Benegal or alongside him, identified land as the unit by which to measure the decadence and depravity inherent in feudalism, the former admin zoomed in on sexual explanation as the principal force by which to gauge the depths to which the rural elite could descend. As illustrations of this point, we can recall how the landlords son, visiting his estate, takes advantage of the young wife of a simpleton - villages, in *Ankur*. Even more graphically depicted is the story of *Nishant*, where a feudal family arranges for the abduction of the attractive young wife of the village school teacher and the repeated assaults she has to suffer at the hands of at least two of its members. The explosive consequences of the dark deeds of the wrongdoers go to show where the directors sympathies lie. When the exploited rise in revolt, there is no holding them back with the result than, at least in *Nishant*, more than one innocent suffers. There is some amount of subtlety in the depiction of popular suffering (the

‘individual’ here is to be ‘read’ as someone who rises above himself or herself, become a representative of the masses), but there is anger as well, loudly and visibly expressed.

To follow the political narrative embedded in *Ankur* and *Nishant*, one must be conversant with the land struggles that have for long been an integral part of the discourse surrounding Telengana. The accumulated anger of the landless peasantry led to a revolt against the nearly – wide pendent Indian State in 1948, which was mercilessly put down by Jawaharlal Nehru. Benegal’s first films of popular retribution using one or more agents of desired change can yield profitable results if ‘read’ in the context of the uprisings, albeit on a smaller scale, that predate independence and the large – scale Communist – inspired Telengana revolt.

From his very first film, Benegal came to be noted for at least three things – first, his choice of subject and the easy flow of his narrative which, at least for the first few years did not fail to communicate with his audience; second, his humanism, expressed in his concern and sympathy for the dispossessed and the discriminated, this despite having served, so to say, an extended apprenticeship in the deceptive and dubious advertising industry; and, cast of all, the unerring eye with which he discovered newcomers and the comfort with which he could work with them, the Bengal assembly – line providing an array of exquisite actors and actresses who, in time, came to be a part of the folklore and history of modern Indian cinemas.

Speaking about the role of establishes stars and newcomers in the film industry, Benegal, long used to the Bombay studio system, but from the outside till he made *Ankur*, once said: “When I was so badly stuck in *Ankur* because I was literally banking on star quality. I decided never to fall in to that trap. New actors may extract more time and effort but they don’t hold a director to ransom as stars can do to our country.” In this, as in many other ways, Benegal’s experience resembles that of Satyajit Ray, who was also highly regarded for his ability to unearth untested material and immediately or in time convert them into highly – prized interpreters of difficult roles. Sharma Zaidi, who has worked with Benegal often, is on record : “The

Benegal repertory of actors is now so highly regarded that the top stars vie to act for him – on his terms.”

‘The Benegal repertory of actors that Zaidi rightly talks of with enthusiasm has benefitted not just Benegal, but directors working in many languages other than Hindi. Ray made ample use of at least two of Benegal’s discoveries – Shabana Azmi in *Shatranj Ke Khilari* and Smita Patil in *Sadgati*, both adapted from Premchand stories. Then again, Mrinal Sen was able to add to the quality of at least two of his acclaimed films – *Akaaler Sandhaney*, in Bangla, with Smita Patil playing an important role in her unique, imitable style; and *Khandehar*, in Hindi, with Shabana Azmi in the consciously underplayed role of an aging spinster with a bed-ridden mother on her hands. These are not the only important directors who have been benefitted by products of the Benegal acting factory. Many directors working in different Indian languages have been supported in their exertions by the likes of Om Puri, Naseeruddin Shah, Kulbhushan Khantanda, Amrish Puri, and others who made the breakthrough acting in Benegal films.

If, to some people, *Ankur* and *Nishant* seemed to have trail-brazing qualities as far as feudalism as a social evil and an economic injustice was concerned, Benegal was destined to give an even more polished account of himself as both storyteller and technical craftsman in some of the films to come. *Manthan* (1976) and *Bhumika* (1977), taken together, arguably represent the most creative period in Benegal’s career. The first is a modern story about the successful working of a rural cooperative venture, despite the occasional setback in the daily lives of some of the participants in the venture, while the second, set in the thirties, takes the viewer into the troubled and treacherous times of a Marathi actress at the peak of her fame career. The second, in particular, revealed Benegal’s fine eye for detail and his ability to create pulsating drama not just by means of the impassioned acting of the leading players, particularly Sunita Patil in the role of Usha / Urvashi, but impressive art direction which raises the film to an altogether different height. And wherever one looked, one was stuck by Govind Nihalani’s inspired cinematography which contributed in no small measure to making Benegal’s early films in particular, the disturbing delight they

were. Derek Malcolm, the perceptive British critic and longtime India watcher, wrote; “What Benegal has done is to paint a magnificent visual recreation of those extraordinary days, and one that is also sometime to the agonies and predicament of a talented woman whose need for security was only matched by her insistence on freedom.” What Malcolm did with those few words on *Bhumika* was to indicate his belief in the artistic aesthetic and social significance of the film. The emancipation of the actress could be possible only after overtaking the hurdles that kept materializing in her path with a breath-taking frequency and intensity.

Bhumika was followed by another period piece, *Junoon* (1978), which came to grips with the insurrection of 1857. Based on a novella *A Flight of Pigeons* by Ruskin Bond, *Junoon* narrates a married Pathan chieftain’s ill-fated obsessive love for a young Anglo-Indian girl at a pace which reminds the views at times of the closing frames of *Nishant*. The girl (played by Nafisa Ali) is sought to be shielded from the Pathan (Snashi Kapoor) by her mother (Jennifer Kendall) and even her grandmother (Ishmat Chnghtai) in an fraught with palpable tension. What begins as a one – sided romance turns after a point into a mutual attraction – but to no avail. The Pathan goes away to battle the Feringhees even as his wife (Shabana Azmi) and his love are left behind, watching and wondering. The film was not **melodramatic** with open and by either the audience or the critics. Marked by a certain quality of dramatic storytelling, which is what the subject demanded, *Junoon* suffered from a lack of depth and certainly revealed no superior cinematic vision.

From *Junoon* to *Kalyug* (Machine Age, 1980), Bengal took a leap in time of at least a hundred years – from a ‘geographical expression’ called India trampled underfoot by foreign occupiers to an independent nation where urban industrial elites were vying with each other in private, domestic wars to prove who was the most calculating and manipulating of them all. Owing its narrative inspiration to no less a hoary and conducted source than the *Mahabharat*, *Kalyug* was interesting and even seemed inspired in certain passages, but in the end fell short of viewer expectations and most probably, the director’s ambitious as well. However, the film held the interest of select groups of viewers on account of Benegal’s continued

attempts to get to grips with the subject of set as an important improvident in understanding rural feudal life or the emerging industrial aristocracy. Perhaps, no one in the history of New Indian Cinema has pursued questions of sexual exploitation to achieve an intended end with such single-minded interest as Shyam Benegal. This aspect of his oeuvre, which has heightened the quality of some of his best films, has been touched upon by some serious students of modern Indian Cinemas but for whatever season, they have refrained from going into it in depth.

Benegal has had a long and eventful career in evasive and meaningful cinema. As is inevitable when an artist keeps working over a long period of time, Benegal had a few 'ups' and quite a few 'downs'. *Aarohan* (1982) looked more like pamphleteering than serious art, and a vehicle of propaganda for its financier, the Left Front government of West Bengal.

Mandi (1983) which followed *Aarohan* is a women – centric film that shakes the camera into or hours around a worked where going of all sorts are marshaled in such a style as to give the impression of storytelling through the marketplace. Paid sex is understandably, the principal commodity in view, giving rise to situations or 'stories' ranging from the hopeful or hilarious to the sad and even tragic. Shabana Azmi as the 'madame' and Smita Patil as her 'favorite girl' come together to create a microcosm where human emotions of attraction and rejection are juxtaposed. The women are strong and assertive, while manhood in the form of Naseeruddin Shah in the role of a pimp and 'server', is weak and subservient. The drama is played out following Benegal's favorite scheme of exploring the 'physicality' of women and their refusal to see themselves as 'victims' even when they are pushed to subordinate positions in an insufferably patriarchal set up.

One has the feeling that *Mandi* did not get its due as a creative film or as a document of social exploration.

Perhaps, Benegal's most remarkable films were made in the 1970s, but even as late as the early 1990s, the pioneering spirit of the man had not dissented him, as evidenced by the enthralling *Suraj Ka Satwaan Ghoda* (1992), adapted from Dharamveer Bharati's novel. The film reminded the

viewer of ancient Indian modes of storytelling in a strikingly modern idiom. Benegal is perhaps at his best when he has allowed himself the independence to do things in a freewheeling spirit, at times verging on the dangerously creative as in *Bhumika* or in *Satwaan Ghoda*.

This worth reaching Shyam Benegal's words on *Satwaan Ghoda*, which may be said to have been the last important film he made before gradually receding from view as an artist of consequence. In a sense, the prodigal son of a once – upon – a time adman, a depth at passing at best half-truths as the virile of god, came back home with *Saatwan Ghoda!* But what a return it was for this formidable figure in the annals of W.I.C.

The film is based on a novel of many dimensions. It seems simple enough when you think of it as a cycle of stories told by a young man to his friends in order to define an exemplary love story. For me the novel started to reveal itself even as the stories did not succeed in defining love. Unstated, uninterpreted elements showed themselves, characters from one story became part of another the raconteur placing himself as the protagonist or observer in the stories. The time frame of the stories remained the same, yet he sees himself in each story differently. In one he is a boy, in another an adolescent, in the third an adult. Differences between perception and factuality, reality and the truth of his imagination, emerged. There was a hint of how creative processes work. All of this was exciting as material for a film since its several dimensions could be explored cinematically without losing the compassion and humanity inherent in it."

On the surface *Satwaan Ghoda* looks like a comedy, but a closer look shows elements of sadness and loss. The film's beauty is in its challenging construction, revealing Benegal as an experimentalist of a high order. Arguably, in no other film by him does he come across so forcefully as a stylist with the ability to play games in heightened humor bordering on absurdly. The blurring of distinction between the factual and the fabricated as the protagonist tells his stories of involvement with different women in different stages of his life is the mainstay of the Film's narrative.

MOOC on HINDI CINEMA

MODULE-16

KUMAR SHAHANI

ACADEMIC SCRIPT

The epic form in its verbal, musical, visual manifestations is not a chronology of static events. The strictly chronological, sequential narrative arose out of a mechanistic and closed system of causation. The intervention of the narrator or the subject in the transformation of the object in nature is clearly recognized in both the epic form and in the modern practice of science. To know is to change. This new relationship between the subject and the object, if accepted, can take us away from both a mechanical idea of objectivity and from a subjectivity which extends into nature, through the pathetic fallacy. The imitation of reality can be replaced by the internal relationship of society or the social, historical man's consciousness of nature.

-Kumar Shahani ('Ideological Ironies')

Kumar Shahani is one of the most prominent film directors of contemporary India who practiced 'epic cinema' successfully. Shahani started his film career in early 1970s. His name in the history of Indian cinema comes with Mani Kaul, Adoor Gopalakrishnan and G. Aravindan as a successful film director of New Cinema movement of India which started in the late 1969. For reference, New Cinema movement in India started with a manifesto published by Mrinal Sen and Arun Kaul. With these two established film directors, a group of youngsters joined new cinema movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s. One of them was Kumar Shahani. Kumar Shahani made his first important film *Maya Darpan* in 1972 and *Maya Darpan* became a landmark film of New Cinema in India.

Kumar Shahani was born on 7 December, 1940 in Larkana, Sindh which is now a province of Pakistan. His family, in the time of Partition, migrated from Larkana to independent India. Shahani studied Political Science and History at the University of Bombay. He also studied Screenplay Writing and was the student of Ritwik Ghatak in FTII, Pune. Later he received a grant from the French government and went to Paris to study cinema at IDHEC. He was taught there by famous French master Robert Bresson. Historian D. D. Kosambi's writings also inspired Shahani. In many interviews and writings of Shahani we find that he acknowledges Ghatak, Bresson and Kosambi as his mentors.

In Kumar Shahani's film the influence of Ghatak and Robert Bresson was immense. But still Kumar Shahani could make his own path in making cinema. Particularly, Kumar Shahani's films were oriented to a political end which according to Shahani is a process of decolonisation of film form and content in Indian cinema. Kumar Shahani borrowed a lesson, to be precise, borrowed a style from Ritwik Ghatak which was known as epic style and from Bresson he borrowed a style of examining the subject before camera in an introspective way. Kumar Shahani's first film *Maya Darpan* shows these trends. *Maya Darpan* is a film which actually tells the narrative of a young girl Taran who belong to a higher middle class wealthy family of a small town. The film adapts a short story of famous writer Nirmal Verma. Verma's narrative mainly concentrated on the loneliness of young Taran in a semi-feudal social system. Film critic Aparna Frank writes,

For Shahani, Verma's narrative becomes the ground for examining the antagonism between individual and society. He recasts Taran's strained relationship with her father as the tension between the caste and class-obsessed worldview of the feudal era and a modern individual consciousness. But the most distinct departure from the short story lies in how Shahani's abstract compositions and extra-diegetic references educe the presence of a social discourse and critical perspective, rather than positing them as givens. Therefore, where Verma's literary style is fully explanatory and descriptive, Shahani's asyndetic and paratactical approach — owed to the Bressonian aesthetic — allows for an objective and normative commentary to gestate in the film's form,

thereby undercutting the subjective focalization of the short story.

In Kumar Shahani's filmmaking style like his contemporary Mani Kaul's, it is observed that Shahani slows down the temporal movement of a narrative. The space and time exposed in Kumar Shahani's films are slowly moving where Kumar Shahani tries to avoid and deny the Western style of making perspective and the Western/ Hollywood style of continuity editing. So, Kumar Shahani from the very beginning tries to distance from the conventional style of filmmaking and he introduces a kind of Indian aesthetics in his cinema where the films to him is never a narrative equivalent to novel but a film to Kumar Shahani is a medium to expose the Indian societies in an epic style.

The epic style of filmmaking of Kumar Shahani could be best explored if we discuss his film *Khayal Gatha*. *Khayal Gatha* is a film made in 1989 and the film actually shows the history of *khayal* in Indian Classical music. The origin and evolution of *khayal*, the development and modernisation of *khayal* as a form of Indian classical music was explored and examined by Kumar Shahani in this film. Shahani explains in an interview with Ashish Rajadhyaksha,

The most evolved form of sequence that I know of is the *khayal*, the North Indian classical vocal system of music. The nuanced tensions between the "named" notes, the proportions that always lead from a kinetic home to a point of rest; the sculpting of sounds from the continuous scale suggest modes of composing movement, including improvisation, revealing transitions, rather than suggesting them. The Western mode of music seems to be more like architecture. It builds up a structure. It has fixed lines of stress and strain. I find that architecture (and music that evokes architecture) a fine constructive principle for the layers of sound that we use in film.

Kumar Shahani's style, approach and way of thinking could be best understood with this film *Khayal Gatha* which is not really a narrative film in conventional sense but a film which in every sense explores the Indian narrative tradition, Indian visual tradition and Indian musical tradition. Shahani says, "Our epic theatre not only used music as part of its narration, but had linked itself

to what we clearly find as a correspondence with music in the gesture and the use of verbal imagery.” He notices his own epic style of filmmaking through the prism of music in this film.

Kumar Shahani made many short films and documentaries but the number of feature length fiction films made by him is limited. Apart from *Maya Darpan* (1972), in 1984 Kumar Shahani made another film *Tarang*, in 1989 *Khayal Gatha* came into being, in 1991 Kumar Shahani made one of the best parallel cinema of Indian history which is *Kasba* and in 1997 Kumar Shahani made a very thoughtful adaptation of Rabindranath Tagore’s novel *Char Adhyay*.

Tarang tells the story of a modern industrial family of India. A strange dynamics of greed for property, kinship complex, entrepreneurship, individual ego and self-centeredness among Sethji, his nephew and son-in-law is grown in the narrative which ends in guilt, mistrust and calamity. Shahani being a Marxist analyses in *Tarang* a typical Indian bourgeois family and its internal dynamics from the core. Film critic Aparna Frank explains,

In *Tarang*, we are confronted, not only with an unusual narrative structure, but more importantly, with a story told through a discourse that makes the spectator aware all the time of a significant mediation going on between the filmmaker and his material.

Kumar Shahani’s *Kasba* is another very interesting film where Kumar Shahani’s political ideology is very clearly understood. Kumar Shahani as a political being is more interested in liberal Marxism and he actually declares himself as a Marxist filmmaker. In *Kasba*, Kumar Shahani shows a family – a family of a set a wealthy businessman Mani Ram and his two other family members, his two sons and another member of his family who is the daughter in law of Mani Ram whose name is Tejo. Tejo is always placed in a space and time where the space, particularly the landscape, the house, the surroundings of Tejo, as Kumar Shahani shows is indifferent. The indifferent landscape is very striking. But many crosscurrents are developing in Tejo’s mind. A narrative space is developed in the *haveli* of Mani Ram but outside it, that means outside the *haveli*, there is another way of living.

There are common people living outside the *haveli*; mainly the poor people. There is a landscape

which is indifferent but contains a normal flow of life. So Kumar Shahani actually makes a parallel in this film between the two ends. In one end, there is Mani Ram's family and the haveli and the other there is the surroundings, there is the other part of the society. Now like Mani Kaul's films, Kumar Shahani's films also actually investigate the formation of subjects in terms of its relationship with surrounding objects. There is a strange interaction shown between the subject and the material world. Sometimes matter exists in its own rights with the mind. Both Mani Kaul and Kumar Shahani actually show the space in such a way that both the space and the subject get their autonomy and they autonomously revealed though there has been a subtle and complex connection established by both Kaul and Shahani.

Usually, in India the political filmmakers who want to make political cinema, follow a structure of strike, industry, factory worker which finally at the end of the day according to Kumar Shahani becomes an imitation of Western cinematic model of investigating capital and its development. But in Kumar Shahani's cinema, the filmmaker emphasises on a family which is a family of a *seth* for example. *Seths* in India, as we know, develop a capital and circulate it in the production and market. They are small producers but yet they are very important part of Indian capitalist system.

Kumar Shahani emphasises equally on the structure of a Hindu family in an Indian society. It's the patriarchal modes of operation, the framework of morality, the deprivation of women as far as their desire is concerned. Its conservativeness, its way of operation and the monetary system of the society everything comes in a complicated way in *Kasba* and Kumar Shahani's film *Kasba* is a very interesting and introspective kind of cinema which exposes the system of Indian society with respect to capital, with respect to the political economy of morality. Not only the political economy of capital, but the political economy of morality and family structure is also explored by Kumar Shahani in this film.

Kumar Shahani's another major film is *Char Adhyay* which he made in 1997. *Char Adhyay* is a novel by Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore's novel criticises the violence and dogma in the movement of independence in India in the colonial period. Kumar Shahani is interested in this

novel because the novel is not only a narrative of two important characters Antu and Ela, but the novel itself is a treatise on the freedom struggle in India.

Kumar Shahani picked up this novel and in a very interesting way Kumar Shahani adapted the Tagore's novel into film. In this film, Kumar Shahani again, following his auteurial style actually examines two important characters of the film Antu and Ela, the protagonists of the story, who are involved with a secret society which organizes violent movements against the British colonial rule in Bengal. Later Antu and Ela understand the problem of 'unconditional devotion' and 'dogmatic regimentation' in the name of patriotism. They try to dissociate themselves from the secret society. While the secret society declares them renegade and wishes to perish them. But Kumar Shahani's camera was not interested in the development of narrative as such, but along with the narrative, Kumar Shahani's camera emphasises on the discursivity of the whole effort by Tagore which was actually Tagore's most important realization of Indian freedom struggle.

Kumar Shahani takes a Bressonian style here. Bresson's style was to observe minutely the characters in the film, and another feature of Bresson's style was that the film was dependent on dialogues, that is, subjective articulations. But apart from dialogue Bresson's camera tries to find something which surpasses the narrative in terms of a relationship between the object and the subject. This very style was followed by Kumar Shahani in this film. Though Kumar Shahani developed his own way of looking at the problem, the Bressonian style here helps him a lot.

In *Char Adhyay* the film is primarily based on the dialogue of Antu and Ela where Kumar Shahani tries to follow the lines of Tagore primarily. But the way his camera and the visuals, constructs a space becomes very interesting. And this is very much a Kumar Shahani style to overcome the dramaturgy of the narrative. By this style he establish a relationship between the objective world and the character in order to penetrate the outer shell of the narrative and finally enters in the discursivity.

Another very important point about Kumar Shahani's film is his method of designing sound.

Kumar Shahani never designs sound in cinema merely to follow the demands of the narrative. On the other hand in Kumar Shahani's film, sound gets its autonomy and it follows a parallel development with the visual. Sound never becomes a supplementary to visual in Shahani's films; sound becomes a parallel device to Kumar Shahani to expose the theme of the film. Sometimes silence plays a role in his sound planning. Shahani keeps in mind the role of sound in Indian culture which emphasize on the fact that 'seeing is believing' is not the central method of reasoning in Indian life. In his films he is very conscious about the Western way of reasoning the world through prioritizing vision. As a process of decolonization of Indian Cinema Shahani shifts the focus from visual to aural perception which helps the viewer to discover a new method of reasoning – a philosophical take on cinema. *Char Adhyay*, *Khayal Gatha*, *Maya Darpan*, *Kasba* and *Tarang* shows Shahani's unique understanding of the role of sound in cinema an Indian philosophy.

Kumar Shahani mixes up in many times the classical musical tradition of India with the folk tradition. Particularly we can again go back to the reference of his film *Kasba* where at the last sequence or probably in the penultimate sequence, Kumar Shahani's camera shows a landscape. And then comes a song. Song and music actually hold the sense of movement whereas the camera very interestingly shows a static landscape. Conventionally in those sequences filmmakers prefer to pan or tilt on the nature to add some visual movement. But Shahani did the reverse in order to create a room for the sound and the autonomy of sound is felt by the audience. This becomes a very interesting part of his style of filmmaking. Sahani the disciple of Bresson says,

When Bresson asserts that the eye is less attentive than the ear, he is speaking of a condition when the spectator is attentive at all! For in the West, the twin enemies of the development of sound in cinema have been realism (note the unnecessary, unimaginative, recourse to music in the best of neo-realistic work of Rossellini, De Sica) and the theatre (the privileged, synchronous word). Even today despite the most sophisticated mixing equipment available, you can see the dips that take place the moment characters project dialogue. In India it is this same expressionist realist

theatrical tradition that has deafened our ears to sound in films.

In the history of Indian cinema, therefore, Kumar Shahani is a very unique filmmaker who tries to observe, examine and investigate Indian modernity of the 19th-century and 20th-century with the help of some aesthetic, political and ideological import from the Indian tradition before colonial era. Unlike other filmmakers, Kumar Shahani never surrenders to the Western ideas of cinema and Western ideas of visual culture. He is a politically conscious filmmaker who never entertains slogan-mongering but throws light to some under-illuminated areas of the Indian modernity. He made several political films but his political films were made towards the his strong conviction of decolonisation.

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MOOC ON HINDI CINEMA

MODULE-17

SAEED AKHTA MIRZA

ACADEMIC SCRIPT

SAEED AKHTAR MIRZA – ASTUTE CHRONICLER OF URBAN DECAY

Saeed Akhtar Mirza (born 1943) is extremely well-read, deeply thoughtful, and flamboyant in self-expression. And, perhaps the most argumentative spokesman of the parallel cinema movement, also known as New Indian Cinema, that flourished for almost three decades – from the 1970s to the 1990s. Born in the city of Bombay at a time when it was commonly associated with both working-class grit and upper-class refinement, Mirza went to a good school and a leading college where he picked up a flair for debating out things and not being satisfied with pat solutions to difficult issues. One would, normally, not associate someone with such a background to do time in the suspect profession of advertising, but true to his maverick nature, that is exactly what Mirza did. After a longish stint in advertising, one day he decided that perhaps his destiny lay in filmmaking. At the Film & Television Institute of India (FTII) in Pune, Mirza had the redoubtable Ritwik Ghatak as his teacher and mentor. From Ghatak, the young filmmaker-to-be appears to have picked up not just another round of the art of repartee but also a social philosophy where there was space enough for the dregs of society – from emotional loners looking desperately for a supportive shoulder to lean on, to young deceived members of the big city's underworld. The deep impression that Ghatak left on Mirza can be measured from the latter's frequent re-telling of an anecdote which has passed into the Ghatak folklore. It seems that the Bengal maestro was in the habit of telling his admiring students that to be a successful filmmaker, one should not fail to carry a bottle of alcohol in one pocket and his childhood in the other. Where John Abraham, to whom Ghatak was god, took that prescription literally with explosive repercussions for both himself and modern Malayalam cinema, others like Mirza or Nirad Mahapatra, who turned out to be the deceptively-simple poet of Odia small-time dailiness, preferred to take the master's word more as a deep and useful metaphor.

If one takes the trouble of reading Mirza's distinguished autobiography, *Ammi – Letter to a Democratic Mother*, one would discern how well he remembers his childhood. His father, Farhat Akhtar Mirza, was a renowned poet and a dreamer with known socialist convictions. He worked in the Bombay film industry at a time when it was widely acknowledged to be a pan-Indian institution that prided itself on its secular and cosmopolitan credentials. Unfortunately, despite his best efforts, Saeed's father could rarely earn enough for his family, on whom he doted. But his mother's visionary efforts to supplement her husband's earnings enabled the children to eat well and go to decent schools. Added to this was the fact that the struggle for dignity was no less difficult or sustained than that for the necessities of life. Together, all this left a deep imprint on Mirza's sensitive and cultured mind. The characters in his best films, like

Albert Pinto, Salim Langde or Naseem, have inherited many a trait from their creator's early life spent in Mahim in the company of peers drawn from more than one class or community. The arrogance or devil-may-care attitude that one occasionally finds in Mirza's own utterances outside the pale of cinema, or in those of his film characters, is perhaps to be understood in the context of the perceived or real injustices that the director and his family had to suffer once upon a time at the hands of an unfeeling society.

An unrepentant Leftist, Saeed Mirza lays great store by the question of class. When it comes to discussing issues relating to class, he is perhaps at his polemical best. There are times when watching a Mirza film, the viewer is convinced that it is nothing if not a trenchant examination of class conflicts, class relationships, class structures and class consciousness. His critiquing, which is often done through barbed comments by one or more participants in his family/social dramas of contemporary relevance, is especially reserved for the middle-class and its hidden fascist mindset which comes out whenever the members of that class feel threatened – more often than not, economically. Speaking about his first film, *Arvind Desai Ki AjeebDastaan* (The Strange Tale of Arvind Desai, 1978), Mirza is on record : “The film was an attempt at understanding the urban middle-class, who are exposed to ideas, but reject them when it comes to the crunch, especially economic.” Both the hypocrisies of the educated middle-class and its capacity/proneness to react violently when its self-interest is threatened in one way or another, are questioned in a non-narrative, ironic, close-to-documentary style that carries the stamp of his individual genius. Portraying the alienation of an upper middle-class urban youth, *Arvind Desai* tellingly makes the point that there is no saving those people who despite having ideas gained from books or even harbouring the occasional good intention, lack the will to take responsibility for their actions. Mirza uses the expression, “frozen and static”, to describe people who are emotionally barren, politically immature, and socially of no value to anyone, perhaps not even to themselves. The story of Arvind Desai, who doesn't even know how to kill himself properly after having decided to do away with his confused and useless life, is moving only in a pathetic sort of way. The film reminds one in places of the Cuban master Tomas Alea's most polemical and intellectual film, *Memories of Underdevelopment*, narrating the experiences of a certain Sergio, a maladjusted bourgeois young man in post-revolutionary Cuba. These are two different films set in social conditions that couldn't be more dissimilar, yet somewhere along the line they are united by the commonality of class psychology and behaviour of the respective protagonists. It is only now, so many years after its making, that *Arvind Desai* is being seriously assessed by film scholars and getting the attention it has always deserved.

Arvind Desai was critically acclaimed and even won the *Filmfare* Critics Award. (This was a time when the Bombay commercial film industry still retained vestiges of interest in the 'other' kind of cinema.) However, it did not cause the kind of storm in art film circles that Mirza had perhaps hoped for. But it was a different story with his second film, *Albert Pinto KoGussaKyoonaata Hai* (What Makes Albert Pinto Angry, 1980), which was roundly applauded at home and abroad for both *what* it said as also *how* he said what he wanted to say about some well-chosen representatives of a religious/cultural minority living a stressful life in certain pockets of Bombay. Albert Pinto, played to unbelievable advantage by a fast-emerging Naseeruddin Shah, is a flashy, tall-talking garage mechanic who has somehow got it into his head that just because once in a while he repairs the big shining car belonging to the fellow-Roman Catholic Mr. Braganza, the two are equals. In one swift shot, Mirza brings Albert down to *terra firma* – the way Mr. Braganza gives the car keys to the lowly mechanic, ensuring that their fingers don't touch. But a lot more has to happen to the young man and to his family, composed of a trade-unionist father, a sister working as a salesgirl in a sari emporium, a lumpen

of a younger brother, a steno-typist girlfriend, and a calm homemaker of a mother, before his education as a social being is complete.

As a vocal ideologue of cinema, Mirza has since his very first film made known his commitment to partisanship. In this regard, he is on record thus : “There are basically two kinds of films : the film of *status quo* and the film of struggle. By and large, films maintain the *status quo*. If one is rigidly ideological, one should struggle. With language. With music. There is no definite answer as to what kind of form cinema should take. For instance, I am trying to experiment with narrative. In *Albert Pinto*, there is a vertical movement which covers a vast area. I have tried to make various genres. It’s still a bit pastiche, but one hopes it will become more cohesive... Form has to be revolutionised but not in an ahistorical manner. The thing is not to maintain the *status quo*; one must destabilise it. Whenever I get an opportunity to destabilise, I do so.”

Stylistically, *Albert Pinto* is more refined than its predecessor; its narrative structure is more developed and challenging. It is more ‘refined’ in the sense that whereas *Arvind Desai* is more classical in its construction and evocative of the tight-sealed nature of film school education/training, the second is less rigid, more free-flowing, unafraid of taking experimental flights of fancy. Mirza fuses the story of an individual with those of his family, his community and the big city which has given birth to them all in such a physical and psychological *mélange* as to produce a remarkable human document with recognizable political undertones. The largely favourable critical responses that greeted Mirza’s second feature had everything to do with his intention to achieve greater and more effective communication with his audience. There was an originality of expression, a freshness in idiom, and an innovativeness of form which did not escape the critical eye. However, it can be confidently said that none of these would have been possible if the content of the film had not been so rich and so valid in both political and historical terms. Urban moral decay in both the individual and the collective is shown growing gradually, giving rise to anger and, perhaps, even cynicism in the restless soul of the affected individual who suffers a series of defeats but is unable to do anything about it because he has not prepared himself to understand the dynamics of social relationships, unlike his salesgirl-sister who calls him “an idiot” for living in a fool’s paradise. As a chronicler of the social (mal)functioning of Bombay, the country’s commercial and corporate capital which had once been a great centre of working-class activity embracing the textile mills, the port and the docks, or the railways, it is difficult to exceed Saeed Mirza. And, *Albert Pinto*, in its own idealistic and idiosyncratic way of depiction, is the strongest case in support of this assertion.

There is a common belief that if you have a roof over your head in Bombay, no one can stop you from conquering the world! In its own way, Mirza’s third film, *Mohan Joshi Haazir Ho!* (A Summons For Mohan Joshi, 1984), explores the world of greedy builders, dishonest lawyers and helpless/opportunistic tenants of Bombay *chawls*, pitting one honest and courageous old man in an unequal fight against a rotten system. Mohan Joshi is an old pensioner living with his wife in an ancient *chawl* that threatens to come down in a heap at any moment – an ideal situation for land sharks and the construction mafia to move in, but they haven’t reckoned with the determination and guts of Joshi who, in the director’s words, is an iconic/mythical synthesis of Bheem and Samson. By projecting this ideal citizen and human being in a style combining gritty realism with caricature and horseplay, Mirza gives birth to an engaging metaphor for idealism in a world largely bereft of it.

Mirza : “Mohan Joshi is mythological... I use mythology not in its obscurantist form, but as a cross-reference in today’s context. Today, the entire world – specifically, Bombay city – is working towards a kind of desensitisation to its own living conditions. To this, Joshi says: No. He

is not a conventional hero. He is an old pensioner. He is not eccentric, he is demanding what everybody needs to demand – dignity according to our Constitution.”

Mirza knows his city better than most, having lived there all his life. Perhaps, in his youth, he took pride in the then unmistakable cosmopolitanism of Bombay. But, by the time he made *Mohan Joshi* (when he was in his early forties), the place had been reduced by human error and conspiracies of history to an abject ghetto where nothing was the same as before. So, what does the director do? Using his conscience and his imagination in equal measure, he conjures for himself and the viewer's consumption/inspiration an improbable but not impossible leader called Mohan Joshi, a Quixotic manifestation ready to charge at one and all who are trying to undo the metropolis economically and spiritually. Mirza : “There is a law of underdevelopment. There is a clear decline of leadership in all fields in underdeveloped countries after Independence. Expediency and hypocrisy flourish. Where is enlightenment today? All this is reflected in *Mohan Joshi*. Still, you will see that one segment of youth takes over the torch from Mohan Joshi.” Deliberately, like Ghatak, Mirza always ends on a note of hope and continuity, never mind if it looks far-fetched.

The next we see Saeed Mirza employing to effect characteristic directorial elements like a sense of helplessness, a gnawing sense of despair or, somewhat paradoxically, a genuine hope for the better despite the odds, is when we come across *Salim LangdePe Mat Ro* (Don't Cry For Salim The Lame, 1989). The film is about Bombay's underbelly of crime and violence which gives birth on a routine basis to warring godfathers and countless small-time crooks like Salim Langde whose precarious, commonplace life and triumphant death are narrated in Mirza's trademark style of latter-day neo-realism mixed with kitsch inputs working like patches of brightness or sentimentality, depending on the quality or degree of the emotion sought to be evoked. Salim's outbursts at home or in the street are deliberately overdone to underline the tragic qualities that give deceptive life and energy to people like him. Both Albert Pinto and Salim Langde are full of bravado and a street-smartness that in the end prove to be of no use to them. But there is a difference in the denouement of the two films. Albert survives to learn his lessons in the scalding cauldron that is Bombay; he is compelled to re-educate himself in the ways of a structured, hierarchical, remorseless society; whereas Salim, named after a medieval indolent *badshah*, dies like a dog in a last-ditch effort to unlearn the lawlessness of the underworld. Once they have chosen to walk the path of damnation, people like Salim have so mortgaged their destiny to the system (read the mafia and its countless tentacles) that they rarely, if ever, can stage a recovery to redemption in their own eyes or in those of their dear ones. The wrenching truth of Mirza's words in this regard can bear a hundred repetitions : “The inexorable logic of events would hardly ever allow the Salims of this world to reach their destination even when they find one. At his sister's wedding, Salim returns to innocence by surrendering to the point of a knife the sinful life he was trying so hard to discard. His death in the hands of a fellow-thief and rival finally establishes the brotherhood of the damned.”

If at first notice the naming of the film makes one think that the director is lacking in compassion towards doomed souls like Salim, it would amount to quite a wrong reading of his intentions. What Mirza is perhaps telling us is that shedding tears for victims like Salim without understanding the workings of the system that seduces/compels them to do its bidding, would be nothing if not an exercise in futility. In his social vision and in his understanding of realities on the ground, Mirza has enough room for enduring sentiments like the need for struggle and togetherness of the wretched of the earth, but none whatsoever for hollow and rhetorical sentimentality. The production of the Salims to serve the market demands of the godfathers can cease only if the operations of the criminal conveyor belt are closely observed, analysed and understood – and ended.

From *Salim Langde* to *Naseem*, which Mirza made in 1994 following the demolition of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya two years earlier, it was a quantum leap in stylistic expression where memories of a more amiable past rubbed shoulders with a present fraught with tension and animosity. The theme of alienation of minority groups in a supposedly secular, tolerant and liberal India, which is there in measure big and small in practically every film by Saeed Mirza, is present in *Naseem* (Soft Breeze) too. But the pamphleteering or sudden explosions of anger of his earlier films are replaced here by a poetic and an almost philosophical view of a burning India at war with itself, trying to get along as best as it can. A middle-class Muslim family in Bombay is sharply divided in its reactions to the hurt and humiliation caused to the entire community by the demolition of the mosque. On one side of the family divide are its uncontrollably angry young rebels and on the other is its cautious middle-aged householder who prefers a patient acceptance of the bitter wrongs inflicted on the community. But what finally holds the family – and the film – together in this moment of crisis is the placid and moving relationship between the family's bed-ridden patriarch – the grandfather of the children, full of good cheer despite the dark circumstances, and the loving memories of his dead wife – and his teenaged school-going granddaughter in a climate of suspicion and distrust for the whole nation.

Many cultured and enlightened Muslims like Saeed Mirza were shaken to their roots by the demolition of the mosque which meant more than a physical structure to them. The demolition struck them as the end of the spirit of tolerance and goodwill that bound the Indian peoples under the leadership of such visionaries as Gandhi and Nehru. *Naseem* was Mirza's emotional response to the tragedy, suffused in deep anguish and disappointment. In a sense, it was a historical exploration of times past and present through a challenging experiment in modes of storytelling. The spirit of critical examination of personal setbacks and collective tragedies which was the leitmotif of the body of creative and interrogative films known as New Indian Cinema, got a new lease of life by means of *Naseem*, a work of inordinate beauty and a joy to behold even as it quietly laid bare an event of bewildering and numbing proportions. From an angry young artist itching to settle verbal scores and an *enfant terrible* given as much to self-conscious attitudinizing as to pulling off ambitious artistic and aesthetic aspirations through discussions largely of classes and communities, Mirza had at last come back home. A battle-scarred, weary traveller, but also a wise and hopeful interrogator of social and economic superstitions without end – perhaps, that is how the rebellious and redolent drama of the life and times of Saeed Akhtar Mirza can be viewed at the end of the day.

MOOC on HINDI CINEMA

MODULE-18

MANI KAUL

ACADEMIC SCRIPT

The negative contribution of cinema towards deteriorating constructive values of a society is not often felt but widely known and analysed. Students imitating the cheap tricks of the 'heroes', stagnating moral issues of the middle class, total anarchy and frivolousness among the poor, creating superfluous bad and good taste, and all other issues of such obvious import can be directly related—a straight connection between a commercial film and the varying mental levels and reaction of the audience can be established. On the other hand, one cannot inverse the process and hope to create positive values in an audience by investing the construction of a film in a positive manner and spouting positive ideas.

-Mani Kaul

Around 1970 a clutch of films appeared all sponsored by the Film Finance Corporation (FFC) at the time, a new organisation of the government. These films constituted what came to be known soon as the Indian New Wave. Sometimes we also use the word expression Indian New Cinema, but I suppose New Wave is a more familiar kind of term to come across. Now these films namely Mrinal Sen's *Bhuvan Shome* which was produced in 1969, Mani Kaul's *Uski Roti*, 1969, followed by Basu Chatterjee's *Sara Aakash* (1969) and Kumar Sahani's *Maya Darpan* (1972). They give us a sense of what the Indian New Wave was trying to do in terms of introducing new style and new thematic concerns into Indian cinema.

They represent the three distinct trends within the new wave. Mrinal Sen's *Bhuvan Shome* is closer to the spirit of French New Wave cinema or the kind of New Wave cinema at that point was emerging across the world in many countries, in Germany, in the Latin American countries

and several other places, even within a kind of sector of the American cinema. There was a kind of a New Wave style that was already evident around that time. *Bhuvan Shome* is closer to that spirit and that style. Basu Chatterjee's *Sara Aakash* would be of different kind of track altogether which ushered in what we would call later 'the middle road cinema' or even 'the middle class cinema' sometimes.

A kind of cinema that Basu Chatterjee himself or Hrishikesh Mukherjee or later on other filmmakers represented within the mainstream Bombay film production. But Mani Kaul from the very beginning with his *Uski Roti* with his friend, classmate and colleague Kumar Sahani thought cinema in a different way. Mani Kaul and Kumar Sahani would represent quite distinctively different trajectory within the Indian New Wave. What the critics have called the avant-garde. This word is probably familiar to us because it is quite widely used in the arts. It means simply the vanguard, the people who push at the frontiers of form, language and so on and the kind of practitioners who extend the possibilities of film language or the expressive repertoire and the expressive tools of cinema. So *Uski Roti* and *Maya Darpan* would definitely fall within that category.

Just to put it very simply as a kind of extreme form of experimentation within the Indian New Wave. I suppose that these films did not find an audience. It was not possible to release them in regular theatres. It was also quite difficult to put them when television came in the mid-1970s. A major part of television's regular programming was kind of featuring films, but one had to wait for sometimes before even television run by the state could actually show these films which were also produced by a sort of state-supported agency like FFC. So that proves that it was a kind of minority practice.

But one must also be attentive to these minority practices if one really wants to understand the dynamics of Indian cinema and Indian film history. Because even though they were not seen by too many people, one has to remember that over the years of the last four decades or so, gradually these films have gained an audience, they have been studied by a number of film students, film critics and scholars, they have been seeing now not only in India but outside the

national boundary. So many people are watching and talking about these films like *Uski Roti* or Mani Kaul's later films which are quite challenging in terms of language and form.

If you think of all these people over the decades watching them, talking about them, in many places in the world, I don't think it remains any longer an insignificant minority. It may still be a minority but it is no longer insignificant. So, one has to pay serious attention to Mani Kaul's films. Now some of his films are available in good-quality DVD prints and it is time that we go back to them, we study them with the due the seriousness that they actually deserve. Now *Uski Roti*, Mani Kaul's very first film immediately established his signature style and over the following films, this style will remain more or less constant. That doesn't mean that it did not change at all. Let us look at *Uski Roti*, his first film and let's say *Nazar* which is a made in 1991 20 years after *Uski Roti* based on Dostoyevsky's story. If you look at these two films, one can immediately see differences.

For example, there is a different kind of choreography of actors that camera is moving; it is much more mobile than *Uski Roti* in *Nazar*. There has been a style of framing through all sorts of intermediary glass paints, doorways, in all sorts of wooden frames and so on in *Nazar* (1990). That is, if you look at the framing carefully, they there is definitely a new element that Kaul by that time has brought into his filmmaking.

On the other hand he was always also committed to documentary filmmaking which is not a very common thing to come by at least in India. People either make documentaries or the make fiction films. But Mani Kaul remained committed to documentary filmmaking. He made documentaries side-by-side. He says,

What would be more truthful is to present with clear versimilitude the actual conditions of one's own individual life and its contradictions and its conflict with contradictions present in the collective life of the people. To be able to see the present and the conditions arising out of it is to witness a fact without the interference of one's desires or memories. This is not to suggest that 'document actualities' (i.e., documentaries) are the

only valid form of film making.

So if you look at documentary like *Siddheshwari* (1990) which is on the thumri singer Siddheshwari Devi, a late documentary of Kaul and if you look at an earlier documentary called *Arrival* (1980) about the arrival of the workers into the city they do not follow exactly same form but both bear Kaul's signature style and his commitment to documentary film.

There is a signature style that *Uski Roti* establishes. That of course goes through almost like music variations and Mani Kaul himself was a musician. He was a trained Dhrupad singer and a 'Rudra Veena' player. Mani Kaul and Kumar Sahani, his colleague, both actually took the Indian classical musical form very seriously and they thought that the cinematic form can actually evolve out of the classical musical form. So this style is then elaborated like a musical composition but there is something constant. That begins from *Uski Roti*, develops through films like *Duvidha* (1983) films like *Aashad Ka Ek Din* (1971) films like *Satah Se Uthata Aadmi* (1980) so on and so on and so forth right into the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s when he makes Dostoyevsky's *Idiot as Nazar* which has been mentioned just now and a number of other films.

These are not really conventional storytelling films. They are not so interested in storytelling. They are interested in studying bodies, gestures, compositions, relationship between objects on the screen and more importantly for Mani Kaul this is something that Mani Kaul used to. He has written about this and he has also, as a renowned film teacher, taught in many places in the world including the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) in Pune. He used to tell his students quite often that for him the most important thing in cinema is not the image, but time. So what he meant by time is the impression that time leaves on the image. So that if you allow the image to slowly grow from one point to another, if you don't regularly cut from one bit of action to another which is a kind of very fast fragmentary movements that we're all used to in cinema now, the sense of time overrules the pressure of action in the film. Most of the conventional films that we see are extremely fast moving and the cutting pattern leaves a few seconds of shots to be joined to another brief shot and so on. So this yields over fragmented very fast extremely angular, oblique, mobile image and action; the camera is never steady in the standards films that

we see. *Uski Roti* is an anti-thesis to all these. And you are immediately become aware when you watch these anti-thetical stylistic elements in his films and one understands that this is a filmmaker who has borrowed a lot from visual arts – paintings, mainly Indian pre-colonial paintings.

If you look at *Duvidha*, this becomes even clearer. He is actually borrowing from folk and miniature painting of the Indian painting traditions in terms of the colour, the frames, and the perspectives. (*Uski Roti* is black and white but *Duvidha* is in colour.) And you can sense that the way faces, colours, bodies, postures are organised. They have a lot to do with the Indian traditions of painting. – miniature painting, sometimes folk painting and sometimes Indian traditions of illustrations and decorations. So what happens is that in *Uski Roti*, which is the story of a poor village woman coming to the bus stop walking 2 miles every day through the fields, waiting by the wayside for her husband who is a bus driver to arrive so that she can give him the ‘roties’ that she has made. This is a routine that she does day in and day out. And this kind of life she lives.

The husband comes only once a week and has almost no relationship with her. There is a small town nearby where he spends most of his time and the speculation is that he has some mistress there. He hardly gives money to his family; he spends most of his money on the mistress or in the city. So he gives the bare minimum with which this young woman has to run the household. And you come to know that the village is also like that.

Many of these women live a life of solitude, loneliness and poverty. Their husbands go off to work somewhere else faraway places. They are drivers, workers, may be agricultural labourers, all sorts of jobs that they go for. Now this ‘Indian reality’, Mani Kaul does not present to us in a dramatised form. Anybody else trying to give us a story of rural poverty, people's desperation, loneliness of these people or desperation and distress of this people would give us a dramatic narrative would tell us about the situation through dialogue and/ or through action. But Kaul decided from the very beginning under the influence of one of his ‘gurus’ Robert Bresson, the French filmmaker who had a lifelong influence on Mani Kaul. So Kaul already had decided

before he made his first feature film that he would withdraw from action, he would withdraw from words and dialogue. He would, even when there is dialogue, like Bresson, not allow his actors to emote or to be expressive. So you will notice that the dialogues are delivered in a flat and linear flat kind of tone. If there is variation in the tone, it's a very slight variation. And it also looks like that the variation or the voice modulation has been very carefully planned. But the director is not allowing his actors to act standard acting that we all come to expect. It is more of the way they are related to your immediate surroundings – a wall, a tree, empty spaces, road, the sky, and another human or animal figure. The way these relationships are built up is unique. And of course we feel the impression of duration interminable wait, wait and wait at the bus stop. It is all a mute suffering. And not only suffering, there is a kind of fortitude, patience, some sort of desperation also but not dramatically presented.

And Kaul chose to shoot with basically two kinds of lenses. One, for the wide and long sort of shots he used wider angle and another for the close ups which is done with narrower lens. And he actually eliminated the intermediary range of lenses. And if you look carefully he also eliminates the tracking. So if he decides to go from foreground to mid ground, he doesn't track. He tracks very rarely in the film. He doesn't use zooming at all. What he does is, he just moves from one kind of magnification to another magnification. And hardly ever these cuts from one angle to another; very rarely there is any match on action which is the standard procedure of film editing. If you follow a continuous action and if you have to cut the action, you cut it conventionally in such a way that the action does not look fragmented. The action looks continuous. So there's a match on action cut. Mani Kaul doesn't do that.

So, he would cut from one position to another without much regard for so-called classical rules of narration which which tells us how to follow the axis rules and so on and so forth. Therefore Mani Kaul's cinema is also challenging because it draws attention to all these conventions that we have imbibed and assimilated by producing the anti-thesis of them. It makes us aware that we are used to watching films in a certain way and here is a filmmaker who is not going to abide by those principles. So it's a self-conscious film making also, not really in the standard Nouvelle vague French style but in a completely different and original style. And the development, if you

don't follow the classical editing style, what is the other format template you are following. This is what is mentioned before. Mani Kaul would say it is the 'Dhrupad' form of classical music that provides him with a template of how to move from one point of action to another – one shot to another.

His ideas of Indian classical music which might be the source of his cinematic form was articulated as Mani Kaul was interviewed on Dhrupad by Angela Lahr in 2006 where he explains the Indian music as,

It is different when you move with a preconception of the whole structure of a raga - in my view preconception is a wasted effort when it comes to elaboration in Indian music. The Indian way is totally different. It has differently resolved the relationship between part and whole when compared with what has been done in the west. In the dominant western tradition parts make a whole and a balance between parts is what any structure is all about. In India that relationship between part and whole works differently. In the cultural realization here, each part resonates the whole. It functions like a part with all its sensuousness but at the same time it resonates the whole. Therefore an half an hour recording of Yaman will be known as Yaman, a ten minute recording of Yaman will be known as Yaman, a ten second recording will be Yaman, and two seconds of Yaman recording will be Yaman too. You see, once the raga is established, all the tones on its scale are not needed to present the swarup of a raga.

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MOOC on HINDI CINEMA

MODULE-19

CINEMA POST LIBERALIZATION: WHAT IS BOLLYWOOD?

ACADEMIC SCRIPT

What is Bollywood?

Introduction

The term 'Bollywood' received its place in Oxford English dictionary in 2005 and is referred to as a noun "a name for the Indian popular film industry, based in Mumbai (Bombay)". 'Popular Indian cinema' quoted as 'Hindi Cinema' or 'Bombay Cinema' by 1990's started being referred as 'Bollywood'. On the other hand informally going outside the performa of a dictionary definition 'Bollywood' has always remained a glossy term used by Indian media to connote a new kind of progressive Hindi cinema often compared to its western counterpart Hollywood cinema. M. Prasad states that the 'term serves different purpose for different people'. (Prasad 2008) The academic conferences often use the term loosely to refer to Indian cinema in general , similarly books on Indian cinema too often use the term vaguely to refer to Hindi film in general , whereas European television often might restrict

the meaning to popular genre , and then only to blockbusters .
“Bollywood also, like Hollywood, refers to everything to do with Bombay film Industry”. (Prasad M, 2008:.43). I would like to clarify at this juncture that I have not equated the term ‘Bollywood’ to Hindi narrative cinema in general. ‘Bollywood’ refers to a ‘culture industry’ which came into existence since economic liberalization in 1990’s with “a reasonably specific narrative and a mode of representation”, (Rajadhyaksha 2003:28) and as a consequence of “synchronous developments of international capital and diasporic nationalism”. (Rajadhyaksha 2003:30). Furthermore Bollywood does not incorporate regional language cinema which plays an important role both in context of the numbers of film annually produced and the strong regional market in their grasp. In contrast, Bombay film Industry dominates the regional markets in context of both revenue earned and the market reach.

Ashish Rajadhyaksha has tracked the etymology of this term ‘Bollywood’ and suggested that “the word appeared, as a joke, in the journal Screen (India) on its “Bollywood Beat” page with the “companion words Tollywood for the Calcutta film industry based in Tollygunge and even, for a while Mollywood for the Madras industry.” (Rajadhyaksha, 2003:29) Madhav Prasad has also located the use of the term “Tollywood” in a telegram that Wilford E. Deming, an American working on films, received as he was

about to leave India.(Prasad 2003). Both the context in which the word 'Bollywood' 'Tollywood' or 'Mollywood' was used looked like they defined a certain Industry based in a certain place or locality. This alliance of the term with certain places or localities frees the term of its vulgar usage denoting second-hand borrowing or uncritical copying from Hollywood Industry.

The most populist approach of reading Popular Indian cinema has primarily remained in the paradigms of nation and nationhood. (Chakraborty, 1993; Prasad, 2000; Gopalan, 2002; Viridi, 2003; Rajadhyaksha, 2003; Vasudevan 2000) Sumita S. Chakravarty with her book 'National identity in Indian Popular Cinema: 1947-1987' gives us a detailed account of the reading of Indian Cinema in nationalist context and thus remain one of the pioneers of such approach. It was only with the neo – liberal policies post 1990s and with the rechristening of Popular Hindi Cinema as Bollywood that scholars began reading Popular Hindi Cinema as a negotiation between 'national', 'trans-national' and 'Global'. Post 1990s we find a strong fixation with the diasporic phenomenon and its representation, in the academic discourse of Bollywood Cinema (Dudrah 2012, Rajadhyaksha 2008, Prasad 2008, Mishra 2005, Desai 2004, Srivastava, 1998). The diaspora as well as the transition from 'nationalism' in Indian Cinema to 'diasporic nationalism' as a newer form of nationalism did remain the centre

of study of Hindi cinema for a considerable period of time.
(Rajadhyaksha 2008)

The distinctive departure

The decade of 1990s is often recounted as the 'decade of reform' for Indian economy. Indian economy experienced major policy changes in early 1990s. Popularly known as, Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization (LPG model) , reforms were undertaken with respect to industrial sector, trade, as well as financial sector in order to make the economy more efficient. These neo liberal policies then became one of the key factors for determining the media environment of 1990s and directly impacted the Bombay based Hindi film industry. 1990s can also be termed as the 'period of transition' of Hindi cinema. (Prasad 2000) "In the midst of on-going 'liberalization' campaign, cinema is acquiring new skills and technologies, new ideological task, and facing new challenges to its established modes of representation." (Prasad 2000:217). Bollywood came into existence as one of the many implications of the socio-economic changes resulting from neo-liberal policies adopted by the government in 1990's (Rajadhyaksha 2003; Prasad 2003; Vasudevan 2008; Punathembkar 2013). In the wake of massive debt to World Bank in 1980 Indian Government decided to let go planning as a strategy and decided to end all direct and indirect state interventions in the economy. It was then that the government

decided to invite foreign direct investment and open up Indian goods to foreign market and competition. This led in turn to formation of a powerful consumer economy along with the newly formed commodity culture in India. As T. Ganti states, 'Hindi film Industry benefited directly from certain changes in state policy; Globalization and neoliberalism; strengthened the Hindi film Industry, and making it a dominant media institution both within and outside India' (Ganti, 2012:18).

Prior to 1992 films were subjected to state policies on the matter of export. However with the breakdown of trade barriers overseas market emerged as one of the major source of income for Hindi films. Rajadhyaksha quotes Subhash Ghai "This is almost a three-fold increase since *Pardes*, for which I'd made 45 prints, and five times that of *Khalnayak*. Hindi films now have a significant market in the US, Canada, UK and the Middle East. It is making inroads into South Africa and Australia. And it is also popular in Japan, Hong Kong, and South East Asia and, of course, Mauritius." (Rajadhyaksha 2008:18). With the opening up of market the number of prints being made for foreign market was on a constant rise. Compared to domestic prices the tickets were sold in dollars in foreign market. Hence the small number of tickets sold generated a considerable amount of revenue and made foreign market extremely lucrative for Indian filmmakers. This generated a tendency to give greater importance to the foreign audience

which in turn gave birth to a new breed of films termed “urban tales,” “diaspora films,” or “NRI films,” with “glossy, consumerist fantasies featuring middle-class worlds and transnational lifestyles” (Srinivas 2005: 321). Soon, the biggest producers began financing films focused to a certain extent on the non-resident Indian (NRI).

However the LPG model not only facilitated export of Hindi films in foreign market but also introduced several key changes in the Indian mediascape as follows-

1. It allowed the entry of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the Indian entertainment industry. As a result Hollywood production Moghuls like Walt Disney, Warner Brothers, Paramount, Fox and Universal pictures started setting foot in Hindi film Industry.
2. Opening up of the economy de-regularized television giving rise to private pay channels to be aired through cable and satellite. Cable TV operators took to satellite broadcasting and by early 1990s. STAR (Satellite Television Asian Region) and ZEE became fully functional satellite channels. These private TV channels not only became a platform for Indian viewers for receiving global entertainment but also became alternate revenue source for Hindi film Industry. “By the end of 1990’s satellite Television and digital media grew in leaps and bounds and became platforms for circulation of Bollywood content across the world redefining its sites and modes of consumption, and enabling filmmakers and

stars to envision overseas market and audience.” (Punathembkar 2013: 2)

3. De-regulation also made it possible for Hollywood films to be released in Indian theatres. Jurassic Park (Badi Chipkili) opened in India in 1994 and was one of the first Hollywood films to be dubbed in three Indian languages - Hindi, Tamil and Telugu. Hollywood films now started being simultaneously released with Indian blockbusters. Hindi film industry which until now had a monopoly over Indian market had to now compete with foreign film, primarily Hollywood films. It suddenly started losing its viewers who now preferred watching films in the comfort of their home or preferred watching films made with much higher production cost and skilled craftsmanship.

This was also the era of Information Technology (IT), internet and mobile revolution in India. IT and software service sectors took over cities like Bangalore and Hyderabad. VCR and VCD were eventually replaced by CD and DVD and subsequently by Blue Ray discs. A DVD player was moderately priced and the home entertainment revenue was on a constant rise.

On 10th May 1998 SushmaSwaraj announced that the government has decided to accord industry status to the business of film making in India and the 'Industrial Development Bank Act of 2000' will make it possible for film makers to acquire money from financial institutions. Thus film making business in India was

now much more organized unlike olden days when Bombay film industry ran primarily on black money and had tie ups with dons and goons of the city of Bombay. (Ganti 2012) This period also saw rapid corporatization in the film industry wherein instead of small scale individual producer; big corporate houses were investing in the movie making business in India either in the form of media subsidiaries such as Reliance Industries, Big Entertainment or in the form of public limited companies such as Mukta arts. These houses were often international players such as Universal and Sony who in a similar fashion were more than willing to invest in the growing Indian global media market through their Indian subsidiaries.

On the other hand dramatic changes occurred with the status of our country too. From being a 'third world country' it was now recounted as 'next generation economic superpower' (Elliott 2006). The IT and communication industry was on the flourish and so was Hindi cinema. The Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) -led coalition government of late 1990's in fact played a very important role in promoting this image of India with its 'India Shining' advertisement campaign before its 2004 general elections. Hindi films, now rechristened as 'Bollywood' also played an important role in promoting the 'India Shining' image which was modern, progressive yet rooted to its heritage and culture. Bollywood becoming the new icon for the progressive India gave back the

long lost honor and prestige to 'Popular Indian Cinema'. T. Ganti in her essay "Centenary Commemorations or centenary Contestation?- Celebrating a Hundred years of Cinema in Bombay" focuses on the relationship between state and cinema , examining how Hindi Cinema became a site for the asserting 'cultural identities' especially for nationalist parties like Shiv Sena and how public celebration such as the Commemoration becomes a part of the process (Ganti,1998). Thus Popular Indian cinema which was once tagged as 'escapist commercial cinema' with 'men and women running around the trees' retained a "cultural legitimacy" and became worthy of being an academic interest. The state thus re-configured its relationship with cinema by the end of the millennium. These developments vies-a-vie reformed relationship between state and the industry, decision to grant Industry status to the Indian Film Industry, the discourse of reform and corporatization of Film Industry, the emergence of diaspora as a route to global, and 'Cultural nationalism' politics signified by the rise of Hindu nationalism and the BJP party, then impacted the strategies and business practice of different domains of film industry such as production, distribution, marketing and exhibition etc. which finally gave rise to 'Bollywood' Cinema (Rajadhyaksha 2003, Ganti 2012).

However T. Ganti in her 2012 book "Producing Bollywood" proposes that Bollywood cinema instead came into being with the

desire of Indian cinema to “gentrify” itself i.e. a desire to renovate or convert itself in-order to cater specifically to middle-class taste and sensibilities.” This was further facilitated by newly acquired ‘cultural legitimacy’ by cinema in India. She specially sites the growth of multiplexes as an important contributor in the process of Gentrification with the fact that it significantly altered the economics of film-making in India. Based on extensive ethnographic research from mid-1990’s until 2010 instead of taking a qualitative approach such as textual analysis of individual films, Ganti claims that the phenomenon of corporatization of Hindi film Industry has redefined its production culture and more importantly is an important contributor in the discourse of ‘gentrification’ of Indian cinema. Instead of looking at factors such as the ‘Diasporic phenomenon’ and ‘NRI –centric narratives of Indian cinema’ Ganti provides us an interesting take on changing pattern of Indian movie going audiences as targeted by the practitioners with the arrival of Bollywood Cinema.

Rajadhyaksha further makes one important distinction between ‘Bollywood’ cinema and the rest of the Hindi cinema in general. Bollywood “comes with its own narrative and mode of presentation” (Rajadhyaksha 2003:28). He refers to this narrative as “techno-nostalgia” and one which is deeply rooted in “our culture” argument of Bollywood movies. Cinema being one of the most prominent culture industries in modern India plays an

important tool in keeping our culture alive. With songs like Phir Bhi Dil Hai Hindustani and Yeh Mera India/ I love my India, commitment to family values and feel good happy ending romances Bollywood carrying the tag of “our culture” became the new ‘culturally authentic cinema’ authenticated by the state and the national culture. He recounts HAHK (1994) as the first big success of this newly coined term of 1990s ‘Bollywood’ and according to the figures provided in his “Bollywoodization” essay “playing for nearly a year the film grossed more than \$30 million in a country where....average movie makes about \$3 million- barely what an art-house film makes in the U.S. (Rajadhyaksha, 2003 pg. 26).

The official website of box-office India recounts the era of 1990-1999 as follows:

“This decade has been split into two parts. Section one is after Hum Aapke Hain Kaun and section two before Hum Aapke Hain Kaun. The release of Hum AapkeHainKaun was a defining moment in the box office history of Hindi cinema....To put into perspective how business changed after Hum AapkeHainKaun is that before Hum AapkeHainKaun an all India share of 10 crore for a big film was regarded as blockbuster business but after Hum AapkeHainKaun the blockbuster business figure went to 20 crore.”

The common factor among films post Hum AapkeHainKaun were i) most of them had made multiple prints for foreign market ii) they

earned considerable amount of revenue from overseer market. Iii) The narrative and Mise-en-scene of these films primarily kept the diaspora and specifically the NRI in their minds. In Rajadhyaksha's words "The difference between the 'Bollywood' movie and the rest of the Hindi and other language films being made would be, say, the difference between Karan Johar and David Dhawan, between Shah Rukh Khan and Govinda." (Rajadhyaksha, 2003)

It is clear from the above references that Bollywood is posited not just an institution but as a 'mode of storytelling' associated to a 'certain mode of production'. But what remains to be explored is; if everything contemporary in context of Hindi Cinema can be bracketed under the broad umbrella of the term 'Bollywood'? According to Rachel Dwyer, "If we discard the term 'Bollywood, then what do we call this cinema? Hindi cinema? This opens up another can of worms. Many films are classed as Urdu films (right up to and including *Junglee* (1961)). Should it be called the Hindi-Urdu cinema? Would anyone recognize that term? If English continues to make inroads into Indian cinema, will it become English cinema, even if it follows the style of the former? If the actors say 'I love you' in English, is it still Hindi-Urdu cinema? What about the fact that all the publicity and advertising is in English, along with many of the film magazines? How would we then exclude forms of Hindi cinema that are produced and distributed in a different circuit from the cinema examined here?

Do we call it 'commercial' cinema? But does that not mean that one is creative and worthy of being called 'art', whereas the other is interested in money at the expense of art? So the appellation 'Bollywood' is problematic, but so are the other terms. While some in the industry and outside think it is insulting, why does it prevail? 'Bollywood' is a recognized term in the UK and US where this writing is to be distributed. Indeed, this may be a part of the problem with the term 'Bollywood', as it is promoted by the NRIs (non-residential Indians) whose culture is deeply problematic for many Indians. It has also been taken up by westerners (as seen with an entry in the *Oxford English Dictionary*), which also causes cultural hand-wringing as to whether this is another form of neo-colonialism. 'Bollywood' is not a term I use myself. I don't like its clichéd humour, and to me it means *masala* film, a film that has some sense of kitsch."

In the wake of the new millennium, a new breed of filmmakers have taken to the helm, writing off-beat, refreshingly themed stories that mostly don't choose to cast conventional stars in them, and are moderately budgeted. Some of these new auteurs being Vishal Bhardwaj (*Maqbool* (2004)/ *Omkara* (2006)/ *Haider* (2014)), Anurag Kashyap (*Black Friday* (2004)/ *Dev.D* (2009)/ *Gangs of Wasseypur* (2012)), and Dibakar Banerjee (*Khosla Ka Ghosla* (2006)/ *Love Sex aur Dhoka* (2010)/ *Detective Byomkesh*

Bakshy (2015)), who have struggled to break from the norm as well as helped pave way for dozens of young up-and-coming filmmakers who have aspired to take the road less travelled. Kashyap's production company Phantom Films, founded in 2011, has since produced a number of award winning films such as Vikas Bahl's *Queen* (2014), and Neeraj Ghaywan's *Masaan* (2015), that have won accolades at the National Awards and the Cannes Film Festival respectively. It is an exciting time to be in a new ever-expanding Bollywood, and it is still yet to be seen where India stands in the future of global cinema.

MOOC on HINDI CINEMA

MODULE-2

V SHANTARAM and PRABHAT STUDIO

ACADEMIC SCRIPT

Indian cinema experienced the emergence of big production houses in the 1930s which brought a new system of production-distribution-exhibition of films. The studio system in India led to a new idea of skilled professional associated with film-making and the rise of experts in those fields. Although several companies came up and produced films, Prabhat, New Theatres Ltd and Bombay Talkies- these three studio names functioned as 'the big three' in Indian studio system. Amongst them Prabhat left its mark for making socially relevant and progressive films which included themes like discrimination of the underprivileged or the empowerment of the women. Few self-taught technicians established Prabhat Film Company in Pune. All of them were technically trained but in the initial years they lacked financial background. But within a few years of its establishment Prabhat became one of the major studios

of India and also functioned as a training platform for directors, technicians and actors. Prabhat's success was also because of good distribution arrangements and long-term contracts with exhibitors. Later it took distribution itself and built its own theaters in Bombay, Pune and Madras. In 1932 Prabhat produced *Ayodhyecha Raja* (director Shantaram) which became a hit. Prabhat's first major hit was *Amritmanthan* (The Churning of the Ocean, 1934) directed by V Shantaram. The film was about people's revolt set against the backdrop of a kingdom where there was a clash between a rationalist king and a ritualistic priest. The filmmaking style of Prabhat in those initial years was highly influenced by the popular Marathi musical theater tradition known as Sangeet Natak. But in later period Prabhat produced films which exhibited diverse thematic and aesthetic tradition ranging from Indian indigenous art form to European modernist film technique.

The studio produced a number of films based on saint characters and pioneered in successful genre of "saint films". These films were biographical films about popular poet-saints from the sixteenth and seventeenth

centuries. In 1937 with their production *Sant Tukaram* Prabhat film studio created a milestone in the history of Indian cinema. *Sant Tukaram* was based on the life of Saint poet of the Bhakti movement in India (1608–50). The film was directed by Vishnupant Govind Damle and Sheikh Fattelal and featured Vishnupant Pagnis in the lead role of the saint. The film received a Merit award in Venice Film festival and was screened in other prestigious film festivals across the world. *Sant Tukaram* was the first Indian film which ran in a single theater for more than a year. The film's achievement is noteworthy in the history of Indian cinema not only because of the commercial success or the international recognition but also its exceptional treatment of devotional genre contrary to other contemporary devotional films. Its lyrical form brings song, dance, performance and technological skill together. Renowned film critic K. A. Abbas compared Prabhat's *Sant Tukaram* with Bombay Talkies' *Achhut Kanya* – " *Tukaram* Flying away on the wings of a bird looked more natural than the obvious town bred hero driving a bullock cart in a certain very popular film" (Mukherjee, 2009: 14). Film scholar

Ashis Rajadhyakshya writes that it's interesting to note how this film appeared to be able to bring certain conventions of the Saint film genre in Indian cinema an unusual degree of conviction. He elaborates:

It's ironic that the movie that went on to become both the biggest commercial hit of the studio- and in hindsight its most significant film – was a considerably lower-budgeted 'saint movie' telling the life of the 17th century Marathi poet-saint Sant Tukaram/ Tukaram the Saint, played by an actor who never did anything else of consequence in the cinema: Vishnupant Pagnis. Situated around the lower caste Tukaram's confrontation with the Brahmin elite, it bound song, gesture, rhythm and camera together with characters and crowd behavior denoting the spiritual connection between the poet and the people while separating off the brahminical caste.

(2016)

Art historian Geeta Kapur wrote that a film like Sant Tukaram with its reflection of a growing Indian modernism could achieve what many acclaimed high modernist cinema and art practices could not (Rajadhyaksha, 2016) .

Prabhat produced a number of socially progressive melodramas like *Kunku/ Duniya Na Mane* (1938), *Admi* (1939) and others which criticized the class hierarchy, patriarchy and other social malaises. *Kunku* an adaptation of a Marathi novel *Na Patnari Goshta* became one of the milestones of Marathi cinema. The film was also released as *Duniya Na Mane* in Hindi. The film plot revolves around a young woman Nirmala's (played by Shanta Apte) struggle against her marriage to an old man. The film criticized child marriage and also focused on the issue of widow remarriage. *Kunku* was shown at the Venice International Film Festival and was critically acclaimed. Another major hit by Prabhat *Manoos* based on a short story 'The Police Constable' attempted to explore the life of a sex worker. The film portrayed a narrative of a simple man and his struggle to free a sex worker. Anil Damle, grandson of Vishnu Damle, one of the pioneering five partners, said that "A perfectionist artiste, Shantaram went to red light area of Bombay and visited brothels to lend a realistic touch to the sets created in Prabhat studios by S Fattelal." Reputed director Shyam Benegal said that it was hard to believe

that the scenes involving the sex worker Maina (Shanta Hublikar) and Ganapat Hawildar (played by Shahu Modak) were shot in a studio. From art direction to casting of character actor, from make up to acting style, *Manoos* attempted to look real in every aspects of it. The music of this film also became phenomenal. The lyrics contained words from six Indian languages and a particular song picturised on Maina, 'Kashala udyachi baat... Hi sarun chalali raat...(Why do you worry about tomorrow, the night is slipping away...)' became most popular.

Prabhat's major hit *Ramshastri* (1944) was an exception in the Marathi historical film genre. This film is applauded as one of the best-researched historical from India. The film was commercially successful and was praised for expensive set and relevant invocation of a historical event. But the interesting point about this film's narrative was it stayed away from the 'glorification' of the Maratha history under the regime of Shivaji and narrated the power struggle of Peshwa rule. In this film the protagonist Ramshastri Prabhune (1720-89) was the chief justice at the court of Peshwa Madhav Rao and later

Nana Phadnavis. The film narrates the power struggle between young Peshwa Narayan Rao and his uncle Raghoba, who tried to capture power. Raghoba killed his nephew and tried to bribe the council but Ramshastri refused his offer and denouncing him as the murderer. Other ministers responded to Ramshastri's call for justice and they united to overthrow Raghoba's regime. Raghoba was portrayed as an ambitious man influenced by his wife Anandibai's evil plots. The Bharat Itihas Samshodhak Mandai of Pune and Dinkar Kelkar, the founder director of the Raja Kelkar Museum of Everyday Art in Pune helped in the production of this films in the research field and in providing antiques. Ramshastri presented the most authentic historical set and costume of that period. Urvi Mukhopadhyay wrote that,

(the film) invoked a past that could be easily identified with the contemporary political condition. But unlike others it never projected the glaring issues of the day in order to generate interest in historical. Emphasizing its conviction in truth that can ultimately triumph in an era of confusion, conspiracy and distrust, the film created in

essence a mythical allegory that earned appreciation throughout the country. (Mukhopadhyay, 2008)

The relevant part of the film was that it remained impartial to the communal politics of that period. Newspaper advertisement of this film emphasized this impartial feature. The advertisement showed "one veiled Hindu woman and one veiled Muslim woman holding each other's hands and asking 'Seen Ramshastri?' under the shadows of a temple and a mosque" (Mukhopadhyay).

Prabhat acted as a training ground for many directors, actors and technicians. Amongst them Shantaram Rajaram Vankudre (popularly known as V Shantaram) was one of the few filmmakers who directed early classics without modern equipment and technological support. And during his filmmaking career with Prabhat he nurtured hundreds of artists and technicians. Shantaram started his career in the railways and after that joined the theatre as a curtain puller. Later he joined Baburao Painter's Maharashtra Film Company and learnt some techniques of film making. In 1929 with K. R. Dhaiber, S. Fatelal, S. B. Kulkarni, V. G. Damle and S. Fatelal he formed the Prabhat Film Company. In the initial years of

his film making career Shantaram directed films like *Gopal Krishna*, *Udaykal* etc under the production of *Prabhat*. But the first success came with *Ayoddha Ka Raja*. This film had some technical flaws but it was appreciated for the visual quality and the narrative style. After *Ayoddha Ka Raja* he directed films like *Manoos* and *Shejari* which created new benchmarks for Indian cinema. For more than sixty years he produced and directed more than forty Hindi and Marathi films. Many of his films including *Manoos*, *Do Akhen Barah Haath* were appreciated in many internal film festivals and in 1985 he was awarded Dadasaheb Phalke award. Hari Narayan writes:

After Dadasaheb Phalke, who is considered the Grand Old Man of Indian cinema, if there was one filmmaker who could lay claim upon the label of a 'cine-pioneer,' it has to be Shantaram Rajaram Vankudre, popularly known as V. Shantaram. From *Netaji Phalkar* (1927)

to *Jhanjhar* (1987), in a career spanning 60 years, he directed 40 films — many of them bilinguals. In the process, he introduced features like trolley shot, the jump-cut, the long single-shot scenes and many other

artistic innovations. Not just that. Here was a filmmaker who tackled themes as radical as feminism, communalism and prostitution in India's pre-Independence era, at a time when talkies were barely making their presence felt (2015).

Shantaram is known as Chitrapati or Father of films in the film fraternity.

During his film making career in Prabhat an internal feud took place between Shantaram and the studio authority and he had to leave Prabhat. After leaving Prabhat he established Rajkamal studio where he produced and directed many remarkable films. Shantaram's *Do Ankhein Bara Haath* (1957) inspired by the 'open-prison' experiment in the princely state of Oundh near Pune was one of the landmark films produced by Rajkamal studio. Litterateur-lyricist G D Madgulkar narrated the story to Shantaram. Initial response of this film was average. But after a few days of its release the film became a hit and Lata Mangeshkar's prayer song 'Aye Malik Tere Bande Hum' became phenomenal not only in India but also in Pakistan. *Do Ankhein Bara Haath* revolved around the concepts of love and brotherhood and deployed a form of

lyrical humanism and idealism which later influenced the works of filmmakers such as Bimal Roy, Mehboob Khan and Guru Dutt. The film was commercially successful with the Indian film audiences and was appreciated by the film critiques. The film was awarded the Golden Bear at the 1957 Berlin film festival for its "profound and poetic symbolism and strong human appeal" . The film bagged the Hollywood Foreign Press Association's Samuel Goldwyn award. In India, V Shantaram won a number of awards, including best national film and best director for this film. If *Do Ankhein Barah Haath* was appreciated for its realist aesthetics and brilliant performance , V. Shantaram's *Jhanak Jhanak Payal Baaje* (1955) was valued for presenting the colour , grandeur and the richness of Indian classical dance. The film centered on a love story between two dancers Neela and Girdhar, explored dance forms like Bharat Natyam, Katthak and Manipuri and created an extravaganza of song and dance. *Jhanak Jhanak Payal Baaje* became another remarkable hit of Rajkamal studio. V. Shantaram in this film consciously referred to Hindu

mythological tales and intertwined them into the script and especially in the dance sequences. The staging of interaction between Neela and Girdhar drew inspiration from the Krishna-Radha romance. And Menaka and Vishwamitra's narrative was referred in a dance sequence in the form of Bhil dance when Neela tried to distract Girdhar from his path. Despite being a dance musical featuring two non-stars, *Jhanak Jhanak Payal Baaje* was a landmark hit. Amongst his later films *Navarang* was also widely appreciated and applauded for its innovative choreographic design in the song and dance sequences by the audiences and film critics. *Navarang* ran for fifty-four weeks in Ahmedabad's Model Cinema and got the Filmfare award for best editing and best sound recording. After *Jhanak Jhanak Payal Baaje*, *Do Akhen Barah Haath* and *Navarang* he made number of noteworthy films like *Geet Gaya Pattharon Ne*, *Jal Bin Machhli Nritya Bin Bijli* and was active as a film maker and producer till late 1980s.

Big studios in India could not sustain themselves beyond a point of time. And Prabhat was no exception. It can be said that after 1947 in the midst of post-war calamity-

the famine and the partition of India, the studio system in Indian cinema came to an end. The partition created a serious problem with the gradual closure of East Pakistan and West Pakistan market of Indian films. And Post-war financial crisis had resulted in the shortages of raw film stock and the emergence of black market racketeering across the country. All of the major studios faced problems and collapsed by the late 1940s – early 1950s. The studio system failed to incorporate the new modes and methods of mobilizing capital, technology and human resources to make films. Statistical accounts prepared by the Indian Motion Pictures Almanac show that in the post 1940s, there was a sudden increase in the number of independent producers in the film industry. This resulted into a new phase of Indian cinema and film economy. And with the unpredictability of new market economy and the emerging need for capital input, production strategies also changed in the film industries. Indian film texts changed themselves to suit the new narrative economy and its rhetoric. Apart from these changes Prabhat was suffering an internal feud which led to the collapse of this studio. This internal feud became a major problem during

the production of *Ramshastri*. Initially V Shantaram was the director of *Ramshastri* . But he could not finish this project. Shantaram had to leave the studio because of his weakening relationship with the studio authority on some partnership issue. Gajanan Jagirdar and Raja Nene finished *Ramshastri*. Interestingly the original Marathi version was released without any credit titles. But its Hindi version mentioned Jagirdar and Nene as the co-directors. In spite of these problems the film became commercially successful. But during this period Prabhat faced a series of other problems. After Shantaram left the studio in 1942, Vishnupant Damle passed away in 1945. The Prabhat Film Company closed down in 1952. In 1960 the Government of India bought the studio and established the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII). With the demise of Prabhat, Maratha film industry attained a new phase in terms of production logic and film aesthetics but Prabhat continued in influencing Indian cinema decades after the closure of it. Prabhat not only produced quality films but also served as a training ground for accomplished technicians, writers, directors and actors across the India. Directors like

Vishram Bedekar, Kesavrao Bhole, Mastter Krishnarao, Vasant Desai, Raja Nene, Anant Mane; actors and technicians like Shanta Hublikar, Hansa Wadkar, Jayashri Gadkar, Shanta Apte, Baby Shakuntala Anant Marathe were among them. The films produced by Prabhat created milestones in the history of Indian cinema for their portrayal of socially relevant issues, realist film making style and a distinct lighting technique.

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MOOC on HINDI CINEMA

MODULE-20

BOLLYWOOD AND LIBERALIZATION

ACADEMIC SCRIPT

Bollywood as a term has been roughly in vogue for the last four decades and is synonymous to the Hindi film industry of Mumbai, formerly Bombay. But not until recently the term Bollywood has become a global phenomenon with the hay days of the economic liberalization or globalization in India since 1991. But before we delve deep into Bollywood, it is imperative that we should throw light on the economic phenomena of globalization and its socio-cultural impact on India.

Towards a definition of globalization:

According to the Oxford dictionary, globalization is

the process by which businesses or other organizations develop international influence or start operating on an international scale.

From the above definition of the term, it is difficult to draw its influence on a culture and its impact on a global scale. If we take the example of India, which in turn, is the world's largest democracy and the largest potential market for its ever growing population, it should be borne in mind that

Firstly, Globalization implies free trade and mobility of goods, which has flooded the Indian market with innumerable foreign products,

Secondly, as the flood gates of foreign business opened to India, it exposed the indigenous business to the crude and highly demanding uneven market competition which resulted in the obliteration of a number of Indian companies. India was primarily a sellers' market, but due to high population and a considerably huge market in comparison to the European ones with a few indigenous competitors, India turned into a consumers' market.

According to Brian Longhearst,

Globalization is a term that tries to capture the rapid social change that is occurring across a number of dimensions, including economy, politics, communications and culture..... where socio economic life cannot be firmly located in a particular place with clear boundaries.

Hindi films, by the turn of the last decade of the previous century, have been an embodiment of these socio economic shifts. These shifts are in accord with the cultural shift that has been inflicted by the globalized order of things. Spectrum of the Indian market had changed overnight due to the flooding of a host of foreign products in the indigenous markets. If we consider the classical Marxist approach of the relation between an economy and its culture, economy of a state is its base and the culture that thrives there is the superstructure built on that base. So an economic implication on a nation inevitably influences the cultural practice of the societies of that nation who are exposed to that economic base.

In P. Joshi's 'Bollylite in America', Bollywood has been meant for a 'culture industry that remains constitutively international in production and global in consumption.' Popular for its Hollywood remakes and reformulation of popular Hollywood films, other regional language films (Tamil, Telugu, Bengali, Bhojpuri, and Malayalam language) and even old films, the term Bollywood has come to represent both an acknowledgment of the debt the directors and technicians of the Hindi film industry owe to Hollywood for their creative ideas as well as a description which challenges the monopolistic hegemony of Hollywood across the globe. In this regard, Asish Rajadhyaksha presents a very interesting definition of Bollywood which enhances us to understand the industry in a better way than the usual consensus about Bollywood. According to him, Bollywoodization can be best understood as a

.....diffused cultural conglomeration involving range of distribution and consumption activities.

But this definition is prevalent only after it has incorporated the ethics and contradictory forces of globalization like privatization, and liberalization which changed the production and consumption of Mumbai films. The near universal legitimization of the term Bollywood (instead of Hindi cinema, Bombay cinema, Indian popular cinema, etc) is an index of larger social transformations taking place in India.

Changes in the Film Industry from 1991

It is imperative to throw light on the media sector of India and its subsequent effect of the liberalization policies. With the arrival of the satellite and international television channels in 1991 in India, the media scenario underwent a radical change in the entertainment arena as well as the financial policies of the same. Hong-Kong based Star TV, a subsidiary of News Corporation, and CNN started broadcasting into India using the ASIAST-1 satellite. This was followed by an unprecedented and dramatic expansion of cable television. The 'open skies policy' under the new liberal economy suddenly exposed the Indian audience to a whole new set of cable channels from all around the world as well as from different regions of the country with their own regional languages. Hollywood films, whose views were limited to the availability of VHS cassettes and film halls, were now easily available on Star Movies and others. Therefore, the changes in the media landscape along with policy initiatives by the state precipitated a number of changes which in turn altered the Hindi film industry in the most dramatic fashion. However, 1998 saw a landmark decision which accredited Bollywood with the status of industry which facilitated the film industry to avail financial support from the government - film industry became eligible for infrastructural and credit supports which was previously available to other industries. In addition to this, the film industry enjoyed reduction in custom duties on cinematographic film, complete exemption on export profits, and tax incentives.

Changes in the Exhibition and Promotional System

With the policy shifts owing to the liberalization process, single screen theatre halls were started being replaced with the multiplexes, especially in the metropolitan cities like Mumbai, Chennai, Bangalore, Delhi and Kolkata. With the sophisticated financial policies for films starting from its investment to its exhibition, the film industry became corporatized with

- a. development of websites for promotional activities of Bollywood films as well as the studios and the big production houses,
- b. aggressive marketing and promotional activities for film music, which was having a stiff competition with the newly found indie pop songs,
- c. incessant and aggressive campaigns of the newly released films in radio, television and other forms of media like mobile phones,
- d. increase in the ticket prices of the films in the multiplexes,
- e. the stars of the Hindi films started appearing in interviews, television shows and press meetings more than ever before,
- f. advertisements started endorsing the stars who became regular faces in the satellite television channels.

According to Ravi Sundaram, circulation of thousands of various media objects (both old and new) in the forms of print flyers, signage, mobile phones, music cassettes and CDs, created a 'visual frenzy' centered around Bollywood.

New Challenges for Bollywood

It is true that the film industry turned into a new global Bollywood with a lot of economic and financial facilities only after the economic liberalization, but for the same open market policies cinema in India and all across the world started facing stiff challenges from other forms of media, especially television. Bollywood faced enormous pressure in every sense to maintain and attract the audiences to the film theatre from the tele-visual extravaganza. Previously the narratives were surrounded with the poverty stricken community and how a working class hero struggles to defeat the corrupt rich villains. It also accommodated the familial and community ties which proved to be more essential and core to the existence of the individual. But now Bollywood films increasingly began to depict India's shifting relationship with the world economy through images of a hybrid relation between the national and global - there was interestingly some conscious deletion on thematic grounds like 'jhoharpatti' (slums) and struggling protagonist in poverty and community feeling more than the feeling of a responsible citizen.

The new filmmaker of Bollywood started adopting thematic structures and narrative devices which are in accord with a broader audience who are exposed to international cinema, international sitcoms and a feeling of becoming a new global Indian under the happy charm of globalization - both economically and culturally. These strategies adopted by Bollywood to incorporate expanding audience tastes and desires can be best described as taking global formats equipped with updated visual styles, while localizing, adapting, appropriating, and 'Indianizing' theme. In this case, a term becomes central to the point of discussion - Glocalization, which is an amalgamation of globalization and localization. Structures of the newly evolved Bollywood films can be labeled as glocalization.

Bollywood and the Glocal

The term glocalization was first coined by Robertson in his seminal essay, 'Glocalization: time-space and homogeneity-heterogeneity.' In the essay, he rejects and nullifies the binaries between the global and the local, the centre and the periphery, universality and particularism as models to comprehend the phenomena of globalization. Considering these models to be inadequate, Robertson says that glocalization captures the dynamics of the local in the global and the global in the local.

The theory of glocalization holds true for a phenomena like Bollywood in the era of globalization. Let us read these characteristics:

a. As Robinson theorizes further, he proposes that the theory of glocalization as a way of accounting for both global and local, not as opposites but rather as 'mutually formative, complementary competitors, feeding off each other as they struggle for influence'. Now, the polarization between the global and the local and the notion that the local undergoes a slow death under the immense pressure of the global orders does not hold true. In Bollywood films after globalization, we see a new sense of Indian nationalism has found its way - more than ground level patriotism of defeating the anti-nationalist villains, nationalism now is more of nostalgia for a motherland that the characters have left behind. Therefore, this patriotic feeling is invested in the Non Residential Indian characters in today's films. Almost all the films produced today have their protagonists settled abroad, but are Indian to the core, or even if they are Westernized, it often becomes the point of conflict in the film which finds its resolution in the national values and traditions of the native nation. An important term vehemently used in academics in this regard is 'Diaspora', which means the movement, migration, or scattering of people away from an established homeland.

b. The very idea of glocalization has been attacked by many theorists for being apolitical in nature and being without any teeth or resistance to the sinister forces of globalization. The same dictum goes for Bollywood as it is an industry to cater to a wide audience ever more to generate profit. Going by this logic, there has been a deliberation by the Bollywood industry to shift its focus from one kind of target audience to the other kind - the target groups have shifted from the rural and urban lower, lower-middle and middle class to the necessarily urban upper and middleclass with special emphasis on the NRIs. But a simplistic critic of Bollywood will not be sufficient to understand the operatives and the cultural ramifications. Bollywood in the globalized context calls for an overall understanding of the global-local nexus and viewing glocalization as a mode of resistance as well as accommodation.

According to many scholars, firstly, the new Bollywood has become a site of reconfiguration of locality and local subjects in the newly evolved cultural dimension under the economic liberalization. Secondly it served as an accounting for the new cultural trends and forms emerging at the intersections of the global and the local. Thirdly, it is also a mode of countering the frequently expressed fear of homogenization which becomes a part and parcel of the global flows of labor, culture or capitals. Lastly, Bollywood has become a recognition of the fact that when new ideas, objects, audio-visuals, spacial dimensions, social crisis, practices and performances are transplanted to another space, they bear the marks of history as well as undergo a process of cultural, political and ideological transcreations. In cinema, with the continuous production of global images of Indian residents, these different images, ideas and meanings attain faith and dependence on the highly varied local spaces.

Fashion, Location, Music, Choreography and Language - the Global Desi Bollywood

Global Fashion, Local Sensibilities

Not until the year of economic liberalization, India started being recognized as one of the most important fashion destinations of the world. Dresses were always being designed by the fashion designers for the Bollywood stars, but only recently have clothes become signed artifacts, and Bollywood styles and fashions become themselves separately marketable. Since liberalization, international fashion magazines like *Verve*, *Vogue*, and *Elle* publish Indian editions feature glossy photographs of Bollywood stars and models with various merchandising objects and designer dresses. The newly emerging fashion designers like Sabyasachi Mukherjee, Manish Malhotra, Wendell Rodricks, Ritu Kumar, Ritu Beri and many others had started participating in the most important international fashion shows at Berlin, Venice, New York and Rome became huge names in Bollywood. 1990s, especially the later part of the decade saw a shift in the way film costumes and clothes were being designed and produced. Indian viewers were no more secluded into Doordarshan anymore, and hence the satellite television network threw a plethora of glitz, glamour and notions of beauty was undergoing a rapid change among the masses. Therefore, filmmakers started believing that emphasis on fashion is imperative in a successful marketing of Bollywood film. According Wilkinson-Weber, who has done extensive investigation into Indian fashion, notes

Indian styles in film have themselves been subject to a fashion reinterpretation, contemporary designers have incorporated both their own designs, and designer label clothes from international markets into the looks they create for their actors.

It is interesting to note that earlier in Hindi films of the 70s till the late 80s, there used to be a vamp, the 'fallen' woman, who would lead an immoral life and was supposed to be a violation of the traditional beliefs of India. These vamps personified the urban and modern tastes of society and 'the temptations and corruptions of anti-Indianness where being Indian meant identifying with, and committing to, constructions of tradition and virtue. This is the woman who would wear revealing dresses, and almost all the designer dresses with innovative fashion statements including fashion accessories and make ups were invested on this character. But with liberalization the tradition was 'won' by the fashion world, we see that there is no necessity of these vamps who would exhibit the fashionable dresses. Instead of the vamps, the new Bollywood heroines became the site of the sensual body to exhibit a host of fashion materials. These materials are not only limited to Western flamboyant designs, but also includes expensive traditional wears like *lehngaas* and sarees. India embraced the global trends and reinvented its traditional culture with the irresistible waves of globalization and soon Bollywood became more cosmopolitan than the other regional language films. Western clothing was no more a sign of anti-Indianness and was no longer marginalized by the audience.

Bollywood Space and its Hybridity

Globalization, in other words, is a world economic integration, hastened by global treaties and transnational organizations such as WTO. This economic network has facilitated the functioning of a market-driven and advertiser supported consumption in an unprecedented scale. Immigration facilities, cheap air tickets and facilitation of infrastructural support for Bollywood in foreign lands allowed easy mobility in travel and tourism among the burgeoning Indian middleclass as well as the Indian film crews. Not only the shooting became easy in foreign locations, it served a two-fold function to satisfy

the desires of the two broad ranges of Bollywood audience – the first and the most lucrative film business is done in foreign lands, therefore the NRIs became the prime target for the films so that they can relate themselves with the known landscapes with Indian oneness on the screen; the second, now less important, being the Indian audience whose desire and longing for a picture perfect and almost an 'ideal state' could be fulfilled on the screen with the exotic spaces of desire they can seldom visit. Moreover, the Indian government does not put any major tax on profits generated in foreign currencies which an Indian can bring home. This was a huge advantage for Bollywood for overseas business. The popular location shootings at Kashmir, Ooty and Shimla soon changed to the Swiss Alps, London and New York.

In Karan Johar's multi star-cast film, *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Ghum*, one might notice that in a single song sequence Shahrukh Khan and Kajol were in Delhi, Switzerland, Cairo, and London. But shifts in cinematic locations have the tendency to create a sense of placelessness, even homelessness and alienation. While audiences recognize the allure of foreign locations, they also feel some loss and dissolution of long-held identities associated with spaces. But although there are these shifts in location, it does not delude its audience as the meanings of narratives remain irreducibly fixed to local meanings with local stories constantly revisited and even reinvented. These foreign locations, whether it is Mahesh Manjrekar's *Kaante*, Karan Johar's *Kabhi Alvida Na Kehna* or *Kal Ho Na Ho*, Rakesh Roshan's *Kaho Na Pyar Hain* or Farhan Akhtar's *Dil Chahta Hain* or *Don*, Bollywood films are always domesticated with Bollywood stars who speak in Hindi in foreign lands or for that matter we can hardly see any native of the foreign land making an entry in the actual story line. The international settings do not confer the fact that the local crisis or the local cultures will find its way in the Bollywood narratives unlike Hollywood. On the contrary, these foreign spaces will be necessarily Indianized and beautiful exotic locations become a part of the world the globalized Indians inhabit. No matter wherever the place might be, Bollywood will be always telling a story about an Indian girl and a boy and an Indian family with their entire traditional ramifications held intact. Bollywood responds to both global and local imperatives by exporting Indianness to exoticized backdrops.

Music

Hindi cinema is known for its music, not as an integral part of the narrative or the story line, but as a separate entity. According to noted filmmaker, Shyam Benegal:

For Indian films, for their very sustenance, songs are very important. But that is because for any kind of Indian entertainment, particularly community entertainment, music and songs were essential features. But songs in an Indian film does not make it a musical. In India film, songs interrupt, sometimes they are part of a story...they are interludes.

Hindi film songs were dominated by *mushaira*, *ghazal*, and *qawali* traditions with emphasis on Indian Classical Music. Songs were composed in the traditional Indian technique - based on ragas and tunes which were accorded to the Urdu lyric poems and traditional Hindi language. One thing should be noted here is that unlike the West, which thrives on a history of rich visual culture, Indian tradition thrives on an aural culture and therefore songs become an integral part of any representation. Globalized Bollywood adheres to the primacy of song and dance per se, and also to the function of the musical parts within the film as spaces of displaying sexual fantasies and a situation of eroticized communication. But the way in which the Hindi film music is composed now (based on chords rather

than ragas as was the case previously) and packaged has undergone a huge change – instead of the classical base, most of the music has shifted to groovy hip-hops and incorporated various forms of popular and rock arrangements.

The reason seems to be very interesting, as Bollywood film music industry faced a big challenge in the 1990s with the advent of the newly found Indie popular music with the likes of bands like Silk Route and Euphoria, and individual stars like Lucky Ali, Kay Kay and a host of talented artists. As mentioned earlier, globalization has made Bollywood more corporatized and aggressive marketing strategies became its key areas to achieve financial success. These independent artists were appropriated by Bollywood - firstly to crush the competition and obliterate the threat of an unprecedented challenge put forward by the indie pop culture, but also to enrich film music with the inputs of these new trends and innovation of a music industry nurtured outside the film world.

Language

Globalized Bollywood has also witnessed a metamorphosis in the arena of spoken language. Usage of English has become more obvious than Hindi colloquial itself. Since independence the influence of Persian and Urdu was prominent in Hindi films. But globalization turned the spoken language into a hybrid one – a mix of Hindi and English. This trend was even reflected in the titles of the films which released after the 90s. This hybrid language has become the most common trend among the urban youth which has been infested to and by the plethora of glocal culture in satellite television channels which runs 24*7 in every household in India.

Madhav Prasad in his essay 'This thing called Bollywood' finds out that the nationalist ideology of India was held together historically by a metalanguage which could properly articulate one nationalist sentiment. Prasad argues that in a globalized India, English provides the ideological coordinates of the new world of Bollywood films. According to him, English phrases and proverbs are liberally used to construct a web of discourse which the characters inhabit.

Choreography

An overlooked arena in Bollywood is the field of choreography. Through the ages, Bollywood choreography has gained considerable amount of sophistication and respect. This has also its influence drawn from the satellite television programs on dance competitions like Boogie Woogie and international and national music videos in channels belonging to a multinational corporation who gained their access in India only after globalization. Choreography in Hindi films, which was taken just as a time pass and was taken in the least serious way by the viewers, suddenly became a spectacle with huge investments and taking highly skilled artists and choreographers as item numbers.

Another change that had taken place in globalized Bollywood films is a matter of a far more serious and economic concern – the accompanying dancers in Hindi films used to belong to the groups of junior artists, most of whom were from lower middle-class and slum areas. But suddenly this changed with Subhash Ghai's *Taal*, which introduced the famous dancer Shyamak Davar and his group which replacing the former setting of junior artists as dancers. Accompanying dancers in contemporary Bollywood evolved from junior artists to highly skilled and upper class professional dancers, courtesy to a number of modern dancing schools. This has further evolved to foreign dance troops who come as packages with other facilities when a Bollywood film is shot abroad. Since the early 1990s, there has been an explosion in the number of foreign women dancers who are used as extras for the song and dance sequences in films (Mumbai film industry's demand for foreign dancers has brought a large number of women from Eastern Europe and Russia).

Since 1960, Hindi films' nationalism through the role of women represented Western women as primarily 'immoral and sexually accessible to the Indian male' and as embodiment of unbridled sexuality. The trend is still continuing today and the value judgment of women based on their sexuality and chastity is immensely significant for the audience. Indian viewers recognize the influx of these foreign women into the song and dance sequences and equate their presence with overt sexualization of film choreography. As V.Lal puts it in his essay 'The Impossibility of the Outsider in Modern Hindi film', over sexualization of song and dance may create a cultural threat and anxiety, but such tensions are appeased with a logic that the 'foreign' backup dancers can be 'sexy' but the 'Indian' heroines and heroes have to maintain the decorum of modesty and tradition. Globalization has made song sequences a site of absolute and flawless pleasure, but seldom have we talked about the particular class of junior artists, who are perished under the new liberalization aesthetics.

However, maintaining the tradition-modernity and sober-obscene construct of the Bollywood notions in accord with its audience has become a conventional practice with the Indian heroines gearing up in both Western and traditional attires and participating in the same choreography with the 'other' cultural representations through the white women (both blonde and brunette) who wear revealing dresses and symbolize sexual ecstasy. It is of course a niche created by the globalized Bollywood according to G. Gangoly in his essay 'Sexuality, Sensuality, and Belonging: Representations of the Anglo-Indian and the Western Women in Hindi Cinema'. It is a curious fact that the integration of MTVization, especially the beach party reality shows like *Grind* and due to new trends in advertisements with star endorsements has further eased the tension of this stance of traditional sanctity in contemporary Bollywood films. Heroines are more global than ever, sexually more liberated than the previous years and the women characters are gaining more independence in terms of economic and social structure as the space of unfolding of the narrative is mostly New York, London or any other first world city. We see the evolution of super stars like Katrina Kaif, whose very presence reminds us that our women of desire in cinema is an Indian who exhibit and combine the beauties and characteristics of a white woman too.

Globalization has embraced Bollywood cinema not to impose the global cultures in the Indian terrain neither to challenge the cultural archetypes, nor to question the nationalist feelings into jeopardy. On the contrary, the national image and the desire of the nation as an emerging global power under the umbrella of the United States is reconfigured and consolidated in a new way. Bollywood through its films have invested a vision of portraying itself to the world as a global superpower, not from the military point of view, but as a highly skilled and updated human resource tank whose representations are manifested through the protagonists and their friends inside, and mostly outside the country. But this is not the only agenda that Bollywood has – the cultural ramifications and re-endorsements of the familial emotions along with the Non-residential Indian community feelings are of prime importance. As Bourden points out, with the changes in media production, consumption, and exhibition, 'locality is produced as one's sense of difference from the global, but the new locality is no longer a spontaneous expression of given, long-held local traditions. Glocalization has helped Bollywood not only to link the spaces far and broad stretching to different continents, but also to invent the localities which are hybrid in nature, but national in culture. An Indian audience in contemporary times aspires to be a global citizen, and Bollywood becomes a key cultural impetus through which global is constructed locally just as the local is constructed globally.

MOOC on HINDI CINEMA

MODULE-21

BOLLYWOOD NARRATIVES

ACADEMIC SCRIPT

M. Prasad in his book *“Ideology of Hindi film; A historical Construction”* charts out the relationship between the ‘economics of film industry’ i.e. the ‘modes of production’ and the ‘actual cultural content of the film’. He states that in India it has always been “the nexus between the economic, ideological and political forces that has shaped the conditions of possibility of cultural production”.(Prasad 2000,Pg.30). Prasad identifies ‘feudal family romances’ as the dominant textual film form¹ of Post-Independence Hindi narrative Cinema primarily from 1950’s till 1970’s. He defines the key characteristics traits of this form as “version of romantic narrative, a comedy track, an average of six songs per film, a range of familiar character types, narrative closure achieved in restoration of a threatened moral/social order by the hero”. He identifies the reason behind the dominance of this particular form in popular Hindi cinema being the ‘fragmentation of the production apparatus’ which he refers to as the ‘heterogeneous mode of production of Hindi cinema’ i.e. “the whole being assembled from parts produced separately by specialists”. Referring to Janet Staiger statement “style is just a reflection of the adopted mode of production” and that in context of Hollywood it was the series of ‘system of production’ Prasad in his book *“Ideology of Hindi film; A historical Construction”* attempts to locate the ‘system of production’ operational in post-independence Bombay film industry and then argues ‘family feudal romances’ as the outcome of the very system of productions.

However M. Prasad has also noted that that the dominant film form mutated over the years. He states the” industry has been undergoing changes which may lead to mutation of this form, or introduction of new ones”. Post 1990’s as the ‘system of production’ changes with the neo-liberal policies adopted by the government the dominant film form of Hindi narrative cinema ‘family feudal romances’ mutated itself to ‘NRI romances’ being referred as ‘Bollywood’. Aswin Punathambekar and Madhav Prasad argue that ‘these changes in the realms of production, distribution, marketing and exhibition, led to an ‘ideological shift’ which instead gave rise to what Rajadhyaksha writes ‘a reasonably specific narrative and a mode of representation’(Punathembkar 2013,Prasad2008, Rajadhyaksha 2003).These ‘mode of representation’ was further elaborated by scholars like J. Desai and R. Dudrah who refer to Bollywood as an ‘all-encompassing genre’ visa-a-vie Masala films ‘characterized by music and dance numbers, melodrama, lavish production and an emphasis on stars and spectacle’. (Dudrah, Desai 2008 Pg. 1). Ganti elaborates further on the narrative conventions of this ‘Bollywood Cinema’ “The changing modalities of the Industry led to dominance of a genre of ‘family entertainment’ – love stories filled with songs and dances, elaborate cultural spectacle like weddings, set against the backdrop of extremely wealthy, extended and frequently transitional families, complete absence of working class protagonist and the lack of villain’. (Ganti, 2012) Madhav Prasad

¹He defines form as “the narrative structure, the organization of elements within the structure, the means employed to carry the narrative forward from one stage to the next and those by which narrative closure is achieved”.

identifies 'structural bilingualism' as another key feature of Bollywood Cinema'. (Prasad M., 2003). Films like Hum Aapke Hain Kaun (1994), Dilwale Dulhania le Jayenge (1995) Kabhi Kushi Kabhi Gum (2001) adhered strictly to this form, of visually excess, extravagant cinematography and designer mise-en scene. Both Rosie Thomas and Rajinder Kumar Dudrah mention Bollywood cinema's emphasis on spectacle.(Dudrah 2006 Thomas 1985) ” Dudrah also states that the “Grand Setting and glittering costume of ‘Bollywood Cinema’ may have actually nothing to do with plot.” (Dudrah 2006, Pg. 49) Bollywood Cinema neither found its place as a genre nor as a style. Moreover it can be questioned if the Bollywood Cinema can further be categorized as ‘genre’ like ‘family entertainment’ as put forward by Ganti 2012, 2004 or as ‘NRI romance’ as proposed by Dimitris Eleftheriotis.(Eleftheriotis; Needham 2006). Anustup Basu in his book “Bollywood in the age of new media” theorizing mainstream Hindi Cinema roughly from 1991 to 2004 suggests this sort of interesting mix as an ‘assemblage’. He suggests that Hindi cinema has always been an interesting mix of local , national and international and a combination of all kinds of genre (action , comedy , melodrama, western) – hence comes the term ‘masala-film’. (Basu 2012).

The NRI or the diasporic nationalism always acquired a central place in the definition of Bollywood cinema. Films like DDLJ, KKHH, and HAHK which were international success earning huge sums of money in foreign markets strengthened the argument. However I argue that in the new millennium, with the changes in the ‘mediascape’ of India i.e. the economic changes which has fostered the flow of media content across multiple delivery technologies and the ‘cultural convergence’ Bollywood NRI centric form has evolved in recent years.

Post millennium Mediascape In India

Post millennium there was what we can call a ‘big bang’ in Indian mediascape. According to FICCI-KMPG report 2012 the Indian Media and Entertainment Industry has registered a growth rate of 12% over 2010 figures. The report states that Indian Media & Entertainment Industry is to touch INR 1,457 billion by 2016. The said growth is evident in all sections of the Indian media industry i.e. across Print, Television, Radio, Films, Music and Internet and Broadband Industry. It should be noted here that in contemporary times ‘Bollywood’ is a prime source of content generated for all walks of media in India and vice-versa all kinds of media helps shaping the Bollywood imagination and enhancing its economic and cultural effect both in the domestic and overseer market.

The Domestic Box office figures have increased multifold primarily due to the introduction of Multiplex in India. Multiplexes offer greater variety in terms of movies and greater time flexibility compared to the single screen theatre along with host of other services such as food courts and video games in order to allure consumers. Moreover the ticket prices in multiplexes are also higher compared to the single screen theatre.“Mumbai based multiplex chain Cinemax for example have raised their average ticket pricing from Rs, 86 in 2005 to Rs. 131 in 2008. Whereas it lies somewhere between Rs. 15 to Rs. 80 for a single screen theatre.” (Khandekar, 2011). Television which flourished initially in the Indian market with the telecast of Gulf War was now emerging as an alternate form of entertainment for widescreen movie goers. On the other hand film producers too found Television as a new medium of exhibiting and recovering a considerable amount of money by selling the satellite rights of their films. Eventually Television became an important vehicle for the Indian film industry for

'publicity, broadcasting songs and a promotional venue for their upcoming film and vice-versa television industry thrived on Bollywood in terms of content' (Ganti, 2012) and thus remains one of the prime sources for generating revenue for the film producer in recent times. The proliferation of television and cable channels which began early 1990's was now in full force with over \$3.4 billion in revenue according to Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PWC) 2005 figures. According to PWC 2010 report television Industry constituted 47% of the market whereas the film Industry only constitutes 14%. The cable subscriber base increased from around 0.05 million in the early 90s to around 24 million by 1999-2000. The music industry too is flourishing with an unprecedented growth rate. "In 2007, the Indian music Industry grew 54% over 2006 to Rs. 27.47 billion. (Khandekar, 2011). Instead of the old format such as CD and DVD, music industry is now flourishing as a result of various other non-physical formats such as Mobile Music, Online music and live concerts. On the other hand several music channels such as MTV, Channel V, ZEE Music etc. thriving primarily on Bollywood based songs and dances (audio-visual content) have emerged in huge numbers since 2005. The Radio Industry too have many big brands such as Sun Radio, Big FM, Radio City, Radio Mirchi coming up with a growth rate of 15% to reach INR 11.5 billion according to FICCI-KMPG report 2011 figures. Private FM industry too is to a large extent dependent on the Bollywood Content as it is not just the music but even chat shows and the phone-in programs, on which the Radio industry is thriving in contemporary scenario. It is based primarily on words around 'Bolly' industry or celebrities belonging to the Bollywood Industry. The Broadband and Internet industry has now become an significant medium in India with over 70.25 million users according to June 2009 figures. Bollywood is benefitting highly from the said industry as by 'late 2005 with the stabilization of the dot.com industry in India, companies like indiafm.com and indiatimes.com have become important cites of marketing and promotion for Bollywood content' and vice-versa there are 100 or more Bollywood website appearing every day in the dot.com universe of India. Downloading movies, songs, movie clip, promos, videos and reading celebrity gossip is a favorite pass time for many Indian commoners belonging to every class and strata of the society. Along with the traditional component of Media and Entertainment Industry many new components are also booming in the contemporary scenarios which are primarily New Media, Digital Entertainment, Animation, Gaming, Visual Effects, and Cricket (IPL), Events and Out of Home Entertainment.

According to figures provided by Vanita Kohli-Khandekar in 2008 the thousand or so movies made in India led to the sale of 3.25 billion tickets for about Rs 97 odd billions in home box office revenues and on the other hand made more than double i.e. over Rs 126 billion from the content they generated in other media platforms. (Khandekar, 2011) The figures make it evident that today no producer depends solely on the box office collection as a means to recover their investment; instead today one has several other platforms such as telecast rights, music rights, merchandizing, promotional activity, in-film advertising, rights for dubbing and subtitling in other languages in order to recover their investment. Sometimes the selling of satellite rights itself can generate enough margin so that the producer do not consider the project a loss any more even though it does not perform well in the traditional box-office of Hindi Cinema. Today Bollywood is utilizing many untapped resources, such as mobile phones and other telecom devices from where users download movie clips, songs, videos, wallpapers, and ringtones and dialer tones thus generating revenue for the said mainstream Hindi film. Along with this the film Industry is tying up with the radio industry, gaming industry, fashion industry, event management industry thus generating considerable amount of revenues from these tie-ups. Siddharth Roy Kapur, the CEO of UTV Motion Pictures

verified that only five percent of Hindi movie released in 2009 made a profit. Nevertheless, Kapur says, 'people continue to make films because of the attractive glamour of Indian cinema, and the long-term revenue potential of video and cable releases.'

'Contemporary' narratives of Hindi Cinema

The form of 'NRI centric family romances have evolved over the years. Directors such as Karan Johar, who were held to be prime examples of the first stage of the Bollywood NRI centric cinema, were now making films like *Kabhi Alvida Naa Kehna* (KANK, 2006) and *Kal Ho Naa Ho* (KHNH, 2003) which do not quite fit into the NRI centric model. Johar's later films in fact complicate this supposed NRI pursuit for soulful Indian-ness. For example, we can read *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gum* (K3G) as a highly ironic critique of Indian values whereas Johar's subsequent two films can be seen to embrace a fragmented Indian identity that does not wish to return to its roots. Characters in KHNH now celebrate the split or diffusion of Indian and western identity and are happy to remain in New York and in the case of KANK; there is no mention of India at all.

Post *Dil Chahta Hai* we see the emergence of a set of films unique in their treatment and style and which cannot be put under the bracket of 'Bollywood Cinema'. Films like *Kabul Express* (2006, Kabir Khan), *Khosla Ka Ghosla* (2006, Dibakar Banerjee), *Mixed Doubles* (2006, Rajat Kapoor), *No Smoking* (2007, Anurag Kashyap), *Honeymoon Travels* (2007 Reema Katgi), *Dhobi Ghat* (2010, Kiran Rao), *Mirch* (2010, Vinay Shukla), which are Bombay cinema due to their origin, cannot be categorized as 'Bollywood' cinema as they do not fit in the stereotype of Bollywood extravaganza or do not adhere to the Bolly culture narrative conventions.

The official website of UTV Motion Pictures boasts about these 'diversity' in the platter of 'Bollywood Cinema'

"No surprise that our movies do just as well at the box office as they do at film festivals around the world. From Rang De Basanti and oriented subjects usually not performing at the box office, performed well as compared to most big solo hero starrers in the same period, Jodha Akbar to Raajneeti, UTV has produced blockbuster in Indian Cinema. At the same time films like Dev D, Khosla ka Ghosla and Wednesday were among those that did not boast of a lavish budget or power packed star cast and yet created history at the box-office because of the inherent strength of their content. By the same token, Fashion and No One Killed Jessica led by an all-female star cast, bucked the trend of woman."²

New forms or in other word new story telling conventions have evolved over the years as an alternative to the dominant 'Bollywood Cinema'. These are films that are shorter in length, either song less or have few songs compared to the earlier films, single-genre aimed at a more sophisticated urban audience, absence of a 'star' or deglamorized 'star', giving them an identity of 'average man and woman', often themes adhering to social taboo commonly referred as 'bold' cinema. The birth of these alternatives is usually attributed to independent film-makers producers making niche sleek urban films for the

²UTV Motion picture official website <<http://www.utvgroup.com/motion-pictures.html>>

multiplex audience all over the country especially in metros but one also not leave unnoticed that a large number of big banners such as Yash Raj films, Mukta Arts, UTV motion are the very production houses from which this films are coming out. However the distinction between 'masala' and 'serious' or 'commercial' and 'offbeat' 'Bollywood' and 'Non Bollywood' films are also blurring with films like *Dil Chahta Hai*, *Rang De Basanti*, *3 Idiots*, *Munna Bhai MBBS*, and *Rock On* coming out from the platter of Bollywood Cinema. The argument gets further solidified when a commercial hero like Imran Hashmi acts with directors like Dibakar Banerjee and Madhur Bhandarkar who are known in the Industry for their offbeat 'Non Bollywood' Cinema.

Henry Jekin's book on Cultural convergence '*Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*' demonstrates that media convergence occurs at various levels i.e. production, distribution and exhibition (Jekin 2006). A. Punathembkar "*From Bombay to Bollywood: The Making of a Global Media Industry*" following Henry Jekin's approach locates media convergence in India beyond the locus of technological convergence and explores the industrial and cultural dimension of convergence in a non-western context in reference to a country like India. (Punathembkar 2013)

"India's mediascape is defined by rapidly evolving, complex, and often surprising connections within and among industry practices, state policy, new media technologies and platforms, and spaces of consumption and participation that criss-cross regional, national, and transnational boundaries and affiliations. In this context, to suggest that film shares deep connections with radio, television, and digital media seems to state the obvious." (Punathembkar 2013:5)

Post-millennium the 'Industrial structure' of Bombay film Industry and the 'modes of production' of the very industry have reformed in terms of the changing economics of the industry vis-a-vis the institutional changes, discourse of corporatization, phenomenal growth of media sector in India, Multiplex boom, Marketing strategies, role played by the new media technologies, digital mediation and more importantly the media convergence. When the bulk of profit is derived more from sources other than the theatrical market, it is obvious to assume that the demand from the secondary market will command more attention in the making of the product. Increasing reciprocity between film and other media made it necessary to design the films keeping all the other windows of exhibition in mind. But to what effect this has affected such pre-established aesthetic norms of Bollywood Cinema is yet to be questioned.

Post millennium 'Bollywood' cinema too had to adapt to these 'modes of production' and hence I argue that the 'aesthetic norms' of 'Bollywood' cinema as it is described by many academic scholars working in the field of cinema has reformed itself both in terms of 'form' as well as 'narrative'. Post millennium we are on the verge of a new epoch with a sudden upsurge of films that no more adhere to the aesthetic norms of Bollywood Cinema. Although whether these changes can be called a 'fundamental shift' wherein Hindi cinema is on the brink of crossing a threshold into a new epoch or are these changes just small scale changes both at institutional and aesthetic level within a more broadly continuous system of Hindi commercial cinema, is yet to be questioned. If Bollywood is considered a certain style which has been only associated to extravaganza and big star cast, colorful song and dance sequences or in one word what can be termed as 'excess' then Bollywood has remained but what we see are certain deviations in the norms set by Bollywood cinema. It is not merely that the 'modes of production' have changed but such convergence between film Industry and other sources of revenue such as

Telecast rights , merchandizing, advertising etc. has directly affected the narratives and forms of Contemporary Bombay Cinema.

On a close study of the narrative conventions one can access that there has been changes in the dominant i.e. 'Bollywood' as well. In terms of genre, the demise of the 'family epic' is quite evident from the filmography.³ Instead one can find the evolution of 'High Concept films'; which places great emphasis on style and stylishness revolving around a simple and easily summarized narrative.⁴ They are heavily reliant on stars and provide great prominence to sound track. They are also overtly 'market driven' and earns huge amount of profit from television, home videos, computer games so forth.(Wyatt, 1994) In a film like 'Aisha' (dir. Anil Kapoor: 2010) the influence of Advertising is evident in the presence of gleaming, over polished visuals. In such films narrative are often substituted by fine performers, stars and fashion models. The 'synergy' between various media industry has made it increasingly difficult not only to distinguish film industry from other media or entertainment industry but also to understand movies themselves as cultural and textual object. Contemporary Indian films have now become increasingly commoditize leading to what Richard Maltby termed as 'commercial aesthetics'.⁵

Does that mean a complete 'Death of narrative' as Scholars like Richard Schinckel claims in context of contemporary Hollywood Cinema - "Hollywood seems to have lost or abandoned the art of narrative"; he suggests that it offers nothing more than "a series of undifferentiated sensations, lucky or unlucky accidents, that have little or nothing to do with whatever went before or about to come next." (Brodwell, Staiger and Thompson, 2005) In this case I am not quite sure about 'Death of narrative' and the basis of a film remaining purely spectacle but certainly the new markets and new technologies have encouraged a certain kind of narrative. A narrative in which we see more and more incorporation of non-linear narratives and often narratives which do not narrate at all. Contemporary Hindi films have 'Modular aesthetic', (Wyatt, 1994) which tends to often 'fragment' narrative form. Madhuja Mukherjee has described contemporary Hindi films as 'cinema of attraction'. (Mukherjee, 2009) 'Films like *Bluffmaster* (2005, Rohan Sippy,), *Dhoom 1* and *Dhoom 2* (2004 and 2006, Sanjay Gadhvi,) *Race* (2008, Abbas - Mastan,), *Cash* (2007, Anubabh Sinha,) etc., are not only nonlinear narratives but some of them do not narrate at all; instead they look like series of fragmented images and stunts.' (Mukherjee, 2009) Films like *Mirch* (2010, Vinay Shukla) weaves four stories with that of the main story, *Yuva* (2004, Mani Ratnam) the same story is told thrice from three different perspective. I argue that post millennium Bombay cinema is not structured in terms of psychologically motivated cause and effect narrative but instead are often self-sustained sequences build around spectacular stunts, star and

³In reference to films like *Gangs Of Wasseypur* (2012), *Water*(2005), *Black*(2005), *English Vinglish*(2012), *Khosla Ka Gosla*(2006) , *Sarkar*(2009).

⁴'High Concept' films are one 'which places great emphasis on style and stylishness revolving around a simple, easily summarized narrative. They are heavily reliant on stars and provide great prominence to sound track. They are also overtly 'market driven' and earns huge amount of profit from television, home videos, computer games so forth.'(Wyatt, 1994)

⁵Murray Smith "Thesis on the Philosophy of Hollywood History in Contemporary Hollywood Cinema" ed. Steave Neale and Murray Smith (London: Routledge, 1998) quote Richard Maltby who argues "Hollywood function according to Commercial aesthetics, one that is essentially opportunist in its economic motivation.

special effects. Complex character developments are replaced by stereotype characters and plot lines are developed solely to link one spectacle to another.

Because of the profits earned from computer games many “Films are now visually structured as video games, through movement in highways, tunnels and of bikes, cars, helicopters; the film becomes pure spectacle.” (Mukherjee, 2009) Action adventure films like ‘Race’ are perceived as high earners since their chase scenario easily can dovetail with the formats of such games. On the other hand Bollywood actors and actresses are now becoming comic book characters. The protagonists played by Ranbir Kapoor and Priyanka Chopra in the film *Anjana Anjani* (2010, Siddharth Anand) feature in a series of comic books, describing the adventures of their screen characters Akash and Kiera. “Films now share territories with comic strips, video games, and so on, disregarding the melodramatic points and resolutions.” (Mukherjee, 2009)

Until the recent advent of widescreen television a sign of synergy between film and television industry, we had two very different shaped and proportioned window for the same product and hence the visual composition of widescreen films were definitely affected by the tele-visual aesthetics of 4:3 television screen. It cannot be denied that compositional conventions, devices, and effects have evolved as a result of subsequent television screening of widescreen films. For example Belton and Eidsvik suggest that the “directors and cinematographer now simply keep essential information away from the edges of the screen.” Belton goes on to argue that cinematographer have begun to “protect their composition for television by keeping essential narrative and aesthetic element within this frame within a frame”(Belton, 1992) Richard Maltby proposes the same concerns and stresses on the need of further research on the impact of television on visual aesthetics of cinema. “The interplay between cinema and television is clearly complex, many sided and by no means one way. The increasing use of zoom and telephoto lens is a case in point.” He also suggested that editing and montage are fundamental to TV aesthetics. He argues “due to small size of screen and its lack of resolution television has little use of complex deep focus shots instead it is dominated by close-ups (showing single object in isolation), rapid cutting (since television require less time for its content to be exhausted), a highly mobile camera (for the same reason as rapid cutting) and shallow lateral space created partly by the use of telephoto lenses.”(Maltby, 2003) On the other hand Steve Neil raises his doubts if the “same complexities is apparent when it comes to cutting rates, the ratio of close up to medium shots and long shots, the relation between image and soundtrack and the general avoidance of deep staging remains to be seen.” (Neil, 1998).

However several new analogies are derived in context of Bollywood studies too. For example Basu in his book “*Bollywood in the age of new media*” comprehends how assemblage of Hindi films transformed itself post “information environment of 1990’s” (Basu, 2012: 7) He suggests in light of dramatic changes post 1990’s Hindi cinema acquired what Basu terms as ‘geo-televisual’ aesthetics’ i.e. the aesthetics derived by ‘the projection and reception of words and images over great distances’ (p. 40), On similar lines Daya Kishan Thussu includes the rise of Indian cable and television industry in the discourse of Bollywood Cinema. Thussu sites the globalization of Indian Television Industry and the fact that the said Industry thrives on ‘Bollywoodized’ content, as one of the prime reasons for the said globalization of Hindi film Industry thus playing a very important role in the formation of the category of ‘Bollywood’ Cinema. He further gives us an account of the ‘corporatization’ of the Hindi film Industry with both trans-national players such as Murdoch ‘s Twentieth Century Fox, Sony , Viacom and non-media conglomerates such as the Sahara group getting involved in all sectors of Indian movie making

business ... production , processing, exhibition and distribution. He also touches upon the fact that globalization of the media Industry has brought more avenues of earning profit for the Hindi film Industry such as satellite rights, Music rights , Internet download sales etc. However he refrains from delving deep into the aesthetic consequences of such changing industry dynamics of the Indian film Industry. Instead he sites examples of post millennium films like Kal Ho Na Ho(2003) , Salaam Namaste (2005) and Kabhi Alvida Na Kehna (2006) which have little or no reference of India or Indian values , as “new kind of cinema” and “hybrid cultural product” as an outcome of the corporatization and globalization of Hindi film Industry primarily in the past decade. (Thussu, 2008).

Rajinder Dudrah in his book “*Bollywood Travels: Culture, Diaspora and Border Crossings in Popular Hindi Cinema*” uses the notion of travel as an extension of James Clifford ideas of travel for storytelling to comment on recently emerging Bollywood narratives. Focusing on four recent Bollywood films: Shah Rukh Khan's Main Hoon Na (2004); Yash Chopra's Vee-Zaara (2004), which also stars SRK; Shaad Ali Sahgal's 2007 Jhoom Barabar Jhoom; and Dostana (2008) Dudrah argues that Bollywood has morphed itself in manners in which it handles subjects like indo-pak relationship, representation of diaspora, gender, sexuality. Dudrah also comments on the cultural impact that Bollywood films create and hence he argues that Bollywood becomes a site for talking about issues that are socially relevant.

"One of the ways in which people see Bollywood is in this kind of linear direction," ... "It's the homeland; Indians and South Asians around the world watch these films; the films teach us to be good citizens and to respect our parents. Then there's the importance of family, so integral to our culture, which features in most films....But I think the way in which Bollywood has 'travelled' and grown, the way in which audiences grab on to these films and watch them, is actually more complex."

Dudrah argues that Bollywood films are no more about representation of Diaspora or a ideal of ‘Indianess’ in the global scenario but instead are commenting on the lives of Indians around the world, as in the case of Jhoom Barabar Jhoom. Dudrah also poses a few questions and comments on the role new media will play in such travels of Bollywood narrative will have scope for further research. Punathambekar on the other hand comments on the newly employed marketing strategies of Bollywood Cinema especially using television and dot-com as a new forum for film promotion. Punathambekar argues that post millennium changing industry dynamics such as increasing promotional budget, newer platforms of film promotion and distribution such as television and dot-com, altered distribution and exhibition forums made brand Bollywood truly global. (Punathambekar,2013).

MOOC on HINDI CINEMA

MODULE-22

BOLLYWOOD: DIVERSITY IN NARRATIVE & FORM UNDER GLOBALIZATION

ACADEMIC SCRIPT

Bombay film Narratives before Globalization

It was not too long ago when Bollywood films would strongly bank on the structures of Sanskrit drama as reflected in Bharata's *Natyashastra*. Hindi films' narratives were primarily based on the character prototypes of most of the Sanskrit dramas - the presence of the comedians before globalization had a very strong resemblance with the 'Vidushaks' as mentioned by Bharata. The comedians in their everlasting friendship with the hero - who is inevitably elite in terms of looks, social prestige and achievements and as one of the pivotal characters to influence the achievement of the hero's goals - fits into the boots of Vidushaks as the royal advisory. The binaries between the good and the bad and the inevitable victory of the former over the evil forces would often remind us of the eternal essence of the great Indian epics like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Traditional reminiscence and its conspicuous credibility had been an essence of most of the narrative structures found in the pre-global Bollywood films. Morphological analysis found by Vladimir Propp usually proved to be instrumental in deciphering narrative structures of most of the Hindi films. In terms of characters, which were celebrated and easily located in the narratives were more stereotypical - the struggling working class hero, the elite heroine, the father who is either victimized or a patriarchal dictator and the villains as evils incarnated. In this respect it should be mentioned that each and every character had their distinct functions and the structure of the narrative did not allow them to trespass the perimeter of the functions. For example, a vamp - the fallen unchaste woman who seduces the hero for ulterior motives and is an ally of the villain - does not take part in the household matters and is barred from having a community life by the narrative itself. She meets her end on a moralistic ground. What is meant

here is that the narrative structures and functions of the characters were well defined and could easily be deciphered.

Bollywood films barring its inception always lacked a generic tendency. Hindi films were a mixture of genres that would reflect every mode of emotion in its filmic trajectory. In other words, it would contain almost six out of eight *rasas* of Bharata's *Natyashastra* like *veer rasa* (which denotes the triumph of the hero through bravery), *karun rasa* (emphasizing the tragic moments and pathos), *sringar rasa* (the human erotic behaviors), *hasya rasa* (the comic relief which most of the times were carried forward by the *vidushaks* and the there were distinct sections for this element in most of the Hindi films). Apart from the above *rasas* or emotions, there was the influence of the ninth *rasa* which was later on added to *Natyashastra* by the popular musician and dramatist *Abhinavgupta* - *shantha rasa* which is a recurrent theme in commercial Hindi films meant for happiness and calmness.

But with the advent of globalization, years of structured narrative traits and consistency of Hindi film's sequence of events with its formatted characters has faced a big threat - the global and the local India is more interested in celebrating Hindi cinema in terms of the new global ideas and hence the narratives' departure from its tradition.

The Prominent Departure

The departures of themes and styles in the narrative have been of significant proportions. As compared to the pre-global Bollywood, the narratives were more keen on prioritizing a homogenized mission addressing the under-privileged by building faith in the protective beneficence of the nation-state. The angry young man, the urban slums as the unintended city with the common man's imagination of struggle and empowerment and a hope amidst of third world corruption and struggles were more than leitmotifs. As put by Dwyer, cinematic fantasy of Hindi films has historically revealed a

Collective fantasy, a utopian solution to counteract anxieties such as the emphasis on family, the community and the opportunity for social mobility.

Although Bollywood has always been a 'temple of desires', but the new temple does not adhere to the godly image of maintaining and restoring the good for the common man as we have seen previously. The new dream world under globalization attains a supra-fantastical status, even to an extent that it stops being a fantasy of pleasure and becoming a fantasy of alienation for a lot of audience. The new image, rather a network of images of the new Bollywood is represented in terms of the material (expensive cars and motorcycles), spatial (foreign locales, beaches, and mansions), and personal (speaking English and wearing designer clothing). The hero's class has acquired high disposable incomes, a jet-setting lifestyle, shopping, oversea holidays, and an increasing distance from the everyday reality of lower middle class and rural audiences.

The post-Nehruvian era has nurtured new imaginations of nation in film narratives and has considerably moved from a socialist thought (especially with the fall the Berlin Wall) of a service sector middleclass orientation to a new middle class identity premised on consumerism and the aspiration to be the part of 'global' metropolitan lifestyles (Mazzarella 2004). The focus has shifted from the internalized underbellies and villages of India to a more cosmopolitan environment which the metropolitan cities thriving and nurturing itself to become at par with other cities of the world through the hands of multinational corporations. As a result the contents, characters and aspirations of Bollywood cinema has certainly not only achieved a degree of homogenization, articulation of citizenship and nationality in terms of globalization or liberalization, but also the simultaneous re-appropriation and re-assertion of folk cultures and regional identities, articulated through different modes of hybridity that diversely appropriate and utilize markers of rurality and 'tradition'.

As India has moved on after economic liberalization, Bollywood's marketing policies have envisaged great plans and have created a huge market abroad. Therefore, Bollywood industry has embarked on films having a global appeal, especially for the goal of making big business outside India by giving the diasporic audience the way they want to perceive Indian conditions visa-vis Bollywood films. Unlike the previous Hindi films before globalization, the new Bollywood cinema encourages narratives which have some common traits, which cannot be fitted under any narratology or within the periphery of a common man's despairs and desires -

However, we are aware of the fact that

- a. Bollywood narrative is essentially melodramatic irrespective of globalization and hence the presence of narrative excess is common,
- b. the narrative form is still a reminiscent of the classical Hollywood where the narrative is determined by 'cause and effect' progression
- c. the narrative has a definite beginning, middle and end with proper closure.

Globalized Bollywood narrative has undergone a see-saw change within the last eight to ten years but not in terms of its narrative form, but in terms of narrative content. If we try to trace the deliberate departure of the Bollywood films from the pre-global period, it will be interesting to note that the departure can only be mapped out in terms of technology, mise-en scene, spatial contours and ideological motivation of the protagonists. But it is interesting to note that globalized Bollywood cinema has hardly experimented or tried alternative forms in terms of its story telling technique. However, the narrative innovations strictly in the light of content has carved new windows which defines what contemporary Bollywood is. They can be read under the following heads:

a. Forget community, the individual is here : the narrative led by the global protagonist

The new dream world is not of ideology or community, but is represented in terms of material, spatial and personal domains. Previously Hindi film narrative was a site of conflict between the individual and the community, where the individual ultimately realizes that his community needs him for the fulfillment for a greater cause. However, it is often argued that capitalism is a vital factor in contributing to a society's departure from tradition and arrival to the idea of modernity. But the kind of modernity we come across in the new Bollywood is dominated by an ideology of consumption, consumerism through which a dialogue is mediated between the traditional and the modern with the new protagonists of globalized Bollywood as messengers of the new global order.

Death of the Angry Young Man

The effect of globalization could be seen only after a few years of the actual passing of the bill. Interestingly, Hindi film narratives were more keen on focusing the crisis of the individual than the overall social community unlike before. The protagonists were less seen in crisis related to any social perspective which was a staple practice for a long time in Indian cinema. Social evils at a grass-root level posed as a great threat to the overall society, and the protagonist's crisis was overtly endeavored through the social crisis all around which the protagonist became a victim of. This was groundwork for the evolution of the angry young man in the narratives from the mid seventies till early nineties. But with the advent of globalization and the eyewash eradication of the local level problems at the cost of a more global and national crisis has not been a good breeding ground for the 'angry young man'. For example, Zanjeer's narrative is no more at par with the global order that the cinematic imagination of Bollywood breathes of. The angry young man, though not in its original essence, only comes back in narratives where the story is based either on a Bombay underworld (most of which become a period drama) or terrorism. The popular characters of Amitabh Bachchan as played in Zanjeer, Shakti, Trishul and many others is replaced by a more multi-dimensional characters who are out of the world and represent fantasy akin to superheroes. In this regard, the influence of regional cinema, especially Tamil films, worth mentioning. The new era of language rights has turned the films into a more active franchisee where films like Singham, Wanted and Rowdy Rathore constitute the action genre of today. But if we talk about the protagonists and try to decipher the historical characterization of the angry young man, the protagonists of these films fail to represent the tradition.

The Good Boy of the Tradition

Hindi films had been a site of an age old tassel between the traditional and the modern. The protagonists' goals are fulfilled only after a dialogue between the tradition (family, religion and social morality) and the modern. Since the narrative's resolution to a crisis was a marriage of the both, the protagonists appeared to be more of an everyday human being than an absolute righteous entity, either from the traditional point of view or the modern. But globalization has

broken this typical structure of the Hindi film hero. Among a number of successful Bollywood films after globalization, *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge (DDLJ)*, *Pyar Kiya Toh Darna Kiya*, *Manie Pyar Kiya* and *Pardes* seem to be more righteous than the previous era. Raj in DDLJ, or for example Suraj (played by Salman Khan) in *Pyar Kiya Toh Darna Kiya* represents a value which is binary to what love stories would have normally dealt with. These films, similar to *Bobby*, incorporate everything where the puppy love meets patriarchal authority. But unlike the previous era, what seems to be surprising is that the protagonists of these Bollywood films are not willing to elope or challenge the patriarchal values. Instead of exploding with revolt and bring out their own versions of righteousness, these protagonists rather implodes within, and accepts the given circumstances of the patriarchal value in the light of traditional ramifications. They never challenge the agent of obstruction, and would devote time (and hence the narrative) in a locale of the dominion. Instead of coming into direct friction with the established structure of age old values and beliefs, they would rather settle with patience and a peaceful dialogue with the agent of obstacle. Hence it can well be understood that the global romantic protagonists have realized the importance of tradition and have evolved a new generation of the ‘understanding’ individuals. This acknowledgement of the patriarchal supremacy and denial to go against the family and community has already become a prototype tale of the Bollywood romance after globalization which we never found in films like *Dil* or *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak*.

The Global Desi - *Lagaan*

As put by Desai, “connect multiple locations in networks in complex and contradictory ways” - one of the essentialities of globalization. According to many scholars, on the outset of a new global phenomenon, culture is thrown into crisis by the vector of uneven, unequal, and unpredictable global flows and motions. Global relations of capital today are utilizing spaces and places in ways that produce complex planes of exclusion and inclusion, empowerment and disempowerment. Hence we come across films like *Lagaan*, *Pardes* and even *Welcome*.

Lagaan's narrative is based on a cricket match which has a number of allegories attached to it. First and foremost, the imagination of an Indian rural hero cannot trespass the ambits and orders of a globalized way of life - the protagonist, *Bhuvan*, is a farmer who, along with his other ten teammates wins his village a cricket match and more importantly, wins a historical battle

with one of the British regiments. On denotative level it might seem to be a lucid imagination of a spark of Indian independence struggle against the colonizers, but surprisingly, beneath the surface of the simple narrative lies an astounding contemporary global ethic. Firstly, as we know that globalization does not fully eradicate the prolific essence of a culture, but produces a hybrid one - Bhuvan in this light becomes an allegory of the traditional icon of Krishna, where he leads the battle against the foreign enemies and is a symbolic desire of all women. Secondly, Bhuvan, in spite of being a rural representative of North India and is uneducated, he develops a great rapport with the British Royal Princess who in turn helps the Indian team to defeat the colonizers. Moreover, even if one leaves the question of narrative logic and viability, one is ought to notice that in *Lagaan*, the Indian team is negotiating through a game which is foreign in nature. They are not only learning the international game, but becomes a master in the same. The allegory is more than obvious - the logic of the new global Indian is to overcome and have expertise on the propositions put by a new global order under the new military capitalism.

The Successful Elite

The emergence of a new breed of Indian generation in Bollywood cinema has radically changed the perception of the Indian society. The protagonists have shifted economic dimensions from the earlier stereotype representations like the 'mazdoor leader' (labour union leader), the 'jhopar patti' compassionate Robin Hood (slum Robin Hood) or the ideal representative of a modern state i.e. the police inspector. The protagonists shifted from a more socially responsible role to the vibes and imagination of today's youth who are made ambitious in the wake of multinationals. Let us take an example from *3 Idiots* - the definition of success is weighed not in terms of knowledge, dedication or personalized happiness, but in terms of material successes. For another film like *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara*, the material world comes with more subtlety - the material elitism already an inherited part of the new Indian youth and this inherent quality becomes an inevitable part of the plot without which the narrative cannot make any progress. The shift from a mundane lower / lower middle class status of the hero to a higher middleclass Indian citizen tells and retells the same logic of what was thrown light upon by Fredric Jameson in one of his essays on Dog Day Afternoon - in a neo-liberal age of capitalism it is very difficult to detect the distinct categories of bourgeois and proletariat. Instead, these two categories have fused together under the broad umbrella of globalization into what we call consumers. The

binaries of Hindi narratives now are not based on class distinction or between the rich and the poor, but strictly on other principles. since the mid nineties, the protagonists in the mainstream big productions have come under a strict stereotypical domain in terms of economic class - there has been an obliteration of the working class representatives, which has larger cultural and political ramifications as the new Indian global imagination does not permit the inclusion of these downtrodden people. There has been a homogenization of classes in terms of economy and hence culture - there is no bourgeois or capitalist or even working class - there is only the logic of consumerism and these protagonists appear in the Bollywood films as the most natural entities that India can aspire. Let us take an example of *Kaho Na Pyar Hain*, where the protagonist's final weapon of destroying the villain (or the climactic moment where the villains are unmasked) is a Nokia mobile set - the most popular consumer product of globalization.

b. Diaspora

The question of diasporic representation has become central to the national filmic imaginary after globalization. The new Bollywood narratives are more interested in telling and retelling the stories of the Non-residential Indians (NRIs) in order to grab the market of the South Asians in abroad. The set up of distribution offices by big producers like Subhash Ghai, Karan Johar and Yash Chopra, films like *Pardes*, *Taal*, *Yaadein*, *Darr*, *Dil Toh Pagal Hain*, *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge*, *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Ghum* and a host of other films started a new narrative under the broad spectatorship of the NRIs revolving around the quintessential predicaments of Indian tradition at the backdrop of a foreign land and a dialogue towards a peaceful coexistence of tradition and modern in a global perspective. This is exactly what Shukla has called 'interpenetrating globalism'. The narratives not only gave a new diasporic identity in terms of global shifts of the Indians, but also provides an ideology of the new Indian identity that could appeal to Indians in India as well as Indians outside the nation's borders as a project that embraced a nationhood based on "common identity." Keeping in mind the characters and the narratives of this new diasporic entity at the centre of a Bollywood popular film, Shukla further adds that the new class of NRIs "illumines the surprising complementarity of two spheres in operation—home and abroad". If we take an example of a film like *Kal Ho Na Ho or Pardes or Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge (DDLJ)*, we may easily realize that all the major characters are

occupying the category of NRIs, created by the Indian government in the 1970s and this NRI has gained meaning from his state of being abroad, and yet he is unproblematically represented as an Indian national. An interesting point by Chopra may throw light upon the new sensibilities invested in terms of narrative tropes in the liberalized Bollywood films:

DDLJ told Indians that an Indian is a hybrid who easily enjoys the material comforts of the West and the spiritual comforts of the East.

Hence we see the hero Raj (Shahrukh Khan) falling in love with Simran (Kajol) in abroad - a space which becomes a free-play arena of individual freedom and sexual liberation which the song '*Zaraa sa jhoomloo mein...*' is a reminiscent of. But strange metamorphosis takes place in these new generation love birds once they come back to the feudal structure of the heroine's family. Simran though occasionally flaunts in miniskirts in solitude, is a cultural conformist. She does not even speak and express her mind once she is the ambit of the feudal environment, and more surprisingly, Raj sticks to the traditional values and decides that he will not elope the girl, rather convince the father to accept him and have a support of the feudal structure. This according to Chopra is the strictly, sanitized view of the lives of second-generation NRIs. even in *Dil Chahta Hain*, the whole narrative is unfolded in Australia and the traditional beliefs of couple formation, feudal responsibility, family and the community. The narratives, thus, according to Rajadhyaksh exports Indian nationalism itself, now commodified and globalized into a 'feel good' version of 'our culture'.

c. The Young and the Restless in Bollywood

India is often celebrated as the youngest nation of the world owing to its population rise and the majority of which is under twenty seven. With the global and marketing ethics within the new Bollywood, a number of Hindi films have begun to focus the age group between eighteen and twenty five. films like *Dil Chahta Hain*, *Rang De Basanti* and *3 Idiots* have favoured a kind of utopic discourse for the youths which are essentially escapist and is caught in between the cobwebs of commodity fetishism and material success. More rampant with the brand ambassadors, the stars for the youth are known and branded faces for the products they stand for

- a star like Shahrukh Khan is “the face” of Pepsi and Santro cars, and Amir Khan the face of Coke and Titan watches. A curious functioning of the concoction of an idea of the global youth in Bollywood and a dreamworld of materiality and overconsumption is the politics of identity manufacturing. Amir Khan had been the ideal representation of youth till 3 Idiots, and now the place has been taken Ranbir Kapoor in films like *Yeh Jawani Hai Diwani* and *Barfi*. Hence the construction of the youth, even a doubly marginalized character of Barfi or Rancho of 3 Idiots gives us a new meaning of youth, its aspiration and an allegory of class. As Jameson had put it, class politics does not necessarily require representations of class in film narratives, but allegories through which the consciousness and the struggle will be readable. But the Bollywood narratives have gone one step further - whatever the ethnic (Barfi and Rancho look like perfect North Indian men but are represented as the marginalized North Eastern race) identity the protagonist has, whatever economic background and geo-political belonging be, they allegorically point to the projected consumer youth of the global modernity as a consumable hero. Politics of appropriation is almost an invincible (to a great extent unconscious) strategy of the new ideology of consumption where the success and failures of the youth are somehow measured in terms of material prosperity - the protagonist of 3 Idiots becomes a patent master and turns into a millionaire. This kind of appropriation is a consistent motive for most of the Ranbir Kapoor films - *Rockstar* portrays him as an unhappy but materially successful artist, *Wake Up Sid* ends up in the triumphant success of a good for nothing guy, and in *Yeh Jawani Hai Deewani* the protagonist lives a life of rich opulence which cannot be justified by the kind of job he does. The young and the restless of new Bollywood cinema has become a common trend, a youth that believes in consumable heroic ventures.

d. Bollywood Women - the Body and the Myth

It is known to all of us that women have always been subject to commodification in every form of media representation. But globalization has complicated the representation of women more than ever. There has been a deliberate shift in which Hindi popular films gave priority to women's characters in its narratives - the most popular and significant character was that of the mother. The mother figure had been a leit-motif for a majority of Hindi films since the iconic success of *Mother India* back in 1957. The trend of the mother figure as one of the most important components of the mainstream filmic imagination had been in vogue till the mid

nineties which strangely coincides with the advent of a new global Bollywood. If we try to recollect a little about the iconic representation of the mother in Hindi films, we will find that *Agneepath* (1991) was one of the last films which featured the role of the mother as an important part of the narrative. But strangely, the mother, the ultimate Indian epitome of support, courage and struggle, seems to disappear from the filmic imagination. With the globalised India on a progressive path of women's liberation, popularity of feminist movements and gender equality, the new trend, lifestyle and outlook has liberated the Bollywood narratives from the stereotypical representation of women in terms of a good mother, a chaste wife, or a fallen woman and weighing them on the scales of morality. The new Bollywood has liberated women from the traditional viewpoints all right, but the same woman has been turned into a more commodified package and an accepted form and object of sexual desire more than before. The metamorphosis from the chaste pious poor/middle-class mother to the global object of desire has a deeper economic and cultural ramification in the Indian context - the spurring of the Indian pageants (the achievements of Sushmita Sen as Miss Universe and Aishwariya Rai as Miss World), the remarkable advancement in fashion business and recognition of India as one of the powerhouse markets for cosmetics, apparels and merchandising had a deep impact on the ways women started being portrayed in the narratives of the new Bollywood cinema. Therefore, the impact and recognition of women's liberation and gender equality has of course given rise to Bollywood films like *Matrubhumi* dealing in female infanticide, or a film like *Lajja* which tells and retells and same story of atrocities on women, or even *Kiya Kehna* focusing on the women's right of surviving as a single mother in a conservative Indian society.

Firstly, there are films like *Ishkiya*, *Kahani*, *Page 3*, *Fashion*, *Corporate* and *Laga Chunri Mein Daag* where narratives revolve around the perception and experience of a woman in a modern India. What is interesting here is that the female protagonists are not at all sexually subdued as was the trend in the past, and is a woman of substance who is equal in the global market of the new nation.

Secondly, almost in all the major blockbusters and hits like *Kaho Na Pyar Hain*, *Humraz*, *Main Hoon Na*, *Dhoom I*, *Dhoom II*, *Mujhse Shadi Karoge*, *Murder 1* and *2*, *Hum Tum*, *Kyun... Ho Gaya Na*, *No Entry*, *Garam Masala*, *Salam Namaste*, *Welcome*, *Partner*, *Singh Is King*, *Cash*,

Race 1, *Race 2*, *Bachna Ae Haseeno*, *Dabaang 1 & 2*, *Tees Mar Khan*, *Kites*, *Hate Story*, *Zindagi Na Milegi Do Bara*, *Rowdy Rathore*, *Houseful 1 and 2*, *Yeh Jawani Hain Deewani* (the list does not seem to end) have a different mode of representation - these women are outgoing, sexually liberated and is at par with the Western women we are acquainted with in the global media. In this context, the representation of the woman is entirely based on the representation of their bodies - a commodity/object of desire in terms of the supermodel scopophilia but with middleclass sentiments. In many of the cases, sexuality of women, which was of immense importance in the past, has just become another 'spectacle' which titillates our desires. Both the parts of *Dhoom* and *Race* consciously or unconsciously put women and automobiles in the same phenomena of utility - just like a Porsche or a Mercedes the women in these films are driven and consumed by different men at different levels of the narratives. It is interesting to note that the dichotomy between women's liberation and women's overstressed portrayal as a commodity puts us back to the same logic - the validity of ethics and modernity in terms of gender in a global product of Bollywood cinema.

The third mode of narrative in terms of new Bollywood women is of course women centric, but the focus is entirely on women not as a mother or a daughter or a wife, but a strong individual, almost a femme fatale in Indian context, only that she reminds us of Jean Luc Godard's *Vivre Sa Vie* (1962). A pastiche and a biopic, *Dirty Picture* and *Ishkiya* (both played by Vidya Balan) had tried to capture this femme fatale essence of the Indian woman. At the same time the representation of the female body as a site of seduction as well destruction has been an evolving trend in recent times. This narrative is not barred from a film like *Kahaani* where, if not in sexual terms, representation of the pregnant body of the beautiful married lady (again played by Vidya Balan) becomes an erotic symbol which is unique to the female protagonist.

e. Globalized Pastiche and Period Narratives

Pastiche, as the dictionary meaning goes, is an imitation of the works done by the previous artists. This mode has been used successfully in contemporary Bollywood films and most of them have proven to be significant in terms of financial returns as well as laying new paths in terms of narratives. Bollywood pastiche imitates what it perceives to be characteristics of its referent with the perceptions which are temporally and culturally specific. Most of the times

'period' becomes a conducive term for pastiche. It was not before the late 90s that Bollywood started focusing on the history of India and portray it under big budgets and big banners. According to Richard Dyer, pastiche is very like that which it imitates, but is not identical to it. Bollywood has incorporated pastiche in its filmic narrative only after the advent of corporatized finance - simply for the fact that creating a pastiche and a period film would simply require a huge investment as the mise-en-scene of these forms of films are not only demanding but also require a big team with technical impetus. One should borne in mind that pastiche is not a period film, hence a film like Anurag Basu's *Barfi* should not be confused with Sanjay Leela Bansali's *Devdas*. It is irrelevant to argue whether it is right to put pastiche under the broad umbrella of period films by contemporary journalists, but it is important to note that as time is rolling by, Bollywood is growing up in terms of cinematic maturity and business development, periods and pastiches are becoming more and more recurrent with the releases of *Bhag Milkha Bhag*, *Kai Po Che*, *Gangs of Wasseypur 1, 2* and *Pan Singh Tomar*.

A period film focuses on a time period which is not contemporary or futuristic. Although most of the pastiche films are period ones, not all period films are pastiche. Period narratives would include films like *Lagaan*, *Parinita* and *Devdas* who have adhered to the historical timeline and has created the mise-en-scene to suit the time period. The same goes for *Lootera*, *Bhag Milkha Bhag*, *Pan Singh Tomar*, *Khoya Khoya Chand*, *Teri Meri Kahani* and *Special 26*.

Lagaan's narrative is a conglomeration of strategic management decisions with the backdrop of two sentiments of the nation - cricket and independence.

But *Om Shanti Om*, *Himmatwala*, *Dirty Picture*, *Action Replay* and *Barfi* selectively quotes earlier works and various parts of the narrative become tributes to earlier films, trends or cinema as a whole. *Om Shanti Om* is full of subtexts talking about the trends of the Bombay film industry of the 1970s. Pastiche narrative in this film becomes a subtle narration of the feelings of Bollywood and a view of how the industry looks at itself - this becomes prominent when a comparison is drawn between Satyajit Ray and Manmohan Desai in terms of popular film tropes. In the same way *Dirty Picture* recapitulates the eighties not only in terms of portraying the tragic

life of the vamp-actress Silk Smitha, but also a certain kind of Hindi popular music resonating the era of extravagant sets and choreography.

f. The essential dark India

With *Shiva* as a precursor to a contemporary generic trend in Hindi cinema, action films which are devoid of any spectacle are set in Indian slums and the dark allies. A distinct genre tendency can be traced after the 90s where Indian suburbs and slums have become a stereotypical representation of the underworld.

The underworld as a genre saw its bloom only after the global news media in India strengthened itself and started broadcasting various news which were not accessible at all by the common people in the earlier era. The imagination of the underworld (an image entirely created by the satellite channels) along with the newly evolved and much complicated network of corporatized black money through the narrow allies of the slums (what Asish Nandy calls 'the unintended city') found its way in the new Bollywood narratives. The first landmark film which brought out the seemingly verisimilitude of the underworld was *Satya* by Ram Gopal Verma in 1998. The film weaved a narrative that sowed the seeds of a new type of realism that had never been seen in a Bollywood flicks. What becomes more interesting in the film is the representation of the Indian urban class and their clashes of interests with an overarching backdrop of the underworld crime and the police as a repressive apparatus of the system. Of course the protagonist of *Satya* is indeed a tragic character in an Aristotelian way like any other gangster films, from *Scarface* to *Agneepath*. But what makes its narrative stand out is the characterization of an educated class as the ideal repressive force fulfilling the duties of the system - the cameo of Paresh Rawal as an educated middleclass family guy who is eventually a police commissioner and a young dedicated Aditya Srivastava as an inspector trying to eradicate the germs of the underworld nexus with merciless modus operandi. The political system as portrayed in the film and the group of gangsters along with the repressive apparatus of the state (police) forms a an unholy trinity of death and destruction, the anecdote being the protagonist himself through whom we see brittle and precarious era that Bollywood narratives just started dealing in. What followed *Satya* was stark realism without flamboyant song sequences and exotic locales in the genre of the new Indian gangster narrative. *Vastav*, *Shootout At Lokhandwala*, *Shootout At Wadala*, *Kaminey*, *Gangs of Wasseypur 1 & 2*, *Waisa Bhi Hota Hain Part II*, *Bhindi Bazar* and many more films

revolve around the central theme of the darker India - a narrative of that India which does not proclaim itself as the 'shining' nation of the NRIs and happy triumphs. Instead, these films have been consciously throwing light on the back streets of a global India where a concoction of harsher truth and imagination of a new global India meet each other. It is interesting to note that the narratives of the gangster films have witnessed a radical change in terms of the characterization of the gangsters - they are no more villains, but have become a part of the daily life in a third world India who cannot be judged under the narrow ambits of good and evil binaries. Gangsters, murder and getting entangled with the underworld crime has become something of a part of daily life - as put by Fredric Jameson, the more these elements are shown as inevitable and probable parts of life, the more it executes an effect of containment for the system as a whole. He goes on:

To name something is to domesticate it, to refer to it repeatedly is to persuade a fearful and beleaguered middle-class public that all of that is part of a known and catalogued world and thus somehow in order.

The above comment is reconfirmed when we see real life portrayals and fictional representations of underworld gangsters - *Sarkar*, *Company*, *D*, *Risk*, *Shootout At Wadala*, *Shootout At Lokhandwala*, *D Day*, *Once Upon A Time In Mumbai* are some of the successful commercial ventures. Ram Gopal Verma's *Sarkar* eulogizes Mumbai gangster turned politician Bal Thackeray while *Company*, *D*, *Risk*, *D Day*, *Once Upon A Time In Mumbai*, *Once Upon A Time In Mumbai Dobaara* puts up a narrative with the characters portraying Dawood, the most wanted criminal of India. But it is interesting to note that these narratives exhibit a conscious departure from the age old binaries and is more interested in problematizing the issues of blackmoney, monopoly corporations, wide-spread corruption and a grand disbelief on the State. These narratives are violent in its conceptual meaning, and have a resonance of a public involvement and public debate with multiple vantage points which may vary from one viewer to the other - thanks to the news media and public opinion ventures of the global satellite channels. The narratives somehow try to deepen the gulf between terrorism and the underworld - a matter which is subject to debates. But after underworld tragedies like *Satya* and *Vastav*, there has been a new mode of narrative where the divide between underworld criminals and a common man is fast becoming hazy. Repetition of these themes and appropriating the underworld criminals

within the umbrella of the middleclass sentiment is a prime part of this generic tendency - more often, successful comedies like Munnabhai series, *Welcome, Ready and Golmal* (Rohit Shetty's film, which has no relation with the previous film called Golmal of Hrishikesh Mukherjee) accommodates the underworld lords in the most humane of ways. Falling in love, petty anger, easy conversion into a good man and normalization of the notion of crime and murder has gained legitimacy in contemporary Bollywood narratives.

Conclusion

New Bollywood narratives have imbibed essences not only from all around the world (thanks to globalization) through their self-nurturing aspects of consciousness, but have also learnt to look back in its own crisis, but not in anger. Commodification, spectacles in terms of both technology and mise-en-scene and big budgets have infiltrated in the new Bollywood narratives. At the same time these narratives have also found their ways to critic and mock themselves being self-reflexive, and inventing new avenues to create narrative elements which were never communicated and catered to the largest audience of the world through its mainstream imagination.

- Soumya Suvra Das

MOOC on HINDI CINEMA

MODULE-23

MELODRAMA & CINEMATIC NARRATIONS

ACADEMIC SCRIPT

'Narration' is the process of unfolding a story in a certain order in time, mainly presented in continuous or discreet segments, which get linked and connected (most often because they are about a set of characters in a certain connected situation). One should not confuse the 'narrative' (i.e. the result of the act of narration) with the 'story', though they might appear to be similar. The narrative and the narration is dependent on the medium and genres, to which the story is not dependent. Therefore, different media might tell the same story differently; oral storytelling will differ from written storytelling, a narrative poem will narrate differently than an epic, a play will narrate differently than a film. This essay will try to discuss how a narrative is presented in the melodramatic mode, how it appeals to our empathy and emotions and how typically it articulates itself through the 'modes of excess' which is so specific to melodramas. Let us begin by understanding what the melodramatic mode is and how it functions in cinema.

What is Melodrama?

'Melodrama' has long been used as a derogatory term, especially in the form of the adjective 'melodramatic'. It meant - earlier in common parlance - cheap sensational drama which were too loud, manipulative of sentiments and emotions, excessive in nature, especially during dramatically important moments. The plots would be formulaic, simplistic with characters signifying pronounced goodness or badness; these plots would often feature implausible or less realistic coincidences, turn of fortunes and twists, but seldom to disturb the status quo. Melodramatic plots which are sentimental and which triggers intense pathos often feature women in lead characters and are addressed to women, thus often described as 'tearjerkers' or 'women's weepies' in Hollywood.

The term 'melodrama' originally meant drama with music (melos). In present times, it is often confused between a sort of style which might be evident in many categories of films, plays, literature or a definitive genre of films, plays, literature etc. It would theoretically pragmatic if instead of describing melodrama as a genre or style, we describe melodrama as a mode of address. In other words, 'melodrama' is a way of addressing, presenting a narrative. Let us first identify the features.

Melodramas would be primarily identified with a plot which is supposed to elicit strong emotions via intensely dramatic situations and turns of plot. Therefore, a film like *Pather Panchali*, though similarly triggering intense emotions, should not be considered as a melodrama because it is not based on convoluted dramatic plots, but observations of events of death and separation as it would have happened in real life.

Characters in melodramas would often signify extremes – pure good or pure evil – without shades of grey or realistic well-roundedness. In the Manichean world of melodrama, goodness is often associated with hardships and suffering, the hero or the heroine would often be victims glorified with goodness of heart or intentions. Conflicts would be less psychological than dramatic, where the protagonist had to make ethical choices which is determined by factors which are beyond individuals. Often these factors are social, but generally the social would be displaced or condensed to the familial sphere or the sphere of a small community. Thus, different historical or social drives would be represented by different characters.

The reliance of melodrama on plots featuring coincidences and dramatic twists or reversals would often place characters in challenging situations. It might be the death of a father-figure in the family, sudden bankruptcy or stripping off of social honour, the rich suddenly becoming impoverished or the poor hero suddenly discovered to be a rich man's lost son etc.

But the strongest features of melodrama might be evident in stylistic and formal flourishes. Dramatic scenes in novels might be written in pompous language, in films and theatre they might be presented in a loud, heavily stylized way. In cinema, acting might suddenly become stylized; theatrical and hyperbolic lighting, camera movement, editing and music might be used in a startling, expressive way, as if the drama is not satisfied by showing a scene, but highlights the dramatic density of the scene by the overt expressiveness of the design of the scene. It might seem that the scene might have more to say than its narrative content. We therefore understand the etymology of the term – in earlier drama important scenes were emphasized with music – therefore 'melos' has a place in melodrama. And in cinema, the function of music is taken over by other aspects of the mise-en-scene too. Such 'melodramatic scenes' always seem to point at a 'absent' repository of meaning, always indicating that the signification and significance lie in more than what is apparent, but never articulates it in legible terms.

To sum it up, melodrama is a mode of excess; it expresses through excesses of design and hints at an excess of meaning. The melodramatic world becomes a highly metaphorical world, a highly coded world, a world burdened with signification where an invisible but powerful narrative intelligence is always at work.

Peter Brooks is one of the many critics who has tried to provide an explanation of how the 'melodramatic imagination' works. Though he discussed novels and plays in his influential book *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess*, his theorization had much influence in the theoretical explanation of melodrama in cinema. For

Brooks, melodrama is essentially a modern mode, born in the moment when modernity was having its shape during the French Revolution.

According to Brooks, the institutions and beliefs of a pre-revolutionary world presented a 'sacred' or 'sacralized' view of the world, which was 'desacralized' with the advent of modernity. Thus, the heavily coded significance of the earlier world has lost its significance in a new world, almost devoid of meaning. It is in this new world, the melodramatic imagination 'resacralizes' the world in melodramatic texts where a hidden repository of meaning becomes active. This is described by Brooks as the 'moral occult'. The mode is modern because it deals with the ordinary bourgeois world, its everyday life and social reality, the hidden source of meaning is hidden because it is not palpable like that of the previous world. Therefore, when a despicable villain gets punished we cannot explain it as divine invention, but it is evident that an invisible narrative intelligence has orchestrated this punishment.

Many other theorists have described melodrama comparing it to the Freudian notion of hysteria and bodywriting, where the physical and verbal symptoms are manifestations of the unconscious. Freud this as bodywriting because to him the symptoms are nothing but heavily coded articulation or inscription of the unconscious which cannot be easily read. Melodramatic texts, similarly, are evident of dense excesses in the 'body of the text' – acting, lighting, sound-design, music, camera movement in cinema, for example – which never spell out, but hints at excessive meaning in a sort of 'textual unconscious'.

But what might form that 'textual unconscious'? Here we should understand that melodrama functions mainly in popular sphere of culture, where official and unofficial censorship might be always in work. Thus, all issues, all sorts of conflicts or contradictions, all sort of desired resolutions might not be articulated in a broader culture of consensual status quo. Nevertheless, these are issues and conflicts which are alive within the mass. Therefore, this issues find a displaced meaning in melodrama. Thus, a story of two conflicting brothers might be a displaced story of broader conflict in society referring to which directly might have been otherwise impossible.

In this way, one of the key drive behind melodrama is to articulate a desire which might be still not easy to spell out in society at large. Therefore, though the resolution of some metaphorical conflicts might be done in a conservative fashion obeying dominant discourses of the society, the heavy excess of articulation before the closure might indicate radical or oppositional desires. For example, a woman-centric story might have a patriarchal closure in a sentimental melodrama, but the excessive emotions before reaching the closure might articulate feminist desires, or desires critical of patriarchy.

Thus, rather than telling stories of discrete people, melodrama – most of the times – tells stories regarding societies at large, displaced into stories of families, generations or romantic-marital relationships. Since it will seldom tell stories of discreet individuals, but will tell stories of

character-types and personas, therefore a mother or a father – for example – will stand for ‘motherliness’ or patriarchy and not be a fully psychologized, well-rounded character.

Melodrama, therefore, heavily depends on spectatorial identification and a certain appeal to the spectator is constantly performed in a melodramatic performance. Since melodrama more than often presents a victim as a protagonist, the appeal most of the time is about justice in this world, and about sympathy.

The coincidences and reversal of fates, the turn of fortunes and sudden *deus ex machina* therefore appear to work out certain broader thesis about society; since melodrama is not bothered to tell a plausible story which might happen in the world, it is telling stories which will *make sense* of the world. One can say that the melodramatic mode is the way by which a public immersed in a changing, opaque world is trying to make coherent meaning of the world where its desires can get certain provisional articulation, where its desires for justice gets a certain legitimacy.

More than often, critics have contrasted melodrama with realism, where realism is understood to be a paradigm where objective reality, or societal and psychological reality can be understood in a rational, empirical way. But we should understand that while realism is a ‘form’ and melodrama is a ‘mode’ they might not be so easily compared. In other words, there might be melodramatic tendencies at work even within a realist text, where the ‘tendency’ will be evident in certain dramatic moment, moments of significance and moments of ‘expressivity’, i.e. when the realist text is trying to say something instead of, or along with, showing something. Though melodrama is necessarily a feature of popular culture, therefore, it might also have its use in higher artistic exercises or in avant-garde exercises where the artist is using it in a conscious, reflexive way.

MOOC on HINDI CINEMA

MODULE-24

MELODRAMATIC IMAGINATION IN INDIAN CINEMA

ACADEMIC SCRIPT

Indian mainstream cinema is famous – or infamous – for its melodramatic mode. The generic divisions had been distinct – either gangster, thriller, horror or noir – in the last two decades but the distinct melodramatic mode which was functional right after the advent of sound had been durable and still persists.

This mode is featured by heightened melodramatic plots, Manichean extremes of purely good and unadulterated evil characters, a lack of individuation. Indian mainstream cinema didn't have developed generic categories, instead a heterogenous narration which is episodic in nature wandered between different genres, e.g. a family melodrama might turn into a musical and comedy, then easily turn into thrillers or revenge dramas. A notable feature of this mode was its resistance to realism. This was so pronounced that the alternative/parallel cinema in India was kickstarted by

Satyajit Ray – through his debut film *PatherPanchali* in 1955 – as an opposition to this strong presence of melodrama in Indian mainstream cinema. Ray found the melodramatic tendencies not only as a strong obstacle to develop a modernist cinema in India, but also thought it to be a result of faulty ways of filmmaking in India. After him (with notable exceptions) Art Cinema in India generally meant a more realistic one than the mainstream films.

But before going into the specific features of Indian melodrama, let us try to understand what melodrama is.

What is Melodrama?

'Melodrama' has long been used as a derogatory term, especially in the form of the adjective 'melodramatic' - it meant - earlier in common parlance - cheap sensational drama which were too loud, manipulative of sentiments and emotions, excessive in nature, especially during dramatically important moments. The plots would be formulaic, simplistic with characters signifying pronounced goodness or badness; these plots would often feature implausible or less realistic coincidences, turn of fortunes and twists, but seldom to disturb the

status quo. Melodramatic plots which are sentimental and which triggers intense pathos often features women in lead characters and are addressed to women, thus often described as 'tearjerkers' or 'women's weepies' in Hollywood.

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But the strongest features of melodrama might be evident in stylistic and formal flourishes. Dramatic scenes in novels might be written in pompous language, in films and theatre they might be presented in a loud, heavily stylized way. In cinema, acting might suddenly becoming stylized, theatrical and hyperbolic' lighting, camera movement, editing and music might be used in a startling, expressive way, as if the drama is not satisfied by showing a scene, but highlights the dramatic density of the scene by the overt expressiveness of the design of the scene. It might seem that the scene might have more to say than its narrative content. We therefore understand the etymology of the term – in earlier drama important scenes were emphasized with music – there 'melos' has a place in melodrama. And in cinema, the function of music is taken over by other aspects of the mise-en-scene too. Such 'melodramatic scenes' always seem to point at a 'absent' repository of meaning, always indicating that the signification and significance lie in more than what is apparent, but never articulates it in legible terms.

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Features of Indian Melodrama

While theorists of melodrama have argued how melodrama functions as a mode of address in Hollywood films within the realist paradigm and have questioned the realism-melodrama binary, in Indian cinema – as we have discussed in the beginning –there is really a strong resistance to many features of realism while it incorporated many of its devices. Thus, continuity editing, rules of cinematic spatiality and narration, flashbacks via character cues etc. has been incorporated into Indian melodrama liberally, while being resistant to certain other attributes of realism.

Let us discuss few of these features. One of the striking features of Indian cinema is its use of music, particularly song and dance.

While due to the advent of sound most nations of the world saw the almost irreversible domination of Hollywood in the national markets, in India the result was exactly opposite. Sound enabled Indian cinema to dominate over Hollywood and other foreign films. This happened primarily because theatre and other folk-forms in India were predominantly musical in nature, and such forms were easily adapted into films. One of the first talkies in India, *Alam Ara* (1931) had 7 songs, *Shirin Farhad*, released in the same year had 18 songs, the next year saw *Indra Sabha* which had 69 songs. Indian cinema very quickly devised the method of playback singing, where actors lip-synchronized to songs recorded by professional singers to avoid the cumbersome process of shooting songs and accompanied music in sync-sound. The playback singing method liberated the shooting process from recording sound and paved way to a creative mise-en-scene design, editing and choreography which western music videos took up decades later.

Songs functioned in multiple ways. It turned the film into a variety show, where the narrative had breaks of songs entertaining the music-loving audience. Songs were

primarily used to depict romantic scenes, comic interludes, social commentaries and religious and artistic expressions. Within a decade or so after the advent of sound, songs were used in complex and sophisticated ways, often aiding characterizations (therefore, different characters will have different genres of songs associated) and getting incorporated into the process of narration (instead of taking breaks from them). Dances were used even when characters are not dancers by vocation; by the 1980s dancing became a requisite skill for lead actors and a benchmark for stardom.

As we said earlier, etymologically melodrama means 'music + drama', therefore one can say that Indian mainstream melodramas imparted a new dimension to the term, somehow akin to – though being different in many ways – from the western opera.

But how do the use of song and dance characterize the Indian melodramatic mode? Primarily by giving it a strong non-realist inflexion (if not anti-realist). Thus, the suspension of disbelief (or the maintenance of the fourth wall, lending a term from the theatre) which realism presupposes is definitely not an agenda for the Indian

audience. For example, when Dev Anand sings in the voice of Kishore Kumar, the audience do not believe that it is Dev Anand singing can consciously appreciate both the stars. Or, when Madhuri Dixit is dancing – both she and the screen she is occupying (and the film form) is aware of the presence of the audience and address it. This 'frontality' (i.e. the conscious addressing, being aware of the audience) is something the melodramatic mode of Hollywood can never address except in musicals and slapstick comedies.

Similarly, the dialog in Indian melodramas have a distinct quality. Dialogs in Indian cinema had a defined quality which can be described as 'literary' or 'rhetorical'. 'Literary' here might not necessarily mean something associated with prestigious literature (though the category called 'Muslim Socials' did maintain a mark of sophistication consciously), it means that dialogs in Indian cinema has a quality which exudes the quality of 'being written', rather than being naturalistic. Therefore, scenes of dramatic intensity or repartees are often featured by certain rhetorical flourishes which are to be instantly appreciated. Therefore, Indian film screening

are often witnessed to 'applauds' appreciating 'well written' dialogs. Often, the dialogs have a distinct 'rhetorical' quality, that is, use of metaphors, similes and other conscious usage of parts of speech and imageries became abundant, giving it a distinct non-naturalistic – often described by the term 'filmy' – trait. The 'delivery' of such dialogs by actors – Indian actors are often judged by their ability to perform verbally – are therefore marked with a double edge: the character speaking to another character on-screen is simultaneous with the consciousness that the actor is also addressing the audience. In other words, Indian cinema is also 'frontal' aurally.

Indian melodrama, therefore, has perfected a cinematic narration which is less a depiction of a diegetic world, but more of a social presentation where narrative, spectacle, iconography, verbal performance is blended into a whole. But unlike the western melodramatic imagination – if we follow Peter Brooke's theory – Indian melodrama do not necessarily present a 'resacralized' world in a post-sacred modernity. Therefore, in films like *Deewar* (1975) we see the sacred amulet worn by the hero falling off just

moments before he is shot; in other words, divine logic – if not interventions – might function even in a film which is about the Bombay underworld of the 1970s. This has been often explained as a collateral of an imposed and incomplete modernity where there had been no bourgeois revolution like that of French Revolution. It is to be noted that after globalization and an increasingly corporatized film industry, as the Bollywood form of entertainment is fashioned primarily to address the NRIs and the middle-class, such eruptions of the sacred has also decreased in Indian cinema.

One of such specific symptom of modernity in the Hindi film form (which is also evident in films of other regional languages) has been described by Madhava Prasad as 'feudal family romance', i.e. a form of family melodrama where the feudal patriarchal framework acts as a moral superego. This is another aspect which has relatively loosened or has been weakened in recent years. Because the Indian polity never saw a complete dominance of the bourgeois – rather saw the bourgeois in negotiation with other power sectors and interest groups, resulting in piecemeal reforms and modernizations – a 'realist form of

narration' which presupposes a modern citizen-subject was also not dominant. As a collateral, though the 'desire for a modern' was articulated, it was censored, kept under check, supervised by a feudal moral framework in Indian mainstream films. This resulted in interesting symptoms like not depicting certain intimacies between couples, a closure of romance via the approval of the greater joint family etc.

Three exemplary Indian Melodramatic films

We can now briefly discuss three films which would show how the Indian melodramatic imagination works.

The film we have mentioned previously, *Deewar*, one of the classic films of the 1970s which introduced the icon of 'angry young man' via the stardom of Amitabh Bachchan, might be one such film. One should not say that the film 'depicts' the turmoil Indian urbanity was in during those years like a realist film, but definitely the film articulates it in a melodramatic way. The plot is rather simple. An idealistic trade-union leader had to betray his cause and comrades when he is blackmailed by a corrupt mill-owner. Shamed and abused, the father of two young boys, leaves his family. The mother, facing the onslaught

of the fellow workers, had to leave for Bombay to start afresh. Ravi, the elder son turns into an excellent student and a police officer, but Vijay, the younger brother, traumatized by the childhood incident vacillates into the world of crime, becoming a powerful mafia don. The story climaxes in the brothers getting pitted to each other and the death of Vijay.

The entire narrative is presented in a flashback of the surviving mother and lawkeeper son when the latter is felicitated for his courage and sacrifice. Thus, it almost becomes a secret history which the establishment is unaware of and the viewers are privy too. It is evident that through the story of the mother and his two sons, the film is re-presenting the myth of Karna-Arjun-Kunti from Mahabharata, but with an intelligent twist: the 'illegitimate son' of the original myth is turned into a 'son whose love for his mother is illegitimated' because Vijay has turned into a criminal.

But the film – as in a good melodrama – appeals to the viewer by presenting the angst and pathos of Vijay, who cannot forget the shame and abuse the family went through, thus seeking moral valence for a kind of dissent.

Thus, one can say that *Deewar* finds an affective 'objective correlative' to the nation-wide dissent which was fermenting throughout the country, displacing the political into the familial and the social. The trope becomes more effective because the mill-owner who blackmails Ravi and Vijay's father never reappears in the film, robbing Vijay of a closure of revenge.

The use of melodrama as a social commentary is never rare in Indian cinema and one of the classic film is *Pyasa* (1957) starring and directed by the legendary Guru Dutt. Here also the protagonist was named Vijay, but in this film, he is a gentle poet. The film tells the story of a misunderstood and struggling poet who finds it difficult to publish his work and get recognition. While his erstwhile girlfriend is now married to a publishing tycoon, his work is appreciated by a prostitute who has accidentally chanced upon his writings. In a turn of event, Vijay is mistakenly presumed dead and his poems gain a 'posthumous' fame. Vijay – who was in a mental asylum – returns to the city to find it corrupt and materialistic. When his greedy brothers – to exploit Vijay's new-found fame – take sides with a rival

publisher to announce him to be 'not dead', Vijay denies to be the poet. Abused and rejected again, he leaves the urban society with Gulabo, the prostitute.

At the center of the plot lies two event of deaths: the death of Vijay's mother and the death of the beggar to whom Vijay gave his coat. While the latter is a perfect example of melodramatic coincidence and turn of fates, the earlier has no effect on the plot but has a profound role in the following order of affect. While earlier Vijay's poems are typical instances of romantic Urdu poetry and love poems, building up an aesthetic melancholia, after the mother's death and the following turn of almost absurd events, Vijay's poetry builds up a critique of the post-Independence society, working on the previous melancholia. Vijay's poems are never political in the way we expect, but are implicitly politicized as he compares the nation to a brothel and in the famous climax, calls for burning this greedy world. The slow building of an artist's subjectivity who transforms from an aesthete to a disillusioned, bitter commentator on society.

MOOC on HINDI CINEMA

MODULE-25

RECEPTION STUDIES: INDIAN FILMS AND MEDIA

ACADEMIC SCRIPT

During the second half of twentieth century the emergence of reception studies in the West led to a definitive shift in the study of cultural texts and media texts across disciplines. This shift gave rise to certain tendencies in disciplines like literature, art and mass communication and moving beyond the close reading of a text later developments in reception theory demonstrated how meaning is created between author, text and readership. First with Robert Hans Jauss' intervention with 'horizon of expectations' and 'active reader' and later with pioneers like Stuart Hall, Laura Mulvey, Dick Hebdige and others the developments in reception studies opened up newer avenues in looking at the making meaning of media texts and their circulation amongst their readers. In Indian context the media and film scholars extended the perceptions of reception theory and demonstrated how cinema and television reception often functioned here as an alternative model to the standardized media reception in the West. Ashis Rajadhyakshya focussed on how early cinema viewership in India was an extension of *Darshan*, which is characteristic of seeing and being seen by the god as a part of a religious experience. He demonstrated how the concept was active in Indian religion and mythological films in the early period of Indian cinema. In later period the reception of popular devotional film *Jay Santoshi Ma* (1975) offered media scholars an interesting text which extended the mythic materials in India Cinema in newer modes of viewership. With this film a new religious cult was born and the film pioneered in several aural cultural practices centering on religious text.

A section of film and media reception scholarships have focused on star texts and fandom. For instance in his article "Devotion and Defiance in Fan Activity" S.V Srinivas demonstrated how that fan activity in South India's film industries are not as naive as they are perceived. In his studies he has shown that the fan activities are not just about hero-worshipping. Rather fan activity is a space where a particular group manifests and asserts its aspirations for power and social acceptance. Srinivas concludes that fan activity is not only about devotion but also about defiance. The phenomenon he has used to corroborate his arguments is the highest paid Telegu star/actor Chiranjeevi's Fan Associations' (FAs) practices and tendencies in Vijaywada, Andhra Pradesh.

In his "Encoding/decoding model of communication" Stuart Hall offers a theoretical approach of how media messages are produced (which he sees as "encoding"), and how these

messages can be interpreted (“decoded”), disseminated and further interpreted. Hall claims that these messages can be interpreted in different ways depending on an individual viewer's cultural background, economic status, and personal experiences. Thus decoding does not inevitably follow encoding. In Indian television scholarships, scholars like Purnima Mankekar and Anjali Monteiro engage with this “decoding” while reading the popular television texts from pre-liberalization period of Indian TV. In later period various scholars from different disciplines extended the methods and perceptions of reception theory while engaging with literature, television programmes, theatre performances, cinema, art etc and theorizing significant ideas about Indian cultural texts and their viewership and/or readership.

In the year 1913, Dhundiraj Govind Phalke, popularly known as Dadasaheb Phalke made India's first full length feature *Raja Harishchandra* and after the success of his debut movie, *Raja Harishchandra*, he made over 90 movies and 26 short films in his film making career. Apart from the historical significance these early films by Phalke are interesting texts to study the reception models. It has been written in Phalke's biography that after watching a silent film, *The Life of Christ*, Phalke gave up his business in printing and turned to moving pictures. But interestingly, while making films, Phalke deliberately marked a departure from the western model of narrative cinema and invited his film viewers to get a *darshan* from the screen gods and goddesses. And the early film audiences as well used to ‘receive’ the films as an extension of rituals like going to temple and get a *darshan* from the gods/ goddesses. What was initiated by Phalke was later incorporated by many directors of Indian cinema while they filmed Hindu mythological or devotional stories. A film like *Jay Santoshi Ma* became phenomenal in offering a text to the cultural studies and media reception scholars. The popular reception of this was a departure from the narrative cinema reception model when the film audiences treated the film going like a ritual. Anita Guha, the actress who played the title role of goddess Santoshi Ma recollected in an interview that,

Audiences were showering coins, flower petals and rice at the screen in appreciation of the film. They entered the cinema barefoot and setup a small temple outside... In Bandra, where mythological films aren't shown, it ran for fifty weeks. It was a miracle.

Pravin Agarwal writes that the film *Jay Santoshi Maa* elevated Santoshi Mata, a little-known "new" goddess to the pan-Indian Hindu pantheon. The screenings of the film shows at cinema halls were accompanied by Hindu religious rituals by the audience. Following the tradition of Hindu temple, some of the audience entered the theatre barefoot. Agarwal writes:

...small shrines and temples dedicated to the goddess, started springing up all over North India. The film attained cult status and years after its release, special matinee Friday screenings were organized for women, who observed the goddess' Friday *vrata* (ritual fast) and engaged in her worship. The success of this low-budget film and media reports of the "sudden emergence of a modern *celluloid goddess*" resulted in scholarly interest in Santoshi Mata.

Michael Brand and John Stratton Hawley observed that it was the wife of Vijay Sharma, the director of *Jay Santoshi Maa*, who urged her husband to "spread the goddess's message". Hawley notes: "As her film brought her to life, *Santoshi Ma* quickly became one of the most important and widely worshiped goddesses in India, taking her place in poster-art form in the altar rooms of millions of Hindu homes". Hawley stresses that Santoshi Mata's iconography took elements from the familiar form of the Hindu goddesses. And he rightly points out that Santoshi Mata's characteristic posture standing or sitting on a lotus mirrored that of the goddess Lakshmi. Along with that the weapons she held—the sword and the trident—are traditional attributes taken from the popular iconography of the goddess Durga. According to Veena Das, the story of Santoshi Mata and Satyavati from *Jay Santoshi Maa* borrows from older Hindu legends like those of *sati* Anusuya and of the goddess Manasa. But more than the constructs of the visual and narrative, the film remains a historical case study of film reception in India. The way the reception of this film intervened the idea of popular visual culture and its consumption is noteworthy and deserves a critical focus. Pravin Agarwal writes that with rising popularity of the film, Santoshi Mata images and shrine were incorporated in Hindu temples and in some cases, Santoshi Mata was installed as the presiding deity like in Jodhpur, deposing other goddesses from that status. According to Professor Philip Lutgendorf the *Santoshi Maa vrata* was gaining popularity among women in North India in the 1960s, a decade before the release of *Jay Santoshi Maa*. But, Das argues that the film was instrumental in spreading the Santoshi Mata worship to the illiterate, who until then could not have known the written *vrata katha* (legend related to the vrata). The instances like the reception of films like *Jay Santoshi Ma* can be studied as departures from the standardized model of narrative cinema across the world and especially in the West.

Along with the reception of mythological and devotional films the fandom in Indian cinema offer new trajectories to engage with other dimensions of media receptions. Pandian's *Image Trap* studied the construct of the figure of M.G. Ramachandran (M.G.R), the legendary film star-cum-politician of Tamil Nadu, as a modern-day political myth. Pandian's book offers intriguing details about the extent to which MGR was successful in creating a stereotypical cinematic persona and also studies what repercussions it had on Tamil Nadu. Although what Pandian studies in this book is not fandom. He brings out the interface and interplay between the media and political processes. And the popular reception played a major role in the construction of political and cinematic persona of MGR. How his persona was 'received' and took part in what Pandian termed as constructed biographies remain a major focus in this work. S. V. Srinivas' work on fandom in Andhra Pradesh focuses on Chiranjeevi, the most popular Telegu Movie Star, a fanzine called Megastar Chiranjeevi and his three Thousand Fans' Association. Here he asserts that, fans are important because their 'active participation'

on the opening day of each of the film release and they constitute a major part of the repeat audience. But Srinivas with his study intervenes in the common belief that fans' associations were created and funded by production companies and studios as an extension to the "star system" in the hope that fans will provide free publicity for the star. In his article "Devotion and Defiance in Fan Activity" Srinivas demonstrated how despite the fans' commitments, they are a constant sources of anxiety for the star and he showed instances of the fanzine's attempt to 'discipline' Chiranjeevi and control the 'real' Chiranjeevi in order to create a real-hero figure. As the industry sources has confirmed that after the "slab system of taxation" was introduced, fans became more important for the distributors profits because fans' participation and repeated viewing of the same film made sure that film ran to packed houses. In the words of Chiranjeevi, what differentiates a star from a good actor is his ability to bring audiences to the theatres. He claims it is easier to be a good actor but being a star is a different phenomenon that happens once or twice in a generation. Srinivas argues that loyal fans are both beneficial and dangerous for the star. On one hand the unquestionable commitment and support of fans to their star in every situation is really beneficial for the Star. Srinivas gives the example of a film called *Alluda Majaaka* which was prevented from being banned by wide protest by fans and their threats of immolating themselves in May 1995. But the other side of the narrative is this unquestionable commitments of the fans also makes the star responsible to provide exactly the kind of entertainment the fans expect from him. Srinivas writes, "Given this devotion, and in this environment, his responsibility is to provide them not only with two and a half hour of entertainment that enables them to 'forget everything else', but also ensure that the films have the right 'message". As a consequence fans gain a position from where they seem to have a right to 'discipline' the star. They write angry letters, protest against films they disapprove of and engage in violent fights with fans of a rival star. There are even instances like fans vandalizing a theatre because of the manager's refusal to replay a song sequence or burning distributor's office. Chiranjeevi had to repeatedly ask his fans not to indulge in violence and instead be friendly with fans of other heroes through the fanzine. Chiranjeevi quotes "they (his fans) expect me to dance like Michael Jackson and fight like Jackie Chan". Hence Srinivas observes that, "far from being willing slaves of their masters, fans can be 'like cane wielding masters' ready to punish and difficult to please".

Fans' associations are generally comprised of about ten to twelve young male members who meet in public spaces such as tea shops, bicycle repair shops etc. These Fans' associations primarily project the star's image and promote his films and their activities depending on the kind of funds they have access to. Srinivas observes that when fans boycott the film, the other segments of the audience are also discouraged. In his words, "Fans thus create a space for themselves not only in the transaction between the movie and its viewer, but also in the

broader social cultural context of film-watching”. Fans have a tendency to take over public spaces that do not acknowledge their presence. In Vijaywada there are areas that have been marked as Chiranjeevi fan territories and Srinivas observes that in these territories Chiranjeevi’s fans have succeeded in driving away rival hero Balakrishna’s fans so that they cannot perform in theatres of those areas. Generally fans acquire tickets for the first day of Chiranjeevi’s film release and distribute them among public. If the theatre management refuses to provide a certain number of tickets to the fans, violent confrontations take place. On special days like the first day, or the day marking 50 days or 100 days of a film, cinema halls are taken over by the fans. On these days the fans decorate the theatres, shout slogans, whistle and applaud throughout the screening and even demand repeat screening of some particular scenes or songs. Srinivas sees these activities as responses to the film industry’s general indifference to the audience. He argues in an industry where audiences have no mechanism to give feedback on any film and only the box office collections matter to the producers, “FAs happen to be the only section of the audience that has not only forced the industry to listen to their views but to take them into consideration”. Very interestingly, fans’ associations actively participate in discussion, judging and analysing films. Srinivas gives a detailed account of how fans’ association’s analysis of films break it into several parts such as the story, songs, action, comedy and they are compared to its counterpart in Hindi, English or other language movies. He states that based on this analysis categories are invented, altered or reinforced (such as class film, mass film etc). In this way ‘the autonomy’ of the fans’ associations from the industry ‘empowers the fans’ and makes sure that the industry alone does not decide the shape of cinema to come. So with fans’ active involvement, industry does not remain the sole determinant of the film culture. S. V. Srinivas also observes fans’ association with established political parties and their regular social welfare service and how they reflect the aspirations of the fans to gain a social and political acceptance. One can also observe that fans of a particular star tend to have affiliation to a particular political party whether or not the star himself is involved or even known to support that party. Caste factors also influences the choice of political party and the star. Srinivas observes the similarities between party workers and fans, in their socio-economic background as well as in their activities. Srinivas compares FAs and political parties and writes both of these “attract people from similar socio-economic background, who share a common quest for social recognition and power”. So it can be said that Fan activity is not limited to hero worship. Stars become an icon with a specific set of attributes that are based on a range of their films and also their real life. This iconography of the star is then used by the fans to negotiate their social, political and cultural location in the public sphere. Srinivas exemplifies this with the point that Chiranjeevi became the rallying point of Kapu youth in Coastal Andhra in 1980s. Srinivas concludes his essay by stating that there is no ‘pure’ hero worship. “Fan activity neither constitutes the surrender of young people to the will of the industry, nor prevents them from articulating aspirations, which fans share with other members of their caste and class groups”.

Another important area to map media reception in India is television. The early period of the state owned television (Doordarshan) in India attracted the attention of media scholars. The works done on this period can broadly be divided into two categories: (1) textual or content analysis of a particular television genre or programme and (2) textual analysis enriched with

audience responses mostly done through ethnographic method. Works done by Jyoti Punwani (1998), Anand Mitra (1993), Prabha Krishnan (1990), Krishnan and Dighe (1997), Arvind Rajagopal (1997) are important works as which have critically analyzed the text of different serials on Doordarshan to reveal the Hindu-Hindi ideology embedded within them, and also examined the constructs of gendered citizen subject in the popular serials. Later works done by Purnima Mankekar (1999) and Anjali Monteiro (1998) looked into the way women were shown in the television serials on Doordarshan. And both of these scholars enriched their textual analysis of the media texts with empirical audience research. Mankekar (1999), in her study, demonstrated how age old issues of women's oppression/exploitation were re-enacted in early teleserials and an ideal womanhood was constructed through popular serials like Ramayan, Mahabharat, Udaan and others on Doordarshan. In her study, Mankekar attempts to read the constructs of national and gendered subject in these tele serials and tries to establish a dialogical interaction between TV texts and audience. Anjali Monteiro (1998) in her study highlights the viewership of television while explaining her observations during her research conducted among the working-class community, in Kamgar Nagar, Goa. In her study Monteiro points out that 'the strategies of viewers range from resistance to negotiated acceptance to complete incorporation of subject positions offered by televisual discourse'. Interestingly Monteiro's study resonates with the decoding technique of the viewers proposed by Stuart Hall. Another important study by Arvin Rajgopal traces the viewership and production popular mythological Ramayana relating it with the broader plane of Ram Janmabhumi movement of Indian politics. In later period various scholars attempted to understand and analyze the entry of private channels into the Indian subcontinent focusing both on their content and presentation; their impact on the Indian society, culture and Indian audiences. The soap operas as defined by the US television came into existence on Indian television in the 90s. A body of works has studied the impact of these soap operas and their viewership relating them with the constructs of visuals and narrative structure of these texts. Abhijit Roy's work, on the other hand, reads the reception of teleserials like *Jassi Jaisi Koi Naahin* mapping it in the pleasure principle of interactive TV standardized with reality television. In brief various scholarships on the reception of Indian film and television throw significant lights on specific areas of media and cultural studies. With the emergence and later developments in new media texts and scholarships on them we can observe and learn how the relationship between author/producer of media texts in India and the reader/user changes and how meaning is created between them. They are important interventions in making us aware of the interpretation of media texts in India and the 'uniqueness' of the reception models in Indian film and media with reference to the standardized media reception in the west.

MOOC on HINDI CINEMA
MODULE-3
INDIAN CINEMA: MADAN TO PHALKE

ACADEMIC SCRIPT

Cinema came to India in 1896, just a year after Lumiere brothers shot and exhibited their first series of silent shorts in Paris. On 7 July, 1896, as a package of six films by the Lumière Brothers, the first ever film exhibition in India was held at the Watson Hotel, in Bombay (Mumbai now). Their cameraman Maurius Sestier brought the Cinématographe, a three-in-one apparatus– camera, projector and developer. Announcing cinema as ‘marvel of the century,’ the *Times of India* regularly advertised these events ‘living photos in live sized reproduction’ as the screenings were repeated on 9 and 13 July, with several shows a day, ticketed at one rupee. Only a handful of Indian elites and British administrators could afford this price. A few days later, the show opened in Novelty Theatre for the general public. This time the number of films

had swelled to twenty-four. The screenings continued till 15th August, 1896. On the other hand, the celebrated journey of Indian cinema begun in 1913, with DG Phalke making *Raja Harishchandra*. Phalke's passion with the Indian mythological subjects and mastery over the medium made him a trendsetter and making mythological films became fairly popular among the early film makers in India.

But what happened in a period of seventeen years stretched between the first film exhibition in India (1896) and the making of the first Indian feature film (1913). Was there a lull? Or through these years Indians were being prepared to cope up with the new medium? Was it a period of intense preparation to engage with cinema in a larger and definite scale?

Everywhere in the world, the pre-cinema culture plays a major role in shaping the modes of early cinema practices. Important examples of that are still available here. Interestingly in India, the arrival of cinema was largely taken as an enhanced, spectacular mode of story-telling. For centuries, itinerant painters, singers and puppeteers have been travelling across the land, showing images and telling stories. In India, there were traditions like the *Chitra-kathi* and *patchitra*. Meaning

picture-stories or picture and story-telling, *Chitra-kathi* is a form of shadow-puppetry belonging to Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Elsewhere, we see the practice of scroll painting, like the *patchitra* in Bengal and Orissa, *phada* in Rajasthan. Stories are told through various panels on the surface of scrolls that opens either horizontally or vertically. It is more like the cinematic images flowing weaves of visuals and narration accompanied by performance. A panel could be long (as if a long- duration shot), at times only a face is shown (as if a close up). Performances at times are held in the night, a lamp illuminating the panels one by one, like cinema, the art of light-n-shadow. Such modes of performance still are integrated to life in villages and the cities, involving various caste-based artisans of different religious denomination.

The modern European instruments like the magic lantern became popular in India by the 19th century. They were especially welcomed in the royal courts. William Henry Jackson travelled all over India in 1895, taking photos, making slides and showing them in India and America. In 1892, an engineer MM Pitale of Thane (Mumbai), used to put up private shows with a magic lantern. His friend Mahadeorao Gopal Patwardhan

turned this into a business venture and named the magic lantern *Shambarik Kharolika*, meaning the lantern of the demon Shambar. The first ticketed public show was in 1895. The successive projection of the images and movements of the glass-slides created the illusion of the moving image. Following the age-old Indian dramatic tradition, the show began with a *Sutradhaar*, a narrator introducing a play, and like a puppeteer holding the thread of the story. The stories were mostly mythological, historical and romantic in nature.

As Indians were already familiar with the centuries old tradition of 'showing and telling' the stories, it immediately became one of the major reasons besides the attraction of the moving image. Also, there were performative traditions like the *nautanki*, *tamasha*, *jatra* etc. in various parts of the region. Also, there was an improvised modern form like proscenium theatre in Calcutta and Bombay. This varied context of the performative practices lays the foundation of appreciation of cinema in India on a greater level.

The early form of film exhibition and increasing popularity of the medium owe largely to 'tent cinema' or travelling theatre companies. Calling the show

'Thanawalla's Grand Kinetoscope', F. B. Thanawalla shot assorted footage of Bombay and exhibited them in various parts of Western India. But greatest of all, Surat (Gujarat) born Abdullay Esoofally travelled (1908-14) through large parts of the Far East, including Burma (now Myanmar), Singapore and Indonesia. In 1909, a photographer Raghupathy Venkiah Naidu set up a tent cinema near the Madras (now Chennai) Court with a projector and sound system with pre-recorded sound to go with the films. These tent screenings proved very successful, and Naidu travelled to Myanmar and Sri Lanka. Similarly in Madras too, S Vincent gained success in tent shows called 'Edison's Grand Cinema-megaphone', which he took to the North of India and Afghanistan. By the end of the first decade of 20th century, a clear shift from the temporary exhibition halls to the permanent in terms of the viewing practice can be seen. Bringing in all aspects of cinema, Aurora Film Company founded in (1911) by Anadi Nath Bose and Debi Ghosh, Kolkata made newsreels, shorts fiction, non-fiction (including famous singers singing), and long feature films. They showed their own films in tents, distributed those made by others, and later constructed permanent theatres. After

saving a large amount of money, Venkiah Naidu set up Gaiety, a permanent cinema hall in Madras, in 1914. Also after his long trip of six years, Abdullay Esoofally settled down in Mumbai in 1914 to join Ardeshir Irani. They acquired the Alexandra Theatre and later the Majestic, two famous theatres in Bombay, to develop them as permanent exhibition space for their films.

Filmmaking by foreign travellers and Indian personnel followed soon after the exhibition of Lumiere films. In 1897 H. S. Bhatvadekar, a photographer and cinema enthusiast, was the first Indian to shoot the first moving images by capturing a wrestling match and monkey dance at the Hanging Garden, Mumbai. He filmed important events, like the return of Mathematician Wrangler Paranjpe from England (1899) and the arrival of Lord and Lady Curzon at the Delhi Darbar (1903). In Calcutta, the first film shows were by Prof Stevenson and Fr. Eugene Lafont. And while being assisted by them, Hiralal Sen began shooting stage performances. As in the immediate understanding of the cinematic medium during the late 19th century-early 20th century was mostly based on the idea of extending the theatrical performative domain over a two-dimensional screen, most of the early filmmakers tried to record the

staged plays as their films. Sen started with recording a popular play of these days, *Dancing Scenes from the Flowers of Persia*, in 1898. However, many followed Sen even since the late-19th century. In 1898, Amritlal Bose screened a package of 'actualities' and 'fakes' at the famous Star theatre in Calcutta. Amarendra Nath Dutt used filmed scenes in his play *Bhramar* and thus mixing the two mediums.

Hirala Sen ventured into cinema initially as an exhibitor of the imported films even before the famous tycoon of Indian film business, J F Madan, who commercially started showing films in 1904. Within a short span of time, Sen began to capture real life events and staged plays to project them during public exhibitions. In most cases, these films were shown in the professional theatre houses in Calcutta, between two plays or during the intervals. The first film he shot under the guidance of Mr. Stephens of Pathe Freris Film Company was a serio-comic opera *Flower of Persia* (1898), based on a play named *Parasya Prasun* by Girish Ghosh. It has some selected scenes from the play. He continued his work with number of stage performances of literary adaptations thereafter- *Bhramar* (1901) from Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's famous novel *Krishnakanter*

Will, Alibaba (1904) from Kshirode Prasad Vidyavinod's original play etc. He was also known for his shooting of important political events like the anti-partition and *swdeshi* movements in Bengal. Moreover, his ad-films make him a pioneer in the then nascent field of advertisement business in India.

Eventually, the same phase can also be marked as the beginning of a monopoly over the film business in India which lasted for two decades. J.F. Madan, the Parsi pioneer of cinema in Calcutta and the owner of the Elphinstone Bioscope Co. shortly took over almost the 90 percent of the film business in India. He managed to procure the supply of films from the British and American companies which no other company could do. Most of his were located in military areas and the civil lines (areas set aside for British and senior Indian civilian administrators) of the major British dominated urban centres. It is also the fact that in the later stage Madan turned to production and imported Italian talent to establish this aspect of his enterprises. Their Elphinstone Bioscope Co. covered the historic Bengal Partition in 1905, directed by Jyotish Sarkar, which eventually serves as one of the first documentaries in India.

In 1919, Madan merged his company to establish Madan Theatres which would shortly start producing literary adaptation of mythological tales and the popular plays by the Bengali playwrights. Directors like Jyotish Bandopadhyay, Priyanath Gangopadhyay, Rustamji Dhotiwala were among the key figures who brought in the culture of the literary cinema in the Madan Theatres production schedule. It started with the production of *Bilwamangal* (1919), the first full length feature in Bengali. Around 50-odd films made under the Madan banner and about 40 out of the lot were either mythological films or the adaptations of popular literary works. They even hired eminent thespians like Girish Ghosh, Sisirkumar Bhaduri, Amritalal Bose to direct their films. Apart from Madan Theatres, the works of D N Ganguly, an alumnus of Tagore's Shantiniketan School, can be exemplified as relevant in this regard. His first venture after forming The Indo-British Film Company with the help of his friends, *Bilet Ferot* (England Returned; 1921), was a satirical silent film on the educated Bengali people who blindly aped the Western culture and also on the natives who detest everything they found alien to their culture. Ganguly then moved to Hyderabad where he

became one of the founders of the film industry in the Nizam's land.

Indian silent films were varied and rich, capturing the euphoria of new city formations and exhibiting the newly growing love for literature and theatre. The films included historical and social films adapted from historical and social novels — Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Bishabriksha* (by Jyotish Banerjee, 1922), Sarat Chandra Chatterjee's *Devdas* (Naresh Mitra, 1928). Mythological and devotional or Bhakti stories, of course, were the most popular all over India and formed the bulk of films produced in this period. The adventure and romance films too drew large audiences. Not only the heroes, they also cheered brave heroines—the swashbuckling Lalita Pawar in *Diler Jagar aka The Gallant Heart* (1931). The economy of cinema at this period was varied and many small producers entered the market. And there were developing studios, aiming to be modeled after the Hollywood: Madan Theatres, Imperial Studios and the General Pictures Corporation (A Narayanan, Madras).

Within the group of filmmakers, who worked brilliantly during the silent era, D. G. Phalke (popularly called Dadasaheb) diligently stands as a pioneer in his own

credit. Once an employee to Raja Ravi Varma's celebrated studio, Phalke was also a photographer, had a business of printing press and loved to perform magic shows. In 1910, he saw the film *Life of Christ* in a tent (distributed by America India Picture Palace) and was inspired to make similar Indian films which will portray the Indian mythological figures. In 1911, he sailed to England and was tutored by Cecil Hepworth in filmmaking. He returned with a camera, perforating machine, developing and printing equipment, and raw stock. Finally in 1913, Phalke released his first feature *Raja Harishchandra*—credited as the first Indian feature film. Phalke perfected the Mythological genre and excelled in special effects. To popularize the filmmaking practice within Indian enthusiasts, he also made several shorts on 'how to make films.' His daughter Mandakini Phalke, perhaps Indian's first film actress, acted in his film and also demonstrated the various moods of a performer. Phalke also made several documentaries and shot important events, like the Ahmedabad Congress of 1922.

His much-discussed works also stand for a formative tendency of Indian cinema—fixing an agenda at par with a powerful rhetoric of national emancipation--

Swadeshi. Phalke's works thus can also be realized in terms of shaping audience's gaze. The 'Indianness' in Phalke's films has largely been developed through an assembly of images and also the audience gaze and desire for them while determining actual standpoint for its spectators. For Phalke the discourse of 'Indianness' in cinema carries another significance. He thought of establishing a film industry where 'ownership, employees and stories are *swadeshi*. Phalke was preoccupied with his vision of a national film industry, enabled the production of the ideal images of Indian nation. Shortly after the release of *Raja Harishchandra*, he started writing about cinema in two Marathi newspapers- *Kesri* (run by Tilak) and *Navyug*. His writings provide an interesting account detailing how the institution of cinema and its apparatus could be appropriated by the non-western cultures for their different ideological and financial reasons (Phalke 1988: 51-54).

Phalke used of female impersonators for *Raja Harishchandra*, but shortly after he brought in a mother and daughter duo, Durgabai and Kamala Kamath for his next film *Mohini Bhasmasur* (1913). This effort of bringing women in film acting has a farfetched social

significance. Actresses began to come in from various social strata, class, caste and race. Many were professional performers, singers and dancers or belonged to the artisan class of itinerant performers; some others were from lower-middle and middle classes. All kinds of women joined in; but their situation proved to be very hard. This new industry was oppressive towards women. But despite exploitation from within and social stigma outside, some women did well. Fatima Begam made over eight films, produced and acted in several films. Three of her daughters acted in silent films; Zubeida took the Indian silent cinema to the talkies in *Alam Ara* (1931). Women from Anglo-Indian families were initially very successful; but they had to change their natal names. However, Patience Cooper did not do so and acted in over fifty films. She was a veritable star. Of Baghdadi Jewish origin, Ruby Mayer took on the name Sulochana. She started a production company and was later chosen a member of the Indian Cinematograph Committee. Renee Smith from Kolkata appeared in Himanshu Rai's *Light of Asia* (1925) at the age of fifteen and went on to work in over a dozen films. Gohar Mamajiwala, belonging to a Muslim family of Lahore, began acting at

the age of sixteen. Later with Chandulal Shah she founded Ranjit Studios.

Treating cinema as art, an artist from Kolhapur, Maharashtra, Baburao Painter made *Savkari Pash* (1922), a realistic film on the evils of money-lending. *Kalyan Khajina* (1924) on the Subedar of Kalyan and the King Shivaji was hailed for its reproduction of 17th century Maharashtra. Nataraja Mudaliar, one of the cinematographers of the Dilli Darbar (1903) made the first Tamil film *Keechaka Vadam* (1918) with a Williamson camera. With Tamil, English and Hindi inter-titles, it was widely released all over India, as well as Sri Lanka, Singapore, and Malaysia. Thus very early Tamil films found a market outside India.

In 1926, Chandulal Shah made his first film *Typist Girl* for Kohinoor and went on to make other successful films like *Gunsundari* (1927). Many filmmakers excelled in making entertaining films—like, Fatima Begum, India's first woman film director, who had started her career as an actress and producer.

The silent era saw so many pioneers enriched cinema in India in this period, RS Prakash, Dwarkadas Sampat, Haribhai Desai, Kanjibhai Rathod, Manilal Joshi, R.S. Chowdhury, Mohan Bhavnani, Homi Master, NB

Sarpotdar, Priyanath Ganguly, Suchet Singh, to name a few. Many of them kept working after the arrival of talkies during the late-1920s.

MOOC on HINDI CINEMA
MODULE-4
EARLY INDIAN SILENT CINEMA
ACADEMIC SCRIPT

Introduction

The question of Good or Bad Cinema has remained constant in the entire study of film history. Cinema has been accorded the status of Good cinema in accordance to different standards at different moments in History. What remained constant amidst these discussions was the question of form and content. Film form refers to the constitutive elements that make a film uniquely a “film” and not a painting or a short story. All works of art might be said to have both form and content. Content is what a work is about, while form is how that content is expressed. As with other narrative media, such as novels, theatre, comic books, epic poems etc., films organize stories according to sets of conventions, which are understood by filmmakers and recognized by film viewers. It is true that unlike Hollywood and other film Industries as such an idealized and coherent film form never existed in Indian Cinema, but the question of form and aesthetic did emerge at particular moments of history of Indian Cinema.

In his seminal book *Our Films Their Films*, the great realist Satyajit Ray wrote, as early as 1957, the unique positioning of Indian cinema, and the lack of it thereof, as was witnessed in the otherwise immensely developed and coherent American counterpart.

“One of the most significant phenomena of our time has been the development of the cinema from a –turn-of-the-century mechanical toy into the century’s most potent and versatile art form. In its early chameleon-like phase the cinema was used variously as an extension of photography, as a substitute for the theatre and the music hall, and as part of the magician’s paraphernalia. By the twenties, the cynics and know-all had stopped smirking and turned down their noses.

It was perhaps inevitable that the cinema should have found the greatest impetus in America. A country without any deep-rooted cultural and artistic traditions was perhaps best able to appraise the new medium objectively. Thanks to pioneers like (D.W.) Griffith, and to the vast sensation-mongering public with its constant clamour for something new, the basic style of film making was evolved and the tools for its production perfected much

quicker than would be normally possible. The cinema had now attained a stage where it can handle Shakespeare and psychiatry with equal facility.

Meanwhile, ‘studios sprang up’, to quote an American writer in *Screenwriter*, ‘even in such unlikely lands such as Indian and China’. One may note in passing that this springing up has been happening in India for nearly forty years. For a country so far removed from the centre of things, India took up film production surprisingly early. The first short was produced in 1907 and the first feature in 1913. By the twenties it had reached the status of big business.”

By stating so, Ray - without explicitly mentioning it - hinted at the rich traditional and mythological material that was the prime source material for the greater part of the Silent Era in Indian cinema. In other words, where American cinema could prosper technically because of a dearth of any recognizable tradition, Indian cinema largely banked on its vast mythological literature, and a gigantic vault of folklore, legends, and spiritual tales, that mainly revolved around the pious lives of prominent saintly men and women. It proceeded to hybridize into the canonical Indian cinema of the 1950s quite soon from there onwards.

“In 1896 just one year after their inaugural screening in Paris, Motion picture technology was introduced in the subcontinent on July 7, 1896, when a representative of Lumière brothers, presented the first cinematographe show at the Watson’s Hotel in Bombay, a few months after its premier in Paris” (Ganti 2004). “Along with being the site of first screening of motion pictures, Bombay was also the site of one of the first films made in India – a wrestling match shot in the city’s Hanging Gardens”(Ganti2004). Bombay which was known for being the center of trade and commerce in colonial India soon became the epicenter of film production too. This was primarily possible because of the infrastructural support of the Parsi theatre groups which provided the pool of workforce to the then emerging Hindi film industry. Thus Parsi theaters were accorded as the aesthetic and cultural antecedents of popular Hindi cinema (Garga 1996; Rajadhyaksha and Willemen 1999).

Nevertheless one figure which dominated early life of Indian cinema was Dadasaheb Phalke also known as ‘father of Indian Cinema’ who persuaded that Indian cinema should be made by and for Indians whether it is narrative film or educational and scientific documentaries. Phalke’s *Raja Harishchandra* (1913) set the genre of mythology as the dominant genre for early Indian cinema. Henceforth the study of early Indian cinema remained the study of Phalke and the genre of mythology.

DadasahebPhalke’s Contribution

Dhundiraj Govind Phalke commonly referred as Dadasaheb Phalke (1870-1944) was born in a Brahmin Marathi family on 30 April 1870 near Nashik in Maharashtra, where his father was an accomplished scholar. He joined Sir J. J. School of Art, Mumbai in 1885. After passing from J.J. School in 1890, Phalke went to the Kala

Bhavan in Baroda. Dadasaheb Phalke got highly inspired by a French film *Life of Christ* (Alice Guy: 1906) and it became a turning point in his life. Deeply moved by the film, Phalke saw it as his mission to bring 'Indian' images on screen.

“While *Life of Christ* was rolling fast before my eyes I was mentally visualizing the Gods Shri Krishna, Shri Ramachandra, their Gokul and Ayodhya... could we, the sons of India, ever be able to see Indian images on screen?” (Quoted in Rajadhyaksha 1993:49)

Phalke shot *Raja Harishchandra* in 1913 which is often recounted as the first Indian feature film in common press. The film was based on Indian epic Mahabharata and thus initiated the genre of Hindi popular films 'mythologies'. “The film revolved around the noble King Harishchandra who sacrificed everything he had to honor his promise to the sage Vishwamitra. His struggles and sacrifices on his journey form the crux of the story. Dadasaheb Phalke wrote the screenplay, produced the film, created the sets and directed it. Dadasaheb's entire family took part in the making of *Raja Harishchandra*, with his wife handling much of the technical details and his son Bhalachandra.D.Phalke played the role of the King's son Rohtash. Interestingly, the film had an all-male cast as no women were willing to play the leads. With no resort left, Dadasaheb cast a man to play the role of Harishchandra's wife, Taramati. The iconic endeavor had a run time of about 50 minutes and took almost seven months to complete. The title plates that were inserted in between the silent scenes were in English and in Hindi. Prior to this Phalke shot an instructional film 'The Birth of a Pea Plant' in 1912. This film brought forward the concept of 'time-lapse photography' and resulted in the capsule history of the growth of a pea into a pea-laden plant. It was this film that provided the financial assistance for his first feature film venture.”The film was premiered on 21 April 1913 at the Olympia Theater and followed by screening with one single print in Coronation Cinema Hall in Goregaon, Mumbai.”¹It was released under the banner of Phalke Film Company. Phalke Film Company thus remained a pioneering effort of institutionalization of cinema in India by Dadasaheb Phalke. Being a private enterprise the company was primarily a family run business with Phalke's family members remaining important heads of the business. The entire cast and crew (many of them were family members) lived under one roof very akin to the joint family system in India.

In 1917 following the success of *Raja Harishchandra* (1913) Phalke released *Lanka Dahan* (The Burning of Lanka). The film was based on an episode of the Hindu epic Ramayana, credited to Valmiki. This was also a great success for actor A. Salunke who played a double role in the film, playing the role of both Goddess Sita and God Rama. According to Barnouw and Krishnaswamy, when Rama appeared on screen, the audience

¹ Excerpt taken from :Verma. Esha “RAJA HARISHCHANDRA: A SILENT BEGINNING TO A CINEMATIC REVOLUTION” *Pandolin*.Web. Accessed on 4th Nov 2015 from ,<<http://pandolin.com/raja-harishchandra-a-silent-beginning-to-a-cinematic-revolution/>>

prostrated themselves before the screen(Barnouw and Krishnaswamy 1963:15). Later in 1918 he released *Shree Krishna Janma* (Birth of Shree Krishna) and *KaliyaMardan* (1919) based on the killing of the demon snake Kaliya by Shree Krishna in Childhood.

In his later films like *Setu Bandhan* (1932) too he confined himself to the genre of mythologies in spite of the fact that his main equipment (Williamson camera) as well as the raw stock was imported from London. In his films mythological gods and goddesses came alive in movie screens. Phalke as an exhibitor travelled far and wide. He travelled in bullock carts with projectors, screen and films and the profit earned though in coins were enormous.

“Phalke’s socio-political context was significantly shaped by anticolonial struggles against the British. Phalke himself had very nationalist intentions as evident in his concerns for an indigenous film industry” (Ganti 2004). The mythologies often had overtly nationalist agenda. He believed in the nationalistic doctrine of ‘swadeshi’ and his films overtly expressed nationalist sentiments through representation of Indian subject matter drawn from India’s glorious heritage.

“Another debate on account of Early Indian cinema is the debate of “frontality” of images in films particularly of Dadasaheb Phalke. In relation to the cinema in India, the matter of frontality was raised by Indian cultural and film historians Geeta Kapur and Ashish Rajadhyaksha. Rajadhyaksha has pursued Kapur's line of argument in relation to the cinema of Dadasaheb (Dhundiraj Govind) Phalke (1870-1944). Frontality is here connected to the way in which the term "iconicity" has been used by Geeta Kapur and other cultural historians: both refer to a kind of direct address to the viewer by way of a frame arranged in a 180 degrees space - as opposed to a 360 degrees space - such as the proscenium of a theatre. The frontal frame presents the viewer with a "reality" that is given and unchangeable. There is no place here for the viewer to roam. Frontality and iconicity often involve emphasizing action as being "signified" rather than performed. A "signified" action presupposes a viewer, or rather, inscribes the spectator in the text as an active element, a presence to whom the gesture is addressed, often emphatically”. (Vitali 2004)

“Since his films were made with nationalist sentiments Phalke entertained an oblique relation to the codes of cinema as it was made in Europe and the US. As Rajadhyaksha has convincingly argued, this was one of the reasons behind Phalke's choice of material, often from Hindu mythology, as well as for his use of a frontal address and a 180 degrees space, which Phalke recovered from, among other sources, the Parsee and Marathi theatres” (Vitali 2004).The paintings of Raja Ravi Verma (d. 1906) greatly influenced work of Dadasaheb Phalke and were a model for visual representation of the divine in Phalke’s films. Just as Ravi Verma brought

Hindu mythology on canvas, Phalke brought it in motion pictures (Abhijit 2008). Alongside Parsi theaters influenced the acting and the music in Phalke's films.

One of the problems which Phalke faced, was finding actresses for his films. The eye of the camera was often considered to be the public view and hence came forward the question of feminine modesty. Soon Phalke started recruiting men for playing the role of woman in films. In the film *Raja Harishchandra*, Phalke was unable to find a woman to play the role of Queen Taramati, Harishchandra's wife. Hence he had to cast a delicate looking man Anna Salunke who earlier worked as a cook, for this role.

“Even though Dadasaheb Phalke is often (inaccurately) credited to be the pioneer of cinema in India, it was in fact the efforts of a couple of gentlemen by the name of Save Dada (HarishchandraSakharamBhatavdekar) and HiralalSen who were the first to make 2 short films as early as 1897 and 1899. These short films were mere attempts at capturing live theatrical performances on film. F. B. Thanawala from Mumbai also made a few short films like the splendid view of Bombay and The Taboot Procession (1900). These films were often matter of fact documentation of events and had they survived the tribulations of time would have been valid cinematographic representative of those times with great historic value.

More than indigenous productions, a lot of cinematic entertainment was imported from abroad like *Life of Christ* (1901), *Aladin and the Wonderful Lamp* (1902), *Alibaba and 40 Thieves* (1903) and *Napoleon Bonaparte* (1904). This was primarily because India was a colony of the British Empire and a large English population lived in the country. It turned out to be a blessing in disguise as the availability of foreign cinema not only brought the wondrous technological advancements of the western world to India but also inspired the Indian film makers to venture into making full length feature films.”²

Post 'Phalke' Indian Silent Cinema

“In the 1920s other entrepreneurs followed in Phalke's footsteps. The main centre for these production companies was in Bombay/Mumbai; however there were also film studios in Calcutta/Kolkata and Madras/Chennai. An important producer was H J F Madan, who launched a Bioscope show in a tent in 1902. He expanded into theatres and later film production. This company was an early example of vertical integration. When Madan died in 1923 he owned 50 movie theatres, a third of the national total.

There were a series of high value productions mainly down to the efforts of Himansu Rai, who also acted in the films. They were directed by the German filmmaker Franz Osten working with a German cinematographer Emil

² Excerpt taken from "THE HISTORY OF INDIAN CINEMA.": SILENT ERA (1899 TO 1930). N.p., n.d. Web. 05 Nov. 2015. <<http://thehistoryofindiancinema.blogspot.in/2011/09/birth-of-cinema-in-india-silent-era.html>>.

Schünemann. Rai raised money both in India, Germany and from the British film industry. The final and most sumptuous of these epics was *Prapancha Pash / A Throw of the Dice* (1929). The film retells an episode from the Mahabharata about a king who is cheated of his throne and must struggle to win back the kingdom and his love. She is played by Seeta Devi, reckoned to be an Indian film diva. This is credited to British Instructional Films and Pro Patria Films Ltd. The surviving print is 6694 feet in length with English titles; it ran at 21 fps for 85 minutes. The other two films, which also survive, are *Prem Sanyas / The Light of Asia* (1925) this debut film from the production grouping dramatized a story about the life of the Buddha. Their second film was *Shiraz* (1928) which told the legend of the building of the Taj Mahal.”³

Conclusion

Both Kaushik Bhaumik and Stephen Huges have cast their doubts on this purist lineage of Indian cinematic form in the early period. The cultural genealogies involving Hindu mythological tradition are insufficient for understanding the pre-history of cinema of India. By 1930's alongside the technology of filmmaking, Indian cinema also imported the cultural apparatus and the modes of filmmaking which was then in various forms crafted into existing forms of entertainment. Cinema already did spend its infancy and youth in other countries and when it finally did come to India It came not only with film equipment, but also with existing genres and narrative form. Rather the visual and narrative form of early Indian cinema must be placed in wider context of parallel trans- cultural negotiation in other popular forms of representation. Indian popular painting from late 19th century exemplified by the work of Raja Ravi Verma , shifted the meaning of conventions of British academic art such as symmetry and perspective to combine illusion with strategies of ‘frontality’ producing what Ashis Rajadhyaksha calls a ‘neo traditionalist style’. Christopher Pinny reads translocation of western techniques in Indian Photography, lithography and early cinema in terms of diverse set of possibilities in which western representational technique became ‘one among many tool’. While Phalke’s invention of mythological genre has been regarded as unique to India, its original cinematic model was a foreign film ‘The Life of Christ’ as described by Phalke. It was not simply a matter of Indianization of cultural text originating in the west but a complex and ultimately commercially driven negotiation of popular taste and critical canons.” (Majumdar2009)

Kaushik Bhaumik states how a very small percentage of Indian silent cinema about 1500 were actually devoted to Indian religious subjects , he also mentions how the bulk of cinema in this period actually consisted of ‘a mix of fantasy films derived from the various story traditions popular in the subcontinent, the most significant one being the Arabian Nights, and stunt romance adventure films that underwent nuanced modulations through the 1920s to emerge as a fully modern action film genre by the time the talkies arrived in 1931.’ He then goes

³ Excerpt from "Indian Silent Cinema." Early Silent Film.N.p., 21 Oct. 2015. Web. 05 Nov. 2015. <<https://cinetext.wordpress.com/2015/10/21/indian-silent-cinema/>>.

on to address the question of 'Good' cinema in the early period of Indian cinema. Middle class cultural observers ascribed the status of 'respectable' cinema to cinema adapted from religious classics and cinema that was rooted to its 'tradition' and "which was also reproducible vision of a stable social order". "Indeed it was this classicized stable notion of 'tradition' that provided the vantage point from which the heady physical energies of the adventure romance film could be criticized as being harmful for society." (Bhaumik,2008) .The irony from my point of view is that, the labor in terms of actresses used in these so called 'respectable cinema' rooted in Indian tradition actually came from what we know as 'Bazaar'. Another reason why these romance adventures was never addressed as 'Good Cinema' was because of the existence of the romantic couple at the centre of the narrative which meant breaking away from the 'tradition'; which was at the heart of Indian 'cinematic imagination' of Early Indian Cinema.

MOOC on HINDI CINEMA
MODULE-5
STUDIO ERA & TALKIES:
(PRE-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD)
ACADEMIC SCRIPT

Introduction

In silent films dialogues were presented through inter-titles. However silent films were not completely silent, almost every film had a background score, which ran through the length of the film. Many of these scores were live in nature and helped to dramatize the narrative. Instruments such as piano accompaniment, violin, harmonium, tables and other musical instruments accompanied these silent films. The first talkie or Al Jolson's '*Jazz Singer*' in the U.S. ended the silent era in October, 1927. *Jazz Singer* was released with musical accompaniment on disc, but with four singing/talking sequences. On July 1928, they released their all-talking picture *The Lights of New York*. Talkies in India led to introduction of sound; incorporating of synchronized and were henceforth known as "talking pictures," or "talkies." The silent era had ended, and films now had sound, and we could hear actors and actresses talking. Madan Theater at Elphinstone Picture Palace in Calcutta exhibited the talkie *Melody of Love*, in early 1929, being the first theater in India with permanent sound set up. By 1930's many theaters in India were ready with equipment for projecting sound films.

The Early Talkie Era

On 14th March, 1931 first Indian talkie Alam Ara directed by A. Irani was released by Imperial film Company. It was the first full length sound feature film. A love story between a prince and a gypsy girl, it was based on a Parsi play written by Joseph David. The film was released at

Majestic Cinema, Bombay starring Prithviraj Kapoor, Zubeida, Master Vithal, Zillo and Wazir Mohammad Khan. It had 7 songs and the music director was Firozeshah M. Mistry. The curiosity was irresistible and the film was a stunning success. When *Alam Ara* was released in Mumbai's Majestic Cinema, police had to be called for crowd control. Both the film and the music was a success.

In the same year as many as 22 talkie films were made in India in several languages including Hindi, Bengali, Tamil and Telegu. "Within three weeks of the release of *Alam Ara*, Madan Theater released its first Bengali Talkie *Jamai Sasthi*. Madan followed this up with *Shirin Farhad* in Hindi. *Shirin Farhad* beat *Alam Ara* at Box office. The film is said to have featured 42 songs. Foreign sound technicians recorded the film on a Double system sound. Other regional films released around this time were *Kalidas* in Tamil, *Bhakta Prahlada* in Telegu, *Ayodhyecha Raja* in Marathi , *Narasinh Mehta* in Gujarati and *Dhruva Kumar* in Kannada." (Gulazara, Chatterjee: 170)

The popularity of talkies made two things evident; one is that films can be localized i.e. made in regional languages for communities understanding a specific language and secondarily it made songs an integral part of narrative of Indian cinema. Moreover it was a rupture in aesthetics of cinema in India from being primarily visual to the incorporation of aural aesthetics.

Initially the question of aesthetics remained in the preview of clear recording of sound. The quality and the clarity of dialogues remained a matter of utmost important. Silent films were recorded at 16 frames per second, however with the introduction of sound films started being recorded at 24 frames per second. This became necessary for reproduction of sound in consistence with the recorded audio. Also the cameras used during this period of time vie-e-vie the Mitchell Camera imported from U.S were heavy cameras, which discouraged cameraman of any complex camera work. Long takes thus became mandatory wherein actors entered and exited the frame with mannerism similar to a theatrical play. This was also required due to constrain of the microphone and lack of training in audio recording techniques (Dharamsey 2010). Virchand Dharamsey in an account on *Alam Ara* states how an American Sound expert Demming was became extremely irritated as *Alam Ara* had excessively long takes.

On the other hand with coming of talkies for a considerable period of time aural aesthetic took precedence from the visual aesthetics. It made Indian cinema heavily reliant of music and henceforth folk tradition of songs and dances became popular in films too. Alam Ara became a trend setter with its extremely popular music. By popular accounts the film had as many as 42 songs. Later films like *Shirin Farhad* (J.J Madan, 1931), *Indrasabha* (J.J Madan, 1932) had songs ranging from 42 to 69. Thus an average of 6 to 10 song sequence often accompanied by dance and performance became a mandate for Indian films. As a result of the increasing number of songs the narrative coherence of films took a backseat and what emerged a series of songs strung in loosely tied up plot.

Arrival of talkies also led to a change in the business model with slow dying down of individual enterprise and establishment of Hollywood based studio model. Most individual enterprises could not equip themselves with sound technologies. Due to lack of funds and failing to make the transition to sound they failed as business enterprise too. As a result filmmakers started to emulate Hollywood in their production methods. This factory oriented approach of Indian film industry was primarily influenced by Hollywood as it followed the very same mode of production commonly referred as 'studios' during 1910. The instituted a particular economic model that would permit them to control all aspects of the film industry in the same manner as Paramount or one of the other big American production houses. This meant that production, distribution and exhibition would all operate from the same base.

Film production during 1920's and 30's had stark similarities with Hollywood Studio system. The work force like technicians and actors were salaried and contracted employees and in accordance to the Hollywood counterpart, each studio was producing a particular genre of films. With the arrival of the studio system, the production budgets of the films were on a constant rise and due to strong competition among the individual studios; more emphasis was paid to the aesthetic qualities of the films. Each studio was now equipped with its own studio, a considerable number of sound stages, film laboratories as well as number of cameras and other film equipment's. This gave a greater amount of flexibility to the then existing cameramen and technicians resulting in better aesthetic qualities in films.

“As Gouranga Prasad Ghosh mentions with the coming off sound ‘Cinema was no longer remained a bioscope’”.

According to Madhuja Mukherjee “coming of sound was also related to problems of nationalism and language, therefore, issues of ‘purity’ of the language and ‘authenticity’ of the music became imperative.... In short, there were multiple issues at stake. First, the problem of technology, and secondly, cultures of performance. Forms of expression, speech pattern, choice of words, structure of language (besides the question of ‘which’ language to deploy) became significant” (Mukherjee .2007). Coming back to the question of form, Virchand Dharamsey gives an account of how early Indian talkies were influenced by Parsi theatres. ‘The advent of sound in Indian cinema brought the theatrical idiom to early Indian talkies, with most of the studios producing a style of ‘filmized plays’. He then goes on to give an account of how the influence of Parsi theatre gave rise to populace of oriental, mythological and costumes film genre in contrast to the genre which remained in prominence in the historical account of early Indian talkie namely socials.

The Rise of the Studios

Thus prior to World War II Indian cinema had a relatively integrated studio system popularly referred as the ‘Studio Era of Indian Cinema’ The Studio’s dominated the Indian film industry during 1930’s to mid-1950’s and primarily functioned on ‘one –big family principle’(Barnouw and Krishnaswamy,1998). Kohinoor film Company one of the very first studios formed in India was founded as early as 1918. Under the studio system all aspects of filmmaking such as pre-production, production, post-production, marketing, distribution etc. were handled under one banner or studio. According to Barnouw and Krishnaswamy it was during the studio era that the film industry was “beginning to have the look of an organized industry.” (Barnouw and Krishnaswamy 1980:117) All artist and technicians including the cast were either salaried employees or worked under contractual agreement with the concerned studio. Madhava Prasad states that “the production companies were functioning in a market economy; producing commodities for mass distribution, but production relations were based on kinship loyalties” (Prasad 1998; 40). However ‘unlike Hollywood these studios had no control over distribution and exhibition sector leading to their high mortality rate’. (Ganti 2004: 15)

The Studio Era of Indian Cinema was dominated by the presence of four important studio’s Imperial Films Company in Bombay, Prabhat Film Company in Pune, New Theatres in Calcutta, and Bombay Talkies. “While Imperial was significant for its efforts at technological innovation, the other three played a key role in training some of the important directors and actors of the

1950s and 1960s, thus laying the foundation for post-independence Hindi cinema.”(Ganti 2004:15)

Imperial Film Company in Bombay

“Established by Ardeshir Irani in 1926 and functioning until 1938, Imperial Films was organized as a vertically integrated concern with its own exhibition infrastructure. Closely associated with the costumed historical genre, Imperial’s (and India’s) first sound feature, *Alam Ara*. In 1929, it became the first studio in India to shoot scenes at night using incandescent lamps, as well as producing the first indigenously processed color film, *Kisan Kanya* (Farmer’s Daughter), in 1937. Imperial also produced the first Farsi language sound feature in 1933, *Dukhtare- Lur*, and thus an aspect of Iranian film history can be traced to Bombay”.(Ganti2004:16)

Prabhat Film Company in Pune

Prabhat Film Company was established in 1929 in Kolhapur as a partnership enterprise of five people working previously in Maharashtra Film Company. Visnupant Damle (1892-1945), S.Fatelal (1897-1964), V. Shantaram (1901-1990), K. Dhaibar (1890-1978) and S. Kulkarni together in 1929 founded Prabhat film Company.

“The company moved to Pune, the, 170 kilometers from Bombay, in 1933 where it became western India’s premier studio with a national reputation. Prabhat had many stars on its payroll, its own processing lab, well-equipped sound and editing departments, the largest stage floor in India, and an art department regarded as the country’s best.”(Ganti 2004:16)

“It’s style of filmmaking was influenced by the popular Marathi musical theater tradition known as Sangeet Natak. In terms of subjects it explored mostly mythological, devotional subjects and social themes. Films like *Ayodhyache Raja/Ayodhya ka Raja* (Marathi/Hindi 1932) on the truth-loving King Harishchandra, *Amrit Manthan* (1934) with human and animal sacrifices as a backdrop, and *Amar Jyoti*, the proto-feminist tale of a woman turning into a pirate and declaring war on the state when she is denied legal custody of her son, made Prabhat one of the finest producers in the country. However Prabhat’s greatest cinematic achievement was Damle-Fathelal’s *Sant Tukaram* (1936), a biopic of the seventeenth-century Maharashtrian saint. The film holds up surprisingly well, is a triumph in all departments of filmmaking, and boasts of two

remarkable central performances by Vishnupant Pagnis as Tukaram and Gauri as his earthy and practical wife Jijai. The studio thus pioneered new successful genres such as “saint films” – biographical films about popular poet-saints from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.”(Bali 2014)

“Prabhat’s success was due to good distribution arrangements and long-term contracts with exhibitors; it eventually took on distribution itself and built its own theaters in Bombay, Pune, and Madras. Prabhat lost its premier director, Shantaram, in 1942, when he broke away to set up his own studio in Bombay, and though it produced films after his departure, the studio finally closed in 1953. Its premises now form the campus of the Film and Television Institute of India.”(Ganti 2004:17)

New Theater in Calcutta

One of the Key regional studio was New Theatre (1931- 55) of Calcutta, which was characterized by its elite members and whose production drew heavily on literature. Founded by B.N Sircar it was later joined by Debki Bose, Dhiren Ganguly, and P.C Barua. Several Key figures central to Hindi film Industry including Bimal Roy, Nitin Bose and Hrishikesh Mukherjee, began their careers at New Theatre.

Unlike Imperial and Prabhat, which produced silent films prior to their changeover to sound, New Theatres from its very inception was a sound studio. Many of its films were based on Bengali novels and the studio aimed for the cinematic equivalent of literature.

It invested considerably in technological innovation and the technique of playback singing was first introduced by the studio in its 1935 film *Dhoop Chaon* (Sunlight- Shadow). One of the studio’s most significant films was *Devdas* made in both Bengali and Hindi in 1935.

Some of the other noted work *Dena Prona* 1931, *Chandidas* 1932, *Mastuto Bhai* 1933 and *Kapalkundala* 1933.

Dena Paona (1931-32), based on the popular novel by Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyaya, was the first film to be released under the banner of New Theatres.

In 1932, on the occasion of Tagore's 70th birth anniversary, New Theatres arranged the filming of *Natir Puja* – an adaptation of his poem *Pujarini*. This effort is important in the annals of Indian cinema as it is perhaps Tagore's only major involvement with the medium.

Bombay Talkies

“Bombay Talkies was among the largest pre-World War II sound studios in India and introduced some of the major stars and directors of post-independence Hindi cinema including Dev Anand, Raj Kapoor, Ashok Kumar and Dilip Kumar. Founded by Himansu Rai after his return from Europe in 1934, it was the only major studio established as a full-fledged corporate body with a board of directors that included prominent business leaders of Bombay. It was one of the first studios with backing from major financial institutions paying a regular dividend to shareholders from its third year onwards.

Rai had been involved in successful Indo-German co-productions during the silent era and much of the studio's early technical team – director, cameraman, set designer, and sound engineer – was imported from Germany. Bombay Talkies' early successes from 1936 to 1939 were directed by Franz Osten who had collaborated with Rai in Europe. These films were mainly rurally-based dramas with social reformist themes centering on the prejudices and exploitation that plagued village communities. After Rai's death in 1940, Devika Rani, his wife and the main star at the studio, took over as production controller.

The studio produced one of the biggest hits of the pre-independence era, *Kismet* in 1943 – a crime thriller about a pickpocket being united with his long-lost family. Some of the other Landmark Bombay Talkies films are socials including *Achut Kanya* (1936), *Kismet* (1943) and *Ziddi* (1948) and *Mahal* (1949). However the studio is remembered for the film *Achut Kanya* which explored a doomed romance between high cast Brahmin man and a woman from an 'untouchable' cast. [Excerpt taken from Ganti 2004]

Wadia Movietones

The studio was established in 1933 by J.B.H Wadia and Homi Wadia, film distributor Manchersha B. Billimoria, and brothers Burjor and Nadirsha Tata. It was a Parsi run film production company and is most known for stunt and action films, including *Hunterwali* (1935). The Hindi film *Hunterwali* in 1935 depicts the exploits of female Robinhood, was typical of the genre and the success of the company. The film made Mary Evans popularly known as Fearless Nadia extremely popular and it was the first lead role for Nadia. Some of the other films by Wadia Movietone are as follows *Lal-e-Yaman* (1933), *Noor-E-Yaman* (1935), *Miss Frontier Mail* (1936), *Diamond Queen* (1940), and *Hunterwali Ki Beti* (1943).

Decline of Studios

1. With the rise of independent value of 'stars' and the influx of black money into the film industry post World War II, the payment offered to the stars increased tenth fold in the form of unaccounted money. The 'star' thus became the most important commodity right from investment to distribution. In this system of production commonly referred as 'star system' stars operated as freelancer and were paid on a per film basis depending on their box office performance. This eventually led to a rise in the cost of production and by the end of 1950's the studio era of Indian cinema came to an end with the influx of a large number of independent producers into the very industry. A characteristic which dominated the Bombay film Industry until the beginning of the new millennium.
2. The outbreak of World War II led to shortage of film stock. Limitation of raw stock led to decline in number of films even made by established studios. The war period also was the period of intense political activity, which continued until independence in 1947. There was strict censorship on the subject of the films which then affected the quality, and choice of subjects by many filmmakers.

Rise of Socials

Rosie Thomas defines the question of aesthetics of 1930's as the "conflict between 'respectability' and 'popularity'". Film History was rewritten to celebrate the golden age of 'realist' 1930's socials. Bombay Talkies eclipsed Wadia Movietones. Rajadhyaksha describes how the socials became the 'privileged form of representation' for nationalist consciousness.

Thus in the History of Indian cinema 'Achut Kanya' became Good Cinema and 'Hunterwali Ki Beti' by Wadia Movietones got the reputation of making cheap films for the masses. Bombay Talkies, Prabhat making socials were considered more respectable than studios like Wadia Movietones who kept fighting for such respectability. New Theatre on the other hand earned this 'respectability' by catering to the literary taste of Bengali 'Bhadralok'. Its association with a literary based and socially conscious cinema, adapting works of Bengali literature for the screen made New Theatre an epitome of Good cinema.

Rosie Thomas makes a comparison between 'fearless Nadia' from Wadia Movietones and 'Achhut Kanya' Devika Rani in order to address this question of 'Respectable Cinema'. Devika Rani was a conventional Indian beauty, upper class, upper cast, educated at South Hampstead High School and Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, was widely known a granddaughter of Tagore. One can also not forget that Devika Rani and her husband director Himanshu Rai learned their craft at Berlin's UFA studio's drawing many of their technicians from German cinema. Nadia on the other hand was working with Zarko's Circus as a vaudeville singer and dancer was the outcaste who played the role of the princess.

MOOC on HINDI CINEMA
MODULE-6
CINEMA OF THE 1940S
ACADEMIC SCRIPT

Why distinguish the 1940s as a significant period in the historical trajectory of Indian cinema? Apart from being a decade that witnessed the World War and Indian Independence, what other ingredients make the cinematic scenario of the 1940s unique? Of course there cannot be any one-liner to answer these questions. Rather, each issue deserves multiple answers to gauge the magnitude of the said period.

First of all, the 1940s stands as an important transitory phase between two different characteristic modes of film production in India- the studio era and the era dominated by independent producers. The preceding decade, i.e. the 1930s, is celebrated as the heyday of the studios. Lead by the triumphant achievements of the major studios like the Bombay Talkies, New Theatres and Prabhat, the entire filmmaking practice took a new turn with the coming of the sound films, the 'talkies', in the early 1930s. The 1940s, on the other hand, experiences the fragmentation of the studio

system along with the rise of a series of new investors in the industry. Mostly because of the wartime money circulation in the domestic economy which resulted in a temporary boom, the economic scenario enabled the new producers to emerge as the powerful stakeholders. With this emergence, a new form of disorganized capital started to be invested in the film industry. The production structure was also forced to undergo massive changes. The hitherto integrated cycle of planning, pre-production, production, distribution got a severe blow after the new investors started pouring huge money into filmmaking. Consequently, as K A Abbas identifies it, the control of the industry shifts from the hands of the filmmakers to the film financiers and distributors.

In terms of the industry dynamics, as Sumita Chakravarty notes, the studio regime was mostly dominated by the Parsee and Gujrati entrepreneurs and Bengali professionals who had given it a flavour of the modern system characterised by a stable and generic mode of production. It is like that the two crucial constituents, the entrepreneurs and the professionals, came together to 'set their stamp on the fledging film industry' (Chakravarty 2009: 40). Later

during the 1940s, this model had to undergo a radical change due to the influx of Punjabi and Marwari capital. The business interests of these new investors shift the industry from a position that used to maintain a nationalist bias to an industry which becomes busy creating a bunch of 'unsophisticated values of entertainment' (Shoemith 2009: 445). Through the process of the fragmentation of the apparatus and also through creating separate clusters for film production, this tendency gets slowly established as the dominant mode of production in Indian cinema. As a sharp contrast to the centralised studio system, the industry gradually shapes into the form of, what Madhava Prasad terms, the 'heterogeneous form of manufacture' (Prasad 1998: 31-32). The disorganization of the production apparatus however has a farfetched effect as it is being developed as an objective condition to transform the apparent linearity of the narrative cinema once greatly achieved by the big studios.

Especially during the crises of the industry in 1940s, the heterogeneity of production perhaps enabled the emergence of a new set of films having a particular degree of 'social legitimacy' into vision. The 'legitimacy' was largely attributed to the realist thematic of the

films focusing on the issues of poverty, misery, exploitation, faint yet strong optimism etc. I suggest that the same action enabling a pre-viewing semantic exchange between the film and the spectator works here behind the popularity of these films. However, almost the entire phase of the 1940s and 1950s was flooded with this kind of films which tended to redefine the cinematic mode of social engagement in new terms. Prasad strike a similar note as he observes, by the late-1940s, a 'silent revolution' was discovered, demonstrating audience dissatisfaction with the existing formula films and the search for new formulas based on realistic stories were launched' (ibid 44).

Secondly, the disintegration of the existing studio system since the early 1940s opens up a rather uncontrolled sphere of filmmaking practice, which results into further experimentation in the respective fields like script writing, music, acting, choreography etc. Progressive writers like Sadat Hasan Manto and Munsii Premchand also worked for the industry for a while as storywriter in the films like *Kisan Kanya* (1938), *Apni Nagariya* (1940) and *Mazdoor* (1934) respectively. From the early-1940s, a huge section of the intellectuals became aligned to the agenda of anti-

Fascist progressive politics, which catalyzed further radicalization of the film industry in terms of their engagements in framing the narratives, writing scripts, lyrics, composing music, improvising acting etc. K A Abbas, gradually emerging as the face of the progressivism in the Bombay film industry, became a key player in social realist films. These experiments eventually helped reorganizing the audiences from being essentially middle class (during the studio era) into a huge sector of mass audiences.

On the other hand, the ever engrossing mass nature of the film medium in India started altering the dynamics of relationship between the industry and various levels of government agencies (Shoemith 2009: 440). The role of the governing agencies, in the midst of these changes, was quite unfavourable for the established film entrepreneurs. The problems were mostly in terms of the raw film stocks and censorship. There was no such Indian factory to manufacture the raw materials for filmmaking. During war, it became extremely difficult to import those materials to India. Moreover, the mushrooming number of new production units multiplied the problem. The number of the new producers increased exponentially- during 1940, there

were 42 new producers among a total number of 100, collectively releasing 171 films whereas in 1942 the number of the new producers rose to 55 among 108, releasing 163 films altogether. And out of these 108 producers, most of them began their business within a year or two. In order to control the situation, government put a limit of 11,000 feet on the length of the possible use of raw stock film for a feature. They also started to follow a stringent rule in allocating raw film stock among the producers with a condition that the benefited units will have to make at least one feature film out of every three as a 'war effort' film. This 'war effort film' must be made to support the agenda of the Allied forces in the war. Ironically the government, even after exercising censorship in a very low scale during the War, was relatively reluctant to solve the crises the industry facing during and because of the War (FEC 1951: 326).

Nevertheless, it is interesting to see that most of the progressive films of this period were made as 'war effort films'. As most of the leading film producers supported the Congress' position to boycott the war effort, the industry became unable to take advantages of the relaxation in raw-stock allocation by making a

war-effort film. But some producers and directors had taken this occasion as an opportunity to experiment. IPTA's *Dharti Ke Laal* (1946), Chentan Anand's *Neecha Nagar* (1946) and V Shantaram's *Doctor Kotnis Ki Amar Kahani* (1946) are most cited examples of that band. However, by the end of the WW-II, it was clearly visible that the time for the big studios is going over quickly. The vacuum therefore was filled promptly by the new producers, marking the beginning of a new era. The then existing liaison between the industry and the nationalist politics therefore had to lift itself up to a new level to face the impending challenges.

Thirdly, the traffic between the rapidly changing domain of nationalist politics and Indian cinema gradually becomes one of the major modifying factors in determining the form, content and representative modes of the films of the 1940s. Interestingly, the decade witnesses a serious threat to the Indian National Congress's hegemony over the national imagination. And the effects of these developments in the national context gradually infiltrated the popular imagination and encouraged an imagination towards a different cultural dimension for the upcoming nation-state. In this context the communist influenced *Indian*

Peoples' Theatre Association (IPTA) and the progressive cultural movement achieved a significant breakthrough in successfully assimilating the different voices of dissent under a single, elusive cultural canopy of an alternative discourse of nationalism. The approach of the movement, during the period of the late-1930s to the early-1950s, broadly materialized within the nationalist institution, was successful in providing an alternative cultural interpretation of the nation. IPTA indeed plays a pivotal role in reorganizing the 'national' ensemble of Indian cinema. The affinity towards practicing social realism in films as the most viable cinematic form to address diverse issues of the national construction was not only an important contribution from this phase but was also largely responsible in forming a specific cultural language for Indian Cinema during and even after this period.

Films like *Naya Sansar* (1941) and *Kismet* (1943), although made by one of the established studios-Bombay Talkies, however signal the said changes. *Naya Sansar*, written by the emerging figure of the progressive journalism KA Abbas, talks about the plight of a radical journalist and his fight against mainstream media. On the other hand *Kismet*,

apparently being a crime thriller and made as a 'war effort film', interestingly provides a cinematic account of the impending crisis of the studio system and the film industry in India. Ravi Vasudevan comments that the films of the 1940s, like *Kismet*, do not only integrate their narratives into such a perception of the social norm, but that the film industry also generates information about its industrial arrangements in terms of the same familial metaphor (Vasudevan 1991: 183-184). The crisis that was inscribed in the structural feature of *Kismet*, was eventually an impending one and was further deepened by war. In New Theatre's *Mukti* (1937), perhaps for the first time in Bengali cinema, the working class appears on screen as a group of people, virtually as a 'class', in the roles of exploited tea-garden workers. The activities of New Theatres takes a new turn towards progressive social realism through a new range of young directors like Bimal Roy, Satyen Bose, Hemen Gupta et.al. *Udayer Pathe* (1943) is a significant example of this trend. Apart from the established ones, other important studios and directors had simultaneously responded to the rapidly changing scenario of Indian society. Mehboob Khan's *Ek Hi Rasta* (1939), *Aurat* (1941), *Roti*

(1942) can be seen as representatives of this trend. These films in fact present a peculiar form of Indian melodrama. *Aurat* was later remade as the famous *Mother India* (1957). Khan made experiments with elements of German expressionism in *Roti* (1942).

Among the 'war effort film' category, *Doctor Kotnis Ki Amar Kahani* (1946) is remarkable not only because of V Shantaram's tactical use of nationalist sentiments, but also because of the appreciations he received from two mutually contending sections— the government and the Congress. The story, originally written by Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, is based on the real life struggle of Dr. Dwarkanath Kotnis, who was sent to China during the WW-II to provide medical assistance to the famous communist Eighth-Route Army, led by Mao-tse Tung, fighting against the Japanese invasion in Yenan province. It was Nehru's proposal to send a medical mission to China to express India's solidarity with their struggle for liberation. Kotnis went there, stayed with them and died on the warfront. It set a significant example of the internationalist solidarity movement against imperialism. The film, full with iconic motifs and socialist symbols bearing the essence of new Indianness, eventually served the purpose of the

progressive cultural movement that was claiming to redefine nationalism. Another war effort film, *Manasamraksanam* (Tamil, 1945), which dealt with the issue of Japanese aggression, achieved huge success. It was directed by the founder of Madras United Artistes Association and a member of Congress party, K Subrahmanyam.

The intervention of IPTA played a very important role both in Bombay and Calcutta-based film industries. Although their organizational effort was limited to only one film– *Dharti Ke Laal* (1946), but IPTA proved to be influential in a few more films made during this period. Chentan Anand's *Neecha Nagar* (1946) and Nimai Ghosh's *Chinnamul* (1950) are prominent examples of IPTA-influenced films. Many workers-activists of the organisation played several important roles in each of these films. *Dharti Ke Laal* was perhaps the first collective film-endeavour in India. For the first time in the history of Indian cinema, a group of politically motivated artists collectively decided to make a film to convey their messages to the people. *Neecha Nagar* is an example of a similar political attempt by Chetan Anand, an eminent IPTA activist. The production of the film was largely supported by the organization.

Significantly, Anand's experience with formal experiments (German Expressionism and Russian iconography) introduced a fairly new pattern for Indian cinema. It received the grand prize in the 1946 Cannes Film Festival. Moreover, *Neecha Nagar* provides the first instance where the subject of the real 'mass' appears in its full revolutionary vitality in Indian cinema. The last among the lot is the Bengali film *Chhinnamul*. It provides a fictional narrative of the agony of partition. The director Nimai Ghosh was a sympathizer of IPTA. Like *Neecha Nagar*, a large participation of IPTA workers made this political venture successful. *Chhinnamul* is remarkable because of its realist aesthetic approach. It used the city space of Calcutta as its backdrop and deployed a classical documentary style to depict the real lives of the refugees in stations, roadside and refugee camps. *Chhinnamul* eventually acts as a prelude for the realist approach in Indian cinema that came to enter the arena in the upcoming years.

In South India, political populism started playing decisive roles in devising the strategy for the filmmakers since the 1930s. There were Telugu films like *Malla Pilla* (1938), made against the atrocities

committed by the caste-system and *Raithu Bidha* (1939), focusing on the *Zamindari* exploitation. In Madras, K. Subramanyam made his epic Tamil film *Thyagabhoomi* in 1939, taking Gandhian politics as the principal thematic for the film. Till the 1940s, the major centre for production of South Indian cinema, i.e. for films to be made in Tamil, Telugu, Kannda and Malayalam languages, was Madras. Also, there was no state named Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala or even Tamil Nadu. Madras presidency used to cover a huge geographical area consisting Tamil and Telugu speaking population. There were Princely states like Hyderabad, Mysore and Travancore. Madras used to serve as the principal production centre for this heterogeneous conglomeration. As a result, mutual influence became a common phenomenon between different culture and languages. On that context, studios like Gemini and AVM played a significant role in shaping the popular mode of film production in South India. S.S. Vasan founded Gemini in 1940 and became the key figure for the films like *Madanakamarajan* (Tamil, 1940), *Jeevana Mukthi* (Telugu, 1941), *Apoorva Sahodarargal* (Tamil, Telugu, Hindi, 1949), *Avvaiyyar* (Tamil, 1953) etc. Even *Kalpana* (Hindi, 1948), Uday

Shankar's masterpiece, was shot at Gemini studio. Another important break for Gemini was *Chandralekhaa* (Tamil, 1948) as it was the first among the Tamil films to be released on all India basis and distribution. On the other hand, AVM is popularly known for *Parashakti* (Tamil 1952). The film introduced Sivaji Ganesan, the future superstar of Tamil cinema. After *Parashakti*, the politics of South India never remained same. The waves of anti-Brahmin and Dravid movement swept the influences of Congress away from the region and established strong sense of Tamil nationalism in command. The scriptwriter of *Parashakti*, M Karunanidhi, later became the chief minister of the state for several times.

The war ended in 1945, but the industry continued to be stricken with the problems. The dream for an independent India became true in 1947 at the cost of riots and partition. The Punjabi and Bengali film industries lost a large part of their market. Bengali industry lost almost 40% of its market and half of its exhibition outlets fell into the East Pakistan. The Punjabi industry also faced similar consequences, but less in magnitude. Bombay therefore emerged as the face of the Indian film industry with Madras as the sole

competitor. And the Bengali Industry in post-Independence India was lagging far behind Bombay. But, there was no significant change and no visible sign of relief as the attitude of the government of independent India towards the industry became even worse after the transfer of power. The new government increased the entertainment taxes, implemented different levies. Furthermore, almost every appellate authority continued to maintain a general reluctance. One estimate made in 1949 shows that the 60% of all the box office receipts were going to the government in the form of various taxes. After a round of protests, there came a response from the government. In the same year a decision was taken to appoint a seven member Film Enquiry Committee. A then member of the constituent assembly, S K Patil, was chosen as the head of this committee. Among the other members there were two distinguished representatives from the film industry- B N Sircar, the father figure of the New Theatres Limited and V Shantaram, co-founder of the Prabhat Film Company. The committee submitted its report in 1951 with several suggestions and recommendations. But, there was no sign of any effective measure taken by the government and the

industry got no relief from drastic tax-system even after the committee submitted its report. Only one recommendation was acted upon later in the 1960s- the establishment of a film school in Pune. Many industry representatives were seemingly disillusioned; they virtually lost the hope that once looked forward to become a part of the nation-building project of the new born Indian republic.

MOOC on HINDI CINEMA

MODULE-7

MEHBOOB KHAN

ACADEMIC SCRIPT

While both Mehboob Khan, producer-director, and his film, '*Mother India*', 1957, are the two most well known icons of Indian cinemas, yet, before we enter into an in-depth discussion on *Mother India* and other films, it is crucial to understand Mehboob Khan's early experiences. 'Mehboob', as he is referred to in the titles of the films, began his career with Sagar Movietone, and some of his early films during the '30s are *Deccan Queen*, and *Ali Baba* etc. Nevertheless, if a meaningful curve is to be located then, one needs to examine one of Mehboob's early films, namely *Aurat*, 1940. A reading of *Aurat* alerts us about both a longer history of the pronounced melodramatic mode, as well, informs us regarding the manner in which Mehboob's celebrated style evolved. Indeed, contemporary studies on Mehboob Khan's films, may be further complicated if we read his notable style in relation to his early films, and locate the tracks through a close-reading of those, especially *Aurat*. Mehboob Khan's style, for instance, the mixing of realistic settings, and melodramatic narration, as well, a specific excessive *mise-en-scene*, for example, the definitive framing of faces against the large looming sky, was probably drawn from a range of propaganda films, including British documentary, Soviet Cinema and art. 'Indiaincine.ma' suggests that *Aurat* "lacks the psychoanalytic dimension and the overtones of socialist realism present in its famous remake [*Mother India*], but Akhtar's [*Aurat/ Mother*] extraordinary performance endows it with an earthiness rooted in North Indian agrarian feudalism that was later replaced by *Mother India*'s attempt at nationalist allegory." The note rightly points out this transition from the '*Aurat*' or (any)

woman to “Mother India” between 1940 and 1957.

In 1942 Mehboob made *Roti*, which is considered to be a benchmark of the socialist frames he created. The film is a sharp critique of capitalism, and opens with shots of people suffering in hunger, scrambling for bread, picking up from garbage bins, fighting with dogs, begging, and dying, which is juxtaposed with a didactic voiceover, that ironically cries “maarja, maarja/ die, die”, and thus, counterposes contemporary situation against community upliftment and socialism. The compositions of the characters in the opening sequence are not only reminiscent of the Soviet iconography, but of Expressionism (may be derived via Hollywood) as well; furthermore, it clearly influenced early films of Raj Kapoor and others, and also continued in Mehboob’s later films. The scornful commentator of the film, speaking in a self-reflective tone, holds the story together; moreover, Begum Akhtar (Akhtari Faizabadi) belted out a “fine performance as Darling, the woman who accepts her role as a sex object and the property of the capitalist” (Indiacine.ma), while she hates the perpetrators.

However, in the following years, during 1943-45, Mehboob also made a few hits, which have supposedly inaugurated the trope of “Muslim Socials”. While Mehboob started his production company in 1943, in 1954 Mehboob founded his own studios in Bombay. As a matter of fact, such setting up of the studio spaces, not merely production companies, implies a specific kind of cinematic imagination, which was being fashioned through such direct interventions. In 1954, Mehboob also produced one of his most provocative films, *Amar*. The film not only presented one of the most unusual topics vis-à-vis Hindi cinema, it also showcased some of the big stars of the period, namely Dilip Kumar and Madhubala. The plot revolves around a rich and well-established lawyer (Dilip Kumar), who, one night, rapes a hapless village girl (Nimmi) who had sought refuge in his home. While, undercurrents of guilt, repentance and tension engulf the story, *Amar* at the end of it, defends the village girl, breaks his engagement, and marries her. The film retains Mehboob’s interest in “cultural primitivism” as

well as in excessive visual style, and remains till date, an exceptional film because of its subject (the fallible hero) and depiction of angst.

However, the idea of rebuilding the nation, and stories set against across expansive (unproductive) geographies, which are marked by continual and intense corporal agony, are part of a number of Mehboob's narratives. *Mother India*, 1957, recounts the same story of *Aurat*, albeit with considerable difference in the narrative style. It opens at the point the reluctant and grief-stricken mother is requested to inaugurate a dam, and yet, at this point she 'secretly' recalls her enormous misery and the killing of her (outlaw) son. The film begins with iconic images of landscape, and signature shots of machinery of development, and situates the mother in the midst of parched land and against deep blue sky. After a series of extreme hardships (in which she confronts drought, flood, violence, death, separation and physical pain) Radha (the mother) eventually shoots her son, in order to protect the honour of a girl of the community. In the climax, as she grieves, "the blood seeping through her fingers dissolves into water rushing along the irrigation canal" (Moinak Biswas (1995)) and emphasizes upon physical pain involved in the nation building project. Needless to say, *Mother India* not only remains the most influential Mehboob Khan film, but of Indian cinemas as well, while the landscape emerges as powerful metaphor. The exploration into barren land on which the lonesome woman traverses and plows with the help of her two sons becomes a critical signifier of socio-political apprehensions. In such films landscape is not merely a setting, or a "backdrop", rather, through specific scenes it attains autonomy, and appears like a self-contained element in the film. Also imageries of plowing and the crop for example, which recur in Mehboob films, become an important thread that binds his concerns together.

It is well-known that Mehboob Khan was associated with Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, and thereby, borrowed and believed in Nehru's values, and the notion of nation building. This is evident in *Roti*, the pre-independence film,

and also in *Aurat*, but particularly, in *Mother India*, made 10 years after the independence. It aligns with the Nehruvian imagination of the nation, just as, two features emerge as a dominant theme. First, is the physical tilling of the land, which is clearly connected with the programme of 'green revolution', and also with technological development, for instance, the building of dams, which would supposedly rebuild the nation from a vast wasteland, so to speak. Therefore, *Mother India* begins with elaborate long shots of the dam being built, as well through the mobilization of typical images of technological growth and development. If we consider the opening sequence of *Mother India* it starts off with vast expanses, and images of technologies, which refer to the 'nation building' project. This is thereafter, followed by close-ups of the parched face of the mother. The mother, played by Nargis, is the other iconic image; she signifies manifold issues including the idea of "land". This land, however, is barren, following many droughts and floods, and needs to be harvested. Thus, the mother who is being invited, or requested to inaugurate the dam agrees reluctantly. The radio in the background further highlights this moment of transformation. At the site she picks up a piece of land, which is as scorched as her face, and while she is being welcomed, she recalls her past which is full of adversities, and the blood and sweat that were absorbed into this land. She goes into a reverie of sorts, and remembers her life of hardship and happiness with her (now estranged) husband. That's how mother India begins, with massive shots of machinery, dam building, vast expanses of land, which is now green, and the long suffering mother, who shares her story with the audience.

While Mehboob had seen *Good Earth* (1937), he preferred another Pearl S. Buck's novel (*The Mother*, 1934), which inspired *Aurat*. Mehboob was popularly known as 'Cecil B. DeMille' of India for his spectacular historicals (like *Humayun*, 1945), and visual elaborations, and explorations through thoughtful *mise-en-scene*. Thus, when *Mother India* was planned it tried to bring together a realistic picture of India, which were juxtaposed with spectacular picturization of the toiling mother. In 1955, Mehboob's cinematographer, F. Irani, took shots of flood

affected Uttar Pradesh, even before anything else was planned for the film. Hence, the stunning images were drawing from many sources, including British documentary style, American melodramas, as well as Soviet School of Cinema. Truly, it is interesting to compare the film with Soviet propaganda posters in the manner the figures are drawn out, the composition of the figures, shot against the sky, the vastness of the sky and land, foregrounding of the crop, close-shots of peasants tilling the land with their heads held high, the iconic and powerful female-figure, all of which inform us about work, labour, about women's participation in nation building. Some of those extremely powerful imageries, for instance, the iconic low angle shot of Nargis, while her face held against the blue sky, or the mother carrying the plough, have been used in the posters of the film as well.

Gayatri Chatterjee in her book (2002) suggests that Mehboob and Irani, had seen King Vidor's *Our daily bread*, which has influenced the film considerably, and has remained influential for a long time. Moreover, there is a clear impact of the Soviet constructivist painters in the film. So in that sense, *Mother India* belongs to disparate notions of nation building, and one could suggest that, it is reflected through Mehboob's emblem, which includes the hammer and the sickle, which is a powerful emblem of the Soviet Communist movement. However, Mehboob was not really a Communist, and the voiceover along with emblem thus, has religious overtones. Mehboob was part of the Nehruvian idea of construction of the nation, in which questions of labour, peasant, reform, and development are crucial. Indeed, a film like *Roti* dramatizes such concerns, through composition, uses light, the edit pattern, deployment of music and so on. It portrayed Nehruvian imagination of the nation, which is connected to socialist values. Eventually, *Mother India* not only became a myth in the Indian context, but, had a wider currency. It has been screened across the world and was huge success. Some of the recent research, for instance Brian Larkins' work on the "itinerary" of *Mother India*, discusses how the film was a cult in Nigeria. In fact, *Mother India* is not merely an important Indian film, if we study history of cinemas and cultures, it is

evident that in a number of countries, including Asian states, and African countries, as well as in Europe, especially Greece, *Mother India* became the centre of many popular narratives, considering it dealt with two historically important issues - the mother and the land.

Indeed, *Mother India* has been read in multiple ways. The music of *Mother India* has been read by Anna Morcom, the figure of Mother/India in the film, the iconic figurartions, and also the ending of *Mother India* have been discussed by scholars. In the film the mother goes through a range of difficulties. Therefore, before her husband deserts her, and becomes the “absentee” father figure so to speak, he was already rendered weak after he loses his arms. The struggle of the mother has been elaborated through a number of scenes (and songs), which depict floods, lack of food, death of child, sexual violence, through which she eventually survives. One of the iconic images, that has circulated through other films and through public memory is the shot of the mother pushing her sons, instead of the bulls, to plough the land. Finally, she is the only person who would not leave the village even after many difficulties, and in due course grow crops on the unproductive land. Thus, on one hand, the mother at the centre of the story, on the other hand, there is the absentee father, and the law (of the father) that is abiding her life. One her sons, in the long run, aligns with the state, while the other becomes an outlaw. In *Mother India*, Birju (played by Sunil Dutt) is the outlaw. Birju grows with a deep sense of antagonism, and thus towards the end, intervenes through violence, rescues the papers of the farmers from Sukhi Lala, the village money-lender. Lala had unlawfully cheated the peasants, so Birju finally burns all documents, abducts Suki Lala's daughter in order to retrieve his mother's jewels. The final confrontation scene is excessive in the manner in which Birju captures Sukhi Lala's daughter, even when his brother confronts, and *en fin*, the mother shoots him. Birju says, “I am your son, you can't kill me”. Radha/ Mother says that, “I can sacrifice my son, but not my honour.” The ending becomes melodramatic in the way Mehboob channelizes images, music, hyperbolic dialogues and arrives at the resolution. After Birju is shot, Radha

embraces him, and as she embraces him there is blood seeping out of her fingers, which dissolves with the muddy or bloody water oozing out of the dam she inaugurates. Therefore, I would like to argue that, there are two levels of story. At one level, there is a “meta” narrative which frames the plot, and urges the audience to participate in the larger project of nation and development, at another level, there are a series “small” and personal stories, specially the story of the mother and Birju, which narrates to us tales of endless physical sufferings that in time produced the nation. Such popular and iconic narratives circulated through many cultures, and have seemingly influenced films like *Ganga Jamuna*, 1960, and *Deewar*, 1975.

Moreover, one needs to consider *Mother India*'s uses of colour, specially, red and the earthy tone. The film, India's nomination for the Academy Awards, was in a way referring to American (King Vidor) or Soviet Cinema (Dovzhenko). Particularly, as we return to the film, the colour of the earth, and the colour of the blood overlap. Colour plays a significant role in the film, which are codified. The colour of the sari, her bright red Bindi, the bridal wear, gradually takes on the hue of the earth as she transforms from a 'woman' (aurat) to Mother/ India. Mehboob's first colour film, *Aan*, 1952, was also India's first technicolour film. While, it tackled a typical story of the pauper and the princess, the visual style of the film has apparently influenced a range of films in the later period.

Mehboob's style like all interesting directors is extremely complicated. For instance, *Andaz*, 1949, is also about the new nation, the conflicts and contestations, albeit narrated through the woman's question. Ravi Vasudevan (2002) reads *Andaz* as a crucial text via which the melodramatic form develops. Vasudevan's analysis of the nine shots of *Andaz* demonstrates the mixing of the iconic, tableaux and continuity shots. In this regard, *Andaz* is considered to be a seminal text. Furthermore, Kishore Valicha writing on *Andaz* (as quoted in Paul Willeman's essay), suggests that *Andaz* represented a particular idea of being modern, being sophisticated, or urbane, rather becoming “new” India. Such shifts

are portrayed through characterization, practices, and situations. The female protagonist, played by Nargis, for example, rides horses, plays the piano, and appears to be somewhat “frivolous”, since she befriends men, and speaks to them freely. This itself is the crux of the problem in the film. However, Willeman points out that the film presents a larger crisis, that is, the weakening of the feudal order, and the rise of a new class, portrayed through Dilip (Dilip Kumar). So even when it appears to be a love triangle between some of the powerful stars of the period, namely Nargis, Raj Kapoor, and Dilip Kumar, the film in reality deals with the question of social change. It tackles India’s multiple processes of modernization, and the function of women. Hence, Raj Kapoor plays the aristocrat, while Dilip Kumar characterizes the new capitalist. Dilip for example, says he hails from Africa, a place where many Indians immigrated for employment and rehabilitation. Seemingly he appears to arrive from ‘nowhere’, and represents the bourgeoisie who are rising or a person without any aristocratic background entering into this field of capitalist growth. In short, *Andaz*, presents a new emergent world, and the ushering in of the capitalist promise. However, the complexities are played out through personal issues, in which the modern girl (in pants) bears the burden of social change. Indeed, *Andaz* ends in a rather problematic way, in which the transgressive woman is killed (by Dilip) or punished for her deeds and dilemma.

Mehboob’s films, for instance, *Andaz*, *Mother India* and *Roti* etc., are crucial not simply because they inform us about the national crises, but the because of the ways in which such films are able to narrate the transition from a feudal structure to early capitalist state, and tackle the modes of negotiations, and the predicaments regarding becoming modern, in the context of a nation that is being reconstructed from a wreckage as it were, following Partition and Independence. While Rosie Thomas (1989) takes another route to read Mehboob’s seminal film, in her essay she suggests that, such films are involved in the construction of the identity in three different yet interconnected ways. While these aspire to achieve formal difference, especially through the choice of the themes, these negotiate a

series of contradictions and conflicts pertaining to kinship and sexuality which become central to the plot. Furthermore, such contradictions are resolved within the parameters of an ideal moral universe. In addition, particularly crucial are the sub-texts, for example, the scene in *Andaz* in which the deviant woman confronts her own image and desires in the mirror, or the overtly Oedipal charge of Radha (of Mother India) – Birju relationship. Briefly, Mehboob's style in way upholds the perpetual paradoxes of the nation-state.

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MOOC on HINDI CINEMA
MODULE-8
POST-INDEPENDENCE HINDI CINEMA – CINEMA OF RAJ
KAPOOR AND GURU DUTT

ACADEMIC SCRIPT

Introduction

The 1930s and 40s were widely known as the time when the talking pictures – “talkies” – had nationally flourished, and paved way for numerous aural possibilities to be witnessed in the decades to follow. Soon enough, as the popularity of the hitherto established studios started to wane, a new, more respectable and aesthetically appealing batch of visionaries emerged, equipped to redeem the mass audience from the gamut of lowbrow entertainment that they were being subjected to presumably more by lack of options than by choice. The audience’s appetite for silly and fantastic antics on the silver screen had more or less been satiated, and was beginning to show interest for more humane

narratives. By then, the ‘socials’ had already seen its fair share, most prominently in the form of Franz Osten’s *AchutKanya*(1936) and Gyan Mukherjee’s *Kismet*(1943) (both of which were produced by The Bombay Talkies). Since more and more of the studio-led content were becoming garish and of questionable taste, the educated middle-class leaned away from them, and from the untimely demise of the Studio Era rose the ashes of what was to be called the Golden Era of Hindi Cinema: the 1950s. And in this, the first decade of film production after India’s independence from the British Raj, saw a number of filmmakers emerge, wanting to tell social stories, of and about the people, their lives, their relationships with each other, and their emotional pathos. Perhaps the greatest among these were Raj Kapoor and Guru Dutt, both of whom are unanimously revered in the filmic realm. We shall delve into the cinematic careers of these two filmmakers at length.

Raj Kapoor (1924 – 1988)

Raj Kapoor (born Ranbeer Raj Kapoor) was one of the three superstars of the 1950s along with Dilip Kumar and DevAnand, in what is agreed to be the golden decade of Hindi cinema. He was the oldest of three brothers (Shammi and Shashi), and died at the age of sixty-five due to asthma and cardiac complications soon after receiving the DadasahebPhalke award in 1971.

Unlike Dilip Kumar or DevAnand, Kapoor went on to become a director-producer early in his career. His studio, R.K. Films, founded in 1948, was both an achievement and a burden because it was financed out of Kapoor’s own earnings.¹ When a film flopped – *Aah*(1953) for example – it was Raj Kapoor who had to work double time, starring in films of

¹Meghnad Desai, *Raj Kapoor – An Enduring Icon*, pg. 89-90, Bollywood’s Top 20 – Superstars of Indian Cinema, Penguin Viking, 2012.

dubious merit such as *Kanhaiya*(1959), *Do Ustad*(1959)and*Chhaliya* (1960) to make up for the losses.Dilip Kumar, by contrast, could afford to be much choosier in what he acted in, and did no more than one film per year in the 1950s. DevAnand had his brother's studio, Navketan, which he later made his own, but the Navketan films he starred in did not place any burden on him by being flops. It is this double burden – acting and being a producer and studio owner – which characterize his output as an actor.

Raj Kapoor was trained as an actor in the theatre by his father, PrithvirajKapoor, who ran Prithvi Theatres for many years out of the Royal Opera House in Mumbai. Unlike Dilip Kumar, he never took to method acting.

Raj Kapoor is best known for his ChaplinesqueRaju, a character he created who became a sort of everyman's orphan/tramp. From early beginnings in *Awara*(1951), where the character is not yet fully defined, he explored the Indianization of Chaplin. By the time he made *Shree 420* (1955), Raju was fully fledged. He then made *JisDesh Men Ganga BehtiHai*in 1960, in which Raju was a well-known image, and *MeraNaam Joker* a decade later, which finally was the disastrous apotheosis of Raju. Somewhere in between was *JagteRaho*(1956) where SambhuMira built on the ingredients ofRaju, but made him a lonely, almost tragic, figure.

As producer-director and showman, Raj Kapoor was outstanding. His earlier productions also featured himself as the hero. He was the star in *Aag*(1948), *Barsaat*(1949), *Awara*, *Aah*, *Shree 420*, *JagteRaho*, *JisDesh Men Ganga BehtiHai*, *Sangam*(1964), and *MeraNaam Joker*. His studio also made *Boot Polish* (1958) (which was one of the two R.K. Films to be nominated for the Palme d'Or at Cannes, the other being *Awara*) and *Ab Dilli Door Nahin*(1957) in the 1950s.

After *MeraNaam Joker* flopped, he made *KalAajAurKal*(1971) by which he launched his son Randhir Raj Kapoor, and *Bobby* (1973), in which he cast his other son, Rishi, in the lead. *Bobby* was a hit, which rescued R.K. Films. He then went on to make *Satyam ShivamSundaram*(1978), *PremRog*(1982), and *Ram Teri Ganga Maili*(1985). At the time of his death, his Indo-Pakistani production, *Henna*, was unfinished. Rishi Kapoor had taken up the task to finish it, and it proved to be a hit when it was finally released in 1991.

Raj Kapoor was also the first of the Indian filmmakers whose films were big hits overseas, namely in the USSR and other Eastern European countries. He was also the first to start the practice of shooting sequences abroad, as seen in *Sangam*, which was shot in London, Rome, Geneva, Paris, and Switzerland. In his films *Satyam ShivamSundaram*, *PremRog*, and *Ram Teri Ganga Maili*, he aesthetically explored the limits to which the female form could be exposed in Indian films, a largely progressive and liberal endeavor not seen in such fashion in the mainstream Hindi cinema since.

Narrative Strategies in Kapoor's Films

Almost all of Raj Kapoor's films can be closely read from the viewpoint of the nation and the state. A simple song lyric, "*MerajootahainJapani, ye patloomEnglishtani, sir pelaaltopiRoosi, phirbhidil hein Hindustani*", speaks volumes about Kapoor's ideals and his love for the country, so much so that he went on to construct an imagined nation.

In her book, *The Cinematic ImagiNation* (sic), JyotikaViridi writes, "To say that Hindi cinema is a national cinema at once begs several questions: What is a nation? What are the criteria by which we designate a cinema "national"? We also need to ask what the basis is for designating Hindi cinema a national cinema, or the "national-popular." And in a multilingual nation like India, film raises questions about the role of

language in the nation's formation.

The popularity of Hindi cinema has to do with its unique regime of narrative and theme, tradition of spectacle, and its aesthetics and stylistic conventions. It is a cinematic apparatus that draws upon the literary and the nonliterary creative imagination, both contemporary and historical. This imagination is also intrinsically tied to – in fact constructs – the nation, a political formation that arrived in India at about the same time as film technology.”

This, combined with his immaculate portrayal of women, most of whom were made the driving force of his movies, such as in *JisDesh Men Ganga Behti Hai*, *Bobby*, *Satyam Shivam Sundaram*, *Ram Teri Ganga Maili Ho Gayi*, and *Henna*, made his imagined nation a place worth yearning for, long after the film is viewed. In *Mera Naam Joker*, Raju falls in love with Marina (Kseniya Ryabinkina), a trapeze artist from Russia. In doing so, he brings together pathos that separates and unites the two countries, all the while playfully disseminating the idea of the nation and what it stands for through their romantic relationship.

This idea of the imagined nation coupled with romance is perhaps best witnessed in Kapoor's final film, *Henna*, which is among the first popular films to openly acknowledge the birth of two nations from one. On August 15, 1947, the Indian subcontinent was declared independent of its two hundred years of British rule. Two nations, India and Pakistan, came into being with Hindu and Muslim majorities respectively. Large-scale violence erupted as migrants crossed the new border in either direction. Literature from the 1950s is filled with despair about the senseless Partition, but open mention of it in popular culture is more or less completely repressed.

More than forty years later, *Henna* harks back to the primary moment of the Indian nation, arbitrarily divided by and contained within imaginary

“boundary” lines. In lieu of veiled references to the “enemy” across the border, the film candidly refers to the twin nation, Pakistan. Henna was, as mentioned, Raj Kapoor’s grand finale, completed by his son Randhir Kapoor after his father’s sudden death. The film is an appeal for unity and Hindu/Muslim amity within the nation. It is also ostensibly an antiwar film, promoting peace between India and Pakistan. Yet the text’s rhetoric and narrative strategy reveals an uneasy fit between the two levels of appeal, pointing to a fault line in the imagined nation.

The film’s protagonist, Chander Prakash (played by Rishi Kapoor) runs a lumber industry in Srinagar, Kashmir. His impending marriage to his girlfriend, Chandini, is thwarted by an accident: his jeep rolls into the Jhelum river, is discovered in a hamlet on the other side of the nation’s border, in Pakistan. Khan (Saeed Jaffery), his daughter Henna (Zeba), and widow friend Gul Chaachi (Farida Jalal) nurse him back to health against the admonitions of Khan’s son, Ashraf. Ashraf fears Shahbaaz Khan (Kiran Kumar), the notorious local army officer, who terrorizes the villagers and patrols the border for spies sent by the Indian army.

Chander regains consciousness but suffers a complete loss of memory. Henna falls in love with him and they are about to be married when Chander regains his memory during the frenzied wedding festivities. Khan’s plan to help Chander cross the border and return home is foiled by Shahbaaz Khan, who demands Henna in marriage as the price for ensuring Chander’s safe passage. After several reversals, Henna successfully helps Chander cross the border, but dies in the crossfire between the two border armies. Chander reunites with his former fiancée, Chandini, who faithfully awaits his return.

The film is prefaced with a slow pan of a river flowing through a picturesque valley, over which the narration tells us: “This story is set on the bank of the Jhelum river, which begins in India and flows through

Pakistan. On one side, Hindus worship it, praying to the rising sun, and on the other side Muslims offer prayers to their Allah at sunset. The water doesn't make distinctions between different human beings. Then why do people observe differences in their hearts?" Nature and culture are invoked together, and the film unequivocally asserts that "difference" is a cultural construct. After Chander's accident, a simple physical map marking the India-Pakistan border, and Captain Shahbaaz Khan's exposition on torturing "spies" who infiltrate these borders, become loaded with meaning.

Khan ruminates about man-made, lifeless lines drawn on paper that erase "God-given love in peoples' hearts." His words echo the film's theme: it is absurd to make difference a source of strife. The Captain responds: "These are not personal matters. These are matters of the state that you don't understand." Khan's poignant and ironic answer rings through the remaining text: "Yes, humane people will not understand state politics." At the end of the film, Chander stands over Henna's dead body, making an impassioned speech for a world without borders, without war games, and for lasting peace. Yet despite the film's appeal to secular principles and Hindu-Muslim amity, the narrative as a whole belies this message, pointing instead to the impossibility of Hindu-Muslim romantic love, permitted only briefly in a moment of amnesia.

Awaara (1951)

Awaara was the first film that established Raj Kapoor as a major international film star; it also became one of the most popular Hindi films overseas (mainly in Asia and the former USSR) and was remade in many other national cinemas. It was also the first film Raj Kapoor made in his own studios and with his own team, from his stars (himself and Nargis) to his musicians (Shankar-Jaikishan) and singers (Lata Mangeskar and

Mukesh).

The wife (LeelaChitnis) of Judge Raghunath (PrithvirajKapoor) is kidnapped by the evil Jagga. When the judge takes her back, he finds that she is pregnant, but does not believe the child is his. She brings up Raju (Raj Kapoor) in poverty and he falls into Jagga's company. When he falls in love with the lawyer Rita (Nargis), Judge Raghunath's ward, the judge tries to forbid their relationship, convinced that the son of a thief will be a thief too. Rita defends Raju in court where all will be revealed...

This was the first film in which Raj Kapoor appeared as the Chaplinesque tramp. Unlike the usual Indian vagrant, Raj Kapoor is dressed as an American tramp, whose clothes Charlie Chaplin drew on in those famous oversized suits that appear to belong to someone else, thus undermining the suit's respectability and recalling, perhaps, the circus clown. In Raj Kapoor's case, the suit was too small, suggesting perhaps that he had outgrown what used to fit him. The western or colonial nature of the suit may also suggest an outfit discarded by a member of the ruling elite, and comically appropriated by a vagrant. Raj Kapoor fans may be delighted to know that R.K. Studios have carefully preserved this outfit, shoes and hat, in their wardrobe department in Bombay.²

The film is also memorable for its presentation of Raj Kapoor and Nargis as the great romantic couple, passionately bound to one another. Nargis is presented as the idealized object of male fantasies, whether in a swimsuit on the beach or as a divine, celestial savior in the lavish dream sequence. The great PrithvirajKapoor, Raj's real-life father, plays his on-screen father, often in moments of Oedipal drama. For despite the film's reference to mythology, notably in the rejection of the pregnant mother, recalling Ram's banishment of Sita in the *Ramayana*, this is a resolutely modern film, arguing that nurture, rather than nature, creates a person's

² Rachel Dwyer, *100 Bollywood Films*, Lotus Collection/Roli Books, 2005.

moral character, inserting Raj Kapoor's quasi-Nehruvian or socialist views.

While almost every song in the film has become a classic – ‘Awaara hoon’, ‘Dum bhar jo udhar mooh phere’ – it is the nine-minute dream sequence that affords one of the most memorable set designs in Hindi cinema. The scene is not only stunning visually and aurally, but it also condenses into a dream many fears and anxieties about the film's key themes of love, religion, motherhood, punishment, and crime, which it then projects onto Achrekar's sets themselves. The first shots show a spiral staircase surrounded by clouds, presumably in heaven. Dancers appear among statues of loops and swirls, singing and sliding down chutes. Rita stands at the top of a flight of stairs, dressed in fine fabric, sequins and shiny hair ornaments, dusted with glitter, singing a love song (‘Terebinaaagyehchaandni’). Raj, dressed in a black T-shirt and trousers, then appears in hell, where he sings his desires for love and spring (‘Yehnahin, yehnahinzindagi’) as he is surrounded by flames, dancing skeletons and other monsters. In the last sequence, he emerges through the clouds to the sound of ‘Om namahShivaya (homage to Lord Shiva) at the bottom of a flight of stairs leading to a Trimurti (a composite image of Brahma-Shiva-Vishnu), when Nargis bends down to take him by the hand and lead him to heaven. Dressed in an embroidered bodice and skirt, she sings ‘Gharaayamerapardesi’, with lights flashing in the background. She begins to climb the spiral staircase and Raj follows her. They then climb more stairs towards a Nataraja (dancing Shiva) as Nargis appears in dancing clothes. As they begin to walk along a twisting road, a giant Jagga appears, holding a shining knife. Raj falls down yelling ‘Rita’ as she reaches over him but cannot save him. A montage of images, including one of Raj yelling as Rita appears superimposed, dissolves as Raj wakes up, shouting, “Maa, mujhe bachao” (“Mother, save me”). It is

perhaps because of this scene alone that warrants the film's subsequent nomination for the Palme d'Or Award at the Cannes Film Festival.

Guru Dutt (1925 – 1964)

Guru Dutt Padukone was born in Mysore in 1925. He had his early education in Calcutta before doing basic training with dance maestro Uday Shankar after which he joined Prabhat Studio. It is here that he got a break as a choreographer and became good pals with actor Dev Anand. From Prabhat, Guru Dutt moved to Famous studios and then to Bombay Talkies. Meanwhile his close friend from Prabhat has launched his own banner 'Navketan'. It is Dev Anand himself who initiated Guru Dutt to direct a film for him.

Baazi was Guru Dutt's first film as a director under the banner of Navketan.

Baazi was an immediate success. Guru Dutt followed it with *Jaal* and *Baaz*. Neither film did well at the box office, but they did bring together the Guru Dutt team that performed so brilliantly in subsequent films. He discovered, and mentored, Johnny Walker (comedian), V.K. Murty (cinematography), and Abrar Alvi (writing and directing), among others. He is also credited for introducing Waheeda Rehman to the Hindi cinema.

Fortune smiled on Dutt's next film, the 1954 *Aar Paar*. This was followed by the 1955 hit, *Mr. and Mrs. 55*. Because of its success, Dutt went on to make his masterpiece in 1957, *Pyasa* - the story of a poet, rejected by an uncaring world, who achieves success only after his apparent death, which we shall discuss at length.

His 1959 *Kaagaz Ke Phool* was an intense commercial disappointment. He had invested a great deal of love, money, and energy in this film, which was a self-absorbed tale of a famous director (played by Guru Dutt) who falls in love with an actress (played by Waheeda Rehman,

Dutt's real-life love interest). *Kaagaz Ke Phool* failed at the box office and Dutt was devastated. Other directors thereafter, officially helmed all subsequent films from his studio since Guru Dutt felt that his name is an anathema to the box office.

Sahib Bibi Aur Ghulam, a box office flop, was directed by his writer Abrar Alvi, which won him the Filmfare Best Director's award. Rumors abound that the film was ghost-directed by Guru Dutt himself. Guru Dutt also had his influence on his last box office smash hit *Chaudvin Ka Chand*, directed by M. Sadique.

During the making of the hugely successful *Baazi*, Guru Dutt met and married the beautiful playback singer Geeta Roy. They had been engaged for three years and had to overcome a great deal of family opposition to marry. At the time of their marriage, Geeta was one of the top singers while Guru Dutt was still a struggling director.

Despite their love for each other, their marriage was a stormy one and in the last year of Guru Dutt's life, he moved out of the family home and lived alone. Guru Dutt and GeetaDutt had three children but after their divorce, the court gave GeetaDutt the custody of the children. Guru Dutt's relationship with actress WaheedaRehman also worked against their marriage.

It has been over 50 years since Guru Dutt committed suicide after three previous attempts, on October 10, 1964 in Bombay at the age of 39. And with each passing year, his reputation as popular Indian cinema's finest director has grown from strength to strength, in country after country. GeetaDutt herself died in 1972 at the age of 41, after excessive drinking which resulted in liver damage.

VK Murthy worked on almost all Guru Dutt films with the exception of *Baazi*. He was the 1st Indian cinematographer to shoot in cinemascope. Dutt's *KaagazKePhool* was India's 1st cinemascope film.

An excellent cinematographer, his lighting techniques in *Pyaasa*, *KaagazKePhool* and *Sahib, Bibi Aur Ghulam* crafted some of the finest images in Indian cinema.

Narrative Strategies in Dutt's Films

For Guru Dutt, melodrama was not merely a suitable entertainment mode to woo the box-office or the Hindi film audience of the 1950s and 1960s. In his capable hands, melodrama became a revealing and critical genre through which the contradictions and deceptions of the middle-class or proletarian Indian aspiring towards bourgeois stability could be depicted, explored, commented upon, and critiqued. Becoming his own producer and director in the 1950s, he adopted a critical distance from the mainstream Hindi film industry and gradually dissociated himself from the cliché-ridden escapist and idealistic melodramatic narratives churned out by most of his contemporaries.

The main subject that Indian cinema explored in 1950's and 60's were strongly social in nature. Idealism was in the air but the films were essentially bright in eyes. All significant film makers of that time - V. Shantaram, Bimal Roy, Raj Kapoor, Navketan, Mehboob Khan, and others, were wedded to social cause.

Guru Dutt at the same time had an interesting choice of context. The only film where he takes a strong moral stance was also a regressive one. The satire of *Mr. and Mrs. 55* was a comment on the new divorce law passed that year. The film endorses the view that the ultimate place of a woman no matter how modern she is at the feet of the husband.

Beyond *Mr. and Mrs. 55*, the subjects were largely non judgmental. He was magnetically drawn towards exploring flawed characters, one that floated between black and white ends of the spectrum.

KaagazKePhool was a self-portrait and remains a pioneer and a true flag bearer in his genre.

Dutt rarely adapts for any of his films a popular Indian novel or a short story. The only exception being: Sahib BibiGhulam based on a Bengali novel by 'BimalMitra' and Chauvin Ka Chand based on a Urdu story 'Jhalak' written by 'SagirUsmani'.

Aar Paar and Mr. and Mrs. 55 were his only comedies whereas Pyaasa, KaagazKePhool and Sahib BibiGhulam fall under his tragic trilogies. Moreover, Sahib Bibi and Ghulam was directed by AbrarAlvi and was only ghost directed by him.

Dutt's melodrama shows a struggle between the utopian ideal and the dark social realities.

The dark social reality shown in Pyassa is the double standards of the liberated Indian bourgeois of the 1950's .It exposes the selfish concerns of the institution of family and business.

The city or the landscape plays a very significant role in Dutt's melodrama.Like Lalaji garage which becomes home and the space for erotic encounter in Aar Paar, Benches of the city park in Mr. and Mrs. 55,the lakeside home and the film studio in case of KaagazKePhool and the feudal mansion in case of Sahib.

Flashback was one of the prime narrative strategies used by Dutt in his film. This is true for Kaagaz Ke Phool , Sahib BibiGhulam and Pyassa. In Pyassa, Vijay accidentally meets her first love Meena in an elevator. The moment when she decides to leave him is recreated in his mind, not only in a flashback as a recollected image but also as a fantasy that is inserted inside the flashback.

Another narrative device used by Dutt in his tragic melodrama is the creative use of 'rich text of metaphor'.

Pyasa: Cross

- The manner in which Vijay stands leaning to Mr Ghosh's book shelf in the song 'Jane wokaise log the jinke'.
- The cover of the Life magazine that Meena is reading on the breakfast table when she hears the news of Vijay's death from Mr. Ghosh.
- The crucifixion gesture in which the beggar whose foot gets trapped in the railway tracks stands – in the glaring headlight of the onrushing locomotive.
- The Christ like manner silhouetted and haloed by an ark of light at the entrance of the hall.

KaagazKePhool: Sweater

Sweater becomes the signifier of the unspoken love of Shanti and Suresh. Shanti becomes a compulsive knitter of sweater on the sets, years later when Shanti recognizes Suresh, she does by her sweater, which is full of holes now but he still wears it like his second skin. Shanti's cupboard is bulging with sweater knitted by a woman for a man in her memory who refuses to die.

All the characters in Dutt's film were in constant pursuit of modernity. Ex- Kalu wanting to learn English during his off time, or Bhootnath wearing English shoes along with his traditional Dhoti Kurta, or the Brahmo Samaj followed by Jaba and her father.

In Dutt's films, even the minor characters were always fleshed out. For example, in Aar Paar, be it the barman, the street urchin or the newspaper vendor, everyone has his own unique moniker. And since he repeated artistes he worked with, the minor roles done in his films by artistes like

KumKum and TunTun stand out for their individual wit and integrity. And for once characters spoke with a language that reflected their background. The hero is from Madhya Pradesh in central India so he speaks in a particular style. The garage owner, a Punjabi, spoke with a Punjabi slang. In addition to the lead characters it can be noted that he created many memorable roles for supporting artists as well, notably Johnny Walker. But in most of his films his characters are either black or white for example his brothers in 'Pyaasa'. They are single dimensionally black. If the director had explored the conflict of the outer world which wants to help but cannot work with the waywardness of the poet it would have put entire effort a couple of notches above its current perch. Similarly in KKP, he gives no voice to the wife. There is no exploration of the internal battles that the spouse of an intensely creative person may have had to fight. It is common wisdom that it is not easy to be wedded to an achiever, esp. if he is an artist. The film industry has many such suffering spouses to espouse. Yet Dutt chose to take the safe path of coloring the wife in unrelenting black.

To sum up it can be said that characterization was an area in which Guru Dutt attempted to break the mould, displayed sparks of genius and created many memorable characters in the wake. But at the end of the day, he could not carry it to a depth that could truly bracket his work as path-breaking.

Pyaasa (1957)

Pyaasa is a masterpiece of world cinema, managing to use all the conventions of the traditional Hindi film to make a movie that can be appreciated cinematically and narratively by both an Indian as well as an international audience. In the spirit of true Romanticism and that of the Urdu lyric, the film is about a tragic hero thirsting primarily for love, but

also for a world where poetry and creativity are valued over shallow material success.

Vijay (Guru Dutt), a poet, becomes a martyr to his art in a material world. When his brothers sell his poetry as wastepaper, he leaves home. He meets a prostitute, Gulab (WaheedaRahman), who reads poetry and is looking for love. His first love, Meena (Mala Sinha), leaves him to marry a wealthy publisher, Mr. Ghosh (Rehman). When Vijay gives his coat to a beggar who is killed, Vijay is assumed to be dead. Gulab gets his poetry published by Mr. Ghosh. The book becomes a bestseller and a memorial meeting to the 'dead' poet is planned. Vijay attends his own memorial and denounces the world. Ghosh and his friends pretend that he is a madman claiming to be Vijay, and have him committed to an asylum. Eventually, he gets out, finally joined by Gulab, and they leave together for a hopeful future.

Although Guru Dutt's earlier films (*Baazi*(1951), *Aar Paar*(1954), *Mr. and Mrs. 55* (1955) were not seen as autobiographical, his two dark masterpieces (*Pyasa* and *KaagazkePhool*(1959)) are widely taken to be premonitions of his suicide and his perennial suffering as an artist. Be that as it may, the character of Vijay is drawn in part from that of the poet, SahirLudhianvi, who wrote the lyrics for this and many other hit films, and was closely associated with the work of Yash Chopra. Again, this may be the reading of the poet into the poetry, but there are also direct references, such as the title of Vijay's poetry collection, *Parchhaiyan*, which is the name of one of SahirLudhianvi's poems and also one of his collections.

The outstanding features of this film are the timeless songs and the astute cinematography. Some of the songs were originally intended to be poems whose language SahirLudhianvi had simplified by taking out the Persian words common to Urdu poetry. Their musical setting by acclaimed

composer S.D. Burman transformed them into some of the most loved and best-known songs in all of Hindi cinema ('Jinhenaazhain Hind par', 'Jaane who kaise log the', and the duet 'Hum aapkiaankhonmein'), and their perfect situational use in the film by Guru Dutt augments their impact, as does V.K. Murthy's exceptional cinematography, involving classical Hollywood style blocking of the actors and long tracking shots which punctuate the rhythm of both the song sequences as well as expand the overall visual language of the film.

The film leaves lasting images on the viewer, such as the lighting of WaheedaRahman's face in 'Jaanekya tune kahi' (sung by GeetaDutt) and the appearance of Vijay as the crucified savior in the theatre for 'Yehmehlon, yehtakhton' (sung by Md. Rafi). One of the songs that is often cited as a perfect example of a Hindi film song is the bhajan, 'AajSajanmoheanglaga lo', in which all the elements of the song itself and the picturisation is essential and integral to the whole film. Another hugely popular song is sung by Md. Rafi, and picturised on Johnny Walker – the comedy song of the whacky head masseur, 'Sarjoterachakraye'.

Legacy

Having written this episode, it is made apparent how both Raj Kapoor and Guru Dutt, belonging in the same generation, made use of their own set of aesthetics, and rose to their success. It is hardly arguable how influential their body of work has been and how big their own legacy has become. Raj Kapoor's grandchildren, KareenaKapoor and RanbeerKapoor, are some of today's biggest stars, and show no signs of stopping. Guru Dutt, however, having given birth to no children, lives forever immortalized on the silver screen.

MOOC on HINDI CINEMA

MODULE-9

RAJ KAPOOR

ACADEMIC SCRIPT

Raj Kapoor's works are, by and large, associated with the internationally famous song from *Awara* (1951) "Mera Joota Hai Japani, Ye Patloon Englishtani" or 'Awara Hoon...". Ahmet Gurata (2010) for example, has written about the translation and reception of *Awara* in Turkey. *Awara* has been quoted in films like *Platform* (Jia Zhangke, 2000) and in many other non-Indian films. *Awara*'s popularity in Soviet Russia and its circulation across territories have been a matter of study. However, with regard to this landmark film we need to address the debates on Indian melodramas, and thereby, tackle its narrative structure, style, and significance. One of the pertinent arguments regarding popular Indian cinema is its 'lack' of genre distinction; and more important, as proposed by Ravi Vasudevan (1989) and others, is the dominance of a particular mode, which has been described "social melodramas". Since the mid 1930s, set in the contemporary times and dealing with issues of social-reform, many of the mainstream Hindi language films involved discrete melodramatic tendencies. For instance, it deployed a pronounced melodramatic mise-en-scene, which was marked by conventions of studio settings (like painted backdrops), uses of (sharp) expressionist light, evocative movement, bodily gestures, norms of (high pitched) performance etc., which were often drawn from (Parsi) theatre as well as from popular Hollywood (musical) films. Besides, the melodramatic mode became recognizable through externalisation of character 'psychology' (or the 'interiority' of characters) into actions, even props, and musical notes. Spectacular performance sequences (including song and dances), characters who do not contribute to the main plot and comic situations – rather, a non-linear narrative structure driven by a pattern of mis-recognition followed by recognition – dominated by coincidences, which eventually solve the complications of the plot, and a range of other kinds of (visual and aural) 'excesses' define melodrama. Melodrama signifies emotional fervour, hyperbole, intense action, high-strung performances, flamboyant music and rhetorical dialogues, as well as presence of morally opposing characters, extreme

villainy, its final purging, and the reestablishment of a particular moral order in the end. In melodrama, thus, according to Peter Brooks (1985), 'things and gestures of the real world, of social life' are 'kinds of metaphors'; therefore, certain dramaturgical elements like coincidences are the basis of melodramatic films.

Vasudevan (1989) in his seminal essay on the "Melodramatic mode and the Commercial Hindi Cinema..." also discusses how the melodramatic form prefers 'non-psychological motivation', and there is predominance of irregular plotting, penetrating music and so on. He shows in what way 'a non-linear dramatic construction', and 'a shifting discursive field incorporating philosophical and ethical expressions, emotional excess, comedy, song and dance' become evident within the melodramatic mode. Vasudevan also analyses in length some of the groundbreaking Hindi films including *Awaara*, *Devdas* (Bimal Roy, 1955) and *Pyaasa* (Guru Dutt, 1957). Furthermore, according to Vasudevan there are two plot types of Indian melodramas. First, is the 'renunciation' plot, in which the hero rejects the authority (as in case of *Pyaasa* and *Devdas*); while the second type addresses the (Oedipal) 'conflict' with the authorial father figure. Films like *Awaara* or even *Deewar* (Yash Chopra, 1973) and *Shakti* (Ramesh Sippy, 1982) belong to this category. Vasudevan (1989) suggests that, "in Hindi Melodrama there is an ambivalence which addresses the forbidden fears, anxieties and pleasures offered by the narrative- the fear of the father, the attractions of sexuality, anxiety attached, in the polarity of West-East, to the question of identity". Furthermore, a number of films of the 1950s dealt with subjects of crime, and thus, contemporary prototypes like the pickpocket, thief, smuggler, loafer, along with taxi drivers, as well as lawyers, journalists, club dancers, women as professionals et al, emerged on the scene with a great deal of dynamism. Moreover, 1950s ushered in the emergence of a new breed of young filmmakers and artists who were keen to enter into conversations with the 'West', and some films made by contemporary directors including Raj Kapoor, demonstrate distinguished styles (of framing, staging of the scene, uses of musical motif and so on), and indicate the ways in which filmmakers of the times were speaking to international modes.

The premise and the plot of *Awaara*, is deeply connected with the concerns of the new nation. For instance, judge Raghunath believes that son of a thief cannot be an honest person. Opening at the point the nation is yet to be formed, it is initially set in pre-independence times, in which the film shows how Jagga, a bandit, abducts Raghunath's wife, though he later releases

her when he realizes that she is pregnant. Framed the by the Ramayana thematic, the film shows how Raghunath is troubled by suspicion, and eventually abandons his wife at the time rumours and doubt engulf the scene. Music acts as a forceful tool within the narrative, and predicts the dénouement right from the outset. Indeed, one of the most significant melodramatic moments of Awaara is the scene in which (on a rainy night) heavily pregnant and helpless Leela lies alone in bed. Judge Raghunath returns home reeling under the apprehension that the unborn child (Raj) is not his. Later, Leela is thrown out of the house and this is conveyed via a series of (low angle) iconic images shot in high contrast. Added to this, the powerful sound of the strings produces deep a sense of fear and loss. This moment of acute vulnerability and injustice is furthered highlighted when the images of the rain-drenched streets are juxtaposed with the song of the labourers (singing about the plight of mythical Sita from Ramayana). The Ramayana trope in Awaara (as evident in the court-room scenes as well), along with the epic dimension of the mother's suffering, are effectively explored through the unique deployment of music. Later, Raj grows up in post-independent India, on the streets and in the ghettos. Moreover, he is raised as a petty crook by Jagga. Indeed, the conflict with the law appears to be the principal struggle between the people and the nation-state. Both Awaara and Kalapani (Raj Khosla, 1958), thus, show the transition from the pre-Independence to the post-Independence times, the shifts within judicial system, and the qualms about an aspired secular system, the drifting away from community based social life into an unaffected and perfunctory system of law and justice governed by the big city. The hero of the times, are in conflict with a father figure, representing the judiciary, or the law, and the state.

The film evolves into a courtroom drama in which father and son are pitted against each other. In addition, the setting itself is iconic, and to borrow Lawrence Liang's words (2011) it reflects that the "power of law is embodied in the everyday iconography of the courtroom, in the theatrical paraphernalia of legal performance, in the wigs, the robes, and the gavel. It is presented through the sculpture and architecture of the courts and the images of justice that adorn most public buildings." Additionally, popular cinema has repeatedly used "the image of a blindfolded Justitia holding a sword in one hand, and the scales of justice in the other. This is an image easily recognizable from public institutions as well as popular culture (Warner, 2001). In India [...] it is also a metaphor for the widely held belief that legal institutions are blind to the injustice of the world". In the critical scene, therefore, after Raj escapes from jail, driven by frenzy and an intense desire for revenge he enters Raghunath's house in order to kill him. Meanwhile, Rita (played by Nargis), his lawyer, and the ward of the judge, pleads with Raghunath and begs for

mercy. She also says how her heart has not studied law, while Raghunath retaliates by saying that the law does not recognize the “heart”. It is at this point (or at the melodramatic juncture) Raj enters the scene, with a knife in hand, and tries to strike Raghunath. Raj, however, is easily dissuaded when he spots young Rita’s photograph, and recognizes her as his childhood friend and recalls his past. While, the conflict between the father and son is eventually resolved in the courtroom, the narrative lays bare the larger concerns of the new nation.

A similar argument can be forged regarding an earlier film, namely *Barsaat*, 1949. The film narrates the story of two young men who arrive at an idyllic village, somewhere in the foothills of Himalayas. They have affairs with two different young and gullible girls, and in due course return to the big city. In a self-conscious manner the film exploits the violin as the ‘sonic signifier’ of romance and love, and deploys music to build melodramatic narration. Thus, every time the hero plays the violin in an enigmatic style, the heroine is magically drawn towards him. In effect, it is the violin that produces the intensity of longing and desire. Furthermore, Kapoor narrativizes this musical motif and creates three distinct sequences to make meaning of the music. Consequently, the heroine suffers in love and expresses joy every time the violin is played. Clarifying that it is a violin and not a *sitar*, Pran (played by Kapoor) admits it is not his tune, but a cluster of notes that he has picked up from a nightclub. In one of the crucial scenes, at the point Reshma’s marriage is being fixed to someone other than Pran, she pines for him. As she lies on the upper bunk of the bed (with her father sleeping on the lower bunk), the camera tracks in for closer shot, just as the strings (played by Pran from outside) sound more intense. This juxtapositioning of close-ups (shot in high contrast, while the characters are placed in a setting that uses value-laden objects/props) along with the strident string chords produce one of the most memorable scenes of Indian cinema. In this scene, as for previous occasions, upon hearing the tune Reshma rushes out. Pran is seen (in a shot that uses doors to create the sense of frame within frame) playing a variation of a Franz Liszt *Hungarian Rhapsody*, while the lights reflected back from the waters highlight the unease. Reframed by a series of doorways, Reshma darts in and embraces Pran passionately. A sharp cut to a closer shot is supported by music, which *stops* abruptly to underscore (through its absence) the unique seductive quality of the composition. This iconic image of Pran, holding the violin in one hand and Reshma on the other, is later taken up and its abstract form eventually became the logo of the company for its later films. This shot attains historical impact because it is at the very moment when the well-known RK Films logo or the emblem of Raj Kapoor’s productions is figuratively formed within the film. More important perhaps, post-*Barsaat* playback singers like Lata Mangeshkar and

others, emerged out of anonymity to receive their due recognition and become legends in their own times. In summary, post-Barsaat musical narratives within melodramas and the deployment of sound and music—including songs—were transformed. Eventually, in last sequence of the series, Kapoor reveals the actual violin player (Joe Menezes, a Goan musician) thereby indicating multiple musical influences.

In *Shree 420*, Raj (Raj Kapoor), plays the vagabond again. He arrives in Bombay with dreams of making it big. Nevertheless, while the film opens with Raj pawning his medal (and his education figuratively), the melodramatic intent is split into two female characters — Maya (meaning illusion), played by Nadira, and Vidya (meaning knowledge) played by Nargis. Moreover, the city is ridden by a sharp class divide, therefore, the poor sleep on the streets, or under the flyovers, while the rich still ride horse-drawn carriages and live in large mansions. While the desire for 'home' is at the core of the plot, Raj is seduced by Maya, who introduces him to the world of black-marketeering. Eventually, Raj cheats his own people by gathering money from them with the false promise that they will have houses. En fin, nonetheless, the problem is resolved, although, according to some scholars, *Shree 420* also referred to the black money that was entering the Indian film scene after the war and collapse of the studios. In one of the momentous scenes, after Raj and Vidya have broken up, Raj is deeply disheartened and returns to the club in which Maya performs. The scene is a glorious example of the manner in which Kapoor channelized music to produce melodramatic affect. Thus, as the music surges forcefully, Maya dances with great verve, which is juxtaposed with a series of swish-pans that highlight Raj's dilemma. Raj overwhelmed by the sound rushes out into the streets. As he walks on the placid streets, a song from the slums ascends softly, and thus, Raj finally returns to his people (and truthfulness).

Raj Kapoor has had a long career; moreover, he was the star of the period, portraying some of the primary conflicts of the newly formed nation-state; additionally, he was both producer and director. His films may be therefore, divided into (*three*) phases, especially because during his initial rung he was considerably influenced by IPTA (Indian Peoples Theatre Association) and more importantly, collaborated with many Left wing authors and writers, including Shailendra and K A Abbas. His 1956 production, *Jagte Raho*, directed by Sambhu Mitra, received international recognition and awards. While Abbas was the writer of several Kapoor's films, he was the director of the singular IPTA production *Dharti Ke Lal*, 1946. So, broadly speaking, Kapoor was part of the progressive, left minded group, who had joined the film industry for

good. In fact, a number of writers, musicians, composers, poets, and performers, who came from different fields joined the industry and produced a potent and progressive film culture. They also introduced a set of themes, especially the notion of class-conflict, labour rights, mass mobilisation, as well as certain striking Soviet iconography (like the low angle shots, uses the backlight, compositions of multiple figures against iconic backdrop, etc.) which was crucial for Indian cinema and continued to influence many filmmakers. Contrarily, *Teesri Kasam*, 1966, directed by Basu Bhattacharya, which was an adaptation of Phaniswarnath Renu's short story, and explored certain the practices of realism in terms of its mise-en-scene, narrative style, and resolution. Moreover, eminent cinematographer Subrata Mitra did the camera for the film. Indeed, Kapoor acted in and produced disparate types of films, which includes *Jagte Raho*, that grew from IPTA ideology, and *Teesri Kasam* that explores the realist trope. *Jagte Raho* narrates the story of a the poor man, who arrives in the city (Kolkata) and confronts new structures of modernity. In his attempt to get some water, the poor migrant enters a gated building, and then moves from one apartment to the other seeking water, which is never available to him until the end. Contrarily, *Teesri Kasam* is the story of a simple man who falls in love with a performer and thus, the film follows the meandering pace of rural life. However, as mentioned earlier, Kapoor worked through multiple genres, especially in the latter part of career. *Sangam*, 1964, for instance, has received considerable attention. According to M. Madhava Prasad (1998) the social spaces articulated in such melodramas represent "a conflict between two ideologies of modernity, one corresponding to the conditions of capitalist development in the periphery and the other aspiring to reproduce the ideal features of the primary capitalist state" In examining the relationship between the transformation of cinematic institutions and the on-going struggle over the formation of the state, Prasad interprets films of the 1960s especially *Sangam* as "feudal family romances," which narrativise negotiations between the newly formed nation-state and the conventions of existing community structures.

Ranjani Mazumdar (2011) locates her argument on a different register. While Prasad reads the uses of foreign location in *Sangam* as an excess Mazumdar reads such "travel and tourism" as the central concern of the plot. She points out how the 1960s experienced the waning of the Nehruvian paradigm, as evident in films like *Mother India*, 1957. Furthermore, India was defeated in the 1962 war against China, the five-year plans had failed considerably, there were food shortages, as well as the crisis of foreign currency. Cinema of the period, however, presented a twisted and even reverse depiction of the contemporary state and aspirations.

Majumdar writes, “wild abandonment of the 1960s seemed to lift this mood of the middle class, acknowledging their dreams of travel. While the visual display of wealth and consumption was always present in cinema, the decisive entry of colour in the midst of an acute economic crisis reframed the sphere of consumption.” She also describes how the “postcard landscape experienced by the couple [in Sangam] metamorphoses into the tourist’s descriptive language. A traveler’s imagination is evoked here as Sundar’s voice expresses his excitement at the prospect of going up the Eiffel Tower. The love for his wife goes hand in hand with his excitement with the foreign landscape.” Moreover, Sangam clearly connects the desire of “photographic imaginations of sites and spaces”. Sangam in fact, was Kapoor’s first colour film, which rather than developing an aesthetics or motif in relation to colour produces a template, which connects desire, pleasure, travel, and consumption through picture postcard imageries. Such imagination is also evident in Kapoor other films like Mera Naam Joker (1970) and Bobby (1973).

I propose that, Kapoor’s last phase, beginning with Satyam Shivam Sundaram (1978), marked a remarkable shift from his early IPTA days, and tackled questions of sexual desire, transgression, and popular imagination vis-à-vis the (female) body. To borrow from Mazumdar, from another context, such “assemblage contained within itself sexual and *erotic play as well as aspirational desires*” which were articulated through emergent narrative forms. *Satyam Shivam Sundaram* for example, may be examined as a film that is a culmination of both Lata Mangeshkar’s and Zeenat Aman’s star personas, in which the heroine’s (scarred) face is virtually hidden while her ‘inadequately’ covered body became a site (or sight) for popular deliberations. In the film, Rajiv’s (Shashi Kapoor) entry into the unexplored and idyllic landscape (highlighted by orange and green filters) is indicated by his encounter with a voice that is emanating from a mysterious figure, which fascinates him until the end. Sooner or later, he comes to know that the name of his love interest is Rupa (Zeenat Aman), and eventually, Rajiv proposes marriage. It is only after their marriage that he actually sees her (charred face), and thereafter, complications follow. Indeed, the film takes off with the well-known title song during which Rajiv is enticed by the voice and it only later that Rajiv actually confronts the voluptuous body (of the star), and is driven by it. Howbeit, Rajiv in reality is deeply attached to the voice, and the imagined figure, and comes to abhor the person he marries. Subsequently, he ‘cheats’ his (nurturing) wife by sleeping with her Other, or her fetishized self. The problem intensifies and is finally resolved when Rupa becomes pregnant. While Rajiv initially accuses her of being immoral (because he assumes that his marriage has not been consummated), through a series

of suffering, he realizes that the unknowable idealized woman is indeed his wife, and thus in the end, he accepts the 'disfigured' woman, with a beautiful voice. Clearly, it is a twisted tale of masculine desires (for both the fetishized body and the inspiring voice), which splits the woman into two, and so, Rupa plays both at the same point in time. As a matter of fact, Kapoor's transition into such narratives of desire, also evident in *Prem Rog* (1982) and *Ram Teri Ganga Maili* (1985), played out popular fantasies regarding women and her body, obsessions, anguish, and yearning.

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