DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDIAN CINEMA: A SOCIOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF DEVELOPMENTAL SOURCES AND INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES

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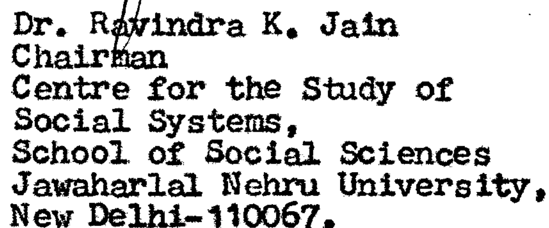
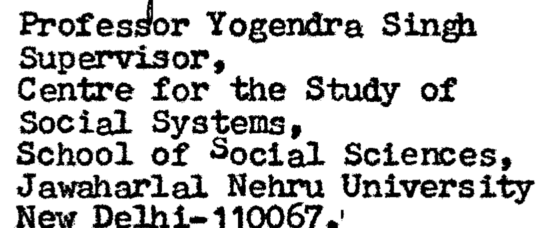
Certified that the thesis entitled "DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDIAN CINEMA : A SOCIOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF DEVELOPMENTAL SOURCES AND INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES" submitted by Ms. Sheena Jain, for the Degree of Master of Philosophy is a bonafide work to the best of my knowledge and may be placed before the examiners for their consideration.





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C_O_N_T_E_N_T_S

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INTRODUCTION

This study attempts a sociological exploration of the developmental sources and institutional structures of Indian cinema.

The term developmental sources refers not only to infrastructural elements such as financial and technical resources and their organisation, but also to super-structural elements such as patterns of belief, values and ideas, and the artefacts in which they are embedded. In this context, our focus is on art forms which affected Indian cinema at its origins (Chapter II), and on more general influences which moulded the texts of Indian films (Chapter IV). The social structure, of course, is a constant reference point. In Chapter III an attempt has been made to present an historical account of the organisation of production of Indian cinema (at the micro level) and of the institutions and policies that affected it (at the macro level).

The term Indian cinema has been used to refer to feature films made in India. An analysis of documentaries, ad-films, and other kinds of short films, though necessary for a comprehensive understanding of the field, has not been attempted here. This is primarily because such an undertaking would involve research on a far more elaborate

scale than that of an M.Phil dissertation. An analysis of the texts of feature films made in the '60s and '70s, and a study of cinema audiences in India, have also been excluded for the same reason.

A developmental, historical perspective has been chosen, among other reasons, to emphasise the value of viewing cinema as a phenomenon which is ever changing. It enables us to see how and why, and to what extent, changes in cinema are linked to wider socio-historical forces. It further sensitises us to discern in the cinema of today the potential for, and possible nature of, changes in the future.

The attempt to grapple with the substantive areas of the study of Indian cinema was aided considerably by a preliminary exploration of methods developed for a sociological study of cinema. An account of this exploration is what constitutes Chapter I of this dissertation.

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CHAPTER I

METHODS IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF CINEMA : AN OVERVIEW

While it was in the 1890s that the first public motion-picture shows were being given in France, America, England, and also in India, it was only in the second decade of the 20th century that cinema began to be studied from a sociological perspective. The discipline of sociology was itself in its formative stage in the second half of the 19th and early part of the 20th centuries. Initially, it was concerned with the general features of the development of modern society, in which cinema was still not a very significant factor. Since the 1930s, however, the sociological study of cinema has been a sporadic activity, undertaken in different countries from varied points of view. In the '70s it was noted that "film and media have developed so rapidly as subjects of academic and critical enquiry, that it is very difficult for a student of film to keep up with the scholarship in this new academic field". (James Monaco, 1977) It is possible however to discuss some of the significant trends in the sociology of cinema as it has developed over the years. It also seems meaningful to look at the body of material which has developed as 'Film Theory' to glean some of the sociological insights it contains.

Beginnings

The earliest contributions to film theory were stimulated by a desire to establish film as art; as deserving serious attention of a kind which had been accorded to other forms of cultural creation with a longer history. Ironically, while certain sections of society began to look upon cinema as more than mere trivial amusement only when theatre began to be filmed, i.e. when it interacted with a form which was already accepted as 'culture', one of the first books on film theory, Vachel Lindsay's "The Art of the Moving Picture" published in the USA in 1915, included an extensive discussion of the differences between the two media, in a section entitled 'Thirty Differences Between Photoplays and the Stage'. The particularity of the medium was further explored in Hugo Munsterberg's "The Photoplay : A Psychological Study", published in 1916, also in the USA. Since sociology attempts to view a phenomenon holistically, drawing upon studies undertaken from the point of view of various disciplines, these early explorations of film's intrinsic characteristics constitute an important beginning for sociological studies as well. A book entitled "Film as Art" by Rudolf Arnhem published in Germany in 1933 is significant for the same reason.

Contributions from Europe

In the following years, contributions to film theory came mainly from Europe, in the writings of French,

German and Eastern European thinkers.

Bela Balazs

Bela Balazs, critic, writer, and film maker from Hungary, is known for his celebration of the 'close-up' as a particularly powerful aspect of film. He may also be considered the first sociologist of film. His essays, including his earliest writings of 1922, are compiled in a book entitled "Theory of the Film".

A sociological perspective marks his very understanding of the genesis of film. A Marxist by conviction, he notes that film art could grow only when business conditions allowed it to. Being at the mercy of the theatre managers trying to fill a need for novel entertainment, cinema was in competition with Vaudeville, music hall, and popular theatre. In order to compete with live entertainment, film promoters were forced to look for subjects which cinema alone could render. And while economic factors made the cinema seek new subjects (chases, children, nature and its wonders) these subjects in their turn demanded the utilization of new techniques such as the close-up and montage. "A form-language quickly emerged from these techniques and that language itself started to dictate the kinds of subjects and stories suitable to cinema." (J. Dudley Andrew, 1976).

The interaction between film technique and culture was further noted in the observation that films are not

pictures of reality but rather the humanization of nature, since the very landscapes we choose as backgrounds for our dramas are the products of the cultural patterns within us. This notion, which has been taken up most recently by the extreme left-wing film journals of France, finds its source in Russian Formalism; in the view that "Since all vision is in a sense cultural rather than natural, the artist does reality no great disservice when he distorts and deforms it." (J. Dudley Andrew, ibid) Balazs' discussion of film aesthetics follows from this point, but that is not what is significant from a sociological point of view. More relevant is what we have already noted: that he situated film squarely in the economic sphere of influence, realizing that the economic foundation of film is the prime determinant of film aesthetics, and also that he understood and explained how our approach to any film is moulded and formed by the cultural values we share.

Further, predating Marshall Mchuhan by many years, Balazs anticipated the development of a new visual culture that would resurrect certain powers of perception that had lain dormant. "The discovery of printing", he wrote, "gradually rendered illegible the faces of man. So much could be read from paper that the method of conveying meaning by facial expression fell into desuetude. That is changing now that we have a developing, reproducible visual culture that can match print in versatility and reach." (Balazs, quoted in James Monaco, ibid) Whether we are concerned with

cinema in the west, or in other countries, including India, these insights provide starting points for viewing the socio-cultural dimensions of the phenomenon.

Pudovkin and Eisenstein

A body of film theory also emerged at this time in Russia, where film makers Pudovkin and Eisenstein (and prior to them Dovzhenko and Kuleshov) were issuing manifestoes for a new cinema to suit the new revolutionary situation. Eisenstein, with his aspiration to make films that allowed the spectator to be aware of synthesizing the entire film, from the smallest particles to the controlling ideas (a theory resembling the theories of drama Bertolt Brecht was building at the time), naturally delved into a consideration of the various ways in which spectators could and did participate in the film experience. While it is true that a host of particular socio-historical factors must of necessity be taken into account when the impact of films on audiences is being studied, it is also true that the manner in which the film is constructed provides one important variable. Eisenstein distinguished between films constructed in a manner that leads the spectator forward in a trance toward a conclusion which would suddenly burst upon him from nowhere and those which consist of a series of images that have been constructed on the principle of 'montage' that demands that the spectator be mentally alert to the formation of meaning through them.

While film makers may use either of these approaches without consciously intending to create the consequent kind of experiences for their viewers, this does not detract from the usefulness of such an analysis for studying the impact of films whose elements can be recognised as consisting of either one, or a combination of these principles. When studied in conjunction with other socio-cultural factors, this element, explored by Eisenstein, gives us an important insight into the qualitative effects of films on society. Thus, a film may be tyrannical or democratic; it may deaden or awaken consciousness. In fact, a study of Eisenstein's brilliant writings on the various formal elements of the medium: his discussion of different kinds of overtones, for example, is a must for any attempt to make a meaningful content analysis of films.

That Pudovkin, a film maker theoretician who was a contemporary of Eisenstein, spoke for a cinema that was narrative and controlled the psychological guidance of the audience, is a fact that suggests an atmosphere of lively and serious debate regarding film during this period of Russian history. The writings of these theoreticians and their films, generated by a commitment to revolutionary social goals in a situation where experimentation was encouraged, had, and continue to have a far reaching impact on film makers all over the world, in many different ways. A discussion of this impact, however, would be beyond the scope of our study.

The Sociology of Cinema in the USA

Effect Studies in the 1930s

By the 1930s, cinema drew the sociological attention not only of film makers and film theorists, but also of some sociologists. In the United States, Hollywood was growing into a giant industry. The Depression made cinema the one cheap diversion to which the public could escape. "The mood of the Depression was reflected by the gangster film, which came to rival the Western for lawlessness and sensation, and by a flood of comedies in which ordinary folk stood up to big business which was invariably shown as corrupt and selfish." (Thorold Dickinson, 1970) But, "in making heroes of gangsters and heroines of prostitutes" (i.e. ladies who took to the streets or became rich men's mistresses in order to provide food for their babies, an education for their sisters, or medicine for their husbands), "the films were reflecting the seamiest side of the picture with unprecedented accuracy" and "far too accurately for some tastes." (Arthur Knight, 1960) As a result, "letters of protest began to reach the Hay's office" (the organisation of the motion picture producers and distributors of America) "from all the more respectable elements in communities across the country. Church groups, women's clubs and patriotic associations passed resolutions condemning the industry. Editorials appeared in the newspapers and sermons were

preached from pulpits denouncing the growing immorality of the movies, urging the film producers to assume a greater social responsibility for the pictures they were turning out, prodding local censorship boards to increase vigilance and more rigorous standards". (Arthur Knight, ibid)

Under the aegis of the Motion Picture Research Council, financed by the Payne Fund, a series of studies were conducted by a number of sociologists and psychologists to measure the effect of motion pictures on audiences. The Payne Fund studies, consisting of several monographs were published in 1933, and were specially concerned with the effects of the cinema on children, on the production of juvenile and adult delinquency, on children's emotions, and on certain specific social attitudes. They included Herbert Blumer's study entitled "Movies and Conduct". The general conclusion of the studies was that motion pictures have definite and measurable effects on attitudes and behaviour, particularly in the case of children and adolescents, and that these effects are on the whole bad.

Some of these studies followed a design which became more or less standard in investigations of this type. Thurstone and Peterson's method, in "Motion Pictures and the Social Attitudes of Children", e.g. consisted in testing a group of subjects as regards certain attitudes before the presentation of a film and repeating the test immediately afterwards or after a lapse of time. The test consisted of

the administration of scales designed to measure attitudes relevant to the content of the picture. The results of this particular study showed that in the case of children, there were measurable changes in their attitudes in the direction indicated by the film and in the case of at least one group, these effects persisted in a significant amount for a period of 5 months. Later studies concerned with the same problem e.g. Wiese and Cole's "A Study of Children's Attitudes and the Influence of a Commercial Motion Picture" (Pub. in the Jrnl of Psychology, vol. 21, 1947) made use of a free association technique in which the subjects wrote answers to question regarding the ideological points in the film before and after being exposed to it. Approximately 3,000 children of different socio-economic backgrounds served as subjects. The results indicated that the effects of films are in a large degree determined by the social, economic, and cultural origins of the individuals. Thus, the socio-economic background of the audience determines greatly what a film means.

The Payne Studies as a whole were the subject of a prolonged and critical appraisal by Adler in a book entitled "Art and Prudence : A Study in Practical Philosophy" (published in 1935). A brochure by Moley entitled "Are we Movie Made?" (published in 1938) summarized Adler's views and defended his criticisms. Among the factors noted as limiting the quality of these studies is the fact that they were conducted in a let's-see-what's-wrong-with-the-movies

atmosphere, constituting a barrier for a completely free enquiry. (Franklin Fearing, 1947, in Denis Mcquail, 1976) Moreover, such studies did not attempt to view larger questions regarding the impact of motion pictures on culture as a whole or regarding the relationship between social reality as depicted on the screen and as it really was, or even regarding the social structure of the film industry itself.

Some of these questions were taken up by social scientists in the '40s. By this time, film criticism too had become an established activity, often mediating between the public and films through reviews that were more than advertisements, as they tended to be earlier, when they consisted of the producers' handouts being published by newspapers.

Hollywood in the Forties

Two studies of Hollywood appeared in the early '40s: Hortense Powdermaker's "Hollywood, the Dream Factory : An Anthropologist Looks at the Movie Makers", and L. Rosten's "Hollywood : The Movie Colony, the Movie Makers". Both were concerned with the social processes behind the industry around its peak period. The former used the technique of participant observation to present a detailed account of the Hollywood community, though despite a good deal of anthropological sensitivity it focusses far too much on individual

personalities to generate a rigorous conceptual understanding. The latter combines impressions, received statistics and an extensive survey; thereby providing an important document of the period.

J.P. Mayer's Sociology of Film

J.P. Mayer's "Sociology of Film" which appeared in 1945 is concerned primarily with the influence of film on British society. It explores the observation that "value patterns, actual behaviour, the outlook on life generally are manifestly shaped by film influences". Mayer thus places film within the gamut of agencies of socialisation, consisting also of family, friends, church, school, university, club, book, newspaper, radio etc. Further, he limits his concerns by discussing "not the qualitative features of this film influence, but rather its sociological presuppositions, which explain its possibility and potentiality". (J.P. Mayer, 1945) Thus the studies in child and adolescent reactions, based on interviews and questionnaires, as well as the documents of adult picture goers which he includes in the second section of his book, are analysed to answer questions in terms of basic human predilections as they are affected and moulded by social situations.

In doing this, he draws upon Levy Bruhl's studies on the primitive mind which point out the fact that our modern abstractions always presuppose and suggest mythic

elements: concepts like soul, life, death, society, order, being illustrations of this thesis. Mayer goes on to suggest that "there is an element of myth which explains the contemporary longing for the cinema. Just because traditional structures of life are uprooted and on the verge of disappearing altogether the modern cinema goer is seeking a 'participation-mystique' in the events on the screen." (J. P. Mayer, ibid) He thereby also links the cinema experience to historical antecedents such as the medieval miracle-plays, and further, he relates the changing media to changes in the sense organs of historic audiences. These in turn are linked to social processes such as urbanization and the development of communication systems. Thus, he contrasts the Elizabethan audience, which consisted of trained listeners, to the modern film audience, which, in general, lives more by way of visualization. In the latter context, the sociology of the large city assumes relevance, for, quoting George Simmel, he notes that "the intercourse of such a city compared with that of a small town, shows an immeasurable preponderance of visual over auditory impact, and not only because a relatively high number of the street encounters in a small town are with familiar people with whom one exchanges a word or whose appearance conjures up for us their whole and not merely their visible personalities - but above all through the medium of improved public services. Before the development of omnibuses, railways, and tramways in the 19th century, people were not generally in the position of being able to

look at each other for hours and minutes at a time without speaking to each other." As a result, the outwardness of our contemporary life requires vigilance and conscious readjustments to the powers of reason - and such a readjustment is not impossible in view of the fact that films are planned and made by a controllable industrial process. (J.P. Mayer, ibid) But this is only to point out what cinema is potentially capable of, because Mayer notes that in fact "many products of our contemporary film industry represent for our age what the Roman Circus meant for the declining Roman Empire." (J.P. Mayer, ibid)

Mayer's study, while drawing empirical support from the situation in Britain, certainly poses questions about film that are truly sociological, and also attempts to answer them on the basis of a perspective which is in the tradition of classical sociological analyses. In his conclusions, he notes that the adaptation of viewers' behaviour to screen personalities, which are essentially types, was leading to a virtual disappearance of individualities; that most films were pernicious to our nervous system: mere drugs that undermined our physical and spiritual health; and, more pragmatically, that the nationalization of the film industry would be a good thing, though no doubt it would create problems for individual producers.

Insofar as it is concerned with clarifying basic issues, the significance of the study really lies in its capacity to stimulate further critical enquiry. The dominant

trend in the sociology of cinema as it developed however, was more inclined towards empiricism and behaviouristic explanations, perhaps because of the social context of its development.

The Psychoanalytical Approach

"From Caligari to Hitler"

An interesting contribution that came at about the same time was a book entitled "From Caligari to Hitler" (published in 1947) by Siegfried Kracauer, the German film theorist. Here, too, the links between social context, mental processes, and films have been analysed, but in a manner which is closer to the psycho-analytical rather than to the social anthropological tradition.

The object of Kracauer's study is a body of films that appeared in the twenties in Germany with a distinctive style and contents, which were termed expressionist films. Kracauer proceeds to show that embedded within the manifest content of these films are motifs which had a special significance both for those who made the films and those who saw them, and that these reflect those deep layers of collective mentality which extend more or less below the dimension of consciousness. The socio-psychological basis of Hitler's rise to power (which Kracauer himself had witnessed) was, according to him, discernible in these films. They were latently portraying the Germans' withdrawal from

a harsh outer world into the intangible realm of the soul, after the humiliation of the First World War, as also (as is particularly clear in the case of the film "The Cabinet of Dr Caligari") they were expressing the development of an uprising against authoritarian disposition which apparently occurred under cover of a behaviour, rejecting uprising. In fact, Kracaver goes so far as to suggest that these films reveal the characteristics of the German mass mind, and enable the historian to understand and predict the appearance of Nazism.

While Kracaver's analysis is insightful and compelling, it is severely limited methodologically. He does not, for instance, make any attempt to answer how, if the films reflect what he says they do, the film makers had access to the collective unconscious of the masses. It is also only a presumption that the symbols in the films were in fact communicated to audiences. Furthermore, the concepts of 'Mass Mind' and 'German Masses' are hardly tenable without substantiation in terms of proper class analysis. For these and other reasons, the book fails to provide tools for analysing the links between cinema and society in general.

What, in his work, was influential however, was the attempt to understand film in much the same way that the psycho-analyst understands the dream, both dreams and films being seen to have a manifest and a latent content, and both approaches assuming that symbols play a significant role.

Parker Tylor and Others

A similar psycho-analytical approach marks the writings of the film critic, Parker Tylor, starting with his book "Magic and Myth in the Movies", published in 1947. Also, several attempts have been made to approach the genre of Westerns from a psycho-analytical viewpoint. A number of French analysts, for instance, have argued that the popularity and development of this genre had much to do with a need to have American national identity affirmed. They suggest that the early Westerns, independent of language as they were, met some such need among American immigrant populations. A more superficial analysis, however, is found in the writings of Barker, who sees the Western as a special sort of fantasy in which the audience identifies with the hero. He views its appeal as primarily oedipal : the conflict between superego and id being manifested in good vs bad.

The Critical Sociologists

An analysis of the phenomenon of cinema as part of a culture industry was what concerned the theoreticians of the Frankfurt School of Critical Sociology, who began to study it in the '40s and whose approach guided to a great extent the cultural criticism by the New Left in the '60s and '70s. Among them the writings of Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno and Horkheimer are explicitly concerned with cinema.

These sociologists were Marxists with a difference, precisely because they focussed on the superstructure, attributing to it a great autonomy and significance. Moreover, "they confronted a situation in which, as they thought the working class had ceased to be revolutionary; hence they were led back to a pre-Marxist notion of revolutionary activity as the product of a revolutionary Critical Consciousness'" (Tom Bottomore, 1975) The principal object of criticism in the sphere of thought was now the positivist elements in the social sciences, not the bourgeois theories of society, and in the sphere of practical life it was the 'technological society', not capitalism. In the latter case it should be noted that the approach was far from one in which invention and technique were seen as the primary cause of historical change, dispensing with any consideration of the human factors of classes and of the social organisation of production. Rather, technology was seen as providing an important instrument of ideological control used by the ruling classes, for maintaining their cultural hegemony.

Walter Benjamin

Not all the thinkers were equally pessimistic, however. Walter Benjamin in his classic essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", for instance, notes that in the movies : the 'reproducible work of art'; the "aura" which is to the world of things what "mystery" is to the world of human beings, and which originally resulted

from the physical presence of actors in the here and now of the theatre, is short circuited by the new technical advance, "and then replaced, in genuine Freudian symptom formation, by the attempt to endow the stars with a new kind of personal aura of their own off the screen". (Frederic Jameson, 1971) More generally, he notes that "for the first time in world history, mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice - politics." (Walter Benjamin, 1973) It is this new basis that provides hope for the future.

The immediate context, however was recognized as dark, for "it was fascism which first disclosed the decisive political power of the electronic media, their mobilizing power; and it was organized capitalism which, by systematically developing the media, revolutionized the conditions of production in the superstructure". (Paul, Cannerton, 1976) Furthermore, "as organized capitalism began to achieve relative stability, the industry that shaped consciousness infiltrated all other sectors of production, and the denial or distortion of human needs tended to move from the economic mechanisms of the labour marked to the social psychological directives of the leisure market - the manipulation of consumption." [Paul, Cannerton, ibid]

Adorno and Horkheimer

Adorno & Horkheimer, in the chapter entitled: "The Culture Industry : Enlightenment as Mass Deception" in their book, "The Dialectic of Enlightenment", and later Adorno, in his article "The Culture Industry", probe the above mentioned dimensions of cinema in depth. In the former, they note that the basis on which technology acquires power over society is the power of those whose economic hold over society is greatest, and the dependence of the most powerful broadcasting company on the electrical industry, or of the motion picture industry on the banks, is characteristic of the whole sphere of the activity of culture in mass society, whose individual branches are themselves economically interwoven.

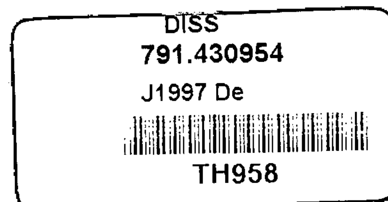
The culture industry, according to them, caters to the public with a hierarchical range of mass produced products of varying quality, advancing the rule of complete quantification, and the man with leisure has to accept what the culture manufacturers offer him. The resultant stunting of the mass media consumer's powers of imagination and spontaneity does not have to be traced back to any psychological mechanisms; he must ascribe the loss of those attributes to the objective nature of the products themselves, especially the most characteristic of them, the sound film. "They are so designed that quickness, powers of observation and experience are undoubtedly needed to apprehend them at all; yet sustained thought is out of the question if the spectator

is not to miss the relentless rush of facts. (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1969) In fact, "the entertainment manufacturers know that their products will be consumed with alertness even when the customer is distraught, for each of them is a model of the huge economic machinery which has always sustained the masses." (Adorno & Horkheimer, ibid) Ironically, amusement under late capitalism is the prolongation of work, being sought after as an escape from the mechanized work process, but to recruit strength in order to be able to cope with it again. This is so, because "mechanisation has such power over a man's leisure and happiness, and so profoundly determines the manufacture of amusement goods, that his experiences are inevitably after images of the work process itself. The ostensible content is merely a faded foreground; what sinks in is the automatic succession of standardized operations". Thus, "pleasure promotes the resignation which it ought to help to forget". (Adorno & Horkheimer, ibid)

Writing in the '70s, Adorno reiterates the fact that the hucksters of the culture industry base their activities upon the principle of the commercialization (saleability) of their work, not upon its actual content or construction. But what he considered striking about the contemporary period was that "the products of the spirit in the style of the culture industry are no longer also merchandise - rather, they are wholly merchandise." Thus, "the customer is sought after in order to sell the world just as it is, in the same way that each product of the culture industry is its own

advertisement." (Adorno, 1971-72) He notes further, that the dependency and servility of human beings, which is the ultimate objective of the culture industry, "could not be more faithfully exemplified than by that character of an American psychologist who thought that anxieties of the present would have their end, if only people would want to align themselves into present personalities. The compensation that the culture industry offers to people, by awakening in them the comfortable feeling that the world is ordered in such way that the culture industry maintains them, frustrates for them the very happiness that it presents so deceitfully." (Adorno, ibid) Thirdly,"the net effect of the culture industry, of an anti-demystification 'Aufklarung', that is, progressive technical domination, becomes transformed into a trick played on the masses, that is to say, into a means of oppressing consciousness." (Adorno, ibid)

An awareness of the manipulative role of cinema which such an analysis contained, inspired not only film theorists, but also film-makers who were intent on developing a historically self conscious cinema which demystifies. But that was in the '60s and '70s - a period we will discuss after considering some of the other developments in the earlier decades.



Mass Communication Studies in the USA

The awe-inspiring spread of media at the end of the post war era led to the development of mass communications

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studies in a number of academic disciplines and in some business organisations in the USA. Film, too, was considered a medium of mass communication characterized by the use of modern technology, being directed toward a relatively large, heterogenous and anonymous audience; being public, rapid and transient, and the communicator working through a complex corporate organisation embodying an extensive division of labour and an accompanying degree of expense. (George Gerbner, 1967, in Denis Mcquail, 1976)

Film was subjected to the same kind of analyses as the other media. There were what may be termed effect studies, and 'uses and gratifications' studies. These were in addition to the audience researches conducted by the Hollywood industry itself, which were linked to attempts at standardization, to find popular subjects.

Unlike the studies by the critical sociologists, which were embedded within a grand theory, and whose meta-theoretical presuppositions were philosophical, such studies were more fragmentary and empirical, and also often tended towards scientism at the meta-theoretical level. At a more general conceptual level, most could be linked to the mass society thesis.

Effect Studies

In 'effect studies', there was a tendency to view the process of communication as a one way flow, since the

mass media conspicuously lacked feedback mechanisms. In its extreme forms, this led to a distorted conception of the audiences as passive receptors. While there is undoubtedly asymmetry of control and authority as between communicator and receivers, such a process needs to be viewed in relation, to the way in which the structure and culture of the situation combine: for instance, in terms of authority, or the capacity to have information one presents accepted as true, or opinions accepted as legitimate. Room must also be made to accommodate indirect feedback channels: the crudest and least of these being the mechanisms of the commercial context in which the media operates — through withdrawal of support. At the same time, these studies were themselves responsible for drawing attention to the inadequacy of such a model; for audience responses could be seen to vary greatly from one individual to another. But as long as they were wedded to quantitative, empirical methods, they could not account for these differences in a sufficiently exhaustive way, which requires methods of observation and data collection that are more indirect and theoretically wide based.

'Uses and Gratifications' Studies

As regards the 'uses and gratifications' studies, many functions, broad and narrow, were suggested, discussed and sometimes even measured: socialization, recreation, escape, information, etc. Needless to say, most of these studies focussed on the popular cinema: that is, cinema which

was viewed by a large number of people. While no single, coherent sociological study emerged in this period, these studies paved the way for more sustained attempts in the years to come. As regards mass communications studies in general, too, it may be noted that the discipline really came into its own only in the '70s. For long, these studies were also biased towards analyses of the radio and other electronic media, and cinema was a relatively neglected field.

The Union of Sociology and Film Aesthetics : Andre Bazin

Also in the post-World War II period, new developments in film theory were heralded through the writings of a brilliant film critic: Andre Bazin. Bazin's writings may be seen as the starting point for the coming together of a sociological understanding and an understanding of the language of film: mutually enriching, and also inspiring new trends in film making.

While it is as a film theorist, with a bias towards realism in cinema that he has been most influential and prolific as a writer, it is significant that he believed that it is as impossible to avoid the sociological function of cinema as to ignore its congentital realism. "Bazin was fascinated by the hypothesis that the cinema responds to the forces of growth and increasing complexity, and by the equally intriguing belief that cinema has certain inherited traits." (J. Dudley Andrew, ibid) As regards the former, he

noted that popular culture played the seminal role in the origin of film; that cinema immediately served and was fostered by an industry of entertainment. He pointed to its rapport with music hall, the dime novel, and the melodramatic boulevard theatre.

Many of Bazin's most impressive articles trace the struggle between these tendencies. He wrote about the evolution of both cinematic language and cinematic content. Thus, he notes that in 1895 no one could say what films should look like or how they should go about the business of communicating and mediating reality. The gradual formulation of a language of cinema came about during the first twenty years of its existence. By 1915 the original freedom of the art was vastly restricted while its powers of expression had miraculously developed as a result of the institutionalization of the art. During the era of the classic cinema people could justly say that they were going to the movies because any particular film they might see would be of less importance to them than the reenactment of the cultural and aesthetic ritual which was "the movies". "Every film was an example, good or bad, of the standard language at work." (J. Dudley Andrew, ibid) The coming of the "film formula" of the twenties and thirties is indeed striking considering that in America alone 50-70 million people went to the movies each week. They watched a language which had triumphed over all other possibilities and which reinforced its supremacy with every new film. Bazin was convinced that this dictatorial

language, even more than social convention, determined the kinds of subject matter available to the classic screen. Genres developed which could most readily respond to and display the machinery of cinema. "Classic cinema, to sum up his position, has an official look which depersonalizes every film and treats every subject alike," and "the ceaseless repetition of style allowed for an immeasurably subtle system of film conventions. A natural rapport grew up between the public which went to the movies weekly and the producers who needed to supply the people with a variant of what they liked and were used to." (J. Dudley Andrew, ibid) What is particularly significant is that there was the possibility for social cohesion through cinema seldom available to any art. "Cinema seemingly had an opportunity to unite the members of a culture with a traditional style and a network of traditional messages like the epic poems of Homer's Greece which every school boy memorized and every citizen heard, year in, year out" and "such a blatantly official art had been effectively unavailable in our culture since the Renaissance. Instead of epic poems or Gothic Cathedrals, the money factories in Hollywood and other film capitals supplied, on the whole, a middle-class ideology." (J. Dudley Andrew, ibid)

There were, however, according to Bazin, always films which resisted the pull of classic cinema towards the popular culture direction. There were always pioneers of

personal realism who confirmed neither to the official look nor to the official message of the cinema of their day. In these, style is not an 'a priori' factor but is arrived at in the course of the film. The few realistic vagabonds of the twenties and thirties were vindicated after 1940 by a general shift in film-making practice toward the more realistic principles they relied on. "The Rules of the Game", and "Citizen Kane" are, for Bazin, films which mark this new stage of cinema, forever breaking the absolute shackles of the official look.

While most films may still have been content to satisfy the culture with a conventional style and message, the way was now fully open for multiple styles exposing and expressing multiple aspects of reality. In fact, Alexandre Astrue, a follower of Bazin, proclaimed in 1948 that the film-maker can be considered the equivalent of the novelist, letting his style be dictated by the exigencies of his material and his personal attitude toward that material. And the founding of the magazine "Cahiers du cinema" by Bazin and Jacques Denial-Valcroze in 1951 provided a rallying point for young critics such as Francois Truffaut, Jean-Luc-Godard, Pierre Kast, Eric Rohmer and Claude Chabrol, who in the following years, created the influential New Wave Cinema in France. Bazin's identification of a cinema of personal expression became an important criterion for film criticism, and developed into what has been termed the 'auteur' theory. An article by Truffaut in the Cahiers gave impetus to this trend. The theory till today finds

a vocal spokesman in Andrew Sarriss, the American film critic - but from a sociological perspective, the trend lacks an attempt to provide an effective mediation between politics and art, between reality and imagination. In the '60s and '70s, the Cahiers' views on cinema moved away from Bazin's own, but it was he who had created a firm base for intellectual debate.

The Sociology of Cinema in the '60s and '70s

From the 1960s greater intellectual attention was given to film, not only by film theorists, but also by a few sociologists who could perceive the glaring gaps in the tradition of research in this area. George Huaco's "The Sociology of Film Art" was published in 1965 in the USA and I.C. Jarvies' "Towards a Sociology of Cinema" appeared in 1970 in Britain.

George Huaco

Huaco's study, as noted in its Preface, "partakes of the recent trend in American sociology - the concern with culture". (George Huaco, 1965) Huaco chooses to investigate the emergence, duration, and decline of 3 stylistically unified waves of film art in terms of possible socio-historical preconditions. "Film history reveals that there have been three and only three complete waves of film art which are stylistically homogeneous clusters" and these

are: The German Expressionist film, from 1920 to 1931; The Soviet expressive-realist film from 1925 to 1930; and the Italian neo realist film, from 1945 to 1955. (George Huaco, ibid) Viewed in totality, the history of cinema yields two other categories of films, which Huaco terms as: the work of isolated film makers, where the films appear as a totality directly related to the creative personality of the author and therefore, the problem reveals itself as one primarily in the province of the psychology of art, and secondly, stylistically heterogenous clusters, which, while amenable to sociological analysis, tend to limit the explanatory possibilities to the relatively more gross political and economic variables because of their heterogeneity. In the case of stylistically homogenous waves, Huaco notes that the homogeneity extends beyond style, and the common subjects, themes, and motifs can be compared to those present in the larger cultural context, and the cluster as a whole eventually linked to specific social structures and configurations in the larger social system.

Huaco adopts two formal sociological models to analyse the film waves, at the micro level of the historically specific social matrix of the films in question, and the macro level of the political, social and economic changes in the larger society, respectively. The latter is a modified version of the original conflict model of Marx, using categories borrowed from the work of Neil J. Smelser. It consists of the broad division of societal phenomenon into

base and superstructure: the former consisting of the mode of social organisation and social resources; the latter of values, ideas, expressive symbols, and norms (particularly legal and political). In this conceptual framework, films are subsumed by the category of expressive symbols. The micro model consists of the web of social structures immediately surrounding film art: of producers, directors, the audience or public, and actors: the last being a relatively insignificant element "because the history of film shows that in periods of artistic afflorescence film actors are completely subordinate to directors". (George Huaco, ibid)

The formal link between the two models is the assumption that major political, social, and economic changes in the larger society tend to affect film (as also art and literature) by being channelled or filtered through the social structure which constitute their social matrix. The dynamic aspect of the macro-model consists in the assumption that in most historical societies the major source of social change is a tension, or "lack of fit" between social resources and specific modes of social organisation.

The basic sociological hypothesis of his study is that 4 conditions must be fully present before a wave of stylistically unified film art can begin:namely, (i) a cadre of directors, cameramen, editors, actors and other technicians, (ii) the industrial plant required for film production, (iii) a mode of organisation of the film industry which is either in harmony with or at least permissive of the

ideology of the wave and (iv) a political climate which is either in harmony or at least permissive of the ideology and style of the wave. Before we proceed to describe Huaco's analysis further, it may be noted here that Huaco's hypothesis is hardly a powerful one. It would take little to prove the importance of these 4 conditions for the development of film waves. In the context of Huaco's study, therefore, the real worth of noting these 4 conditions seems to lie in the fact that they provide a framework for systematically presenting data relevant to a discussion of the social aspects of the film waves identified. What he terms a corollary of his hypothesis: that the elimination of one or more of these conditions will be sufficient to produce the decline and destruction of wave: also provides a means of describing the manner in which each wave came to an end.

His method may be briefly described by taking examples from his analysis of German expressionism. He begins by noting the presence of the 4 necessary conditions: the existence of a generation of actors, cameramen, directors and technicians as a result of the First World War, which blocked films from the Allied countries that previously were available in the German market, and because documentary and propaganda films had to be made for military purposes; the existence of the basic industrial film plant for the same reason; the formation of the German film industry into an oligopolistic structure, by 1917, conducive to films with a

coherent conservative ideology, and finally the political shift from left to centre by mid-1919. The decline of the wave is seen to be linked to the migration of the best expressionist directors and actors to Hollywood, following the stabilization crisis of the German film industry.

Huaco then turns to an examination of the larger aristic literary-dramatic cultural context of Weimar Germany for the genesis of the expressionist style, and finds the stylistic continuity between expressionist paintings, novels and plays on the one hand, and the expressionist films, on the other, to be very strong.

Coming to the films themselves he describes their definitive style and presents a content analysis of the political and social ideology implicit in their plots. For each film, he describes the way in which it reveals a consistent and self reinforcing pattern of conservative and frequently reactionary themes. In addition to this, he culls up data regarding the social backgrounds of the expressionist film directors that reveals "a group that was largely middle and upper middle class, well-educated, with a common background in painting and theatre, and of a romantic conservative political orientation", which seems to be congruent with the more pragmatic conservatism of the UFA film production and distribution business empire.

Apart from the weakness of the hypothesis he advances, Huaco's study is limited by a lack of data - particularly

regarding audiences. Further, while he does effectively demonstrate some of the social factors responsible for the emergence of each wave, he does not account for the fact that not in all societies where similar structural conditions obtained did comparable waves of film art develop. His study has also been termed a vulgar Marxist analysis, for, among other reasons, his reduction of German cinema to simple conservative ideology, and also for his simplified account of the basic contradictions in German society. The errors are noted to be symmetrical to the extravagance of Kracauer, the latter invoking idealist conceptions of soul and spirit, and vulgar Marxism treating the categories of materialism similarly, (Andrew Tudor, 1974).

<u>I.C. Jarvie</u>

I.C. Jarvie's "Towards a Sociology of Cinema" published in 1970 proposes to give sociological answers to the questions: who makes films and why? who sees films, how and why? What is seen, how and why? and, how do films get evaluated, by whom and why? (I.C. Jarvie, 1970) Jarvie sees four primary areas that need to be explored from a sociological perspective: the industry, its composition, roles, economics and relation to the individual artists; the audience, its social structure, statistical identity and the sociological rationale of movie-going; the experience, influence of films, audience relationship to themes, stars,

myths etc (escape, wish-fulfilment etc.); and evaluation, the formulation of a film image and the creation of objective criteria for film criticism.

In answering his questions (with special reference to cinema in Britain and the United States), he used the method of situational logic, whereby he considers several candid answers, rejecting those which are inadequate. However, in the absence of sufficient empirical substantiation (despite his call for scientific analysis) the answers he provides are either too obvious to deserve much attention, or are clearly just opinions and thereby lack validity. In detail, Jarvies' perceptions generally fail to go much beyond further urging others to carry the work, since critics and others have so often contradicted themselves. Examples of his answers are, for instance, to the question regarding who makes films, how and why: that films are made principally by a specialized industry which recruits widely, and the industry operates like any other, bringing together land, labour and capital. Further, films are made by the industry in order to make profit and/or to make propaganda, while the individuals who man the industry do so either to make money, and/or quality films, not to mention some other desires that cinema gratifies, such as fame or sex, Regarding the audience, he criticizes the notion that cinema going is a passive activity; that the sociological information imparted by cinema is distorted and status-quo-esque; and that films have a corrupting influence on the public. In the absence of rigorous methods of research

and analysis, such observations are disappointing and unprovocative.

The Marxist Perspective

In the '60s and '70s, the writings in the journal "Cahiers du Cinema" were primarily oriented towards analysing the ideological content of films from a Marxist perspective. Other Marxists working in the province of cinema have followed bourgeois positivists and behaviourists, e.g. the communications group in Paris, the Italian semiologist Umberto Eco and Raymond Williams.

Cahiers du Cinema

A significant statement of the Cahiers views during this period is found in the article entitled "Cinema/ Ideology/Criticism" by Jean Luc Comolli and Paul Narboni. (Jean Luc Comolli and Paul Narboni, 1971) It is particularly significant because it rejects a simplistic equation of all films made under capitalism with a reactionary ideology, and takes into account the formal aspects of the use of the medium to arrive at an understanding of ideological content. It starts with a definition of film, as, on the one hand, a particular product, manufactured within a given system of economic relations involving labour (which appears to the capitalist as money) and becoming transformed into a commodity, possessing exchange value which is realized by the sale of tickets and contracts and

governed by the laws of the market; and on the other hand, as a result of being a material product of the system, as an ideological product of the system, which in France meant capitalism.

Addressing itself primarily to film critics, the article goes on to say that for film critics, the vital distinction to be made, first and foremost, is whether films reveal the cinema's so-called 'depiction of reality', and therefore are able to disrupt, or possibly even severe the connection between the cinema and its ideological function, or whether they do not. In this context the authors list seven possible types of films: those which are imbued through and through with the dominant ideology, in pure and unadulterated form, and give no indication that their makers are even aware of the fact, accepting the established system of depicting reality: "bourgeois realism" and the whole conservative box of tricks, blind faith in 'life', 'humanism', 'common sense' etc; those films which attack their ideological assimilation on 2 fronts: the level of the 'signified' i.e. they deal with a directly political subject, and do so by breaking down the traditional way of depicting reality (for only action on both fronts: 'signified' and 'signifiers' has any hope of operating against the prevailing ideology); films in which the same double action operates but against the grain - i.e. the content is not explicitly political, but in some way becomes so through the criticism practiced in it through its form; those films which have an

explicitly political content but which do not effectively criticize the ideological system in which they are embedded because they unquestioningly adopt its language and its imagery; films which "seem at first sight to belong firmly within the ideology and to be completely under its sway but which turn out to be so only in an ambiguous manner, starting off from a non-progressive standpoint but throwing up obstacles in the way of the ideology, causing it to severe off the course so that the ideology becomes subordinate to the text; films of the 'cinema-direct' variety, which can be divided into two groups: first, those arising out of political (or rather, social) events or reflections, but which make no clear differentiation between themselves and the non-political cinema because they do not challenge the cinema's traditional, ideologically conditioned method of 'depiction', and finally the other kind of 'live cinema' where the director is not satisfied with the idea of the camera 'seeing through appearances' but attacks the basic problem of depiction by giving an active role to the concrete stuff of his film.

'Cinethique' and the Tel Quel Group

Another journal which at the same time undertook a radical critique of cinema, was the 'Cinethique', also published in France. While every one realises that ideology plays its part in the financing, production, distribution, censorship

and criticism of films, these critics were the first to claim that the very basis of cinematic signification is corrupted by a lie which destroys every possibility of meaning 'except for the neurotic repetition of the dominant ideology'. Their work formed part of a large and growing movement centred on the review 'Tel Quel' in Paris, a journal intent on restructuring culture by taking in hand its various means of social interaction. The practice of what Barthes terms 'semioclasm' was manifest in the films made by Golard at this time. The basis for the Marxist theory of film as 'signifying practice' was the semiology of Christian Metz, shorn of its initial a-political problematic. Metz, in his "Language and Cinema" (Eng. pub. in 1974) saw film as a combination of codes, both specific (to the practice of film making) and non-specific (common to a variety of signifying practices, including politics). Translating this into Marxist terms, the Cinethique politicized this idea by noting that a film is therefore a set of contradictions between two types of heterogenous elements - the specific and non-specific codes - and of contradictions within the specific and non-specific codes. These are the contradictions which can be distinguished from the standpoint of ideology. The contradictions which traverse the non-specific codes are in fact those which principally characterise the conflict between bourgeois and proletarian ideologies, unequally and to varying degrees.

The Cinethique, seeing film theory as a guide to the production of the 'revolutionary film', argued that in the last instance, the non-specific codes are dominant over the specific (cinematic ones) and that one can distinguish between two kinds of revolutionary film: the materialist 'deconstruction film' and the Marxist Leninist political film. The former, favoured by the Tel Quel group was condemned because the attempt to transform the specific cinematic codes within the film was not accompanied by a parallel transformation of the non-specific codes. The Cinethique noted that the latter, being dominant, slip back into a non-revolutionary position and therefore become subversive. But in the Marxist Leninist film (initiated by the Dziga Vertov group of film-makers in France) "the balance of the film is dictated by the domination of the non-specific codes invested in it, and the reason why this system takes in new (specific) codes is because the kind of non-specific (Marxist Leninist) codes which go to make it up have never (or almost never) featured in what is conventionally known as the history of the cinema. Thus, "the novelty of the one summons up the novelty of the other". (Dave Laing, 1980)

<u>Enzenberger's Radical Critique of Cinema</u>

Another variant of a radical critique of cinema, found in the writings of Enzenberger, is more in line with the activity of film makers like Chris Marker in France. Hans Magnus Enzenberger, in his "Constituents of a Theory of

the Media' notes Walter Benjamin's views that "monopoly capitalism develops the consciousness-shaping industry more quickly and more extensively than other sectors of production" and "it must at the same time fetter it". Therefore, "a socialist media theory has to work at this contradiction. Demonstrate that it cannot be solved within the given productive relationship - rapidly increasing discrepancies - potential destructive forces. Certain demands of a prognostic nature must be made of any such theory".

Enzenberger observes that "for the first time in history, the media are making possible mass participation in a social and socialised productive process, the practical means of which are in the hands of the masses themselves" but "in its present form equipment like television or film does not serve communication but prevents it. It allows no reciprocal action between transmitter and receiver; technically speaking, it reduces feedback to the lowest point compatible with the system." (Hans Magnus Enzenberger, 1970, in Denis Mcquail, 1976) This state of affairs, however, cannot be justified technically. On the contrary electronic techniques recognise no contradiction in principle between transmitter and receiver. Every transistor radio is by the nature of its construction, at the same time a potential transmitter; it can interact with other receivers by circuit reversal. The development

from a mere distribution medium to a communication medium is technically not a problem. But it is consciously prevented for understandable political reasons. The technical distinction between receivers and transmitters reflects the social division of labour into producers and consumers, which is why the consciousness industry becomes of particular political importance. It is based, in the last analysis, on the basic contradiction between the ruling class and the ruled class, that is to say, between monopoly capital or monopolistic bureaucracy on the one hand and the dependent masses on the other.

Enzenberger also criticized the NewLeft of the '60s, which, according to him, "has reduced the development of the media to a single concept, that of manipulation. This concept was originally extremely useful for heuristic purposes and has made possible a great many individual analytical investigations, but it now threatens to denegerate into a mere slogan which conceals more than it is able to illuminate and therefore itself requires analysis." In fact, "the current theory of manipulation of the left is essentially defensive and its effects can lead the movement into defeatism." Further, he feels that "it is perhaps no accident that the Left has not yet produced an analysis of the pattern of manipulation in countries with socialist regimes." Finally, he holds that the question is therefore not whether the media are manipulated but who manipulates

them, and "a revolutionary plan should not require the manipulators to disappear. On the contrary, it must make everyone a manipulator." (Hans Magnus Enzenberger, ibid) Chris Marker equipped workers with 8 mm cameras because the goal was to have the worker film his way of looking at the world, just as he was writing it. Such activity in France and elsewhere, has opened up unheard of prospects for the cinema, and above all a new conception of film making and significance of art in our time.

Revolutionary Film Making

It is interesting at this point to note that there came into being a sociologically informed cinema in the Latin American countries in the 60s and 70s, which also had radical aspirations. The Argentinian film makers, Fernando Solanas and Getino made their "Hour of the Furnaces" in 1968, influenced by their knowledge of the thinking of Frantz Fanon and a consciousness of the extent of colonization in their country. In an interview, they note that "from this came our decision to make a cinema of discussion, a cinema of consciousness, a cinema of ideological and political arguments, a cinema of ideas, to replace an old cinema of sentiments, of characters. The effort was to realise the decolonizing film, a film of disruption as compared to the traditional values of American and European cinema." It would not have been a decolonized film if it didn't decolonize its

language." (Fernando Solanas and Getino, 1970) Of course, revolutionary attempts were not, and are not the rule, but the exception, in the countries of the Third World.

Andher approach in revolutionary film making is one that discounts theoretical concerns which are considered mere 'auxiliaries' to the spontaneous energy of the masses. Thus, the Brazilian film-maker, Glauber Rocha, emphasises his belief that the real strength of the South American masses lies in 'mysticism' in an emotional dionysiac behaviour which he sees as arising from a mixture of Catholicism and African religions. Rocha argues that the energy which has its source in mysticism is what will ultimately lead the people to resist oppression and it is this emotional energy which he seeks to tap in his films. This is clearly in contrast, for instance, to Godard's approach, who draws upon Lenin to criticize the 'cult of spontaneity' - pointing out that "any cult of spontaneity, any weakening of the 'element of lucid awareness', signifies in itself - and whether one wants it this way or not is immaterial - a reinforcing of the influence of bourgeois ideology". (James Roy Mac Bean, 1972)

The English School of Cine Structuralism

To come back to the sociology of film proper: In Britain, a semiological approach found an early and receptive home in the pages of the journal "Screen", and led to

the establishment of the English school of cine structuralism. In fact, in the seventies, discussions of the cinema were the product of a cross fertilisation of numerous intellectual streams: the structuralism of Levi Strauss and Althusser; Marxism, Freudian psycho-analysis, and semiology (which was in turn rooted in linguistics). The articles, "Sociology and the Cinema", and "Sociology of Aesthetic Structures and Contextualism" by Terry Lovell exemplify the sociological perspective on cinema that 'Screen' fostered.

Lovell defines film in Parsonian terminology as an expressive symbol system, and sociology as a systematic and inter-subjectively verifiable knowledge of social phenomena. As an expressive symbol system, Lovell notes that a film must have an object, for an "expressive orientation is an orientation towards something", and she thereby introduces an additional element into the method of content analysis of cinema. (Terry Lovell, 1971) According to her, film includes orientations towards (i) itself, (ii) states of affairs in the world (realism), and (iii) possible states of affairs both desired and feared (fantasy). She then discusses three types of relationships between cinema and sociology, observing that the logical possibilities are wide. Broadly, film/cinema may be related either to sociological knowledge or to social phenomena. In the former case, while few films if any are about sociology, the ideas about and attitudes towards the social world expressed by films may be compared

and contrasted with sociological knowledge. In the latter case, the relation between social phenomena and the cinema/film may be conceived as either conceptual or causal or both. Reflection theories of cinema, for instance, see the world which the cinema creates as a mirror "possibly a distorting one" of the real world. Conceptual links can also be established in other ways - as for instance, on the model of Levi Strauss' work on myth and social structure, wherein "we may proceed by breaking down the world of film and the social world into its elements and working out the logical possibilities of variation and relation." (Terry Lovell, 1972, in Denis Mcquail, 1976) As regards a causal link between cinema and society, Lovell observes that perhaps no study postulates a direct link of this kind, without meaning, or at least convention as an intervening variable. Moreover, such studies commonly operate with the concept of influence and earlier in this chapter, we have noted some examples. Among studies already done, she also notes others which concentrate on the internal relations and developments of film/cinema from a sociological point of view, within which there are two main traditions e.g. those which describe the institutional structure of the cinema (e.g. Jarvie), and those which centre on the concept of movement (e.g. Huaco).

In her second article, Lovell focusses on one particular limitation in the field of the sociology of cinema, which, in fact, is to be found in the more general domain of

the sociology of art: namely, that "the claim to autonomy from "externalist" influences has led to the tendency to view 'hack art' as more amenable to sociological analysis than great works". (Terry Lovell, ibid) In her opinion, it would be a retrograde step, were 'contextualism' to remove artistic creativity from the purview of the sociologist because of unjustified fears of reductionism, and suggests that such a trend can be contained in so far as contextualism takes the form of structuralism. Further, the effect is reinforced by the union of structuralism with Marxism: the latter ensuring that the social refeence is not lost. In this context, she refers to Althusser's structuralism, which allows the ideological component of the superstructure 'a certain autonomy' in relation to the infrastructure, via the concept of 'over determination'.

Lovell also notes that in the case of media sociology (including cinema) the production context has been relatively neglected. She refers to the sociology of science, particularly Kuhn's analysis, whose value lies in the creation of a single theory of structure, process, and change of science. Parallel processes in cinema are noted briefly, providing an insight into the way in which a similar analysis of cinema may be undertaken. She illustrates some of her points regarding the sociology of aesthetic structures and contextualism by presenting a preliminary analysis of the French new wave.

The Sociology of Cinema : A New Basis

The latest study in the sociology of cinema which purports to take a synoptic view of the developments in the field so far, and to present an approach of its own is "Image and Influence : Studies in the Sociology of Film"; by Andrew Tudor published in 1974. Noting the fact that "off and on, various people have suggested provisional schemetics for a study of cinema", it identifies its aim as being distinct i.e. to partly contribute to such a process. (Andrew Tudor, ibid)

The account is divided into two sections: the first part, broadly microscopic in its focus, is concerned primarily with the process of communication (often taking off from criticism of established sociological studies) and presenting and elaborating on a 'conceptual scheme', fleshing it out with some empirical detail, while the second section is concerned with a macroscopic level of analysis, and discusses 'film language', followed by a conceptual and empirical discussion of cinema as a pattern of culture within society. The concern with the process of communication leads to schematization of factors relevant for a sociological analysis that is diagrammatically presented as follows:

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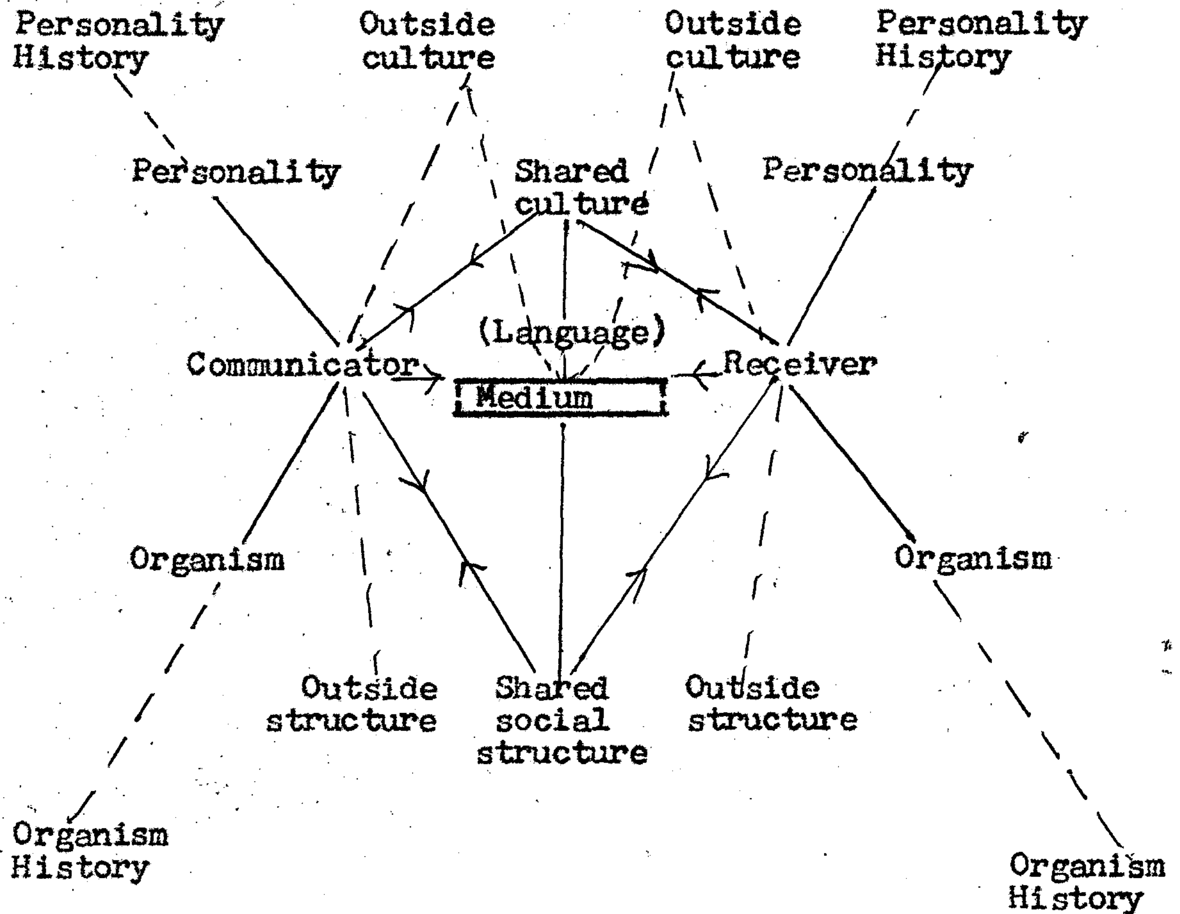

The Structure of Communication

Tudor notes the great many gaps in the details of the studies of cinematic communication: especially in the area of media language - and proceeds to attempt to understand the dynamics of the process by discussing in turn the movie communicators, movie audiences, and movie languages, patterns of culture, film movements and popular genres.

In the case of movie communicators, or movie makers, he suggests that they can be usefully thought of as constituting their own society "with its own aims and problems, its special strains and conflicts", and that by doing so "we can begin to isolate the socio-cultural factors which seem to be repetitive elements in movie production." (Andrew Tudor, ibid) To illustrate his point, he discusses the Hollywood system in detail, drawing upon whatever studies have been made.

In his discussion of movie audiences, he considers the problem to be to somehow reconstitute an image, of a movie audience which does not start from mass media prejudice. He then identifies the basic psychological machinery through which most people relate to film: a combination of identification and projection, and delineates a framework for analysing types of audience star relations; audience reaction to the story line of the film and so on.

The chapter on movie language is an extensive one: and once more, he develops a scheme for better analyses of this aspect /a paradigm in fact/ drawing upon Christian Metz and Roland Barthes for the purpose. In the process, he also discusses in detail the various elements of film; the sign image, the image frame, the shot sequence etc.

The next chapter on culture explores the mass culture concept in some depth identifying its strengths and weaknesses; as also other views as to how cultural patterns

fit into social process - and proceeds to analyse some popular genres and film movements (sketchily, as he himself notes) to exemplify the use of the conceptual scheme he arrives at.

Tudor's work certainly fills an important gap in the sociology of cinema both by identifying what has been left out in this field of study and by presenting critically and lucidly, whatever valuable conceptual contributions have been made. It certainly provides an important methodological reference for anyone attempting to research a particular area within the sociology of cinema.

The Present

Even as academic sociology is slowly waking up to a better appreciation of the need to study cinema, film criticism through the seventies, and into the '80s is being progressively enriched by a climate of lively intellectual discussion, providing invaluable material for the further growth of the sociology of cinema. A recent development is the application of Lacanian psycho-analytical notions, positing a range of concepts which could account for the process of cinema in relation to the Lacanian 'subject', seeing the cinema as a crucial 'technique' of the imaginary. Christian Metz who led the way in this endeavour, sees the task of the psycho-analytic analysis of cinema to be that of a disengaging of the cinema-object from the imaginary "to win

it for the symbolic in the hope of extending the latter in a new province". (Dave Laing, ibid)

The Sociological Study of Indian Cinema

Studies by Sociologists

The fact that India is the largest producer of films in the world would probably not come as a surprise to anyone acquainted with the sights and sounds of urban India. Film posters prominently displayed, pictures of film stars in pān shops, in vehicles, on calendars, radios and transistors playing film songs, their tunes being hummed on buses, in shops, and elsewhere, and of course, crowds at cinema houses.

Coupled with the growth of methods in the sociological study of cinema, discussed above, this fact may lead us to expect the sociology of Indian cinema to be a rich and alive field. In fact, however, even though sociologists have frequently noted the need for, and potential significance of such study, the field has been neglected almost completely.

The reasons for this perhaps include the notion that low brow popular art (for that is what the bulk of Indian cinema is) is unworthy of high brow academic attention. Also, the diversity of languages in which films are made in this country would have made it difficult for individual social scientists to practically come to grips with aspects

of Indian cinema, which require a conceptualization of the field as an integrated totality. Further, to the extent that research is not completely autonomous, and is influenced, among other factors, by government policies, it is not incomprehensible that cinema has been considered a low priority area. Without going into further details here, we will now take a look at the work that has been done.

The earliest sociological study, Panna Shah's Ph.D. thesis, published in 1950 [The Indian Film] is concerned with Indian cinema from the silent period (i.e. 1913 to 1938) to 1950. Without following any particular conceptual framework, the book gives a statistical profile of film production over the years, of the exhibition and distribution aspects of the industry, and a descriptive account of the kinds of films being made in the country. It also includes a chapter on films and filmgoers based on responses to a questionnaire administered in Bombay. Questions such as why people go to the cinema, are, however, answered with reference to studies done in the West, combined with impressionistic views of the situation in India. The social significance of film stars, and the influence of films, are discussed in independent chapters in similarly general terms, followed by more informative accounts of the newsreels made in the period under study, and of film censorship over the years.

The book is useful for anyone undertaking further research, being the first systematic compendium of

sociologically relevant information on the subject. Data has been drawn from Motion Picture Year Books, government surveys, including Cinematograph Committee reports, film industry journals, the popular press, the few books on Indian cinema, written primarily from the perspective of developmental planning, and from some questionnaires and surveys specially administered and conducted by the author. The analytical content, however, is less interesting and useful, primarily because superficial comparisons have been made with the situation in the West, and there is little reflecting a first hand, authentic acquaintance with the field.

In the late fifties, the sociologist Asit Baran Bose made a content analysis of sixty Hindi films. Certain recurring elements of the social world depicted were brought to the fore, but the study was really more descriptive than analytical.

Very recently, a collection of articles by social scientists, psychologists, a sociologist, social anthropologist, and historian, have appeared in a special issue of the Indian International Centre Quarterly journal, entitled "Indian Popular Cinema : Myth, Meaning and Metaphor". These articles provide stimulating insights into the links between Indian films and Indian mythology, into the applicability of a structuralist method of analysis to Indian films, and into the rules of grammar and normative codes which guide the

storyline and expressive style of popular films. As is noted in the introduction, most of the contributors had no previous interest in the cinema "and were persuaded to lean out of their own specialized concerns for a few weeks, at the most, before returning to their cloisters". (Pradip Krishen, 1981(a)) While their writings provide a good basis for a serious study of Indian cinema, one hopes further attempts will be made and sustained over the years.

<u>Other Relevant Writings</u>

Sociologically relevant information and insights are also to be found in a few other writings on Indian cinema, which are not written from a sociological perspective. One of the most informative books on Indian cinema is "Indian Film" by Krishnaswami and Barnouw. It is an historical account of Indian cinema from its beginnings up to the 1970s.

Other 'histories' are Firoze Rangoonwalla's "Seventy Five Years of Indian Cinema" (published in 1975) which can be described as a chronological listing of some of the more influential Indian films made up to the end of the sixties, interspersed with comments on themes and personalities, and his "A Pictorial History of Indian Cinema" (published in 1980) which discusses the same films and also some others made in the seventies, within different thematic

categories. A more exhaustive catalogue of Indian films, starting, however, from 1940, and minus the comments, which in any case are at times too sweeping and disjointed to be meaningful, is available in the series called Indian Film, compiled annually by B.V. Dharap. These annuals also carry information regarding government reports, exhibition and distribution circuits, and production figures.

The only book on the economics of the Indian film industry appeared in 1963. "Economic Aspects of the Film Industry" by R.D. Jain carries a lot of detailed and very useful information, but the book is unnecessarily cluttered with opinions about cinema in general which are best ignored. An article by Martin Gold entitled "India's Motion Picture Industry" published in the Indian Journal of Economics (October 1971) provides additional economic data which is valuable.

Film Cemsorship in India has been excellently researched and analysed in Aruna Vasudev's "Liberty and Licence in Indian Cinema" published in 1978. The author manages also to provide a perspective from which developments, as they occur in this area, can be viewed systematically and meaningfully.

Some relevant material has also been generated by the National Films Archives of India, an institution which has been doing seminal work in the field of documenting information about and preserving Indian films. Its publications include

monographs on the film director/actor Guru Dutt, and on the documentary film maker, P.V. Pathy, and also several informative articles and information sheets prepared for film appreciation courses.

As regards film criticism: while the bulk which appears in the form of film reviews is too superficial to be of much consequence, some contributions are compelling and useful. 'Chitrabani', 'Films for an Ecology of Mind', and 'Mediations' are books by Gaston Roberge which discuss various dimensions of Indian cinema with varying degrees of emphasis. Other critics, whose articles have been compiled in anthologies are Hameeduddin Mehmood ('Kaleidoscope of Indian Cinema', published in 1974); Kobita Sarkar ('Indian Cinema Today', published in 1975), and Chidananda Dasgupta ('Talking About Films', published in 1981). It is worthwhile for any sociologist working in the field of Indian cinema to go through their writings.

Among individual film directors, there are a number of books written on Satyajit Ray, and his cinema, including Marie Seton's "Portrait of a Director", and Chidananda Dasgupta's "Cinema of Satyajit Ray".

The published writings of film-makers themselves include Satyajit Ray's "Our Films Their Films", and Mrinal Sen's "Views on Cinema". There may be other writings in regional languages, which, however, we do not have access to for purposes of discussion here.

Among film journals, one which has been recently started, called "Cinema Vision India" is invaluable for reference work. It promises to continue to be so in the years to come.

Even though our survey is limited to material which is easily accessible and is in the English language, it does, I think, correctly suggest an area where little work has been done. Hopefully, the signs of a growing and serious interest in the field have also been correctly perceived, and discussions of Indian film will become part of the intellectual ferment in the sociology of cinema.

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CHAPTER II

INDIAN CINEMA AND ITS GROUNDING IN PRE-EXISTING ART FORMS

A sociological perspective imparts to the study of a phenomenon a focus on the human element that dynamises it. It further abstracts from the multiplicity of what constitutes the human factor that which is general and shared by human beings in the course of their mutual interaction, without implying that individuals are not, at the same time, unique and worthy of particularized attention.

To view the sociological aspects of cinema means to examine the nature of human activities and relationships that are linked to it. To begin with, unlike natural phenomena, cinema is a cultural object: an object created in the context of human activity, being an instance of man's universal capacity, in space and time, to create objects. In fact, man the creator, creates not only tangible objects, but also ideas and structures of emotion and experience, often actualized in action, sometimes embodied in tangible objects like books and works of art. They may even exist as part of an oral tradition. Man made structures of experience, even when primarily products of the imagination, often have an effect on those who partake of them, beyond the imaginary, for imagination plays a role in all externalised activity.

The Invention of Cinema

While sharing with other created objects, the fact of being the product of human activity and capacity to create structures of experience, cinema has certain particular qualities as does any phenomenon. To begin with, it depends on the use of a mechanical device, the product of scientific invention in the late 19th century. The impetus for its invention, by all accounts, was not provided by any external social, political, or economic force. It was a simple outcome of the human urge to create machines capable of diverse feats. In this case, the feat was of recording and reproducing visual reality in motion, al beit reduced to a two dimensional plane, and initially, in black and white tones alone. The fact that such a machine was invented in a particular socio-historical context did, however, determine the way in which this device was used.

If we look at the technological invention of cinema closely, we find that "more so than most of the other technological innovations that form the panoply of modern electric and electronic modes of communication, film was a communal invention. Unlike the telephone, telegraph, or even wireless, film depended upon a whole series of small inventions, each attributable to a different inventor. Even single concepts had multiple authors". (James Monaco, ibid)

It was in the 1830s that the production of the illusion of motion was made possible, in a very crude way

by the so-called Magic Discs, and then by the more sophisticated Zoetrope, patented in 1834 by William Horner. In the 1870s Edward Muybridge, working in the USA and Etienne Jules Marey, in France, began their experiments in making photographic records of movement. Reynaud's Praxinoscope (1877) was the first practicable device for projecting successive images on a screen. In 1889, George Eastman applied for a patent on his flexible photographic film, developed for the roll camera, and the last basic element of cinematography was in place. By 1895, all these elements had been combined and movies were born. It was in 1895 that Louis and Auguste Lumiere in France and Thomas Armat in America came up with a device for intermittent motion which was the key to the main problem of projection for a large audience.

Cinema, Society and Art

In its early years, cinema was supported by "that rather small group of people who are attracted to any novel form of entertainment" (Arnold Hauser, 1959). What was recorded was not important, the exciting thing being the fact that movement in reality could be recorded and reproduced, even if crudely. Over the years, however, cinema developed into a very pervasive form of entertainment, which would legitimately be termed a popular art. To understand the nature of this transition and development we need to look at certain social factors to which it is linked. We will

view them briefly, as they affected cinema in the West, before considering in greater detail its growth in India.

Cinema originated and grew in the context of the development of capitalist society, and was unique among the arts in having been non-existent in any form in pre-capitalist times. Industrial urban centres, whose growth was a concommitant of the capitalist development of metropole countries, provided the social milieu for the existence of cinema. The populace of these urban centres was stratified, not just economically, but also culturally. Cinema was patronized mainly by the fairly prosperous, although not wealthy, semi-educated, urban middle class, fulfilling its need for a leisure time activity which could be passively indulged in, making few demands on the intellect.

A number of facts made cinema particularly appropriate for consumption by such a public. Firstly, it was unlike the other existing forms of cultural activity in being immediately intelligible not only because it was a visual medium and hence accessible to the literate and illiterate alike, but also because it was a young art, whose potential as a medium of serious artistic creation had not yet been explored. Further, while it could address a large number of people at the same time, it could be shown only to those who could afford to pay for it, since cinema production was, from the very beginning, a fairly costly affair. In fact, the commercially minded were quick to make good of the

existing situation, and the basis of an entertainment industry, geared to making profit, was laid early in the history of cinema. It was this that also gave impetus to the creation of a particular kind of cinema: the cinema of illusion, which was only one of the possible ways of using the medium, as demonstrated by the later diversification of cinema into different kinds. In this respect, cinema formed part of the phenomenon of popular culture, which also made an appearance in literature, painting, music and theatre. As Arnold Hauser notes: "The history of modern popular art begins about the middle of the 19th century with the rise of the idea that art is relaxation, the prevalence of a desire to find in art a means of distraction rather than education or deepened understanding." (Arnold Hauser, ibid)

An important ingredient noted as common to popular films and popular literature is sentimentality "feelings for which there is no room in the life of society being something one must not give way to, are exaggerated, over-valued, raised to the level of the ideal and the unreal, divorced from all need to stand the test of time." In fact, "the great attraction of the successful film and novel of today lies in the escape from reality it offers, through identification of the reader or spectator with the hero" and "the modern reader sees the heroes of his favourite novels as no more or no less than the fulfilment of his own frustrated or muddled life, the realization of all he has missed." (Arnold Hauser, ibid)

Popular art is distinct both from folk art and from the higher art of the educated, the expert and the connoisseur. Unlike folk art which emerges from the ranks of those who enjoy it, popular art is derived instead from professionals belonging to and spiritually dependent upon the upper classes. But of course, the most important distinction lies in the different character of their publics. "The people who maintain the folk song are the unlettered, though not necessarily, illiterate inhabitants of the countryside, the villages, the little market, towns", "while the readers of murder-stories, picture papers, sentimental novels and oleographs, are the lower classes of the cities, who are less clearly separated from the educated than the country folk are." The escape from reality it offers distinguishes it from serious art "which necessarily involves wrestling with the problems of life and an effort to capture the meaning of human existence". In fact, serious art has little in common either with folk art, which is often hardly morethan play and adornment, or with popular art, which is never more than entertainment and a means of passing time." (Arnold Hauser, ibid)

Once it was established along these lines, the cinema, together with its public, and the industrial complex which sustained it, naturally was affected by, and in turn affected the social environment in which it developed. But

more of that later. Let us look at the beginnings of cinema in India, now, for which the above delineation of some characteristic features of cinema in the West, although sweeping, suffices as a base point for viewing parallels and divergences.

The Indian Experience

Cinema first made an appearance in India as early as in 1896, when the country was still a colony of British imperialism. The fact of its origin in the metropolises of the capitalist world, and of the backwardness of India's own industrial development, gave to the viewing of cinema in India an enhanced status, attracting the indigenous upper classes in a way it did not those of the countries where it came from. The colonial context also meant that cinema in India was initially an imported item - the country providing a market for film-makers and distributors from France, Britain, the USA, and elsewhere, to sell their wares to the Indian population. To comprehend the emergence of an Indian cinema, we must therefore look a little more closely at the precise configuration of Indian society during this period.

The late 19th century was the period of the transition of British imperialism from the stage of industrial capital to that of finance capital, on the one hand, and, on the other, of the growth of a small Indian industrial bourgeoisie, of the Indian working class, and also of the Indian Western educated intelligentsia and middle class. It was a period when the urban population was increasing due

to the influx of landless peasantry, unemployed to a large extent, due to the absence of any real development of Indian industry. It was also the period when the first stirrings of nationalist consciousness could be felt. There was undoubtedly here, as in the West, a public in the urban centres which was looking for forms of entertainment, suited to their cultural level and evolving life style.

While imported films did initially provide a suitable diversion, they became less attractive once the novelty of the cinema technique wore off, because the films were, after all, made to address a very different cultural milieu. On the other hand, the easy intelligibility of the medium, and particularly the fact of its use for creating a means of relaxation which was an escape from reality, provided a model for indigenous film making when it finally did appear. But what endeared Indian films to the public was the ingenuous use of themes from Indian mythology which the Indian film-makers drew upon to entertain them. It would be an interesting exercise to examine the manner in which this fact of Indian cinema made it a sociological phenomenon which was distinct from the phenomenon of cinema elsewhere. What was common to main stream cinema all over was the crystallization of an entertainment industry around it. But socio-cultural differences were apparent in the content of the films and among the viewers of cinema. "Unlike in the West", for instance, "no long intervening literary culture separated the

oral traditions of peasant society from the advent of cinema." (Pradip Krishen, 1981(a))

Popular Arts in India : A Historical Perspective

The actual emergence of film industry and commerce in India spans the period from roughly 1913 to 1931. 1913 is the year when the first Indian feature film, Raja Harishchandra was made by D.G. Phalke. In 1931, we had the first Indian Talkie, 'Alam Ara', made by Ardeshir Irani. This industry included then as it also does today, an exhibition sector, distribution sector, a foreign film imports sector, a technical imports sector (involving projection equipment, and later, raw films, camera studio equipment and even make up materials) and a production sector.

Over the years, the structure of the film industry, the kinds of films being made in the country, as well as the film audience have been undergoing modifications. Some of these of course, were the result of the nationwide upheaval which was the freedom struggle, and the attainment of Indian independence, with all its infrastructural and superstructural implications. Through all this, however, what survives is the fact of cinema as predominantly a medium of entertainment in urban centres, a form of 'popular art' as delineated by Arnold Hauser, providing an escape from reality through fantasy.

Today, the Indian film industry is the largest in the world, and millions of people in India see cinema everyday. While it exists mainly in the urban centres, it has also, though to a lesser extent, become part of the rural environment.

The Economics and the Audience of Film

We have already noted that cinema provides a way for people to spend their hours of leisure, and also that it has to be paid for by the audience. The fact that a large number of people can view a film at the same time, makes it a fairly cheap form of entertainment without making it an unprofitable industry. But not all city dwellers with leisure and the money to pay for it are patrons of the cinema. And while it would obviously be in keeping with the nature of a profit-making venture to strive to have the largest number of buyers possible, the fact that film, while attractive to some (and it is a fairly large number) excludes others, is a socio-cultural fact of great significance. Insights into the nature and reasons for this phenomenon are provided by the economics of the film industry in relation to its audience and by a look at the content of films which are economically successful.

While crores are spent annually on film production, the returns, including profit, are provided by payments of amounts which are below Rs.5/- on an average per head, by those

who see a film. In the context of urban centres which are economically and culturally stratified, those who can afford to see films are many, whilst those who do see films belong predominantly to the lower middle class and the working class, and most, to what may be termed the 'lumpen proletariat. That the latter constitute a large segment of the audience makes sense from the economic point of view because this segment of urban society does earn money, but is underemployed. In other words, what distinguishes it from the working class is the fact that it does not enjoy a regular form of employment, with all the socio-economic benefits that accrue from it, while it does nevertheless have sources of income which allow it to survive, and in fact provide it with considerable 'leisure'. For such a population, seeing films is an entertaining way of spending time and money (whatever remains of the latter after subsistence needs have been taken care of.) In fact, it does not have the options which the other classes enjoy for spending their leisure time differently: of participating in the activities of trade unions or community get togethers as does the working class; of getting actively involved in cultural activities such as social get togethers, theatre, or pursuing hobbies as varied as from gardening to reading and writing as does the middle class (because they presuppose a higher income as well as education, which the lumpen element conspicuously lacks).

That the Indian film industry finds its economic anchorage from such a class is also reflected in the content

of films. The popular film generally displays a total lack of aesthetic sense, which after all the audience can demand from its entertainment only if its milieu allows its cultivation: and certainly the lumpen proletariat lacks such a milieu; secondly, it seems totally devoid of thematic unity or unity of place: qualities that echo the lumpen proletariat's own sense of aimless existence and uprootedness from regional cultural ties (for it consists largely of dispossessed peasantry that has migrated to the cities, often out of its native state, in search of employment). This latter quality is also reflected in the fact that the main characters in most films lack a regional identity: it is deliberately left vague, and in the fact that at the same time, elements from different regional cultures appear dispointedly, dance sequences in Bharata Natyam costumes, the landscapes of Kashmir, a 'qawwali', and a Maharashtrian 'lavni' may all be thrown in together in one film.

While these features of the Indian film provide some indices of the relationship between it and its audience, there are a number of other typical characteristics which link the two in a way that requires us to look closer at the Indian socio-cultural situation in a socio-historical context. For instance, it is true that despite their lack of thematic unity (i.e. in the coexistence of a number of plots and subplots in a single film) certain dominant ideological motifs appear in one film after another. An

example is the dramatic division of the main characters into the 'good' and the 'evil' with the climax provided by the triumph of the former over the latter. In many films, moreover, the 'good' characters mouth 'traditional' values, whilst the 'evil' characters pursue life styles and indulge in actions which are recognizably anti-traditional; and are portrayed as immoral. Also striking is the fact that misfortune and tragedy are generally inflicted upon the protagonists by the machinations of an evil character, a villain, and are seldom if ever shown to result from a particular conjunction of social factors. All this seems to point towards a certain logic within the 'fantastic' content of the popular Indian film, which deserves systematic study, since it relates to the creation and perpetuation of a certain kind of consciousness of reality. Not unlike dreams which are individual manifestations of unconsdious responses to reality, these films provide a world which is fantastic, but nevertheless relates to the real world, providing points of identification for the audience that make the experience of viewing films particularly powerful. The fact that these films uphold conservative values is also relevant as an index of the commercial motives of film-makers for such an approach assures basic acceptance by the public, in turn ensuring returns from the box office.

It is in the context of a milieu that is dominated by a cinema of the above kind that we have to view the existence of a cinema in India that qualifies for being

considered a form of serious art. This would require us to delineate some of the characteristic socio-historical features of the development of art in India.

In India, as in the West, the phenomenon of popular art appeared at about the same time as the growth of cinema in various media. And as in films so also in other forms, it drew, among other sources, upon Indian mythology for inspiration. Reproductions of oleographs of gods and goddesses, in a style perfected by Raja Ravi Verma, were sold in the Indian market, sometimes in the form of calendars and other items for household decoration. Episodes from the epics formed a large part of the repertoire of the popular 'Parsi' theatre. But despite the continuity of the fact that mythology provided inspiration for traditional India art and for these modern popular forms, the stylistic differences between the two indicate important elements of discontinuity. These differences are rooted in wider social structural changes: in the transition from a feudal to a colonial social structure.

Theatre

Over the centuries, both in rural and in urban areas, forms of art activity had been effected by wider socio-economic changes in various ways. A brief look at some of the social dimensions of the performing arts in India, particularly theatre, over the years, would lead

towards a better understanding of the way they were effected by, and in turn effected, the development of cinema in India. This is significant because Indian cinema began by being filmed theatre, and even when it did not consist of the recording of actual stage performances, it modelled itself on the prevailing theatre trends.

In ancient India, there existed on the one hand, sanskrit drama performed in palaces or temple yards, patronized by the court. It was the preserve of the cultural elite. On the other hand, there was folk drama, which was popular among the people in general and looked down upon by the former as crude and vulgar. Folk drama developed from the art of ballad singers, or wandering minstrels, who sang traditional heroic poems about mythological gods and goddesses, and at a later point of time also of the glories of kings and princes, at village cross-roads and open spaces. The singers were poets and story-tellers, who were in a sense also historians and disseminaters of traditional Indian philosophy, apart from being entertainers, for they used drama and song to tell their tales.

By the 10th century A.D. this tradition resulted in the coming into being of a hereditary caste of 'charanas' who developed this folk tradition further into a rich and vital form of dance drama (Adya Rangacharya, 1971). Simultaneously there was a decline of the tradition of

sanskrit drama, as alien invaders, particularly the Muslims, took over the citadels of power from the Hindu kings, and conferred prestige on other arts, other values. The Muslims, in fact, had no theatrical heritage and at this time considered drama a sacrilegious activity.

For many years, folk theatre was the only theatre form that flourished, and that too in the countryside, alone. It received a great fillip in the 15th century with the development of the Bhakti movement, as the inspired bhaktas took to expressing their devotion and message of divine love through dance, drama, and music. In fact, the performance of drama came to be regarded as a religious offering, and preaching became important instead of mere narration. With the spread of the Bhakti cult, we also find that the reciters rose higher and higher in the caste hierarchy, and the temple-yards became the venue for their performances. With the participation of Brahmins, the folk theatre also came to be acquainted with the sanskrit Natyashastra, and followed the traditional rules laid down by Bharata. Thus there developed and flourished forms like the 'Yakshagana' in Karnataka, the 'Chhau' in Bihar and Orissa, the 'Jatra' in Bengal, the 'Ojapali' in Assam, the 'Kathakali' in Kerala, the 'leela' in Orissa, the 'Swang' in Punjab, and many others.

As theatre became more popular, it also led to the enactment of themes taken not directly from mythology. The

tradition of prose dialogue (introduced through the practice of performers providing a commentary to the Sanskrit texts) also developed. It constituted an important element in the 'tamasha' form of Maharashtra and the 'Darzapather' of Kashmir, for instance.

Up to the 18th century, the folk theatre was active and growing in various forms all over the country. It often had a communal character, in the sense that the form encouraged audience participation through dialogue and singing, although the main performers generally belonged to certain distinct caste groups.

What was practically non-existent, however, was a live tradition of written plays, as the sanskrit drama had been. In the urban context particularly, Indian theatre and dance had lost their standing, and became a domain of the degraded castes, the occupation of prostitutes.

The advent of British rule in the 18th century generated new tensions in Indian society, which naturally had repercussions for the growth of Indian theatre as well. The British in India maintained their distance from the 'natives' and for entertainment performed English plays and invited drama troupes from 'back home' to perform in play-houses specially constructed in urban centres. Meanwhile, among the Indians, the British policies led to the growth of

a new educated class, which occupied a privileged position vis-a-vis the other Indians, but one which was inferior to the British ruling class. The pattern of economic growth brought into being industrial urban centres in India, whose population consisted, apart from the British residents, of the Indian middle classes, of the landed gentry from the countryside who came to cities to avail of the benefits of Western education, as well as of the working class, and a floating population of landless labourers who migrated from villages to towns in search of employment, due to the disruption of the traditional economy. It was the growth of a new class of educated Indians and the rise of a new urban population that prepared the soil for the growth of modern Indian theatre.

The new urban population demanded new forms of entertainment and the building of playhouses provided a venue for putting up plays, al beit in lieu of paying rent. The English drama performances, of course, were exclusively for the British, and by the 80s of the 19th century, several professional Indian troupes came into being. This was a phenomenon entirely new in Indian theatre till now. In Indian tradition, a dramatic performance was usually patronized by kings or rich persons. Even a public performance was sponsored either by the temple or the head of the community or by the entire village. The actors had settled down in society as a caste of their own, social life being

a co-operative effort by the different castes. The new actors did not, and need not, belong to the hereditary caste.

In many parts of the country, these troupes were formed by the uneducated sections, who enacted themes taken from the old pauranic stories, with "an occasional dash of the revue-cum-tragedy-cum-farce-cum-opera which reflected contemporary manners and customs". (Mulk Raj Anand, 1957) There were also several adaptations of English plays into different regional languages, particularly Shakespeare, and among those who wrote scripts for the theatre, one of the most popular, Agha Hashr Kashmiri, came to be known as 'Shakespeare-e-Hind'. The Parsi community of Bombay was particularly active in forming such groups, and the kind of theatre they created: spectacular, melodramatic, and hybrid (consisting as it did of elements imitated from Western drama as well as others borrowed from traditional folk forms) came to be known as 'Parsi' theatre.

For the urban population it was entertainment quite detached from any authentic religious or educational content as the folk theatre had been. For, while these dramas drew upon mythological episodes, they were performed in a social context where the epics were no longer the only source of knowledge, "recitation was not the only medium of communication, nor were 'Mudras' the only language of explanation" (Adya Rangacharya, ibid). It was

a form of popular art essentially different both from folk art and from high art.

In Maharashtra and Bengal, however, the modern theatre movement, from the very beginning, grew as a form of entertainment which was more socially informed and refined. The educated Indians participated more actively and this influenced the character of theatre. The Marathi stage developed an operatic form, which persists to this day as the 'Sangeet Natya'. The leading dramatic groups were associated with established writers, who in turn were inspired by nationalistic sentiments. It was hence a theatre which was moving with the times. In Bengal, apart from Shakespeare who enjoyed a great vogue in many adaptations, the work of many indigenous dramatists, too, were enacted. Unlike Maharashtra, however, urban theatre in Bengal was not musical. The Bengali professional theatre, coming early under the influence of British, evolved prose plays. Themes from mythology were reinterpreted to convey nationalistic sentiments. Before it became professional, moreover, theatre in Bengal flourished in the form of private family theatres maintained in the large joint family homes of educated Indian families. However, both in the private theatres, which flourished from the 1830s, and the public theatres which began in the 1870s, the new Indian drama started by adapting and imitating European models. But almost at once there were also attempts to synthesize

Western and Indian elements, thematically and in terms of form.

It was in a cultural milieu where the above kind of theatre existed that cinema as entertainment made an appearance. Unlike other forms of entertainment that the British in India enjoyed, the cinema, even when it came from the West, was available to the Indians as well. It came as a commercial product to be sold in the market. When cinema developed in India, although it was a wholly new technological phenomenon, its content was, initially, inspired to a large extent by pre-existing forms of popular art and entertainment. Satish Bahadur in an article entitled "Context of Indian Film Culture" notes that "as a popular art, film had to draw elements from the easily recognizable values of other popular arts, not from the tradition of the classical arts. The visual values of Raja Harishchandra were derived, not from the values of Ajanta or Rajput paintings, but from the oil paintings of Raja Ravi Verma, who had conceived the Hindu pantheon in the lowest sentimental values of Victorian painting and popularized it in cheap reproductions through another mass medium, the colour printing press. For dramatics, Phalke drew upon the crude elements of the 'company natak' not the glories of classical sanskrit drama or the vital forms of the folk theatre. For story material, Phalke did not delve deep into the spiritual meaning underlying the Hindu epics. Rather, he used their most

obvious, ritualistic and superficial level viz. the magical, the miraculous and the spectacular in the exploits of the Hindu gods and goddesses," and also, "the other model for the Indian film-makers was Hollywood cinema: serials, stunt films and romantic melodramas". (Satish Bahadur, 1978)

It would appear from the above that apart from the novelty of technique there was little, if anything, new about the manner in which cinema sought to entertain. However, the significance of technique was tremendous. The mere transference of material on to celluloid heightened attempts at sensationalism and popular appeal so powerfully that people were rapidly seduced away from other forms of entertainment which correspondingly declined. This was particularly true when talkies came into being from 1931 onwards.

The influence of the traditional folk theatre, is also discernible to date in certain characteristics of Indian cinema. This is in addition to such direct influence as the making of dozens of films like 'Ram Joshi' and 'Sangte Aika' based on the tamasha form of folk/urban theatre, in Marathi. Thus, for instance, "The films are long, as folk entertainment has always been; the opposition between good and evil is sharp, as it has always been in the epics and legenda". (Dasgupta, Chidananda, 1980)

There is another striking parallel between a lot of folk theatre and popular films in India, which needs to

be explored further. It has been suggested, that not unlike the former, which consists of a fixed repertoire of stories that are repeated again and again, in the case of popular films, too, while each new film apparently has a new story, it is in fact an example of the merchandising of the same themes over and over again. (Komal Kothari, 1981) This may be linked to a common function performed by the two: the maintenance and reinforcement of a definite system of values; of a world view.

Music

While the coming of sound, the musical component of these traditional and other popular forms was appropriated with verve. Thus, the piercing quality which Lata Mangeshkar established as the model for film songs for the rest of the country, "derived from the conventions of folk singers who entertained the populace out in the open without the aid of a microphone". In fact, "to this day itinerant singers in Rajasthan or Madhya Pradesh travel in couples, the man sporting a rich baritone and the woman a supersoprano". (Chidananda Dasgupta, ibid) As in the case of other elements, Indian film from its inception, even in the case of music, chose to borrow from popular and folk forms, in the main (Though, later, the classical component was incorporated, within a modified structure). Thus, as Bhaskar Chandavarkar notes, when films appeared,

"we had a rich tradition of classical or concert music. Alladiya Khan, Abdul Karim Khan, Ahmedjan Thirakwa, Imdad Khan, Govindrao Ganpatrao Paluskar, Omkarnath an endless list of great musicians this period in North India alone will prove that there was scarcely any dearth of talent. But from its inception, film-music even of the silent era, was regarded as an auxiliary art. Although the first rate musicians were attracted towards theatre as a medium for artistic expression at the turn of the century in Maharashtra, music for films was regarded as too lowly an occupation by those ustads and pandits. The monetary benefits, however, attracted a few youngsters to the new vocation." (Bhaskar Chandavarkar, 1980)

It is true that in the years to come, a great many film songs were modelled on simplified classical 'raga' structures, and not on folk tunes and 'dhuns' alone. It is therefore incorrect to say that film music is a genuine continuation of folk tradition. But, "what film music does share with certain forms of communal folk-music is a set of 'strategies' designed to allow a melodic line to be remembered and reproduced without too much effort by an unskilled audience. In this precise sense, it can be opposed to classical music and certain other folk forms, particularly those associated with highly skilled professional castes of bards and 'mirasis'. The opposition is between

an 'easy', repetitive, musical structure, one that is simple enough to be whistled with some degree of fidelity by a 'chaprasi' bicycling to office - and an esoteric, 'difficult' tradition that is intended primarily for passive listening." (William O. Beeman, 1981)

To move away from the popular cinema for a while, we may note that film theorists are beginning to discern the musical structures present in the very structuring of films by some Indian film-makers. Discussing the work of Ritwik Ghatak, for instance, Arun Khopkar notes that "His landscapes and locations with their precise tonal gradings are in themselves lyrical. This lyricism is enhanced whenever the sound-track is a melody - like the Hansdhwani of 'Meghe Dhaka Tara' or the Kalawati of 'Subarna rekha'. This lyricism is intimately linked with the tradition of Indian Romanticism which forms the backdrop of most of modern Indian art. Ritwik, a product of this tradition, realizes its impotency and decadence. Therefore, he repeats the sound motif of these intensely lyrical moments when the dramatic mood of the images is exactly the opposite, so that they enter into a dialectical relationship with the visuals and destroy the comfortable lyricism. He uses one of the most effective formal devices of the romantic vision - only to destroy it later." Such structuring gives an epic dimension to his works, a structuring which is homologous to the 'khayal gayaki' in Indian classical music (Arun Khopkar, 1981). Such an analysis, apart from

heightening our understanding of Ghatak's art, draws our attention to the possibilities of a rich interaction between the art of the cinema and traditions of Indian classical music: an interaction qualitatively different from that found in the commercial formula films.

The link between popular Indian film music and pre-existing traditions also makes the use of music in Indian films very distinct from its use in films in the West. "In Western tradition, the arts have been thought of as separate entities since before the Renaissance. However integrated dance, music or drama might be in a single instance of performance, the three were conceived as separate, and their co-occurance was thought of as a combination of separate artistic forms. Even in types of performances which combined the arts - opera as a combination of drama and music, and ballet as a combination of music and dance, for example, one of the modes was always thought of as being predominant." (William O. Beeman, ibid). In Western films, music has always had a function as a separable element. "Its primary function is in the underscore of the film, only occasionally rising to prominence in the form of a theme song, or as the featured element of the film in the rarely seen musical. In no sense, howsoever, is music treated with prominence to the other elements of the film." (William O. Beeman, ibid)

In the Indian film, in contrast, music plays a role equal to other cinematic elements, as in traditional

Indian folk performances and also in the 'Parsi' theatre, "For Indian spectators the psychological distance between speech and song is considerably narrower than for Western spectators. The artificial break which is felt in the West when an actor bursts into song is thus less apparent to the Indian viewer." (William O. Beeman, ibid) Indeed, music in Indian film occupied a position equal or superior to all other elements of the film.

<u>The Visual Arts</u>

As in the case of theatre and music, so also in the visual arts of painting and sculpture, there have existed various forms in the towns and in villages in India: patronized, executed, and appreciated by different sections of society.

The earliest surviving art objects are figurines of metal belonging to the Indus Valley Civilization (3rd millenium B.C.). Thereafter, we have the magnificient Ajanta and Ellora caves with wall paintings and sculpture, innumerable temples, sculpture pieces, some illustrated manuscripts, examples of miniature paintings of different schools, and instances of extinct as well as continuing traditions of folk painting and sculpture. These constitute evidence of the rich art heritage of ancient and medieaval India.

We have noted earlier that the visual values of Raja Harishchandra, the first Indian film, were derived not from the values of Ajanta or Rajput paintings, but from

the oil paintings of Raja Ravi Verma. These visual values, adopted by most film-makers, were the culmination of certain tendencies in the socio-cultural life of the nation in the late 19th century. If we view some of the dominant sociological features of art in ancient and medieaval India, we will be able to appreciate better the situation in the later period, and the reasons for the adoption of these values by film-makers. The choice was symptomatic of the breakdown of an interrelated system of ideology and art, of popular and scholastic traditions, in turn linked to a change in traditional social patterns.

By about the second quarter of the 19th century, and certainly by the middle of the century, there was hardly anything left of India's traditional values and practices, except in the circumscribed field of rural and tribal arts and crafts and in the secluded court shelters of the hill-rajas of the Western Himalayas. Moreover, all traditions of high art and consciousness of basic aesthetic and formal values were already things of a distant past, very little of which was only dimly known and understood, far less appreciated. (Nihar Ranjan Ray, 1974)

The view that the reasons for the adoption of particular visual values by the early film-makers were linked to social factors which determined their cultural milieu, rather than to formal artistic considerations, is underscored by the fact that contrary to the assertion by Western art

critics of the period, that specimens of Indian art were significant primarily as expressions of "those ancient and religious conceptions which are the glory of India and of all Eastern world", in fact, not only were Indian art traditions rich in imaginative, aesthetic, formal and human values, but also, there had been numerous examples of non-religious art in Indian history. In other words, even if the film-makers did not share a common religious world view with artists of the past, there was much that they could have imbibed from their tradition of art.

Later historians have corrected the picture of India's artistic past. "Because the few fragmentary early works of Indian art are predominantly religious monuments executed in stone", notes Philip Rawson, "many people have been led to believe that Indian arts were all indelibly stamped with a religious character right from the very beginning. This is a complete misconception." In fact, "an enormous amount of non-religious architecture and sculpture was executed in perishable materials such as wood and plaster." And "painting, no less than sculpture, must have existed as an independent tradition that was able to adopt itself equally to the requirements of a rich man's harem, or the walls of a Buddhist monastery." (Philip Rawson, 1961)

Secular art was created not just by professionals, but by laymen, too. For instance, it has been noted that in the Gupta period painting and sculpting were among the

accomplishments considered desirable among the well off citizens, and the works were always on view in the houses of those who executed them. (Romila Thapar, 1966) Literary references note lovers painting portraits of their beloveds, of kings painting in their chitrashalas, and so on.

Even in the case of religious art, the artists' deep and joyous involvement in the reality of everyday life was apparent. This was possibly linked to the difference between ancient India's religious art and her religious literature. The latter is the work of men with vocations - Brahmans, monks and aescetics. The former came chiefly from the hands of secular craftsmen, who, though they worked according to priestly instructions and increasingly rigid iconographical rules, loved the world they know with an intensity which is usually to be seen behind the religious forms in which they expressed themselves. (A.L. Basham, 1967) A clear surviving examples are the Ajanta caves, whose wall paintings narrate jataka tales and episodes from the life of Buddha against a background of varied and lively scenes of secular activity.

Nor was it true that the more evolved Indian traditions were so esoteric as to be meaningless in the context of the evolution of a popular form like the cinema. In fact, the interaction between the literary and scholastic traditions, on the one hand, and popular traditions, on the other, was remarkably pronounced in several periods of Indian history. Thus, in Hindu temple sculpture, there was the

incorporation of local cults of numerous village deities as escorts of the major gods. The Buddhist movement in particular, "prepared the way for a release of popular forces which were eventually to transform its original character as a monastic order to that of a popular religion with a cult incorporating the beliefs, practices and modes of worship characteristic of the traditional cults of the soil." This was naturally reflected in Buddhist art. "In this way, the worship of trees, snakes, and 'stupas' and numerous other non-Aryan cults became characteristic features of popular Buddhist worship, and at the same time, a Buddhist pantheon arose peopled by yakshas, yakshinis, nagas and other devatas, the godlings and fertility spirits of village India." (John Irwin, 1966).

To come back to secular art: with the establishment of Mughal hegemony religious art declined due to the Islamic injunction against pictorial representation of the divine. The artists patronized by the Mughals, painting secular themes,"introduced in their ouvre an acute and deep understanding of people caught in tensions of insecurity, political turmoil and overbearing pressures of cultural change." (Gulam Mohammad Sheikh, 1973) In terms of form, a fusion of Persian and earlier traditions of Hindu art created a new Indian art. During Jehangir's rule, European influences, particularly the realistic mode, also permeated into the Indian tradition. But with increasing imitation of European artists, the paintings tended towards stereotypes which diminished their vitality.

Meanwhile, in the courts of some Rajput rulers, styles of miniature painting, most of it dealing with the legend of Krishna, flourished and developed. In the countryside, folk forms of Hindu art, being independent of the need for royal patronage, also continued to grow. A lot of folk painting consisted of scrolls called 'pata', carried by wandering minstrels to illustrate their tales. Examples of these survive to this day among the community of 'jadupatnas' in the Santhal Parganas of Bihar. (Mildred Archer, 1977) Bhopas in Rajasthan, as even today, stretched a long scroll called 'phad' consisting of several episodes painted in a continuous fashion, from the life of the hero whose tale was recited. In what are known today as Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, story tellers used a box called 'kavad', and the visuals painted on its doors were unfolded in film strip fashion as the story progressed. (Shyam Parmar, 1976) Folk painting, of course, also included ritual arts, such as the Madhubani wall paintings, and ceremonial floor paintings which are found in many parts of the country even today.

These folk forms which continued into the 19th century and beyond, were not, however, the reference points for the Indian film-makers of that period.

There is no doubt that the social context of art had changed drastically from what it was in ancient India,

even during the Mughal period. In ancient India, religion being the dominant ideological force in society, all art media had been pressed into its service (even though they were also used for creating secular art). The craftsmen who created the more monumental works of art, were professionals patronized by rich kings and merchants and were "well versed in the subtleties of the higher religion of philosophy". The Indian craftsmen "believing in a Supreme God brought all the fire of his faith to bear upon the sacred task of rendering explicit the implications of the cosmic life". (Mulk Raj Anand, 1957) He traced the descent of his caste from Vishwa-Karma, lord of all the arts to give his work an exalted place in the scheme of Hindu social life.

With different art media centring around a unified vision, "the interpenetration of ideas, techniques, and norms that resulted, made art a richer, more integrated and kinaesthetic product, to be viewed from a variety of angles". (Gulam Mohammad Sheikh, ibid) And temples were not just places for worship, but also the museums and exhibition galleries of traditional India. "They were in addition schools for religious education, in a sense using the visual aids of sculpture, painting, and often also dance and drama, which were performed in the temple precincts." (Nihar Ranjan Ray, ibid) The artist, too, though a professional, receiving patronage and following priestly canons, was united with his patrons in a community of ideas

and interests - "mediated through some sort of a group consciousness and embodied in great religions and ethical ideologies, myths, and legends". Since the predominant use of art objects was a medium-cum-channel-cum-object of communication, the artist was as much the user of the created object as the one who beheld it." The artist was not creating just another object which sustained him physically, but an object which united him with others. (Pranab Ranjan Ray, 1973)

Such a context obviously did not exist for film makers, but neither did they draw upon the fruits of what had been created by its existence in the past. We must now look closer at their immediate milieu to get an insight into what they did draw upon, and why they drew upon it.

With the beginning of Aurangzeb's reign of austerity, the artists were hounded out of the courts, and began to paint suave pictures in the hope of attracting casual patronage. Mughal art degenerated into what came to be called the Delhi School, whose works were bought by Westerners in search of picturesque souvenirs of their years in India. By the second quarter of the 19th century, "all rural and urban crafts had been feeling the direct and indirect impact of Western mercantile economy forging its strangle-hold, slowly but surely, on all our traditional creative arts and crafts". Instead, "the Indian markets were gradually being flooded with merchandise from the new industrial plants of the West, including mediocre engravings,

oleo-prints and lithoprints of mediocre British and European artists. Along with the British rulers, merchants and missionaries, a few more or less known and gifted European artists had also come over to cater to the needs and tastes of the growing Western community, of the old and new Indian aristocracy and the new Indian middle class that were fast growing up in the major Indian administrative and commercial centres, as in Calcutta and Bombay, for instance." All this "brought over a complete transformation of our tastes, aptitudes, and traditions, and of our attitudes and approaches, in our urban centres of art and culture at any rate." (Nihar Ranjan Ray, ibid)

The British also set up government sponsored art schools, principally to produce painters and draughtsmen for the Railway and Survey Departments. Not only were Indian traditions of art ignored, they were looked down upon by critics. Their attitudes are echoed in John Ruskin's later comments, saying he found in Indian art nothing but "distorted and monstrous" forms, meaningless fragments of colour and flowings of line. Indian art, he considered, was "preoccupied" with the grotesque and the bizarre, and with the crude presentation of exaggerated forms of many-headed and many-handed gods and goddesses. (Nihar Ranjan Ray, ibid)

In such a milieu Raja Ravi Verma's oleographs of Hindu gods and goddesses, executed in a romantic, illusionistic style, derived from 'superior' Western culture,

placated the Indian middle classes. In fact, they became extremely popular and were reproduced for commercial purposes; to be sold in the Indian market. Scores of artists imitated the style, which in its more commercialized form, was marked by "garish colours and crudely illusionistic style", a characteristic of semi-urbanized India, an example of 'kitsch'. (Ratan Parimoo, 1975) The visual aesthetics of the Parsi theatre: sets, costumes, make-up, and so on, were also a product of such influences, an extension of the same tendencies in art.

Indian film makers: urban, semi-educated/educated, trained/untrained in the arts, incorporated the visual values of the Parsi theatre and Raja Ravi Verma wholesale. There was no question about their popularity with the public; the rural audience or folk art were not related to the market they wished to cater to. Moreover, a deeprooted community of ideas between patrons, artists and the public was a thing of the past. Differences of approach such as might have existed between the three were increasingly resolved in favour of what enabled survival in the market. The ground work had already been laid for a shallow, but popular, visual culture.

In this context, it is interesting to note what a contemporary film critic has to say to new film-makers. Chidananda Dasgupta notes the persisting differences between the visual sensibilities of the vast, unlettered, village

audiences, and the urban middle class. According to him, the former are free of bourgeoise prejudices (regarding art), and even the middle class is yet too small to have acquired and propagated them in a big way. Thus, "it is only the urban middle class which, in India, will question the distortions of the human figure in painting. The villager has long been used to folk art which has no more respect for the outward features of the human physiognomy than 'modern' painting. He has enough simplicity to believe and to accept the beauty of line and colour." This is an advantage for the creative film-maker, because "to such an audience the content means more than the form and there are few preconceived notions or acquired prejudices to prevent a simple reaction to an essential expression. Also, there is less of a search for mere novelty and sensation which is bred by high pressure existence". (Chidananda Dasgupta, ibid)

At the same time, however, we have to contend with the fact that while, to begin with, films borrowed from other popular forms of art, today, "the other media tend to model themselves after the style of the film. Values of film determine the visual style of other forms of popular visual communication; calendar pictures, magazine illustrations, hoardings, posters and advertisements, schemes of interior decoration; even the traditional iconography of statues and pictures for religious worship has accepted the visual values of the film; the conventional Durga image for the Bengali puja

festival is looking more and more like Suchitra Sen. Visual kitsch has come full circle. Raja Ravi Verma contributed his painting imagery to Phalke at the beginning of Indian film; Indian film is now contributing its imagery to popular Indian painting." (Satish Bahadur, ibid)

In this chapter we have considered some of the social and cultural forces that shaped the beginnings of an Indian cinema, referring particularly to pre-existing art forms. There is no doubt that such a study would have gained tremendously from a specialized acquaintance with Indian art. Hopefully, however, it does succeed in sketching out some broad features, which can be elaborated upon and delineated more accurately by those in the field, covering the total span of cinema in India. And film-making being an ongoing activity, one also expects that different links will be forged, and qualitatively new forms of interaction will emerge.

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CHAPTER III

THE PROCESSUAL ASPECTS OF INDIAN FILM MAKING : INDUSTRY AND INSTITUTIONS

The Silent Period

We have noted in the last chapter the fact that cinema first made an appearance in Indian society as an imported product, manufactured in the West, and sold in the Indian market. Indians first entered the field of cinema as exhibitors of imported films though the majority continued for long to be foreigners who were agents of foreign companies. It was from amongst these Indian exhibitors that the early Indian short film makers emerged. These included Sakharam Bhatwadekar, a photo-good dealer and exhibitor from Bombay, who imported a British camera, and later acquired a Lumiere camera-cum-projector, Fazalbhoy Thanawallah, an electrical engineer, who was a dealer in cinema equipment and exhibitor, and Hiralal Sen, another exhibitor of imported shorts.

These early film-makers shot records of important social events, short performances specially staged for filming, and also scenes from actual drama performances. Their films were shown, as were the foreign films, in several big cities and a few small towns, in drama theatres, and

sometimes in tents in maidans. In a few places they accompanied popular plays performed on stage.

Some of the other Indians who were involved in the exhibition business at this early period later expanded their activities to include the production of feature films. Amongst them, J.F. Madan was particularly successful. However, this was not before Dadasaheb Phalke completed the first Indian feature film, 'Raja Harishchandra' in 1913.

Feature Film Making

A film is the end product of a series of activities, some of which are a necessary part of film making anywhere and at any time. These include the acquisition of raw film or raw stock; shooting, or exposing the raw stock; processing of the exposed footage; and editing of the film. Other activities form part of film-making, depending on the kind of film to be made, and the circumstances in which it is being made. And once a film is made, it is usually exhibited to an audience.

The term feature film refers to full length fictional films, and these form the major part of the output of all film industries. The making of feature films includes the activities of the writing of a story, of a script, of directing, of performances by actors and actresses, in many cases, the use of studios, of costumes, and the activity of production - i.e. organisation - on a far more elaborate

scale than in the case of short films. Being lengthier than short films, feature film making also involves a larger financial investment, so that arranging for the requisite finance forms a more significant activity. In the following pages, we will discuss, historically, the sociological aspects of the various processes involved in the making of feature films in India. We will be concerned, among other things, with sources of finance, the organisation of production, the related institutions which developed over the years and the changes that occurred in each; and also, with the ways in which films were distributed and exhibited.

The First Indian Feature Film and D.G. Phalke

The first film to be made in India was 'Raja Harishchandra', though some are of the view that the film 'Pundalik' released in 1912 should in fact be so regarded. The latter, not surprisingly, was the creation of two people, R.G. Torney and N.G. Chitre, who were associated with the form of urban entertainment most popular prior to the emergence of cinema, namely, theatre. They directed actors from an amateur theatre group to act in their film, but the camera work was done by a technician hired from the British photographic firm 'Bourne and Shepherd', from which the camera, too, was hired. (Firoze Rangoonwalla, 1975).

However, the film 'Raja Harishchandra' made by D.G. Phalke, was not only shot by him, but in fact, all the

processes of film-making were handled by him and his Indian associates, with the use of technical equipment specially obtained for the purpose. A closer look at this pioneering effort will provide us with a better understanding of the initial situation from which an Indian film industry eventually developed.

When D.G. Phalke first conceived the idea of making a feature film, Indian society was experiencing the growth of an indigenous industry, whose interests were being articulated in the Swaraj and Swadeshi movements of that period. Phalke himself had recently resigned from his job as draughtsman and photographer in the governmental archaeological department to set up an independent business. Being a trained artist of Kalabhawan in Baroda, who had also exhibited half tone blocks of Ravi Verma's paintings, he set up an engraving and printing business, which, however, he left due to differences with his partner. It was at this point, while viewing "The Life of Christ", one of the many foreign feature films which by now were being seen by the Indian public, that the idea of making an Indian film gripped him, and he pursued it against innumerable odds.

Starting off with a lack of any experience in film-making and the non-availability of a ready financier, D.G. Phalke had to evolve his own methods for going about his venture. Viewing film constantly, reading whatever technical journals were available in the country, D.G. Phalke began

experimenting with film-making, using an imported camera. For six months he was singularly involved with this effort, and succeeded in making a short film called 'The Growth of a Pea-Plant'. It was this film that enabled him to negotiate a loan from an old friend, Yashwant Nadkarni, a dealer in photographic goods in Bombay. Pledging his insurance policies, he raised a loan of Rs. 10,000 for going to London, both to buy equipment, and to see for himself how films were being made. There he purchased the best available Williamson Camera, printing machine, perforator, and some raw negative film. He also met Cecil Hepworth, a prominent producer, who gave him valuable advice and allowed him to see all his film departments. On his return, Phalke began to work on his film, first satisfying his financier by showing him a couple of hundred feet shot with his newly acquired camera, with his wife and children as artists. Mrs Phalke also came forward to give her ornaments as security against the loan (Parag R. Amladi, 1980).

The script of Harishchandra was written by Phalke himself, the idea of basing it on a mythological theme having occurred to him even as he first conceived of making a film. He chose the story of king Harishchandra, from the Hindu Puranas. The toughest problem Phalke faced was of acquiring film artists. Theatre artists of repute were apprehensive of the new medium. Moreover, an inhibition against participating as professional artistes existed amongst other talented people in the social milieu. The Female

artists were almost non-available. Even in theatre, it was a common practice for young handsome boys to play female roles. Consequently, Phalke had to engage a feminish looking boy cook, A. Salunke, to play the heroine 'Taramati' in "Harishchandra". As the technique of film acting differed from that for acting on the stage, Phalke taught the artistes himself. The scenario, putting up of sets, processing, editing, and even projection, were all Phalke's own responsibilities. On the main road of Dadar, Phalke put up a studio, where shooting went on during the day and processing and printing of the film at night. Phalke admitted in the Mauj Magazine in 1939, that it was due to his labour and courage that a film industry was born in 1912 in India. Six months of unabated single-minded devotion, brought 'Harishchandra' to light, (Parag R. Amladi, ibid).

When "Harishchandra" was exhibited at Bombay's Coronation Cinema, it ran for a record 23 days, which was 6 times the normal run of film. D.G. Phalke's venture was a resounding success, and from there, he went on to produce several more films. But what is most significant is that he laid down a precedent for the making of Indian feature films.

The latter effect, however, was delayed due to the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 which blocked the import of film and film equipment, on which film-making in India depended totally. (To date, the term Indian film industry excludes the manufacture of most film equipment, which continues to be imported)

While Phalke himself continued his film-making under these adverse conditions, it suffered, because finance was not forthcoming and two films were made on very small budgets: a new version of "Harishchandra", and "Lanka Dahan". The great commercial success of the latter, however, demonstrated anew the economic viability of feature film-making in India, and a number of film production companies started production on a strictly commercial basis. Phalke's own Company, "Phalke Films", was incorporated towards the end of 1917 into the "Hindustan Film Co" with Phalke as working partner and five financing partners. He established a studio at Nasik which grew into a model studio, with medical care of artistes, provision for their daily exercise, coaches specially employed to teach fencing and the like, a farm and a garden, which were used not only for outdoor locations, but also for providing vegetables and other products for the common mess in the studio. There was also a library, a reading room, and a miniature zoo. A permanent staff was maintained and there emerged a first generation of Indians who had been trained through the experience of working in Phalke's studio.

Other Early Film-making Ventures

While not following Phalke's methods completely, the people who began making films in the early days of cinema in India did have to face the problems that Phalke faced, with the major difference that the possibility of making successful films had already been demonstrated. The initiative in

western India, was taken predominantly by people from the Parsi and Gujarati communities, specially those who were in some way linked to the film business as it existed at that time, and those associated with the theatre. The reason for the former is probably the fact that film required handling and acquiring finances for which these communities, among the most wealthy and commercially enterprising were particularly suited.

Organisation:

The general pattern was for those who wished to make films to put together their resources to form a production company, hiring directors, script writers, actors and actresses, technicians, and other ancillary staff. It was characteristic in this period, since the craft had not yet attained a high level of sophistication, for the same person to handle several different tasks at the same time or at different stages of his career. We have instances of directors-cum-producers-cum-script writers-cum-cinematographers-cum-actors-cum-exhibitors.

From 1913 to 1931 (when the first Indian talkie 'Alam Ara' was released), about 1,268 silent feature films were made, and more than 55 per cent were produced by a dozen or so film companies. (B.V. Dharap, 1980). Film making was centered in Bombay, though a few companies also grew in Calcutta and in Madras.

Finances:

Finances were provided by some businessmen (such as individuals involved in the textile industry), exhibitors, persons working at the stock exchange, and even some scions of feudal families, but a large percentage came from money-lenders, at usurious rates of interests. A film cost from Rs.5,000 to Rs.60,000. The government charged a duty on the raw-stock which was imported.

Scripts:

Scripts were by and large based on plays, particularly mythologicals, and there are several instances of play wrights turning to filmscript writing. Some films were made by adapting Shakespeare plays. 'Macbeth' and 'Hamlet', for instance, were made into films. In Bengal, a few stories by Sharatchandra, Tagore, and Bankim Chandra Chatterji were made into films. In Madras, the stories of the 'Kathakalakshepam Bhagwatars' or ballad singers, also formed the basis for films scripts, (S.T. Bhaskaran, 1980). Many films were adaptations of popular Hollywood productions. While some production companies depended on a single script writer for most of the scripts, other consciously drew upon stories by many authors, with a view to offering a varied fare to the audience. At times, the writing of a story and script was a co-operative effort, involving several staff members of a studio, (Uma DaCunha, 1980).

Technique:

Hardly any of the film makers had been formally trained in film-making. The exceptions were Bhogilal Dave and Haribhai Desai of Bombay, who obtained diplomas from the New York Institute of Cinematography, and Raghupati Prakasa of Madras, who went to England for training. Others learnt by experimenting on their own, by observing others at work, and by becoming apprentices of those who had become successful film-makers.

Studios:

Most of the production companies had their own studios which were self-sufficient, equipped with cameras and editing and processing facilities. The studios generally had no ceilings, sunlight being manipulated by using curtains and reflectors. Most of the major studios maintained a permanent staff of technicians and male and female artists, their salaries ranging from Rs.30 for a coolie or an extra, to Rs.700 to Rs.800 for a star (B.D. Garga, 1980). But there was relative equality of payment for technicians and artists, who worked as a team, even exchanging roles if the situation demanded. The studio technicians were expected to be versatile. They helped in erecting sets, assisting cameramen, and in developing and printing the film. It has been noted, that a family like

environment was characteristic of production companies of the silent and early talkie period in India. (Satish Bahadur and Shyamala Vanarase, 1980). Though a film unit was a professional organisation, the inter-personal relations between its members were modelled after the prototype of family relationships.

Artists:

Acting in films was held in low esteem socially, so that getting artists for films was for long a major problem faced by film-makers. In the case of women, the stigma against acting in films was particularly strong, and peculiar myths, too, were associated with it, as for instance the belief that exposure to the camera lens would impair ones health. (S.T. Bhaskaran, ibid). As a result, in early films, it was usual for males to play female roles. When finally women did consent to act in films, they came predominantly from the Anglo Indian community - one from which women were among the first to enter several professions which other communities debarred their women from joining. There were also a few instances of actresses from the popular stage acting in films. Generally, the major quality demanded of actors and actresses was good-looks, what was termed 'a film face'. (B.D. Garga, ibid). As action films and stunt films became a popular genre, actors who belonged to gymnasiums and were generally athletic and skilled in acrobatics, were inducted into the industry. In Calcutta, a few prominent

stage artists joined films, though in most cases, artists were reluctant to leave the theatre.

The artists were often closely attached to studios. After the pioneering days, some of them rose to the status of stars, and were paid more than others. There was even rivalry for stars among studios, some companies trying to win them over from others by offering higher salaries. There are instances of scripts being written with particular stars in mind. Type casting was, however, a rare phenomenon, and the same actor was known to play a hero in one film, and a villian in the next. Most artists, unlike in more recent times, did not have the foresight to invest in other business ventures, and this often left them in very poor financial straits once their film careers came to an end.

Exhibition and Distribution:

After a film was made, it was censored by a government appointed officer, as stipulated in the Cinematographic Act of 1918. Thereafter, the producer sought to have it exhibited, and for this he generally approached an exhibitor directly. The distribution business had not yet become a routine part of the film trade, though there were a few distribution agencies. During this period, the number of cinema halls increased progressively from year to year. There were 121 in 1921, and 309 in 1927, (Panna Shah, 1950; B.D. Garga, 1980). Of these, 77 were in Bombay, 43 in

Madras, 28 in Uttar Pradesh, 26 in Bengal, 22 in Punjab, 15 in the Central Provinces, 13 in Bihar and Orissa, 10 in the North West Frontier Province, 3 in Delhi, 3 in Assam, 11 in Cantonment areas and 58 in Burma. 35 seasonal cinemas operated mostly in hill stations. There were also an indefinite number of travelling cinemas which visited big fairs and smaller provincial towns. (B.D. Garga, ibid).

Not all theatres showed Indian films, the majority of films shown being British and American. A few began to show Indian films exclusively. If a film was a good box office hit, its cost of production was recovered rapidly in Bombay and other key cities, and thereafter the returns dribbled in from other moffussil areas. (Panna Shah, ibid) An average success ran for about 8 weeks, a better one for 10 to 12 weeks. (Girish Karnad, 1980).

Instability of the Industry:

Though the Indian film industry had assumed a shape by the 1920s, it was still beset with certain problems which made it less than stable. Finances were not freely forthcoming, since films were still considered a risky investment, and indeed, not all films fared well at the box office. The production companies were characterized by fissiparous tendencies, and only about 8 or 9 kept up a steady output. The rate of their dissolution and formation was high. Overall, the salaries of those employed in the industry being

quite low, it was not a very attractive profession for many. Moreover, the market was dominated by foreign films, and within a colonial set up, incentives from the government, for encouraging an indigenous film industry did not exist. On the other hand, as the freedom movement in India gathered momentum, the percolation of nationalistic ideas and sentiment into films, invited stricter censorship, and a general distrust of the use of the medium by Indians. However, as an entertainment industry, particularly geared to making products for an Indian audience, the Indian film had taken root, and created an audience that looked forward to its further expansion. Indian films were certainly more popular than Western films, though fewer in number, and appealed to more sections of Indian society than the former.

The Talkies

While silent films had become a popular form of entertainment in many countries of the world, there were, simultaneously, attempts being made to further develop the technique of cinema, and in 1927, the talkies, or motion pictures with sound came into being. While film makers all over the world reacted variously to this innovation: regarding it as a remarkable addition, enhancing the richness of the cinema medium, or alternatively as a negative factor, detracting from the evolution of a purely visual kinetic art, the public welcomed the talkies with great enthusiasm.

It was this public reaction that gave momentum to the development of the talkies, and before long, the silent cinema was a thing of the past.

Requisites for Change

The Indian public and film makers' encounter with this phenomenon started off a race among Indian film makers to produce Indian Talkies, which had far-reaching effects on the evolution of the film industry as a whole. This was so because the switch over from silent films to talking films was not a simple matter, involving, as it did, quantitative and qualitative changes in the process of making films. The existing production companies were not all capable of adapting themselves to the requirements for producing talkies: they needed new skills, new equipment and more finances. They required scripts with dialogues and hence the services of script writers and performers with different qualities and talents. The context in which such changes were sought to be wrought further determined the relative case or strain involved in the process of change. The economic depression of the 30s, for instance made it extremely difficult for many production companies to become financially capable of making talkies, which quietly folded up. On the other hand, the indisputable attraction of the talkies which were coming in from abroad strengthened the effort to make Indian talkies, and despite difficulties, they did come

into being, the first feature film 'Alam Ara' being released in 1931.

Techniques and Personnel

Sound Men:

The production companies that survived and came up in the talkie era had to begin by importing sound equipment, and together with it, finding ways of acquiring the technical knowhow for operating it. Equipment dealers with their foreign engineers were of course "waiting with folded hands to sell their wares", (S.B. Thakkar, 1980). Some people picked up the rudiments of sound engineering from the foreign experts who came to assemble the machines, others trained themselves by experimenting and observing. One of the major studios of this period, Bombay Talkies, arranged to have foreign technical experts on its staff to train its own candidates over a period of time.

Since unlike America, Germany and England, where qualified engineers were available to migrate to the film industry or to loan their expertise as and when needed, there was a dearth of properly educated engineers in India, most of the studios chose their 'sound men' on the basis of aptitude and expediency. The equipment for sound was also for quite some time cumbersome, and not very efficient. Its maintenance and repair was generally the monopoly of the equipment dealers.

In fact, so long as their engineers were available (they were paid monthly royalty-cum-service charges), the process of indigenous sound men gaining proficiency in their craft was retarded. In the beginning, India used a single system camera, in which picture and sound could be exposed simultaneously on the same film. This made the process of shooting dependent on the successful recording of sound, and often involved repetition of performances, to which the artists and other crew, being unused, responded with irritation, earning for the sound men of those times the status of second grade citizens of the film studios (S.B. Thakkar, ibid).

By the year 1935-36, with the use of a double system in which a separate sound camera and sound film were used, sound had grown to the stature of deserving an actual department of its own - the sound truck. Essentially the truck was intended for installing the sound equipment, but it could be used as an emergency luggage van (S.B. Thakkar, ibid). To begin with, as the race for producing talkies was fiercely competitive, the techniques of sound film were kept secret by the studios that obtained them. Outsiders were not allowed on the sets, and requests to learn were brushed aside. Gradually, the techniques became known by all, and in India too, the period of silent films came to an end.

Dialogue-Writing;

The use of dialogue, by adding a new dimension to the way in which films could communicate, opened the way for introducing on the screen, stories which were more subtle and complex than the silent cinema was capable of handling. Dialogue writing became an art in itself, and many more playwrights turned to film. Agha Hashra Kashmiri, one of the most sought after script writers of this period, was known sometimes to have written entire screen plays in rhymed verse.

The manner in which the spoken word was used became an important distinctive feature of the films made by the outstanding companies of the early talkies period. Thus, for instance, it is noted, that for the film makers of Prabhat, language, among the other things, "served to depict the vital links that the contemporary reality had with the saint literature. The words of the Maharashtrian saints like Dnyaneshwar and Tukaram had been absorbed in the mainstream of the Marathi language and were its highest achievements. Their poetry and passion was brought to life through the use of sound. Their rich musical tradition brought an intensity to the use of sound. The use of dialects gave a strong earthy flavour to Prabhat films", and in the case of Bombay Talkies, "the simple Hindi language which was used in their films paved the way for its national popularity which was to be witnessed soon". (Arun Khopkar, 1980).

Lyrics, Singers and Orchestra;

In fact, the most striking development in Indian cinema, which was contingent on the development of sound films, was the lavish and prolific use of music and songs: a distinctively Indian phenomenon, rooted in age old traditions of musical entertainment. From the very beginning of the talkie era, songs became an integral part of popular cinema in India. This in turn, implied the development of the craft of writing lyrics, of music direction of employing artistes who could sing, and an orchestra that could accompany the singers.

Initially, as for instance, in 'Alam Ara', the songs were composed by the director himself, and so was the orchestra conducted by him, consisting of little besides a 'tabla' and a harmonium. The artistes, who had a background of opera singing, sang the songs themselves, which proved to be very popular with the public. Over the years, film music became more elaborate, and there came a time when the music director was the highest paid artiste, on account of the fact that it was by and large his contribution that determined the success or failure of a film.

Till more sophisticated methods were introduced, background music was provided by an orchestra that perched precariously on a platform raised well above and beyond camera range, aligned with the microphone suspended over the actors' heads. The orchestra usually consisted of 4 or 5 musicians.

Songs were generally picturized in a single shot because of microphone placing. (Ram Mohan, 1980).

Artists:

"The introduction of sound changed, literally, the complexion of Indian screen personalities. The Anglo Indian girls who had almost monopolised the female lead roles in the silent films were unable to cope with spoken Hindustani and Urdu. They had to make way for new talents discovered mainly in the red light areas of Calcutta, Bombay and Varanasi." (Ram Mohan, ibid). For these women their new career in films was a step up the social ladder. Often due to illiteracy, lines had to be individually taught to the actor or actress, and on some occasions, lines were read from a blackboard.

Also, at a time when 'pilot tracks', 'post dubbing' and 'play back' were unknown, the ability to sing outweighed all other aspects of histrionics. It was only in 1936 that playback singing was introduced in Calcutta, and around the same time by Bombay Talkies in western India. For long, however, actor-singers like K.L. Saigal, Pahari Sanyal, K.C. Dey, Kananbala, Shanta Apte, Shanta Hublikar, Shahu Modak, Govindrao Tombe, and Vishnupant Pagnis, were very popular. Film songs were pressed into discs, and the gramophone became a familiar feature of many middle and upper class Indian households.

Linguistic Diversity:

The linguistic diversity of Indian society posed a special challenge with the coming of the talkies. Unlike the silent film which was an all India phenomenon, regardless of where it was made, the audience for talkies was limited to the speakers of the language a film employed. There developed thereby a regional specialisation in particular language films, but there was also an attempt to make the same film in different languages, so that it would have an all India market. In the case of certain films, the same shots were taken twice, in different languages e.g. Bengali, and Hindi, and this placed artistes who could speak both languages at a premium. This was not true, however, of all, or even most films made.

Exhibition:

At the stage of exhibition too, the advent of sound films brought about important changes, because the cinema theatre and its sound system had to be rendered suitable for projecting talkies. The major studios normally sent their recordists to the first screening of their new films. If possible, the theatre sound system was overhauled before the screening. The job of the recordist was to see that the operator maintained the correct volume throughout the film by instructing him to increase or decrease the fader at suitable points. (S. B. Thakkar, ibid).

Growth of Industry

Noted above are some of the specific ways in which the development of sound films affected the process of film making in India. More generally, the fact of the development of the talkies in the particular context of Indian society affected the overall development of the film industry. Three factors peculiar to Indian society enhanced the popularity of talkies, and hence of films, to which can be linked the rapid growth of the industry even within a span of ten years since talkies came into being. There was, to begin with, the fact that the use of vernacular languages endeared films to the public which had for about a hundred years been subjected to the subordination of its indigenous cultural heritage by a foreign language and culture, (Erik Barnouw and S. Krishnaswamy, 1980). Further, the use of Indian languages gave a tremendous edge to Indian films in competition with foreign films which since the very beginning of cinema in India had dominated the market. Finally, by incorporating music and songs, Indian talkies found a link with Indian tastes in entertainment which were very strong, making cinema indisputedly the most popular form of entertainment.

The number of production companies rose from 21 in 1927 to 110 by 1936. The industry was the eighth among Indian industries in 1939, and the third largest film industry in the world. The total investment in it was Rs.17 crores, and it employed about 40,000 people. About 150 lakhs

were paid annually in taxes by the industry, and about 200 films were made in a year, at an average cost of Rs.1 lakh per film. The number of cinema houses increased proportionately from 309 in 1927 to 660 in 1935.

With the increase in cinema houses, an elaborate distribution system also came into being. Films were even being distributed outside India, in places with an appreciably large Indian population, such as the West Indies, East Africa, South Africa, Fiji and Mauritius Islands, Malaya and Iraq. With the expansion of the industry, organisations such as a Motion Picture Society of India (Estd. 1935), the Bengal Motion Picture Association (1936), the Indian Motion Picture Producers Association (1937) and the South Indian Film Chamber of Commerce (1938) also came into being.

The Studio System

In terms of the organisation of production, the coming of sound strengthened the studio system, for "the new technology called for larger and more complex organisation requiring many new skills. Until such skills were available freely, it was necessary to nurture them. This was achieved by bringing them under the same roof, so that constant working together would bring about greater co-ordination. Studios provided a steady base in times of change and fluctuation", (Arun Khopkar, ibid). The joint family

character of the major studios made them institutions which were more than just a meeting point for professionals, and indeed, like in all joint families, there were internecine quarrels which the head had to resolve with promptness and unerring judgement, (Swapan Mullick, 1980). A studio system with such a patriarchal character led to considerable overheads as most of the staff worked on a regular salary basis. In some studios welfare schemes were launched.

Three studios which stand out during this period, both for the quality of their productions and their streamlined organisation are Bombay Talkies, New Theatres and the Prabhat Film Company. On the whole, in the 30s, each of the major studios had its own definite style. There was no occasion for cutthroat competition, no need for interfering with each other. The artists and technician stuck to their own studio and were proud of it. There was opportunity for greater finesse and sophistication in production methods, given the stability provided by the studio system. P.C. Barua of New Theatres, for instance, was the first director to start making movies to a schedule, and within a short span of time. Himansu Rai of Bombay Talkies recruited Franz Osten and Joseph Wirsching as director and cameraman, and Carl von Sproti as set architect. These German technicians were to train young Indians, and since the Rais believed that film makers should be provided with all round education, distinguished scholars, writers, musicians etc. from India and abroad were invited to Bombay Talkies.

Nationalism and World War II

The two factors, other than the development of talkies, that had far reaching effects on the development of the film industry in India during the 30s and the early 40s were: the growing nationalist movement, and the outbreak of the Second World War. As regards the first, we have already noted how during the silent period itself there was a reflection of nationalist sentiments in the films being made. As the movement gathered strength, film makers too were effected, and nationalists in turn, some of them at least, began to notice the tremendous potential of cinema for influencing people and communicating new ideas. Some of the leading film-makers of the period were inspired by nationalism. It has been noted, for instance, that for Himansu Rai, the stage and cinema were means to project and build the culture, of the country. Nitin Bose of New Theatres, too, notes, that "when we were directing films, we wanted to make pictures that would wake people up, rouse them and "it was the political atmosphere and social reform movements of the times that effected us." (Govind Nihalani, 1980). In the south, film makers A. Narayanan, H.M. Reddy and K. Subramanyan were openly committed to the nationalistic cause, which gave an added dimension to their works.

The change in content secured a new respectability for film folk. The new approach was also echoed in the fact

that there was, for instance in Bombay Talkies, a coming together of people from all castes, creeds, and regions under one roof: an emphasis on national integration. But overtly revolutionary themes in films were banned by the government and often dialogues which were even mildly political were censored. Commenting on the era, the film maker/journalist K.A. Abbas writes that "A great many films were produced which attacked the rampant social evils, sometimes not hesitating to expose economic inequalities and injustices. However, the treatment of social themes in these films was not fully scientific but subjective, emotional, and sometimes only vaguely progressive. A more direct attack on existing society was not possible under the existing censorship." (Quoted in Aruna Vasudev, 1978).

The Second World War affected the film industry more directly and contributed to the crumbling of some of the structures that supported the industry in the early years of the talkies. The year 1940 brought a spurt in industrial activity in India, especially the armaments industry. Increased employment put extra money in circulation and the motion picture theatres were crowded. A drift from rural areas to city factories augmented the boom. Meanwhile, war shortages generated a black market in essential items, and anticipation of rising prices brought speculation. The bulging funds in circulation included not only the wages of industrial workers but also various kinds of illicit profit.

The sudden surfacing of ill-gotten wealth became available to the film industry and it included black money, (Erik Barnouw and S. Krishnaswamy, ibid).

Film was considered a suitable area for investment because it was an industry that could not and did not show concrete proofs of investment. Thus, many small independent producers came into being. Guessing that stars were a key to financial success, they began making offers to stars on a per picture basis, seducing them away from the studios to which they were attached. Directors and music directors were similarly lured.

At the same time, the halt in construction of theatres due to shortage of building materials, put the distributors in a position to bargain with producers. The purely commercial interests of the distributors dictated that the producers make what assured profits at the box office: films with a star or two, six songs, and three dances. This formula was acceptable to the new producers who were themselves motivated by the desire to be commercially successful above all else. Thereby the formula film was born. Government restrictions on raw film, and general price rise due to war, induced the producers to economise on what was considered redundant as far as the box office was concerned, the story writer. The producers themselves wrote scripts often adapting Hollywood films. The gradual evolution of sophisticated film making, a process which characterized the 1930s was drastically perverted by this trend.

Stars were offered huge amounts, half of it in black, undeclared, untaxable income. Star fees shot over the years from Rs.20,000 to Rs.200,000 per film. The cost of production escalated to a post-war average of Rs.500,000, (Aruna Vasudev, ibid). By the end of 1941, various stars, free lancers now, were found to be making 3 or 4 pictures simultaneously. Production schedules were slowed. Old companies could no longer afford to maintain large full time s staff. An exodus began from them. The old companies could not compete with the new breed of speculative producers. By the end of 1945, the big joint family studios ceased to exist.

The Post World War II Period (1945-59)

New Financiers and Other Sources of Change

The post World War II period was marked by a rise in prices and shortages of raw material required for film making. Nevertheless, a number of new producers entered the field, many securing finances from those who had indulged in black-marketing and profiteering during the war. Some of the latter became producers themselves. While earlier the commercial aspect, including the motivation to make profits, existed as just one of the considerations for production companies to make films (and in some cases, these were fairly subordinate considerations), they became the only and primary factors for many of the new film making establishments.

Commercial considerations became very powerful also because of the changed position of distributors and exhibitors, in turn, linked to the shortage of theatres, as noted above. Some distributors themselves turned into film financiers, a number of distributors, at a time being involved in the making of a single film. The overall process of film making in India, changed in some very important ways in response to these factors.

The attainment of national independence, and the process of the country's partition, soon after the Second World War, were cataclysmic social events, which, also naturally affected the development of the film industry. Some crucial features of the kind film making that characterized the 1950s were direct products of these forces.

Organisation of Production, New Producers, Studios

With a number of new producers entering the field offering higher amounts to film artistes for their work, many of the older film companies, with their composite studio-cum-production complexes, that maintained a regular staff, were forced to dismantle their structures. Artistes and technicians began to work on a free lance basis, and studios became autonomous organisations, which were hired by producers for use. A very small percentage of producers were studio owners as well. The independent producers were therefore dependent on financiers for finances, on studio owners for shooting

facilities, including cinema equipment, on stars for performances, on laboratory owners for printing and editing, and on distributors and exhibitors for the release of their films.

More producers also meant a greater demand for stars and studios than were available, in turn, jacking up star salaries and studio rents. Simultaneously, as always happens, in a situation where market forces have free play, it was the workers such as technicians, assistants, and junior artistes whose wages were reduced to a minimum. And ironically, it was some of these film workers, who were not trained for other avocations, and so had perforce to stay in the industry, who induced some of the prospective financiers and other enthusiasts without experience to venture into film production, (S.S. Vasan, 1956).

Others who entered the film industry after 1947 included persons, who had migrated from Lahore to Bombay, some of whom had earlier been making films in Lahore. From the Bengal film industry too, which was hit by the partition, (it took away a large proportion of the audience for Bengali films) a number of individuals migrated to Bombay. The dislocation caused by the partition also created for many a search for new bases of employment and the film industry, though to most an unknown field, attracted many aspirants, some of whom became firmly entrenched in the business.

In most cases, producers, whether established or new, launched a production without sufficient funds to

complete it. At some time during production, the producer had to secure new finance, either from a distributor or a money lender. In most cases, one or more distributors became involved.

Actual production could begin only, when stars, who were now working for several producers at a time could provide shooting dates corresponding to the availability of studios and floors. The great demand for studios provided no incentives to studio owners to maintain facilities of high quality. The condition of the lights, of the cameras, the sound machines, the bathrooms and dressing rooms, were known to be deplorable, (K.A. Abbas, 1956).

Scripts

Seldom was a script complete before the shooting began. The stress on stars and songs, dictated by the distributors comprehension of box office requirements, made the proper writing of a script a factor of such low value that film makers were even known to write scripts as the shooting progressed, following patterns which were as unoriginal as they were banal. It was only in the mid-fifties that a few notable writers from the literary world entered the field, but hardly any stayed on, since the environment was far from congenial.

Most film stories were either plagiarised from foreign books, if not outright from foreign films; or they were remarks of old films transplanted from one language to

another, or even remade in the same language with just a change of cast, or based on well known legends of mythology or folklore. (K.A. Abbas, ibid). While the reality of independent India was too rich in dramatic potential to be ignored by film makers, and even by the distributors, who could sense the immediate impact of related themes on the public (that was, after all, making and living that reality), it appeared in film stories in a terribly cliched and distorted form. The profit oriented industry's preference for 'safe' escapist entertainment encouraged a story-formula of boy-meets-girl-loses-girl-gets-girl situations. (K.A. Abbas, ibid).

Artists Stars, Middlemen, and Workers

While many new directors entered the field, their work was in a sense more mechanical than creative, for the majority simply carried out what was dictated by commercial interests, following set patterns. Actors' performances were effected by a lack of involvement in each production, since they were working in several films simultaneously. The scripts being what they were, the delineation of roles, too, lacked depth and specificity. People were "simply described as hero, heroine, hero's father, heroine's father etc." There was "no mention of the age, of the profession, of the emotional background etc". (K.A. Abbas, ibid).

The artists were type cast playing only either hero/heroine or villain/vamp, in almost all the films. This flatness was filled by the 'star' qualities which some artistes developed, spilling over from the films themselves into a complex psycho-social system which included the relations between the artistes and the public, mediated by the press and other forms of publicity.

While earlier, there had been a good deal of interaction between the stage and films, both, since films were made on the basis of plays and artistes from the stage had moved to films, this source of influence almost ceased to exist through the fifties, with the gradual decline of theatre activity in the country. An exception was the growth of the Indian Peoples Theatre Movement, starting in the forties, and reviving folk forms to convey radical ideas. A few individuals, from it joined film, and IPTA even produced a film, 'Dharti Ke Lal'.

As for the social backgrounds of most actors and actresses, they were diverse. Quite a few were second generation performing artists, sons and daughters of latter day actors and singers. This was particularly true of female artists - few other, women venturing into the field, which was still regarded with ambivalence by most sections of society; a mixture of admiration for those seen on the screen and a negative impression of their moral standards in real life.

After a while, it was a few artistes who dominated the scene, even as a large number of aspirants literally waited for days on end at studio doors, to somehow get a chance to act in films. They were attracted more often than not by the glamour associated with the life-style of film artists. Yet most who did get a break, worked as junior artistes: miserably payed and treated in an extremely shabby manner. There grew a system of middlemen, who, in return, for providing junior artists with jobs took a cut from their wages. As regards women aspirants, their attitude was to ask for all kinds of favours, which the more desperate and unscruplous gave in return for a film role. The artistes were also often made to sign receipts for amounts much above the actual payments (to avoid taxes) and some time production companies were known to even change their names so as to liquidate their debts to the workers, leaving them in a lurch.

Despite such an insecure existence however, the number of people employed by the industry was 100,000 approximately in 1960, which made it the fifth largest industry in respect of the number of people employed (Indian Film, 1960). Being free lancers without a fixed place of work (since production companies were dispersed and also detached from studios) the workers could not effectively organise themselves into trade unions to demand a better deal, though a film workers union was formed in 1946.

Technicians and Technique

While the 'stars' were involved in several productions at a time because they were in great demand, and the prospect of minting several lakhs of rupees at a time was irresistable for most, the ill-paid technical workers and others, worked for several films at a time because it was the only way they could earn enough to live, in a manner far from grandiose. There was, of course, within the category of technicians, too, a considerable range of variation in pay scales - but the 'stars', and on a lower level, the music directors, were a category apart.

The technical quality of films suffered due to these practices, even as the competition with Hollywood films in the Indian market made producers anxious to add technical gloss and to introduce spectacular techniques in their products. The Hollywood products, developing in the context of competition with T.V., and of rapid technological advance in general, were becoming progressively more technique dominated. The Indians tried to follow suit but could not attain the same standards, given the context, for such an approach meant a greater dependence on imported equipment, i.e. a greater employment of foreign exchange reserves, which was hardly in keeping with the Indian government's policies. There was also a lack of organised training facilities for technicians, so that the actual use of sophisticated technique was a matter of great risk, as well as had fewer

chances of reaching excellence when tried by Indian producers.

However, the fact, that by 1960, the industry's production and processing machinery was among the latest in the world (Indian Film, ibid) speaks for the power of the commercial film makers' lobby in the Indian Government as well as of the inexorable growth of a particular kind of film making in the country.

Dimensions of the Industry

By 1960, the Indian motion picture industry was one of the biggest industries in the country with an estimated capital investment of 840 millions. Of the 100,000 persons employed by it, over 50,000 were in the cinema houses; 15,000 in the studios, 5,000 in the processing laboratories, and the rest in production, distribution and allied branches. It was second in respect of wages paid, and fifth in the number of people employed. There were 68 studios, and 39 processing laboratories. 1,400 million people visited 4,000 cinemas every year - the ratio of seating capacity to population being 5 per 1,000 (Indian Film, ibid).

While the number of producers grew over the years, the percentage of those who made a single film and then left the field, as the film flopped, was about 70 per cent. The number of producers who had made ten or more pictures

between 1931 and 30th June 1956, was only 72, out of a total of 2,244. (Silver Jubilee Souvenir, 1956).

Exceptions

There were a few who were continuing from pre-war years, including V. Shantaram of Prabhat, who established his Rajkamal Kala Mandir. Shantaram had his own way of keeping 'star' problem under control. He played the leading male role in a number of his films, often co-starring with his wife Jayashree. His was among the few production companies that continued to give first place to direction. There were a few other film-makers, for whom scripts, performances and aesthetic values did count: and not surprisingly their films were made on far lower budgets than most. Film makers like K.A. Abbas, Bimal Roy, and Kidar Sharma are examples.

But at the box office their films could not compete with those that had been moulded specially to please the distributor, if not necessarily the viewer. The response of the latter, too, was being conditioned by the proliferation and publicity that backed the mainstream commercial film. However, if this gives the impression that distributors were solely responsible for the kind of films that were being made, we must qualify it by noting that the materialistic ethos was manifest in all the different sectors, each of which contributed to maintain the whole structure.

The successful producers lamented the presence of 'fly-by-night' producers, and pleaded for the formation of combines as in Hollywood and Japan, saying that "If, the producers were to combine and form big units, they would be able to cut overhead expenses and get better exploitation of pictures and organised working", (Silver Jubilee Souvenir ~~Sangeet Natak Akademi Film Seminar Reports~~, 1956). But the situation remained unchanged for years to come.

<u>Associations, Organisations and Conflict</u>

However, the expansion of the film industry did bring into being a number of associations and organisations. These included - the Film Federation of India, the Film Producers Guild, the Indian Motion Picture Producers Association, the Indian Motion Picture Distributor's Association, the Cinematic Exhibition Association of India, the Theatre Owners' Association, the Central Circuit Association, the Motion Picture Association, Delhi; the East Punjab Motion Picture Association, Jullundur, the East India Motion Picture Association Calcutta, the Andhra Film Chamber of Commerce, the South Indian Film Chamber of Commerce, the Studio Owners' Association, the Cine-Laboratories' Association, and the Film Financiers' Association (B.K. Adarsh, 1963). They articulated their respective interests, at times in conflict with each other or with the government. The film worker's union, however,

as noted earlier, was an ineffectual body, despite the pressing problems of the section it represented.

The Indian government grappling with a host of other problems of immediate concern to it, was slow to take note of the film industry, beyond acting as a taxing agency, and imposing a censorship code through a board of censors. Producers and others in the film industry resented the taxes ~~on them~~ as well as the nature of censorship rules. But while in general, the attitude of the government was to let things be as they were, those few who did feel strongly about film regarded both taxes and censorship to be legitimate and correct being convinced that cinema was a luxury basically unsuited for a nation which had yet to secure for its citizens the minimum necessities of life, and also of the harmful effects of cinema on public morality. Nevertheless a Cinematograph Enquiry Committee was constituted which submitted its report in 1951. But its recommendations were not acted upon, barring a few which were implemented much later.

Government Efforts : Festival, Awards and Seminar

In 1952, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting organised the first ever International Film Festival in India which had a lasting impact on some film makers, till then relatively unexposed to any other cinema besides that from Hollywood. In 1954, the National Film Awards were instituted. In the same year a state government, that of

West Bengal, financed the making of a low budget film: Satyajit Ray's "Pather Panchali". But it was much later that the Central Government and other state governments ventured to do the same. In 1955 the Sangeet Natak Akademi hosted a seminar on Indian cinema, which provided a forum for a more constructive dialogue between the leading representatives of the film industry and the government, but it was not sustained beyond the seminar itself.

Regional Developments

Meanwhile the industry and its products with their progressive expansion, were beginning to affect large segments of the Indian population. Over the fifties the regional film industries, with the exception of the industry in Bengal which was facing a crisis, were growing. Madras in particular became the second largest centre in the country after Bombay, catering to Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada and Telugu speaking audiences in the south, and also successfully venturing into Hindi film production. The percentage of Hindi films to other language films declined in the fifties, from being 65 per cent of the annual output in 1947 to 38 per cent in 1959 (B.V. Dharap, 1979).

In Tamil Nadu the fifties witnessed the growth of a film movement clearly allied to the separatist southern nationalist politics of the DMK. Its leaders were writing, producing, directing and acting in films. It was the first

instance of 'political cinema' in the post-independence period.

The Press

A number of film magazines, oriented mainly to boosting star images, and publicing a glamorous view of the film industry came into being. Stars also featured in advertisements for diverse products. The relation between the press and film industry grew through advertisements of films, and the case of K.A. Abbas, whose "pungent and lively criticisms brought to the Chronicle" (the paper for which he worked) threats of an advertising boycott from film interest exemplified the nature of these links, (Trishala Goyal, undated).

The A.I.R.

The government owned All India Radio became a powerful disseminator of popular film culture by broadcasting film songs. The attempt by the Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Dr. Keskar, to stem the tide of film music which he condemned as hybrid by cutting down the time devoted to it on the AIR in 1952, resulted in such a severe drop in radio listening time, that it was deemed necessary to revert to the earlier schedule ban in 1957. The AIR continues to date, to be a most effective channel for the popularisation of film songs which are heard on the radio by the public even prior to the actual release of films.

The 1960s

The film industry entered the '60s with a growing emphasis on producing films with glamorous settings and locations, stars, romance, spectacular song and dance sequences, and a further whittling down of themes and story lines to stereotypes. Colour was used in tune with this emphasis: to dazzle and overpower: and soon the majority of films were colour films. Shooting dn foreign locations was another new craze that lasted right through the '60s.

Dominance of Big Finance and Speculation, Small Producers Vs. Big Producers

All these ingredients involved larger budgets, and the dominance of big finance in cinema continued through the years - Bombay setting the trend, followed by the bulk of regional cinema as best as possible. The budget for some films went as high as six million rupees. Between 1960 and 1974, 4,867 features were made at an estimated cost of 486 crore rupees: black money still playing a major role. (B.V. Dharap, 1974).

As happened with the introduction of sound in the '30s, the addition of colour, too, led to a remake of several older films - particularly mythologicals. But the majority were romances set in 'contemporary' times.

A considerable number of films with smaller budgets and lesser known artistes flopped at the box office, causing alarm in the industry. It has been estimated that about 2 per cent of the films made were superhits at the box office; 13 per cent managed to cover costs with small profits; 15 per cent just scraped through, while 10 per cent ran into a total loss. A producer had to recover 10 times his cost of production at the box office to break even, given the high rates of taxation. Not surprisingly, 70 per cent producers in a given year vanished in the next. (B.V. Dharap, ibid). Thus, film making continued to be a highly speculative business, and institutional finance did not enter the picture because of the high risks involved. The obsession of film folk with the astrological almanac, manifesting itself in rituals performed at the 'mahurat' or the starting of a film, the consultation of priests before deciding on titles for films, and numerous other practices, even dictating at times their personal lives, is a factor undoubtedly linked to this feature of the trade.

On the other hand, the chain of distributors-exhibitors-financiers was trying continuously to arrive at a delineation of what exactly worked at the box office, without really being aware of the totality of the social situation of the film audience, and it dictated accordingly to the producers, with varying degrees of success as far as the results were concerned. Most of the films which flopped

were modelled on the same lines as the big budget films, but were watered down versions of the latter, being minus the glamour that sustained them. But the category of small producers, which subsumed the makers of these films, also subsumed the few who were attempting to make better films, on premises which were different from those on which the majority of films were being made. It was from amongst the films made by them that some won international recognition, and critical acclaim in the country. That it was the former who raised a hue and cry when their films flopped at the box office, splitting the ranks of the IMPPA (Indian Motion Picture Producers Association) into 'Small producers vs. big producers' is a fact which must be kept in mind when we study the nature of interests coming into open conflict within the film industry during this period. It was not a conflict between 'good' and 'bad' cinema, i.e. between different kinds of cinema, but between the 'smaller fish' and the 'bigger fish' who were threatening to swallow them.

More significantly, the split led to a plea to the government to change its taxation policy vis-a-vis the film industry, on the grounds that it was encouraging monopolistic tendencies, since the smaller producers were completely crippled once they paid up the taxes demanded by the government. Rs.9 crores, consisting of entertainment tax, show tax, import duty and excise duty were being paid by the industry every year. (B.V. Dharap, ibid). In asserting this

demand, the producers were united, for the big producers too were irked by the taxes.

The fact that the quality of cinema was being affected by the presence of fly-by-night producers who made films purely for commercial reasons was noted by the more socially concerned film-makers but they were unheard, since those who were there to make a quick buck provided only an extreme case of what was the major thrust of film making in India.

Stars of the '60s

New stars entered the scene, even as some of the older ones continued to hold sway-often playing teenagers in love, regardless of the fact that they were no longer youthful in fact or in appearance. A few Bombay stars turned film directors-for instance - Manoj Kumar, Sunil Dutt and Joy Mukherji. In the 1950s, Raj Kapoor was the only star who also became a director and a producer with his own studio. Film artistes were also known in the 60s to be investing money in business ventures of many kinds, sometimes allied to the film industry. In this respect they were unlike the stars of yesteryear who found themselves in a very insecure financial position once there film careers came to an end.

The phenomenon of the idolization of stars by their fans remained a part of Indian society during this period.

Film magazines of a picture book variety containing gossip about film artists proliferated in English and in regional languages. Events like the Indo China War brought forward these stars as patriots who collected funds for national defence and even went to the front to entertain troops. A few films incorporated the motif of the war, mainly highlighting the emotional aspects of patriotism, glorifying those who died fighting for their country.

Changes and Role of New Government Institutions

But even as the Bombay film dominated the scene, a few films in Bombay itself and some in the regional centres were being made in the 1960s that approached the medium of cinema differently. Also during this period, the government finally woke up to the possible role it could play to improve the nature of film making in the country.

While the proposal had been made as early as in 1951 by the Patil Committee, a Film Finance Corporation was set up in 1960. A film institute, also suggested by the Patil Committee, was established in 1961, an Indian Motion Pictures Export Corporation in 1963, a National Film Archive in 1964, and the Hindustan Photo Films Factory in 1967-68. An enquiry committee on film censorship was instituted in 1968.

The Film Finance Corporation

The Film Finance Corporation was established with two aims in mind: to provide finances for the film industry,

and to raise the standard of films in the country. While it was based on a correct perception of the links between the sources of finance and the quality of films produced, it was, however, insufficiently equipped to make a significant dent in the overall structure. It started with an equity capital of Rs.50 lakhs and a loan of one crore. In the first year or so of its existence, it gave loans for the making of 15 feature films, ranging from Rs.2½ lakhs to 5 lakhs for each. They were granted on the basis of the merit of the scripts put up by producers, but only a small number succeeded financially so as to recover the loans.

The constitution of the FFC was in fact based on the overlooking of a glaring fact; that the exhibition outlets in the country were limited, and moreover, since distributors themselves often staked finances in the industry, exhibition time was booked for films made specially according to the dictates of the box office. Practically no one was willing to risk showing films which were different. A few films, however, which were exhibited and proved successful at the box office, namely, Mrinal Sen's 'Bhuvan Shome' (1968), Basu Chatterji's 'Sara Akash' (1966) and Kantilal Rathod's 'Kanku' (1973), caused a flurry of excitement and jubilation among film makers and film critics. The phenomenon was noted as an index of the sophisticated tastes of the audience, with the implication that distributors had misinterpreted audience tastes, the latter having no option but to see what was offered to them.

But the strangehold of the organisational structure of film making in the country was too strong for this insight to have an immediate or even sustained impact. Of the 116 films financed by the FFC between 1960 and 1974, for which it made available 2¼ crore rupees, a few were able to recover the loan, and not many made appreciable profits at the box office. A few are still lying in cans for want of exhibition outlets. The viability of the FFC as an ongoing organisation was questionable without major changes, and while this was realised in the 60s, changes were affected only in the 70s. On the other hand, several FFC films did win awards in India and abroad, thereby realizing one of the aims of the organisation, but only to a limited extent, because the number of films was too small to effect the dominant trends.

FFC Films : Organisation of Production :

Apart from being low budget films, the FFC sponsored films showed an emphasis on realistic content and innovative styles. Many were based on short stories from modern Indian literature. Performers and performances were unaffected by the 'Star' syndrome. There was little use of elaborate sets and sensational techniques. Outdoor shooting, and on location rather than in studios, were other factors that marked them as products of a film making process which was very distinct from the kind that characterized the Bombay

film industry. In the latter half of the 60s the technicians and directors who were involved in the making of these films included some graduates of the Film Institute at Pune.

The Film and T.V. Institute of India :

Right from the inception of film making in India, the need for a training institute had been articulated by various people concerned with Indian cinema. The late appearance of the Institute can only be attributed to the fact that the government considered film to be an extremely low priority area.

Earlier in 1945, the Central Polytechnic, Madras, had started a course in cinematography and sound recording. Later, this section of the Polytechnic was separated and an Institute of Film Technology was established at Adyar, Madras in the year 1960. In the late 40s, the S.J. Polytechnic Institute, Bangalore had also started courses in cinematography, and sound engineering. But there was no institution which provided training in all aspects of film making, (Report of the Working Group on National Film Policy, 1980).

The objective of the Film Institute at Pune was to provide facilities for professional training in the art and technique of film making and thereby help to improve the technical as well as aesthetic standards of Indian films. The Institute started with diploma programmes in film

direction-cum-screenplay writing, motion picture photography, sound engineering and film editing. In 1963 an additional one year advance course in direction and a two year course in acting were introduced. Though the number of students admitted was small (on average of 30 per year) there were thousands of applicants from all over the country after the first few years.

Three years after its establishment, there appeared the first batch of professionally trained film makers in the country, whose presence was welcomed by most in the film industry, but grudged by older technicians who felt threatened by their competence. During their training, the students at the institute were also exposed to the richness of the cinematic medium as it had developed internationally, and some were thereby inspired to attempt to create a new kind of cinema in India as well. After graduating, however, most were quite unprepared for the conditions prevailing in the Indian film industry. A few turned towards the Film Finance Corporation to overcome financial constraints. In 1966, a graduate of the institute formed a film co-operative in Kerala, the first of its kind in the country. Such an organisational pattern was given greater consideration in the 70s when a few more co-operatives were formed.

The results of the acting course, however, suffered due to the presence of students who were clearly oriented towards the glamour of the 'star system', but a few emerged

as powerful artists who were committed to higher artistic values, challenging set patterns. They, too, had to contend with the prevailing atmosphere, some succumbing to the given pattern, others losing their way, and a few charting out their own paths to preserve artistic integrity. The impact of the Institute became more pronounced in the 1970s.

The National Film Archives :

The National Film Archives, set up in 1964 in Pune is an institution based on the recognition of the value of preserving films and building up a collection of Indian and International films which can be used for study and the spread of film culture of a kind qualitatively different from the one generated by the commercial film industry. Through the 60s, the Archives continued to expand, and to promote film awareness in the country, though not unlike most governmental organisations, it was handicapped by insufficient funds.

The IMPEC :

The Indian Motion Pictures Export Corporation was set up in 1963, initially as a joint stock company in the public sector, mainly with the objective of promoting export of Indian films, particularly feature films, and discouraging various malpractices such as under-invoicing, illicit trade etc., which were prevalent in the export of Indian films. Later, in 1977, it became a wholly government

owned agency.

Film Manufacture and Import :

The Hindustan Photo Films factory was set up in Ooty in 1967-68 to lessen the dependence of the film industry, on imported raw stock by manufacturing film indigenously. Early in the 60s, State Trading had entered the sphere of raw film import to ease the shortage of raw stock availability. But as for the Hindustan Photo Factory, it has to date been unable to play the role of a reliable supplier of indigenously manufactured raw stock.

Censorship :

The Khosla Committee went into the issue of censorship in great detail and suggested far reaching changes in the censorship code. A few of its recommendations aroused a good deal of controversy. But the act promulgated on the basis of the report was not passed in Parliament for several years.

New Facets of Regional Cinema

While the Bombay film industry products continued to be popular with mass audiences, and imitated by the regional film industries, in the sixties, there was a distinct development of a better cinema in some of the regional centres.

Right through the 50s and the 60s, in Bengal there had been a few film makers who were making films which were

in many ways better than the usual and in the sixties, there came from Karnataka and Kerala, too, films which reflected a change in the approach to cinema among certain sections of society. 'Chemmeen', a Malayalam film by Ramu Kariat, based on a novel by T. Sankar Pillai, and the Kannada film 'Samskara', directed by Pattabhi Rama Reddy, based on a novel by Ananthamurthy, were undoubtedly products of wider social forces and changes.

Regarding Karnataka, Girish Karnad notes: "A lot of things combined to make the Kannada cinema suddenly come alive in the mid sixties with 'Samskara'. First, there was a Kannada nationalist movement led by the Kannada writer, A.N. Krishnarao. He demanded that Kannada films be given more money, be shown in Bangalore, and be allowed to run for a longer time. He almost browbeat the distributors into agreeing to take on Kannada films. Many film-goers were also affected by this linguistic fervour, and they decided to see all the Kannada films that came, good or bad. The second thing was State subsidy - Rs.50,000 per film (which was introduced in 1967). Now you could make a good commercial Kannada film with Raj Kumar and Kalpana for about 2,25,000 and a small budget one for Rs. 150,00. So Rs.50,000 wasn't so bad. The Karnataka government had another axe to grind here - they said that the subsidy would be given only to films shot in Karnataka. The number of films doubled to almost 30 a year." (Ahmed Rizvi and Parag R. Amladi, 1980) State awards were also instituted which were

richer than the national awards themselves. Besides, the government gave the better films exemption from entertainment tax.

Bombay Cinema and World Cinema

Even as regional films showed a greater awareness of the potentialities of the cinema medium, representatives of the Indian film industry who were now attending international film festivals in India and abroad were reacting in their own way to the new developments in world cinema. They noted with alarm the fact that the films of the European New Wave were bagging more acclaim than Hollywood films, and realized the extent to which they themselves had equated cinema with Hollywood. Significantly, the factors they isolated as marking the new cinema as different from their own were greater realism, particularly in the depiction of relations between the sexes, and consequently grumbled about the strictures of Indian censorship. The fact that world cinema was moving in many directions from the point of the neo-realism of the forties and fifties eluded them.

Crisis in the Industry

For the Bombay film industry, the latter years of the 60s were also marked by a crisis, because of which film production dropped to an all time low of 89 in 1968 (Screen, 1969). The crisis occurred due to tussles between

the production sector and trade organisations representing the distribution sector, triggered by a decision taken by the Central Circuit Cine Association and subsequently by the trade bodies in Punjab and Delhi, to acquire films for distribution henceforth only on the basis of refundable advances. The reason for this was the fact that a number of big budget films flopped at the box office. The producers responded by suspending work. The crisis was resolved only in 1969.

There were indeed fewer flops in 1969 and production figures soared again - 363 films being made in the country and India regaining its position as the largest producer of motion pictures in the world (Screen, 1970).

1970-1980

While the Bombay based commercial film industry continued to produce big budget extravaganzas right through the seventies, it was also a decade when the old formula was revised and replaced by another which involved even higher budgets, leading to a veritable monopoly by a few production companies. This induced smaller producers, still motivated by the desire for commercial success and profits, to try out alternate formulae.

At the same time, the awareness of cinema as a medium of artistic expression grew among other sections

of society, through the impact of film societies, the film institute, and other agencies, and a few new film makers emerged on the scene, who, despite being only a handful in number, were articulate and committed enough to generate support and make a beginning towards evolving structures that would allow a different kind of film-making to exist and to grow.

Processual Aspects of Commercially Motivated Film-Making

The overall predominance of commercially motivated film making makes it imperative for us to view its processual aspects first, if we are interested in viewing the evolution of the film industry in this period.

Investment :

In 1973, the investment in the film industry has been estimated to have been about 175 crore rupees and the number of producers about 1,200. (Madan Gaur, 1973) In 1979, the investment was roughly Rs.300 crore, though some have estimated the amount to be Rs.550 crores. (M.N. Upadhyay, 1979). A more recent estimate (1981), notes the investment to be Rs.1,000 crores. (B.K. Karanjia, 1981) It has also been suggested that roughly 600 crores of black money has been floating about in the industry during this period. (Ashish Rajadhyaksha, 1979(a)).

Through the years, the costs of basic ingredients for film making - raw stock, equipment, star salaries (in the case of commercial films), studio rentals, etc. have been escalating. Opulent costume, sets, and properties, which are other staples of the commercial film have also implied heavy expenses. So it has been that an average big budget film costs Rs.30-50 lakhs, while the cost of some more ambitious productions is known to have reached Rs.3 crores and more.

Financiers :

There has been a greater involvement of distributors in the financing of films in this period, while "the growing interest of film financiers and film makers in agricultural and allied activities are generally a facade behind which huge profits are shown as accruing from farming and ploughed back into film making"/ (M.N. Upadhyay, ibid). Gulf money has been an important source of finance for films in Kerala, accounting for what has been termed the 'porn boom' in Malayalam cinema. In the 80s, however, there are signs of this source drying up.

The established producers who have professional expertise in production management and whose banners have a high prestige in the film market are able to finance their productions largely by preselling their films to distributors during production itself/ (Report of the Working Group on National Film Policy, ibid).

The average producer who has some, but not enough finances, goes to a distributor who purchases one territory (of a total of 6 in India) for a sum that may range from Rs.12 lakhs to Rs.25 lakhs, of which he pays 40 per cent in instalments to help the production along. (Report of the Working Group on National Film Policy, ibid).

Those among them who are primarily adventurers out to make a quick buck, or to simply sanitise their black money, get two stars to sign for 10 per cent of their price, and then approach distributors to obtain 25 to 40 per cent of their projected budget. Very often, they begin production and then leave half way; or after one or two projects have failed. Their presence accounts for the fact that 30 per cent of films that are begun never get completed. However, generally these producers do not have enough standing in the industry to generate advances from the distributors, and are compelled to take loans at usurious rates (sometimes 30 to 40%) from questionable sources. (Reports of the Working Group on National Film Policy, ibid).

Institutional finance is generally not available for film-making since film-makers usually have no real assets, though a few have been known to stake whatever assets they have in order to get bank loans.

Multi-Starrers, Story-Writers and Small-Budget Formulae :

~~Multi starrers, story-writers, and small-budget formulae~~ Vis-a-vis distributors stars are the only guarantee

for success, and that is why the first thing a producer does is to book stars for this film. He then engages a music director, a story writer, and a director - usually in that order. (Economic Times, 1979). Compared to the last decade, the story writer has become more sought after in the 70s, specially since the production of multi-starrers that require stories that give equal emphasis to a number of characters. As regards fees, however, on an average, the stars are still paid from about 25 to 50 per cent of the investment in a film, while the music director, story writer, and film director get about 3 to 10 per cent. The balance is spent on raw film processing, technicians, publicity, etc. (M.N. Upadhyay, ibid).

The trend of multi-starrers, which really began with the films 'Deewar' and 'Sholay' released in 1975, implied large budgets by the very fact of engaging more than 1 star pair per film. It was only a few producers who could afford to do so, and they were able to reap unprecedented profits - of at least 50 to 60 lakhs even before their films hit the theatres - through preselling their films. Not all multi-starrers were hit, however, and some just scraped through at the box offices. (Anil Saari, 1980).

On the other hand, simultaneously, some small budget movies were runaway successes. Unlike these, which take about two to three years to complete (given the involvement

of stars in several films at a time, and occasionally due to financial reasons), the multi-starrers take from 3 to 4 years to complete.

It has been noted that the multi-star films had an adverse effect on the careers of non-star artistes, whose roles within the formula films were usurped by stars, and new comers, too, found it more difficult to enter films. On the other hand it was also noted, in early 1980, when the multi-star phenomenon was being evaluated, that "small budget films formed a giant by themselves, and the sheer pressure of the number of people who want to stay in the film line despite their exclusion from the charmed circle is enough to sustain a new trend for some years" (Anil Saari, ibid). In fact, with the failure at the box office of some multi-starrers recently, there are, indeed, some big producers who are reverting back to films with single star pairs, through a few multi-star ventures have also been launched.

Monopoly :

Overall, however, there has occurred the phenomenon of a greater percentage of finance being locked in fewer productions with the consequent emergence of fewer, but bigger leading producers, namely, B.R. Chopra, G.P. and Ramesh Sippy, Manmohan Desai, Yash Chopra and Gulshan Rai, and the Rajashree organisation manned by Tarachand Barjatya and his sons. These producers have left behind the big names of the early seventies - such as Nazir Hussain, Raj

Khosla, Mohan Segal, and Shakti Samanta, by the unprecedented scale of the success of their films at the box office (Ashish Rajadhyaksha, 1979(b)).

While all have been linked to the distribution sector through financing, Tarachand Barjatya is alone among them who is himself a distributor exhibitor. He is known to monopolise a chain of 50 theatres in Bombay. Even when the multi-star phenomenon was at its height, he was able to produce films with new artistes and smaller budgets, without being stuck for want of exhibition outlets. What he saved by engaging non-stars, he is known to have invested in publicity and for expanding his exhibition empire.

Extras and Junior Artistes:

Apart from engaging stars, music directors, story writers, directors, and technicians the commercial film maker also employs 'extras' and 'junior artistes', including dancers and stuntmen. The situation of these film artists continues to be pathetic, though thousands still throng to find employment in films. There are in Bombay several associations of workers which maintain offices to supply these workers to film producers. The organisation of extras exhibits a rigid hierarchy. "It is divided into 3 categories: the casual meaning those who appear only in mob scenes, the 'A' grade, who get slightly more exposure, and the super grade who might get a line in the film or a shot

all to themselves." (Ashish Rajadhyaksha, 1979(a)). The greatest reward is a mention in the credits. These workers are often ill-treated and ill-paid, and the practice of middlemen taking cuts from their wages and demanding other favours, as well as of producers making them sign receipts for more than the actual payments, continue. As for stuntmen, they have become an indispensible part of films, specially in the 70s with most films becoming action oriented. Stuntmen are known to perform extremely risky acts for a pittance, though their wages are still relatively higher than those of other extras. There are accidents everyday; many stuntmen have died in the past few years; but their death is kept a secret. (Ashish Rajadhyaksha, ibid). Then there are the dancers, who, again, are essential as far as the formula film goes. Dance masters and stuntmasters are specially engaged to choreograph specific sequences in films.

From Studios to Locations :

As regards the actual shooting of films, the general trend of film shooting has shifted from indoor studios to location shooting or outdoor studio production. While there were about 65 studios in 1980, a number were closing down due to the pressure on urban land, making way for more lucrative real estate investments such as apartments and shopping centres. Producers have been known to use private

houses and bungalows for indoor shooting-some being hired out for shooting purposes on a regular basis. The conditions of the studios that are still running are far from satisfactory - the situation being relatively exchanged from what it was in the 50s. (Report of the Working Group on National Film Policy, ibid).

With a decline in the studio system of production, an independent business of hiring out cameras and other equipment has come into being. Hiring agencies have been set up by film-stars, distributors, exhibitors, and by businessmen who are not directly engaged in film making. The few producers who are also studio owners are operating in much the same way as before, and it is they who are still engaged in making films which demand lavish and elaborate set constructions.

Processing, Printing, Editing and Dubbing:

After the completion of shooting, the producer seeks the services of laboratories for processing and printing the film. While the number of colour films being made in the country has increased, the 9 laboratories with facilities for processing colour films are insufficient. Being heavily booked, the producer often spends a long time awaiting his turn. In fact, the overall availability of laboratories (38 in number) is inadequate, leading to a situation of monopoly, as was true of studios earlier, with its attendant neglect of the quality of services offered. In particular, the fact that

the personnel engaged in the handling of exposed negative are not properly trained has made for very poor performances by some. Further, the frequent interruptions in power supply particularly in recent times, have led to irreparable losses during this process of film making. There has been no attempt to provide safeguards by installing generators with automatic switchoever facilities. Editing and dubbing facilities in the country are also not quantitatively consonant with the number of films being made. (Report of the Working Group on National Film Policy, ibid).

Distribution Systems :

Distribution is the next sector the film producer has to tackle. There were in 1980, 3,200 distributors operating in the country (which had been divided into 6 circuts), as against 1,500 in 1973. (Report of the Working Group on National Film Policy, ibid).

Distribution systems are of various types. The first has been termed the 'own distribution system' - under which the major established producers istribute their own films to the theatres all over India or at least in important territories. It is not a very commonly used procedure however. There are also a few concerns in this category which started as distributors and then entered the field of production. The Rajashree Organization is an example. These

concerns distribute the films which they themselves produce in addition to undertaking distribution of outside productions. In the regional film industries, this system, is generally linked to star artistes and several well known artistes have their own production and distribution establishments.

There also exists the plain distribution system, which is in the nature of professional wholesale marketing services offered by a distributor without making any advance payment to the producer. "The distributor charges a fixed commission from the proceeds after payment of tax and the exhibitors share."

A third system, termed the commission distribution system, is one in which "the distributor advances money to the producer during production or the time of lifting prints. The total amount invested by the distributor becomes the first charge on the collections of the film in addition to a fixed percentage of commission which is generally higher than under the plain distribution system."

The minimum guarantee system is one in which "the distributor pays a fixed amount to the producer, spread over a period of time during the production of film which is offered as a minimum guarantee, or MG by the distributor for marketing the film. This amount is non-refundable in case the film fails to recover the 'MG' amount. From the collections of the film, the distributor first recovers the 'MG' amount along with about 20 per cent as additional commission and then

shares with the producer the overflow if any, usually on a 50/50 basis.

There is also the outright lease system, in which "the distributor pays a minimum sum of agreed amount to the producer for the exploitation of a film for an agreed period, usually 3 to 6 years, in specified territories. During this period the entire proceeds of the film belong to the distributor". (Report of the Working Group on National Film Policy, ibid).

<u>Distributors</u> : Film Market Experts, Speculators, and Employers :

When the distributor makes a major investment in film production he tries to cover his risk by attempting to ensure that the film meets his assessment of the market requirement. We have already noted some of the repercussions of this fact, as far back as in the late 40s. With increasing involvement, the distributor became film market expert by acquiring knowledge of network, preference for different types of films in various areas, the appropriate time for release of films and strategy for publicity etc. The commodity character of films is nowhere as apparent as in a distributors' office. Here, one finds the distributor clinching deals with his clients on the basis of discussions in terms of the percentages of sex, violence, emotional appeal, etc. their films contain.

As in the case of producers, among distributors too, there is a sizeable floating population who try their luck with one or two films and then disappear only to be replaced by new entrants.

Also as in production, the majority of people employed are on a casual or contractual basis. There are no benefits of security of employment, old age pension, social security or compensation against accidents. Speculation and insecurity pervade the business.

Retarded Growth of Exhibition Sector:

As for the exhibition sector, the number of permanent theatres which was 6,000 in 1973, had risen to approximately 10,000 in 1980. About 1.25 crore people were watching films everyday (Report of Working Group on National Film Policy, ibid). When viewed in conjunction with the growth in the production of films and in population it is found that the share of exhibition outlets available for each feature film has come down considerably and the ratio of cinema seats to the number of viewers is still very inadequate.

Theatres have been growing at a slow pace for various reasons. These include the fact that cinematograph rules which govern the construction of cinema theatre are archaic, cumbersome, and restrictive, and make cinema construction prohibitively expensive. Secondly, cinema construction, except in Orissa, is not recognized as an

industrial activity, and very limited institutional finance is available for it. The overall economics of theatres has also become less ~~and less~~ attractive because of the growing incidence of entertainment tax and other levies. Particularly in metropolitan towns, it is more economical for entrepreneurs to construct multi-storeyed commercial or shopping complexes than to invest in cinema houses. Finally, no systematic effort has been made to develop inexpensive theatre designs which can be readily adopted by entrepreneurs in semi-urban areas, small cities, and towns. (Report of Working Group on National Film Policy, ibid).

Cinema Rentals, Black Marketing and Control :

With budgets of films rising distributors have been known to practice what has been termed saturation release, whereby a film is released simultaneously in a number of theatres over the country. This has led to a monopoly of theatres by a few films, and since they are backed by big finance, it has pushed up cinema rentals. Rentals have in fact doubled in the last few years and only 1/4th of this rise is due to a rise in the costs of running theatres. (Report of Working Group on National Film Policy, ibid).

When dealing with big budget films, exhibitors are also known to sell tickets at black-market rates ~~like~~ of Rs.35 to Rs.70 per ticket, in the first two weeks. Ticket

books are maintained in duplicate, the tax collector being shown a lot of unsold tickets. In many instances, the exhibitor leases out his theatre to a professional 'lessee' whose sole job is to feed his theatre with 'hit' films in return for a commission. The lessee contacts bigger chain theatre owners who include his theatre in the group of theatres where a new prestigeous film is scheduled to be released in town for another commission from the original exhibitor. This brings his theatre in direct control of the major chains. In fact, this is how Rajashree controls some 40 per cent of all theatres in the cities, either directly or through lessees. (Report of the Working Group on National Film Policy, ibid).

Growth of Industry :

Of the films released almost 70 per cent do not recover their costs, but the number of films made annually increased from 598 in 1970 to 714 in 1979, the speculative nature of the business remaining unchanged. From about 2.5 lakhs employed in the industry in 1973, the number has risen to approximately 3.5 lakhs in 1980. Of these, 60 per cent are employed in the exhibition sector and the rest in production and distribution. (Report of the Working Group on National Film Policy, ibid).

Processual Aspects of Creative Film-Making

A continuous thread running through the growth and evolution of the film industry has naturally been finances, and the second important supporting pillar of the industry is the involvement of persons interested and talented in the multifarious activities associated with the production of a film. Variations of these important elements in relation to other situational facets of the country, have contributed to the emergence of another cinema as well, which has a more individualistic character than can be grouped as a type or be described by a generalised adjective or definition. However, a few common points between its films, which emerged in the 60s and 70s, encouraged the use of terms such as low budget cinema, 'New Wave films', 'parallel films' and 'the other cinema' for it.

Finances :

While there were some who made low budget films in this period to save their investments, low budget production was a necessity for others who were genuinely restless to use the medium of film creativity but did not possess any big amounts which could be used for the purpose. So the term low budget films is applicable to two very different categories of films. One could perhaps say that there were the commercially motivated low budget films, and the

creatively motivated low budget films. We have already noted in our overview of the 60s, some of the processual aspects of films marked by a creative approach, as they were made then.

Undoubtedly, the fact that some film makers with such an approach could feel satisfied with low budgets is related to the fact that certain elements that enhanced the budgets of commercial film makers, such as stars, elaborate sets, and glamorous locations were inherently unnecessary for their purposes. It is therefore also understandable that the financial assistance provided by the FFC could go a longer way for them than it ever could for commercial film makers. Let us look at this source of finance a little closely, and then at others as well.

A. The F.F.C. and N.F.D.C. The FFC as an organisation was beset with certain problems right from its inception, as already noted earlier. Its ability to remain financially soluble through the possibility of the success of its films at the box office was thwarted by the exhibition sector's close involvement with films made by the commercial film industry.

In 1974 the FFC began to import films, motivated partly by the need to give FFC her revenue generating activity, partly to bring in films from countries other than the United States which had dominated our imports till then. The need to enter the sphere of distribution and

exhibition was also recognised as imperative for better cinema to reach the audience, but to date, little has been done practically despite the FFC's much publicised schemes for financing and promoting low budgets cinema theatres in rural, semi-urban and urban areas.

It has also been pointed out that the FFC requirement of collateral security against loans debarred otherwise deserving film makers from utilising its finances. Thereafter, the FFC evolved criteria for waiving collateral security in particular cases: that is if (1) the script committee unanimously recommends a script of unusually high merit; (2) if the film maker makes the film in 16 mm, which, while it significantly reduces cost and risks, also helps develop the 16 mm movement, and (3) loans are advanced against the guarantee of the State Development Corporation or any party with adequate means, (Siddhartha Kak, 1980).

In early 1980, the FFC announced its decision to produce films. The scheme was for the corporation to hire independent film-makers to produce films from scripts provided by it. It stated that the corporation will bear the full cost of such films and have total artistic control over their production. It will also be responsible for their distribution through a chain of small theatres it proposes to acquire in major cities. As a prelude to launching the scheme, the FFC organised a script writing

competition, apparently to find out if there would be enough good scripts available if the corporation decided to go into production.

Later in 1980, the impending plan of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to form a National Film Development Corporation to formulate a national film policy, merging the FFC and IMPEC under it, was put into effect. The manner in which the government proceeded in this matter, however, confirmed the suspicions of the creative film makers about the sincerity of the government's desire to promote good cinema, and regarding its freedom from the pressures of the commercial film industry. These other film makers got together and formed a 'Forum for Better Cinema' that articulated their criticisms, and publicized their views through the press, also presenting a memorandum to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

The specific point which brought forth the film-makers criticisms was the constitution of the board of directors of the NFDC, which included leading representatives from the commercial film industry. It was pointed out that the film industry was undoubtedly interested to capture control of the NFDC, since "all the raw stock that will be used for making films will be channelled through NFDC. All our exports of films will also be channelled through NFDC and the commercial film makers "have the money and the power to do it" (M. S. Sathyu, 1980). To put the task of setting

the total policy for film making in the country in the hands of this section was clearly recognised as a measure which would be antithetical to the interests of the growth of the nascent 'new cinema' movement in the country.

The Ministry responded by revising the list of directors to include a few non-commercially motivated directors. But the move had exposed the extent to which the government was committed to the growth of better cinema.

D. State Film Development Corporations - While the Central Government's attitude towards cinema manifests this ambivalence, from the late sixties on a number of State Film Development Corporations have also come into being, whose approach, too, is not evenly geared towards qualitative improvements, though some of the better films have been aided by them. At present there are eight states which have film corporations dealing with different areas of film activities. These are: Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Maharashtra. In West Bengal, too, the government is directly involved with certain areas of film making.

We have noted earlier some of the effects of the developmental activities in the state of Karnataka. Here, too, not unlike the FFC story, the lack of initiative in entering the exhibition sector has made even low budget films

aided by the state financially vulnerable in the ultimate analysis. At present, the beneficial aspects of the subsidy appear to be eclipsed, by the films of those who made a beginning with better cinema, Veering towards the commercial framework. The problem of exhibition is indeed not being tackled by any of these corporations despite the pressing need to do something.

In fact, one aspect which several of these efforts share in common is that they do appear to be motivated by interests which are commercial in their own way i.e. they are articulations of the regional bourgeoisie's attempts to shake off the hold of the Bombay film industry on the film market - and the corporations provide protection and encouragement to them, rather than to good cinema. That the better film makers do approach these bodies for aid, may have less to do with the corporations' attempts to encourage better cinema, than to do with the fact that such film makers have few other alternatives before them. The possibilities of obtaining subsidies for specific language films has also led to a rather interesting phenomenon: the attempt by film-makers to make films in languages other than their own. Mrinal Sen, for instance, film-maker from Bengal, made 'Oka Ooric Katha" in Telugu, ~~in other~~ to avail of the subsidy offered by the Andhra Pradesh Film Development Corporation. Incidentally, the film is based on a short story by Munshi Premchand - written in Hindi.

C. The 16 mm Movement - The grip of the commercial film industry over sources of finance has also made the creative film makers look for ways of cutting down costs of film production. The need to develop an infrastructure for 16 mm film production in the country has been felt and some progress in this direction has been made. Not only is 16 mm film cheaper but the equipment, too, is more mobile and requires a smaller crew. For long, facilities such as laboratories for blowing up 16 mm to 35 mm, and also for sound mixing and other processes, were not available in the country. At present, the facilities are there, but in an inadequate form, qualitatively and quantitatively. The FFC has been trying to encourage 16 mm by setting aside loans for films shot on this gauge, but the amount, i.e. 3.5 lakhs is hardly sufficient. As for as the use of 16 mm goes, recently a number of films have been shot successfully in it.

D. Film Co-operatives - Another move, which has not yet acquired the dimensions of a movement, has been the setting up of film co-operatives. The first, we have noted, was set up in 1966. The Chitralekha film co-operative was started in Kerala by Adoor Gopalakrishnan and a few other graduates of the Film and T.V. Institute of India. In contrast to the exploitative nature of the relations of production in the commercial film industry; the domination by those who invest their capital and those who own the

other means of production; co-operatives, in principle, are egalitarian organisations, based also on the premise that all members are equally responsible. At the state level, co-operatives are eligible for bank loans, and this has been a major point in favour of their formation by film-makers. There were 39 film co-operatives registered by 1977 (Ketan Mehta and A.M. Padmanabhan, 1980). But not unlike other attempts at evolving new structures, a number of them were unable to exist beyond a few films, because of a lack of exhibition outlets. This has also retarded the growth of an audience that supports better cinema.

The Chitralekha Film Cooperative has been the only one which has included amongst its activities, the creation of audiences for better films, by starting numerous film societies, publishing literature on films, and holding seminars and festivals. The movement was also supported by the press and after its first feature film 'Swayamvaram' was made in 1973, the co-operative has entered the distribution field as well.

The latest film produced by a co-operative is 'Bhavani Bhavai'. The co-operative called 'Sanchar', once more, consists mainly of graduates from the FTII. Another formed earlier by some other graduates, called 'Yukt', dissolved after producing 2 films. Among the reasons noted for its dissolution is the observation that sharing of the artistic responsibility created ego problems (Ketan Mehta and A.M. Padmanabhan, ibid).

The prospects and problems of film co-operatives were discussed at a national seminar in July 1979, and though they may not be the way some film makers would like to work, they certainly do suggest one possible way for film making to become relatively free of the constraints imposed by the commercial film industry.

E. Indigenisation of Equipment - One important way in which government initiative could considerably help creative film makers, is through reducing the costs of film making, by indigenisation of film equipment, including the manufacture of raw stock. At present, most equipment is imported at heavy cost and a lot is paid in the form of excise and customs duty. While the Hindustan Photo Film Co. was established in Ooty in 1968, and is able to meet almost the complete demand for cine positive black and white, 35 mm and 16 mm, as also sound negative 35 mm, it is not able to meet all the requirements of the industry. Among the reasons advanced for this are: defective collaboration, lack of development consciousness leading to a neglect of research, the low quality of products and the use of outdated technology. (Report of the Working Group on National Film Policy, ibid).

The possibilities of manufacture of other equipment, too, in India, has not been fully explored, though the report of the latest Working Group on Cinema (May 1980) does discuss it in great detail. It also suggests various

other measures for moving towards greater self-sufficiency. But how far they are followed up remains to be seen.

F. Other Sources of Finance - Among the new financing bodies that have entered the sphere of films in the past decade are some advertising agencies. The most famous of these is Blaze Enterprises, which has financed several films by Shyam Benegal.

Also to Benegal goes the credit of obtaining finances for his film, 'Manthan', in a very unusual way. The film was financed by collecting a rupee per head from farmers who were members of a milk co-operative in Gujarat.

The Madhya Pradesh Kala Parishad, a state government body, primarily concerned with promotional activities in the fields of literature and the arts, has financed the latest film by Mani Kaul. The film, 'Satah Se Uthta Aadmi', based on the works of poet and short story writer, Gajanan Madhav Mukhbodh, has won high accolades at Cannes recently.

Also singular is the case of ~~commercial~~ film star, Shashi Kapoor, who has financed Shyam Benegal's film, 'Kalyug', a non-formula film. His company called 'Film-Vallahs' has a number of projects in hand.

There is no doubt that film-makers are struggling to find new sources congenial to creative film-making. It is also very likely that the inclusion of 'stars' in their

films, by some film-makers, is prompted by the possibilities of tapping financiers linked to the established film industry. Whether or not this in itself is a retrograde step, a compromise from the point of view of the evolution of a new cinema, is a matter for debate.

Organisation of Production :

Though individual creative film makers have approached the medium of cinema in diverse ways, they have in common certain other processes of film making, apart from the ways employed for obtaining finances. With limited budgets, workers involved in such films have naturally been paid only limited amounts, but there are seldom, if ever, traces of the extreme differences in wages as between stars and extras, characteristic of the commercial film industry. The predominance of black and white film making in preference to colour film-making is also often a choice dictated by economic necessity.

Shooting schedules are generally shorter, and a lot of work is done, as far as possible, at a single stretch. There is greater involvement of actors and other crew, not only with respect to their specifically allotted tasks, but in the production of each film, in its totality. Actors with experience of working both in such films as well as in commercial films have noted the definite feeling of creative satisfaction which participation in such film making provides.

As regards scripting, there is a clear recognition of its value, and the attempt is to approach meaningful and significant themes. There has also been a good deal of interaction between contemporary literature and film scripts. Where the film makers have deviated from the originals, it has, more often than before, been in the interests of the appropriateness of change, when material is translated from a written medium into a visual medium, or due to the film directors' convictions, and not to suit the dictates of some outside factor such as the guidelines of a distributor. Distinguished literatures including playwrights have also written original film scripts.

Quite a few persons trained at the Film Institute are involved in the making of these films, and their expertise has certainly contributed improved technical values - right through script writing, shooting, acting, camera work, handling of lights and sound recording, to editing.

The fact that these film makers have to share laboratory, dubbing and editing facilities with the commercial film makers, however, often causes problems, not only because the latter have determined the high rates for these facilities, but also because the demand is greater than the facilities available. As a result, time schedules are delayed, and priority is often given to commercial film makers.

The Role of F.T.I.I. :

The acquaintance with better cinema, whether through the institute or through film societies has been a factor of great significance both for attracting talented people to film making and for creating a greater audience for better films.

The Film Institute, since its inception in 1960, has been training students in all aspects of film-making. After 1971, on the basis of a report on its working, some modifications were introduced in the courses offered by it. In 1975, a two-year common course in cinema was introduced leading to specialisation in third and fourth years in one of the major disciplines i.e. film direction-cum-screen-play writing, motion picture-photography, film editing and sound recording and sound engineering. In 1977 there was a further change in the course design. A two year integrated course leading to specialisation in motion picture photography or editing was introduced, to be followed by a one year course in film direction. A separate one year course in sound recording and sound engineering was reintroduced. The number of students trained up to December 1979 at the FTII was 798. The acting course was subsequently discontinued, and now it is the students of the National School of Drama who have film acting as part of their curriculum.

Film Societies :

The film society movement began in Bombay in the late 40s, and a central organisation - the Federation of Film Societies - was set up in 1959. Today there are some 500 film societies existing in the country, mainly in the urban areas. A very recent phenomenon has been the growth of a film society movement in rural areas of Karnataka and Kerala. Also recently some film societies have made it a point to show Indian films, while in the past, the emphasis was on cinema from other countries.

Distribution and Exhibition :

It is the distribution-exhibition sector which has proved to be the greatest stumbling block for creative film-makers. The stranglehold of the established financier-distributor-exhibitor chain has resulted in a number of FFC financed and other films remaining unseen by the public.

This is particularly frustrating for film-makers who genuinely want their work to be seen by a wide public. For those whose films are clearly for a minority audience, outlets such as film societies do exist, but they, too, are inadequate. For, while the release of such films in general theatres would allow anyone with a taste for what is not 'pap', to view them, in film societies, some potential appreciators are excluded, not by rule, but indirectly by

factors such as class, educational background, and so on.

Recently, the FFC is known to have granted loans to film-makers to distribute their own films. The case of Syeed Mirza, whose 'Albert Pinto Ko Gussa Kyo Aata Hai', has found a few outlets through this method, should encourage others to do the same.

Linked to the situation is the fact that awareness of better cinema in the country as a whole is limited, and exhibitor-distributors are no exception. With increasing numbers of film appreciation courses being conducted, perhaps a stray distributor-exhibitor can be expected to take up an unusual film for release.

A few commentators on the film scene, who have noted a growing inferiority complex among commercial film producers, vis-a-vis the 'art film makers', have also noted their anxiety to prove that they too are capable of being creative. Perhaps a similar syndrome among exhibitor-distributors will also manifest itself.

Recently, a distributor-producer from West Bengal has approached directors Mrinal Sen and Syeed Mirza to make films, without dictating any terms as to the content of their films. Whether or not the instance signifies a general trend of more enlightened persons entering the distribution business, it is still too early to assess.

What is apparent, however, is the fact that film-makers with a commitment to communicate, have to be more actively concerned with the creation of new structures of trade and industry as well.

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CHAPTER IV

INDIA CINEMA : FORM AND CONTENT

In earlier chapters, some characteristics of Indian films related to traditional art forms, and those affecting the actual process of film making have been discussed. Here we will be concerned centrally with the sociological aspects of the texts of Indian films. In our overview of the sociological study of cinema (Chapter I), we have also noted some ways in which films can be related to specific social contexts. Regarding Indian films, we have to note which Indian films, when, and in relation to a societal context delineated in what manner.

India being the largest producer of films in the world, making films since the 1890s, and in several languages, a comprehensive analysis is impossible here. Data, too, is inadequate for viewing links at the micro and macro levels. We can, however, discuss some broad features, raise questions, and attempt a few hypothetical answers.

The total bulk of films made can be conceptualised within a few categories based on sociological differences. Earlier we have differentiated between films which have the

qualities of popular art, overlapping with 'formula films' dictated by commercial interests, and those created on primarily aesthetic premises, having qualities of high art. Each category subsumes a variety of films whose differences also suggest variations in their sociological significance. We will discuss these differences and refer to particular instances to view their sociological coordinates.

Andrew Tudor's discussion of the macro and micro levels of the sociological study of cinema aids our attempt (Andrew Tudor, ibid). Without following his method step by step, we can use it to guide us towards areas of potential significance.

At the macro-level, films can be viewed as part of culture linked to social structure. Culture here refers to patterns of beliefs, values, and ideas as well as artefacts in which they are embedded; and social structure refers to established structures of social relations: stratification, role structures, organisational patterns and the like. Combined with 'cinema' and 'society' this gives us a four part classification of the principal domains on which a macro-sociology of film may focus:

Cinematic Culture	General Culture
Cinematic Social Structure	General Social Structure

At the micro-level, one is more directly concerned with the texts, conceptualised as sign systems consisting of the signifiers at the plane of expression and the signifieds at the plane of content. Each plane may be subdivided in form/substance terms i.e. there is a form of content and a substance of content; a form of expression and a substance of expression.

Substance of content refers to the 'human content' of the body of signs, while form of content refers to the formal structure within which this diffuse human content is constrained. (Christian Metz uses the term 'thematic structure' for the latter.) Substance of expression includes what has traditionally been called the 'materials of the medium': the moving image, sound, speech, and music. Form of expression encompasses the traditional interest in the patterning of these basic elements.

To understand the meanings conveyed by particular films, a paradigm based on these analytical distinctions has been suggested by Tudor. Meaning itself can be classified into three kinds: cognitive meaning, which is roughly a 'factual' meaning within the domain of a film - i.e. the element which informs the spectator, including actions, appearances, events, and the like. Then, 'expressive' meanings which are those which appeal to the emotions: one is excited, saddened, aroused, or embittered by what one sees. Finally, 'normative' meanings, which are the ethical or evaluative inferences that we make from a film. Of

course, all these are faces of the same process. A particular sequence of events on the screen will invariably have cognitive, expressive and normative dimensions. By cross-classification, we arrive at a 'map' of film meanings constructed according to the sort of meaning involved and the channel through which it flows. Thus the following diagram:

CINEMATIC MEANINGS

<CHANNEL>

	Nature of the Film World	Thematic Structure	Formal Structure
Cognitive	Factual Nature of the film world	Events in thematic development, e.g. plot	Factual Meanings Conveyed by form
<ASPECT> Expressive	Emotional meanings associated with film world	Emotional involvement in thematic structure	Emotional consequences of formal structure
Normative	Normative meanings implicit in the film world	Normative meanings implicit in thematic structure	Normative meanings conveyed by formal means

Referring back to the macro-level, this gamut of cinematic meanings can be located within the cinematic culture category. A sociological analysis of films as texts may then be seen as being concerned with the links between the meanings in films, existing within cinematic culture

and the cinematic social structure, the general social structure, and general culture.

The above framework, we may note here again, is only relevant to guide our discussion towards areas of potential significance; not as a scheme for presenting a detailed analysis.

The Silent Period

Mythological Films

The majority of films made in the silent period derived their themes from Hindu mythology. As noted earlier, this was also true of the popular theatre which flourished prior to the coming of films. The dominant urge of the early film makers was thus clearly to present a new technological phenomenon to the public rather than to communicate new ideas and realities. Further, the making of mythological films provided a degree of commercial security: the promise of acceptability by the public, since the appeal of mythological stories had been tested over many centuries. Virtually every film-maker started his career by making a mythological film.

This last point is important because it indicates a changed relationship between the tradition of mythology and the arts in Indian society: a change from its growth and transmission in a context where the active performers and the public were directly related to each other (and in

certain cases the roles were even interchangeable) to one where mythology was being used to create objects by a distinct category of professionals, reaching the public through the mediation of the market.

In fact, the penetration of market forces into the Indian economy had torn usunder the roots which sustained the organic growth of Hindu mythology: the integrated system of occupation-based caste groups, rituals, patron-client ties, and an over-arching religious ideology. However, quite apart from the significant fact that mythologies have universal components that resonate with meaning at all times, it is also true that the disruption of the Indian economy did not involve a simultaneous breakdown of traditional systems of ideas. This was so not only because a change in consciousness generally occurs after more basic changes have been achieved, but also because the colonial context generated pressures to which reactions ranged from attempts at defending traditional cultural patterns, to assimilating new ideas - in some instances to reinforce, and in others to challenge colonial domination.

But in the case of the silent cinema, the introduction of mythological themes was rarely imbued with any kind of political consciousness. Thus, "while Phalke's films were directly influenced by the vital and powerful Marathi theatre of the day, which leaned strongly towards nationalism of a radical variety expounded by Tilak, using episodes from

mythologies to disseminate a political message"; yet, "Phalke's films exploited mythological stories for their magical and visual quality". (Pramod Kale, 1979) This was true even though the main motivating force behind Phalke's career was nationalism, as exemplified in the countrywide 'Swadeshi' movement. In effect, he did lay the grounds for an indigenous industry. The ideology of capitalist development - production for profitable consumption rather than for changing consciousness, was present in a seminal form in Phalke's activities as film-maker.

In fact, one could say that mythological films were effective in maintaining the common world view traditionally shared by the elite and folk in the towns, even as the impact of modern social forces was vitally disturbing the relationship between the two. This is also reflected in the fact that the title cards used in Phalke's films were in English and in Hindi: English for the elite, and Hindi for the common people. Of course we must remember that the rate of literacy in India was then even lower than what it is now, so that a system of commentators reading aloud the title cards while the film was projected was often used.

To this world view the films brought not only the means of production characteristic of an industrial society, but also the aesthetic sensibilities of the new middle class; for, it has been noted, that "Dressing his gods and goddesses in typical Maharashtrian costumes, Phalke brought them to the

level of ordinary human beings with whom his audiences could identify. It is said that the artists of the Indian Renaissance used to depict Gods and Goddesses in the image of man thereby attributing to them all the characteristics of mere mortals." (K.K. Nair, 1980)

Whether mythological films also brought about a democratisation of religion, in the sense in which Milton Singer uses the term (Milton Singer, 1960) is not, however, so clear, because mythology as incorporated in films, i.e. in its popular format of dramatic episodes, was never the sole preserve of the elite anyway. On the other hand, the impact of social forces disrupting the basis of a common world view for the elite and the folk audiences seems to be reflected in the situation today; in the fact that the proportion of mythological films to the total number of films being made, has declined drastically.

The notable formal features of Phalke's mythologicals, some of which were used as a model by other film-makers were superb craftsmanship in the use of special effects and trick photography: the fantacy element predominating even as the gods were being brought down to earth (in the way noted above). Also, in terms of thematic structure, some of the stereotypes that appear in 'Raja Harishchandra' the first film, namely, the comic servant, the orthodox sage with villianous overtones, and the innocent victim (the heroine Taramati), under trial in the not so traditional

court-room were to become recurring features of Indian films to come. (P.K. Nair, ibid)

What Ashish Nandy enumerates as the rules of grammar and the normative codes which guide the story line and expressive style of the Indian popular film seem to be present in these early mythologicals. (Ashish Nandy, 1981) Firstly, the element of spectacle: in which black is black and white is white--emotionally, motivationally, and morally. All shades of grey are scruplously avoided, "not because greys do not exist in the world but because they detract from the logic and charm of a spectacle". (Ashish Nandy, ibid) A spectacle also implies overstatement, and in the popular film it is couched in melodrama. This element of the mythological films imbibed intact from popular theatre. Further, Ashish Nandy notes that the popular film is not concerned with the inner life of characters on the screen, and in fact, the logic of its structure is anti-psychological. Secondly, apart from being a spectacle, the film does not generally have an unexpected conclusion: it only has a predictable climax. This was obviously true of mythological films whose narratives the viewers were well acquainted with. The third characteristic of the popular film: the fact that it attempts to provide an alternative universe, was also inherent in the mythological films which drew upon the universe of the puranic epic. This last factor also gave them a particular functional significance. They allowed the spectators to leave aside their mundane

considerations and escape into a world of fantasy for the duration of the film. In this respect, the transmutation of mythology from its existence within the context of traditional Indian society to the celluloid creations of film makers, in a sense secularized it. Its fairy tale qualities were perpetuated while its ethical and philosophical dimensions were neglected.

While many film makers began their careers by making mythologicals, not all were craftsman of the same calibre as Phalke. Further, there were some who brought to film the amalgam of nationalistic sentiments with mythological stories in the way that theatre had sought to bring it about. Mythological themes were adopted to present other secular ideas too.

Baburao Painter, for instance, was a notable film-maker of this period, who in a sense, may be considered the founding father of Marathi cinema, because his films reflected the trend which was to be dominant in the films made in Maharashtra: the recreation of reality, recording of facts and events, rather than the creation of magical forms (Pramod Kale, ibid). His mythologicals, too, were imbued with contemporary sensibilities, and it is reported that Tilak had encouraged him by saying that "the art of cinema is an extremely useful art from the point of view of the nation. You could use it a great deal in awakening the people. Make a movie on the massacre of Jalianwala Bagh. For awakening

the people the cinema is a means more powerful than hundreds of our lectures or writing." (quoted in Pramod Kale, ibid)

The adaptation of mythologicals to express nationalistic sentiments formed part of what has been an important trend in the growth of the nationalist movement in India; the use of traditional symbols by certain leaders to communicate to the Indian public, a kind of revivalism. Thus, it has been noted that in Bengal, for instance, "this interpretation of the old images of gods and goddesses has imparted a new meaning to the current ceremonialism of the country, and multitudes, while worshipping either Jagat Dhatri or Kali or Durga, accost them with devotion..with the inspiring cry of 'Bande Matram'. All these are the popular objects of worship of the Indian Hindus...and the transfiguration of these symbols is at once the cause and the evidence of the depth and strength of the present movement. This wonderful transfiguration of the old gods and goddesses is carrying the message of new nationalism to the women and the masses of the country." (B.C. Pal, quoted in A.R. Desai, 1966)

Baburao Painter made a film 'Sairandhri' based on a Marathi play by Khadilkar called 'Keechaka Vadham'. The play deals with the chapter of the Mahabharata in which the sadistic Keechak tries to seduce Sairandhri and is killed in a duel by Bhima, who assumed the identity of a cook.

Khadilkar had made Keechak into an allegory of the Viceroy Lord Curzon, and the play was banned by the British government. The film, too, had situations and titles which appealed to the patriotic fervour of Indian audiences. The film was released in Pune, and was seen by Khadilkar's guru, Tilak, who ceremoniously bestowed a gold medal on Baburao Painter. (Pramod Kale, ibid)

In 1921, Dwarkadas Narayan Das Sampat produced the film 'Bhakta Vidur' which told the story of Vidur of Mahabharata in an allegorical portrayal of Gandhi's political activities. "Vidur, as he was referred to in the titles, wears khaddar, sports a Gandhi cap and spins on a 'charkha', all already powerful symbols of the nationalist movement." (B.V. Dharap, 1980) The film was, however, banned by the government in many parts of India.

It needs to be reiterated here that the majority of mythologicals made were devoid of political overtones. And those which carried nationalistic messages were soon baited by the censors and banned. In fact, during this period, British imperialism had moved on from its liberal phase to one of ruthless suppression of all expressions of opposition.

Historical Films

While film-making began with mythologicals, and more mythologicals, a number of film maker also made films

centred on historical characters, particularly kings who had fought bravely against foreign invaders. The fact that nationalist forces opposing British rule were gaining strength at this point of time is more than incidental in explaining the appeal and popularity of such films. Particularly in Maharashtra, where the tales of glory of Shivaji and other Hindu rulers were being resurrected to stir popular consciousness, resulting at times in near fanatical Hindu chauvinism, films like 'Sinhgad', 'Chhatrapati Sambhaji', 'Umaji Naik', 'Thoratanchi Kamala', 'Poona Raided', 'Netaji Palkar' and 'Kalyan Khajina' were made.

While traditional ballad singers had incorporated tales of great kings into their repertoire, in films they appeared as spectacles where a good deal of emphasis was placed on gorgeous costumes, sets, battle scenes and the like. Once more, the Parsi theatre was a reference point for the film makers.

Some film makers also started a cycle of Rajput films - once more centring on tales of martial glory. It is significant that among the early financiers of films, there were also some members of the feudal aristocracy, for whom, as a class, such films provided more than just a profitable field for investing their capital. It may also be noted that Shahu Chhatrapati of Kolhapur, while he did not actively patronize the movie making ventures of Baburao Painter, did create a congenial atmosphere for such ventures

to flourish in his domain, and his successor lent the film makers of the Prabhat Film Company costumes, horses, elephants, weaponry and soldiers, which were still very much in use for ceremonial occasions in the state, thereby saving them a lot of expense. He even arranged mock battles and supervised the shooting of battle scenes. (Pramod Kale, ibid)

The emphasis on action in these historical films was undoubtedly inspired by the imported films which proved to be popular in the country. Thus, while Indian theatrical traditions had their share of mock battles and other fight sequences, their cinematic versions were closer, in terms of form, to action films from the West. For the urban audiences, a new kind of entertainment with its own gamut of ingredients: action, fantasy, melodrama, and grandeur, was taking root.

Another variety of historicals was centred round the saints of the Bhakti cult - such as 'Sant Tukaram' and 'Kabir Kamal'. It is fascinating how the predominantly oral lyricism of the verses of these saints was used by the silent film makers on title cards, and an attempt was made to approach the vibrancy of actual music.

In so far as the Bhakti movement was a religious reform movement linked to social reform, one important role of these films was to give voice to the demands for social reforms in the period when they were made. In keeping with

the other forms of cultural expression in this sphere, the emphasis in 'Kabir Kamal', for instance, was on the fact that Kabir was a child of Hindu parents fostered by a Muslim couple and preached a message of communal harmony that was a need of the day.

Other historicals like 'Raziya Begum' and 'Bajirao Mastani' focussed on Hindu-Muslim romances - the former made by Dhiren Ganguly earning him the displeasure of his patron, the Nawab of Hyderabad. Himansu Rai's 'Light of Asia' told the story of Buddha's life. The idiom once more was romantic, and the historical environment was created with an eye for the exotic. This latter quality is to be found in all films made by Himansu Rai. Among early film-makers, he was one who was definitely interested in addressing an international audience. His films did, indeed, have "gala openings in Berlin, Vienna, Budapest, Venice, Genoa, Brussels, with personal appearances by Himansu Rao and toasts by international notables." (Krishnaswamy and Barnouw, 1980)

As is perhaps apparent from the above account, the film makers drew upon history for elements which could be glamourized in a spectacular or romantic manner. The idea was to tell a tale which would grip the public. Authenticity or interpretation were never the prime, and in most cases, not even subordinate considerations.

The Socials

By the 1920s, apart from historicals and mythologicals, film-makers were increasingly attempting to make

films which portrayed contemporary society, al beit in a fictionalised form. In addition to gods, goddesses, and kings the protagonists were now 20th century Indians: men and women delineated with varying degrees of emphasis on particular social characteristics such as class, caste and region. The themes ranged from simple love stories and slightly more complex family dramas to the problems of Westernisation, untouchability and communalism. In the absence of surviving prints of these silent films, we can only go by the descriptions provided by former movie makers and movie goers to know their overall content.

Producer/Director Chandulal Shah made a series of films revolving around a central female character, such as 'Typist Girl', 'Sumari of Sindh', 'Educated Wife', 'Sati Madri', 'Gun Sundari', 'Raj Lakshmi', 'Vishwa Mohini', Griha Lakshmi', 'Chandra Mukhi' and others. The actresses Gohar and Sulochana attained the status of stars through their portrayal of ideal traditional Hindu women; chaste, submissive, husband worshipping and beautiful. Similar films were made by Sarpotdar ('Vilasi Kanta', and 'Ideal Wife), J.F. Madan ('Pati Bhakti') and others. The films were extremely popular with urban middle class audiences.

The dramatic element in these films was provided by the intervention of villians and vamps, who threatened either the heroine's chastity by taking advantage of her in some situation of helplessness, or her domestic bliss, by

seducing her weak-kneed hsuband. In the end, the heroine regained her happiness (i.e. marriage to her true love, or her husband's fidelity), by her unswerving devotion to the ideals of patient suffering and husband worship, if not immortality through immolation on her husband's funeral pyre.

These films shared elements of spectacle and melodrama with the mythologicals. The element of fantasy was incorporated through the sheer extremes of 'good' and 'bad' characters. The strain caused by the impact of Westernization on Indian society was often 'resolved' by showing the 'bad' characters as Westernized, and the 'good' characters as orthodox in outlook and behaviour. But the films managed also to pander to the audiences' fascination with 'Westernized' ways of life, by, for instance, depicting vamps in seductive dresses often copied from Hollywood films; or even by showing the heroine behave in a Westernized manner to win back her husband, as in 'Gun-Sundari'.

The sufferings of women due to orthodox patterns of living were depicted in some films - but the treatment was sentimental, and the heroines ultimately drew audience admiration because of their patient, passive suffering, exemplifying an intensely reactionary use of the film medium.

As for Westernized Indians, a more compelling depiction came in the form of a satire made by Dhiren Ganguly called 'Bilet Pherat'. Dhiren Ganguly's admiration

for Charlie Chaplin films, and his training in the arts of painting and drama, gave to his film a sophistication which was rare in this period.

But the film which dealt with contemporary reality in the realistic mode well ahead of its time was Baburao Painter's 'Saukari Pash', made in 1925. The film opens with an old farmer who is driven out from a cotton mill of Bombay. "The farmer repeatedly begs of the door keeper not to drive him out, but in vain. In flashbacks, the old peasant sees the village, his farms, his sons ploughing and so on. Later, the villianous Saukar (money lender) has his eyes on the farmer's land and take it away by deceiving him. Although the farmer repays the loan from time to time, both in cash and in kind, the Saukar treats it as interest on the initial loan. The farmer's family suffers great hardship and finally the old farmer dies saying to his sons "Don't remain illiterate...die of hunger but do not take loans from money lenders". (Shashikant Kinikar, 1980(a))

It is significant that while the film was close to life in terms of the problem it depicted and its from, i.e. the characters put on no make-up, the shooting was one on actual locations; and the acting was so sensitive that in the tragic sequences, the audience was moved to tears, yet Baburao Painter arrived at illiteracy as the root of the farmer's problems.

While the money lender and debt were not new phenomena in Indian society, the role of the money lender

had taken on new proportions and a new significance under capitalist exploitation, specially in the period of imperialism. "Previously, the peasant could only borrow from the money lender on his personal security, and the trade of the money lender was hazardous and uncertain; his transactions were in practice subject to the judgement of the village. Under the old laws the creditor could not seize the land of his debtor. All this was changed under British rule. The British legal system, with the right of destraint on the debtor and the transferability of lands created a happy hunting ground for the money lender, and placed behind him all the power of the police and the law, making him an indispensable pivot in the whole system of capitalist exploitation." (R.P. Dutt, 1979) That behind the sufferings of the peasantry at the hands of money lenders, stands the whole power of the British raj, was an insight that eluded Baburao Painter and the script writer, a novelist by profession, as it did many Indians of that day.

But in terms of cinematic culture, Baburao's style of film making was a far cry from the commercially oriented entertainment films. It is no surprise to know that Baburao treated film making as a hobby - "a rather expensive and rewarding hobby, but still a hobby". Personally involved in all the different aspects of film making, from filming and editing to set building and the processing of prints, he was perhaps the first Indian film maker to assert that "a film must never look like a play"; and to go in for a minimum

of title cards knowing well that film was preeminently a visual medium. (Pramod Kale, ibid; Dnyaneshwar Nadkarni, 1980) In creating conditions conducive for Baburao's talents to fructify, the role of the Maharaja of Kolhapur, too, was not inconsiderable. It would also perhaps not be far fetched to trace his ideological influence, for while the Maharaja "had turned his little town into a centre of social reforms and agitations which rocked the Brahminical establishment and tradition throughout Maharashtra", he looked upon the British as his allies. (Pramod Kale, ibid).

'Saukari Pash' was the only serious attempt by a film maker to portray the life of the peasantry. The other important section of Indian society which was neglected by film makers was the working class. One hears of only one film: "The Saviour", being concerned with the conflict of capital vs labour. The working class in rural areas appeared only incidentally in the few films which were made on untouchables.

Of these, the films 'Two Little Untouchables', and 'Nandanar' were considered brave attempts at exposing the evils of the caste system in a tradition ridden society. In fact, however, the public expression of anti-caste sentiments can be dated back to the Bhakti movement of the 17th century and even earlier.

'Nandanar', made by Raja Sandow in Tamil Nadu, told the story of Nandan, a low caste devotee of Shiva and a loyal servant of a brahmin landlord, who "undergoes a lot

of suffering before he fulfils his ambition of worshipping Shiva at Chidambaram. Nandan preaches against superstition and alcoholic drinks and leads his fellow farm workers towards a better life. The landlord, observing the result of Nandan's evangelistic work, has a change of heart and accepts the untouchable farm labourer as his religious mentor", (S.T. Bhaskaran, 1980). The Gandhian approach of the film is unmistakable; the idealism unadulterated.

In a similar vein were two other films: Indulal Yagnik's 'Young India', which exhorted youth to emerge as leaders of modern India; to break social barriers and build a new society; and 'Charkha' which advocated the use of Khadi.

But the one film which really made a scathing attack on British policies in India was 'Vande Mataram Ashram' by Bhalji Pendharkar, who claims to have entered films, not so much for the sake of art, "but mainly to make people understand more about their own country and religion", (Shashikant Kinikar, 1980(b)). The film strongly criticized British educational policies for cultivating the clerk mentality amongst Indians. "As long as the universities, schools and colleges do not change their attitudes and give our country what she wants, these institutions are nothing but dead bodies" is the statement of film opens with. Predictably, the Censor Board refused to certify the film without drastic cuts and amendments.

Yet another 'nationalist' film made round about this time was 'Gao Mata', produced by the reactionary all India Cow Conference Association.

While the above account of 'social' films is not exhaustive, it is perhaps indicative of the main trends. That film, despite a few exceptional attempts, was far from being in the vanguard as a medium of cultural expression for social change, should be amply clear.

Stunt Films and Fantasies

Stunt films, directly inspired by action films from Hollywood, became a craze in the silent era. It is significant that "those who patronized socials would not be seen dead watching a stunt film", (Girish Karnad, 1980(a)). Perhaps because unlike the socials, the latter had few pretensions of being concerned with social problems and lofty ideals. Yet, there was always a plot and story-line around which the action and stunts were woven.

The first such film was an adaptation of the 'Thief of Baghdad' which, starring Douglas Fairbanks had been sensationally popular in India. Master Vithal, the hero in the Indian version was publicized as the Indian Douglas. Trick photography and fight sequences made the film extremely popular, especially with the younger audiences. A number of producers began to make stunt films in quick succession, inducting young men from gymnasiums and chareographing action sequences which were often very risky.

Though tricky photography was used, there were no stand-ins employed to perform stunts: the heroes themselves performed.

In the 20s, J.B.H. Wadia made a series of stunt films starting with 'Thunderbolt', followed by 'Toofan Mail', a railroad thriller,"the first film to be shot entirely on several railway locations, replete with fight sequences staged on the roofs of trains". (J.B.H. Wadia, 1980). In the talkie era, Wadia introduced 'Fearless Nadia', a stunt-woman heroine who projected an image radically different from that of other actresses.

The stunt films were essentially fantasies with an emphasis on action. Other fantasies drew story elements from the Arabian Nights, from folk tales, and from other foreign films, including gypsy romances. They had titles like 'Zindagi', 'Husnapari', 'Gallant Hearts', 'Soul of a Slave', and 'Fall of Slavery'. Himansu Rai's 'Throw of Dice' had a story which was a cross between the Arabian Nights Tales and the Mahabharata.

The film 'Fall of Slavery' was the story of a king who sets out to abolish slavery in his kingdom, and overthrows his evil opponent with the co-operation of his loyal subjects. The film 'Gallant Hearts' was similarly about good kings, bad ministers and court intrigues. It may be noted, that these two films, made by S.S. Agarwal, "are representative of the Indian cinema of a particular genre which has found

favour with producers/distributors who want to make a quick buck in the film line". (P.K. Nair, ibid). Undoubtedly, such films catered to the audiences childish delight in simple tales, with a lot of visual fare of a pure action-for-the sake-of-action kind.

Films Based on Literary Works

Some films made during the silent period were based on novels and stories of Indian and European authors including Tagore, Sharat Chandra, Bankim Chandra, K.M. Munshi, and Victor Hugo, Sheridan and Alexandre Dumas among others. There were Indian versions of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, the Hunchback of Notredam, Wedding Night, and Blood for Blood. 'Bicharak', 'Dena Paona', 'Durgesh Nandini', 'Kapala Kundala', 'Krishnakanter Will', 'Giribala', 'Naukadubi', 'Barer Bazaar', 'Ratnavali', 'Bisha Briksha', 'Andhare Alo', 'Jai Somnath', and 'Kono Vak' were some of the Indian works filmed. In terms of form, few were successfully adapted to the film medium. Yet, specially the films based on Indian writings, attracted the educated sections of Indian society to cinema as never before. The films were seldom viewed critically at the time when they were made.

Cinematic Culture in the Silent Period

The above account of the texts of films in the silent period is not a comprehensive one, but it is an attempt to

present some of the major preoccupations of the film makers at that time.

As regards formal aspects of the medium, it is pertinent to note Phalke's views as expressed in the Cinematograph Committee Report of 1927, where he says that "almost all productions in India lack in technique and artistic merit. The acting is not good. The photography especially is of the worst class. Nobody knows anything about the art". (B.D. Garga, 1980) This was so, even though "the best of American and European cinema for the silent period was accessible to our film makers" (Satyajit Ray, 1980).

Apart from purely individual factors like talent, the lack of which cannot be presumed, some of the reasons for this backwardness were primarily sociological. For instance, the fact that in British India avenues for creative development in general, and art education in particular, were conspicuously of low quality. The government sponsored art schools, referred to in an earlier chapter (Chapter II) are a clear example. Further, it is also true, that while film is a technological medium, born in an industrial society, India's industrial development had been thwarted by the interests of the imperialists, so that acquaintance and training in the handling of technical equipment was not general in the country.

The fact of cinema's novelty, coupled with the inadequate growth of other forms of entertainment in urban

India also meant that there was no pressure from the public for improvement; whatever was provided was eagerly consumed. And while there was little active encouragement of Indian film making by the government, it liberally imported foreign films which dominated the Indian markets.

Given the low social status accorded to those involved in film making, the doors to a career in the field were closed to potential talent, which could have made Indian film-making richer and more imaginative. In a sense this created a monopoly, excluding people on grounds which were not intrinsically related to the betterment of the art. It led to an absence of a free flow of ideas and talents, which was not conducive to creativity. The reasons for such social attitudes are linked to the fact that in the Mughal period, the performing arts, particularly in the urban areas, had become the preserve of a limited section of society - the degraded castes, prostitutes and courtesans.

While all this should hardly lead us to belittle the efforts of the pioneers and of a few extremely gifted individuals, the conclusion that Indian cinematic culture in the silent period was not really a sophisticated one is inescapable. Perhaps to expect otherwise of a society crippled by colonialism, a society which was still incompletely aware of the roots of oppression within its own structure, would be utopian.

The Early Talkies

With the coming of the talkies in 1931, a new dimension was added to the auditory environment of speech, music, and other sounds in Indian society. Mediated by the cinematic milieu as it had already evolved: an urban audience that had begun to see films for entertainment, and a film industry that had demonstrated the popularity of certain themes and forms: the introduction of sound in cinema prompted film makers to use the new technological phenomenon predominantly to enhance these values.

But in doing so, Indian cinema linked itself to pre-existing forms of entertainment with strong roots in Indian society, closer than the silent cinema ever could: the composite presentation of dance, music and drama as in folk theatre, and to the Parsi theatre, which also synthesized these elements with European inspired conventions of acting and melodramatic plot structures. It also borrowed from regionally rooted popular oral traditions, such as the poetry of the Bhakti saints in Maharashtra, and the Urdu poetry or 'Shairi' of northern India. In fact, film music was a synthesis of these and the more elite classical traditions of music, which were modified to reach an uninitiated audience through the easily accessible medium of film.

While technical sophistication was slow to come, the introduction of sound was a veritable feast for the

public, a basically aural people. In terms of cinematic culture, the element of sound was a regressive force, because it facilitated a closer adherence to theatrical forms. Exposure to international trends in cinema continued to be weighted in favour of Hollywood and British films, though from India, the film 'Seeta' a mythological, was sent to the Venice festival, and 'Sant Tukaram' was marked among the three best films there in 1937. While some film-makers of Maharashtra are known to have become acquainted with the writings of film theorists like Eisenstein (Pramod Kale, ibid) an actual encounter with world cinema was absent, so that their film making as such was not influenced. Himansu Rai, who had lived abroad for many years, was among the few whose works bore the imprint of advanced and sophisticated techniques learnt from the West. But then, he seems to have lacked inventiveness and originality.

Till sound equipment became streamlined, and technicians gained proficiency in handling it, the talkies were marred by several rough edges. Actors' movements were restricted during song sequences when only one microphone was used. "Sarangi, harmonium and tabla were given positions outside the camera frame. It used to be a tight frame composition and the actor was not allowed to make any movements because the microphone was fixed and so was the balance between voice and the musical accompaniment". Then there were the carbon microphones, which generated a hissing sound that was injected in all recordings. (S.B. Thakkar, 1980) Since

there was no dubbing, the microphone was placed near the mouth and even whispers were spoken loudly. Despite constraints, however, some of the production companies established distinctive styles, and used sound very imaginatively.

There seems to be no doubt, that, as noted in the last chapter, the studio system created conditions conducive to better overall organisation of production, and therefore also for certain advances in technique, artificial lights were used for the first time by P.C. Barua, the craft of screenplay writing developed, films were made to a schedule: all these factors effecting the final product.

Overall, there was a distinct increase in the popularity and number of social films in the talkie period, although a number of mythologicals and films of other earlier genres continued to be made. Mythologicals were, as before, the safest commercial propositions.

The Mythological Films

A number of episodes filmed in the silent era were remade with the addition of songs and dialogue. The humanization of gods and goddesses thereby went a step further. The Parsi theatre style - flowery Urdu dialogues and all - was transplanted to the screen. In fact, there was a veritable exodus of performers from theatre to films. An occasional film, as before, was made to carry messages of socio-political import, of a predominantly social reformistic, Gandhian variety.

Historicals

The talkies were clearly a far more powerful medium than the silent cinema for making films on the lives of the Bhakti saint-poets. This led to the making of 'Puran Bhakta', 'Chandidas', 'Tukaram', 'Dhyaneshwar', 'Vidyapati', 'Ramshastri' and 'Narsing Mehta', among others. In fact, as has been noted in the last chapter, the words of the Maharashtrian saints had become part of the Marathi language commonly spoken, and the use of the local dialect by the Prabhat Film Company of Kolhapur and Pune created a vibrant cultural impact on Marathi speaking audiences.

In fact, the films of Prabhat had a distinctive style, and were not, like the majority of films made, completely stuck in the groove of being essentially filmed theatre. There were moments of real cinema in its films. One possible reason for this is the existence of a fairly unified middle class culture in the region, which the film-makers drew upon for their themes. This ensured a good reception by the public, which was not jeopardised by formal experiments. In contrast, the heterogeneity of the Hindi speaking public and the amorphous cultural environment of Bombay, made security conscious film-makers resort to using theatrical forms which had definitely found acceptance.

A film in those times also had wider appeal if it was linked to some strand within the nationalist movement.

'Chandidas', produced by the New Theatres of Calcutta, for instance, highlighted the poet-saint's love for an untouchable girl: a theme in tune with the growing consciousness of the need for social reform; of the inhumanity of the caste system. The musical component also created an important basis for inter-regional popularity. The songs of the film 'Vidyapati', for instance, sung by Pahari Sanyal, were a sensation, not in Hindi and Bengali speaking areas alone, but all over the country. This, in fact, led to a somewhat over-zealous use of songs in films (some films had over 70 songs!) certainly to the detriment of visual values.

The more spectacular and grand historicals also continued to be made, the romantic element still going strong. Certain studios, such as Minerva Movietone, with director Sohrab Modi, whose 'Sikandar' and 'Pukar' were very popular, and the Imperial Film Company, specialized in this genre.

Social Films

Most of those who assert the view today that the 30s were the finest years of Indian cinema, and give examples of the social films of that time, are not surprisingly found to belong to generation which was in its youth in the 30s, and shared a middle class milieu within which a particular ethos was crystallizing: the milieu of the makers of these films as well.

With regional variations, it was the ethos of the educated and articulate urban middle class, morally indignant about

colonial policies, and by and large politically aligned to the Congress. A humanitarian zeal: for the upliftment of the Indian masses through greater opportunities for education and literacy, through possibilities for entering white collar professions, for wiping out superstitions and antiquated social customs; and also a desire for increased economic and political power for itself and for the indigenous capitalist class: these were some of its driving forces. Its reaction to the gathering strength and scope of the workers and peasants movements in this period found climactic expression in the withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience Movement under Gandhi's leadership in 1934. Gandhi, after all, strove for humanizing capitalist social relations, not replacing them. While all direct expressions of nationalist sentiments in films were censored, the more social, minus the overtly political concerns, were communicated and reinforced through films.

Calcutta, and Maharashtra (i.e. Pune and Kolhapur) were the two major centres where social films were produced. It has been noted that in sharp contrast to the romantic pessimism and despair of Bengali film-makers the films made in Maharashtra had a more positive and optimistic message. In fact, "The Bengali movie makers' emphasis on love and tears was considered to be harmful by Marathi movie-makers who held up hope and courage to the unemployed young men in their audience." (Pramod Kale, ibid) An exploration of

the reasons for this difference offers an interesting area for research. One critic, for instance, referring in particular to the film 'Devadas' based on Sarat Chandra's novel and made by P.C. Barua of Calcutta, notes that "The historical importance of Saratchandra and Barua lies in the fact that the male sex symbol they built up as a weak hero in need of feminine domination was not just a creature of their fancy, but embodied a familiar type in real life, particularly in Bengal. It is the adolescent incapable of action to realise his own ambition, seeking solution in escape, who drowns himself in a lake of unrequitted love after writing a lot of puerile verse; the adolescent who has not yet become a man - and will never be". (Chidananda Dasgupta, ibid)

While such extreme pessimism was peculiar to Devdas, the observation may have some import in accounting for the general tone of films from Bengal. Also relevant is the fact of the Bengali middle class' early and intensive encounter with western literature, coupled with an openness to external influences. The tragic ending, as in Devadas, was not used in sanskrit drama, and can even be considered to be at odds with the Hindu view in life. It had, however, become common in India before Devadas, 'especially in Bengali literature and drama, but this was apparently part of their European rather than Indian heritage." (Krishnaswamy and Barnouw, ibid.)

It is true that the performance of singer actor K.L. Saigal as Devadas did, in fact, capture the imagination of youth in a way which was alarming. Sigificantly, V. Shantaram, from Maharashtra, was prompted by the situation to make a film, in which the hero, spurned in love like Devadas, reacts in a constructive, rather than self destructive manner. The fact also remains that Devadas "became an archetypal hero who still serves as a model for much film writing". (Chidananda Dasgupta, ibid)

The New Theatre Studio of Calcutta, which produced 'Devadas', was the most noted maker of social films in Bengal. One other film made by it, called 'President' was concerned with a woman who runs a textile mill: therefore, a woman who appears to hold her own in a male dominated society. In the context of social reform movements of that period, the film seems to promise a very interesting delineation of modern Indian womanhood. As the story progresses, however, the film reveals in itself the pathetic limits of 'enlightened' opinion in this area. For the film narrates that the woman falls in love with a worker, promotes him to a desk job, and treats him in a privileged fashion. On discovering, however, that he has in fact won the love of her younger sister, the woman loses her mind: and here the film ends. The verdict of the film-maker appears clear: that a woman who moves out of the domestic domain meets disaster. In fact, a number of films were made in this period imbued with such a view of women. Women were depicted as

best suited to play the roles of devoted wives, mothers, or daughters.

Many of the other films made by the New Theatres were essentially entertainment films centring around romantic relationships. Significantly, in most films, the heroes were wealthy upper class characters. In the case of P.C. Barua's films, they were almost all, sons of zaminders. This is particularly interesting in the context of the fact that in the following decades, the villianous zamindar becomes a stereotype in popular films.

The film-makers of Maharashtra worked in close collaboration with eminent writers of the region, and were in many ways socially aware and sensitive. But for all their optimism, in their depiction of women, they proved to be no better than the film-makers of Bengal. This is particularly true of the films directed by V. Shantaram, who, for film after film "projected the Indian woman as being happiest only with her total and unconditional acceptance of her place in traditional Indian society". (Shridhar Kshirsagar, 1980) Shantaram's case is specially pertinent because he was the first film-maker who was able to persuade women from educated and well-to-do families to act in his films. Some of them took up an acting career and continue to act in films today. One of his films, 'Duniya Na Mane', is about a girl bargained off in marriage to a much older man. The girl resents playing the role of his wife, and finally convinces the old man of the injustice

of their alliance. The man, filled with remorse and regret, kills himself. "In one sense", as a critic notes, "the girl is now 'free'. But what the director happily forgets to tell us is what happens to the girl now that she is faced with the prospect of being a widow in Hindu society". (Shridhar Kshirsagar, ibid) The film, surprisingly is still cited as an example of a bold protest against social injustice against woman.

The same is true of Shantaram's film, 'Aadmi', which tells the story of a prostitute with whom a policeman falls in love. The film depicts how he tries to reform her, even takes her home, but the woman finally returns to her earlier life. The message, as the critic quoted earlier suggests, seems to be: once a whore, always a whore. Coming from a film-maker whose style of work consisted of first choosing a theme and then weaving a story and characters around it, the ideological content of the film is not difficult to grasp.

What was true of the educated middle class in general was true of the film-makers as well. It was unable to perceive the working class except as the masses who needed its benevolent patronage and it was even less able to perceive the circumstances and structures which perpetuated the oppression of women. The film-makers could not create an image of emancipated womanhood, except in fantasy films. Thus, in Shantaram's 'Amar Jyoti', the heroine is a rebellious queen who destroys a tyrant, and

also exhorts women to break the stranglehold of male domination.

A more lively set of social films came from the Huns Film Company of Pune, which made satires that even went so far as to lampoon some aspects of Gandhian thought. The film 'Brahmachari', for instance, directed by Master Vinayak and written by P.K. Atre, satirised the idea that celibacy could generate moral force to fight against the British. In their combination of comedy and social comment, these films reflected the influence of the indigenous 'Tamasha' tradition of popular theatre. However, unlike the 'Tamasha', since films were frequented by the urban middle class, and even upper middle class public, certain elements were considered in bad taste. Thus, a sequence in the film, 'Brandichi Batli', where the Chaplinesque hero requests Krishna to give him a chance of making love to one of his cowherd maidens, led to the formation of the Culture Preservation Society, which demanded cuts in the movie (Pramod Kale, ibid).

Apart from a number of romantic films with urban middle class characters, including the big hit 'Kismat' starring Ashok Kumar as a chainsmoking, easy speaking hero, Bombay Talkies, one of the other major studioes of this period, made several rural romances including 'Achhyut Kanya'. The film is the story of a Brahmin boy's love for

an untouchable girl, which ends in tragedy. Unfortunately, the film laid down for all time to come the Hindustani film's notion of the village woman's costume and make-up; "a notion not entirely based on observation and fact" (Shridhar Kshirsagar, ibid). Nor, for that matter, was the phenomenon of untouchability fleshed out with any authenticity. The formal structure and appeal of the film was that any popular romantic tale, with many catchy songs. An earlier film made by the Ranjit Film Company called 'Achhoot', portrayed the social world of untouchables in a far more impressive way, but for its fantasy ending of a Harijan girl leading her people towards liberation.

A significant film of this period was Shantaram's war effort film, 'Dr Kotnis Ki Amar Kahani', based on a real life character who was sent on a medical mission to war-torn China by the Indian National Congress. Also striking was K.A. Abbas' debut as film-maker, with his 'Naya Sansar', a film about an honest journalist's struggle against corrupt and monopolistic elements in the world of Indian journalism. The latter marked the entry of leftist middle class intellectuals into the world of cinema: a presence which was to be constant in the years to come. The number of such individuals was, however, always very small.

<u>Stunts and Fantasies</u>

While stunt films continued to be popular through the thirties, by the 40s, the craze began to decline. The

'singing and dancing' socials were probably responsible for taking away a large segment of their audience.

A number of stunt film makers of this period claim that they linked their films to social ideals such as the emancipation of women. The Wadia Brothers, for instance, consider their creation, 'Fearless Nadia' (a woman with remarkable physical prowess and fighting spirit) to be a symbol of liberated womanhood. Girish Karnad, who vividly recollects watching Nadia films as a school boy, notes that for him and his friends, 'Fearless Nadia' "meant courage, strength idealism". (Girish Karnad, 1980) The boys tried to initate the stunts after the film was over.

To keep their audience, stunt film makers introduced novel elements like performing dogs, horses, and other paraphernalia. Trains continued to be a favourite location for action. 'Frontier Mail', 'Toofan Mail', 'Hurricane Hansa' and 'Flying Ranee' were some of the titles of these films. Apart from the Wadia Brothers, the Ranjit Film Company also specialised in this genre.

Fantasy got a new lease of life with the introduction of sound. 'Alamara', the first talkie, was a fantasy. It was followed by films like 'Shirin Farhad', 'Laila Majnu', 'Alibaba', 'Karma', and 'Lale-Yaman'. 'Shirin Farhad', with 42 songs and a number of dances, was immensely popular, and set a vogue for more films of its kind. A new crop of action and crime films, influenced by foreign films, also made an appearance. Examples are 'Al Hilal' and 'Watan'.

Films Based on Literary Works

While more films based on the writings of Indian authors were made in the '30s, than in the silent period, they continued to be poor adaptations to the cinema medium. The fact was symptomatic of the slow evolution of the art of cinema in this country.

The Post World War II Period

The period following World War II up to the end of the 50s was one of several upheavals and momentous events in Indian society. Indian capital had acquired considerable strength before and during the war, and had already thrown up its leading section of big bourgeoise. The end of the war saw the nationalist movement gathering momentum, leading to independence in 1947. The famine in Bengal (1943) had wrecked havoc and brought to the fore social forces which would play a prominent role in modern India. The partition of the country in '47 preceded and accompanied by violent communal riots, was involved in immense suffering, large-scale migrations, and the tearing apart of the cultural fabric of the nation. Free from colonial political control, but left with the ravages inflicted by its hold for over a hundred years, Indian society in the post-47 decade composed of feudal and capitalist segments, was in a state of flux, punctuated by efforts to move in a definite direction, towards stability and organisation.

As regards cinema, it was in this period that the base for the film industry as it exists today, was created. Speculation and box-office orientation determined its quantitative and qualitative growth to a greater extent than ever before. Its products bore the marks, not only of cinematic culture as it had existed till then, but of the changing relationship between general social structure and cinematic social structure. It thus created new patterns of linkages between cinematic culture and general culture.

Since the prints of almost 70 per cent of the films made in this period are not preserved, they are inaccessible for analysis. As in the case of an earlier set, therefore, we have to base our account on verbal and written descriptions, and a study of some of the available prints.

Mythologicals

While mythological films continued to be made, their number was smaller in proportion to total production. In the context of big-budget films and the star system, they gradually came to occupy a lower position in the film hierarchy; the status of 'B' grade films, being minus top stars, high-powered publicity and box-office success. They catered to a smaller audience now.

These films did not use mythology to comment upon the existing social situation, as some earlier mythologicals

did. After 1947, it seems that film-makers, by and large, shared with a sizeable segment of the middle class, the illusion that independence had solved the country's problems. The gods and goddesses could now move completely within the timeless universe, groomed for greater appeal by increasingly sophisticated film technique. Kitsch had come to say.

Among the more popular mythological films of this period were: 'Bhakta Dhruva', 'Shri Krishna Rukmani', 'Veer Ghatotkach', and 'Bharat Milap'. Kanu Desai, the artist from Gujarat, who published designs for furniture, dresses, decoration, make-up and jewellery (his albums were considered a coveted presentation for a bride who was artistically inclined; his influence on the aesthetics of daily life extended to north, south and central India); was art-director for several mythologicals made in Bombay.

Historical Films

A few historical films, too, were made the idiom remaining unchanged from what it was in the past. Sohrab Modi made 'Mirza Ghalib' and other historicals in a manner which in the audience's mind became coterminous with the periods of history they depicted. Mughal history was associated with styles of speech, decor, sets and costumes as seen in his films; references to the poet Ghalib conjured up an image of none other than the actor Bharat Bhushan, who played Ghalib in the film. A pseudo-historical film from Bombay 'Baiju Bawra', about the legendary rival of

Tansen in Akbar's court, proved a big hit because of its music, which was a popular adaptation of classical music.

From Maharashtra came the last inspired film on a poet: 'Lokshahir Ram Joshi', an 18th century Brahmin poet of 'tamasha'. The main attraction of the film were the erotic 'lavni' songs. This time no section of the public raised a hue and cry about vulgarity. The audience in Maharashtra as elsewhere, was now increasingly composed of blue-collar workers, many of them migrants from villages and other lower-middle-class sections. The box-office, too, was responding to the changing situation.

And nowhere was the influence of the box office more apparent, than in the social films during this period.

<u>Social Films</u>

The Bombay Film

The tyrannical demand of the distributor-exhibitors for films with two major stars, six songs and a few dances, coupled with the film-maker's motivations, cultural backgrounds and perceptions of audience wants determined, by and large, the kind of films made in the late 40s and in the 50s.

A concern for the audience was stimulated by either of two reasons: for commercial security, and/or for genuinely communicating with and entertaining the audience. Attempts of the latter kind - to meaningfully

communicate deeply felt ~~ideas,~~ emotions, ideas or experiences - were rare; and among them, those which could keep at bay the pressures pushing the content of films towards standard, saleable commodities, were even more rare.

Film in India was regarded at best as a medium for the display of showmanship, not as a medium of artistic creativity. Art and cinema interacted mainly in the realm of skills: the skill to act, the skill to sing, the skill to create dramatic plots and scripts, the skill to design sets, and so on. Beyond that, cinema involved the ability to sell. This is not to say that people with artistic talent were not to be found in the film-making profession. But the dominance of commercial and other institutional interests harnessed them within boundaries that hampered creativity in the ultimate analysis.

Within the framework of the precise demands of the exhibitor-distributors, and the overall acceptance of commercial success as an important motive, the films made reflected varying degrees of proficiency in the craft of film-making; certain individual stylistic and thematic preferences of film-makers; and even a certain range of ideological shades. There was, of course, no question of making truly radical film and getting away with it. But in the context of a nation with the purported aim of achieving socialism, al beit of the Congress variety, social criticism in films was tolerated within limits, and most definitely if it was of a shade corresponding to official ideology. You could not show a

corrupt Congress politician on screen, not even a postman accepting a bribe; but you could have a stereotyped blood-sucking zamindar, or a degenerate 'nawab', in film after film. All the better if you also had a patriotic hero, and a romanticized portrayal of village life. In short, while quarelling about taxes and certain areas of censorship, the film industry and the government were united in their adherence to the norms of the status-quo; the film industry for reasons of commerce (why risk being rejected by the public?) and the government, quite simply because it represented after all, the interests of the status quo.

Before we discuss further the ideological dimension per se with reference to particular films, let us look closer at some of the formal characteristics of Indian cinema in this period. We shall then also be able to assess better the ideological impact of the films.

The critic Hameeduddin Mahmood notes that the Bombay film had three sources of inspiration: the folk-theatre (discussed earlier); the Hollywood tradition (with the accent on production values); and the Russian tradition (with its distinct film grammar and ideological commitment). To these he adds: "periodic borrowings from the continental films", and "the influence of Urdu and its concomitant Perso-Arabic orientation, its roots going back twelve centuries to the advent of Muslims". (Hameeduddin Mahmood, 1974)

The Bombay film of the period under discussion shared with the early talkies, elements stemming from some of these influences, and also retained a few other features. It retained, for instance, the kind of language used by the film-makers of the Bombay Talkies studio - a simple Hindustani, which could be easily understood and appreciated. The didactic quality found in a number of social-films of the 30s, however, was less prominent in the commercial Bombay films. In fact, there was a distinct trend towards films offering pure escapist entertainment. Action and stunt films, which even in the '30s, were being eclipsed by the socials, virtually ceased to exist in the late '40s and '50s. Stunts and action, were instead, incorporated within the format of social films.

Certain elements which were retained were also heightened in this period: the accent on romance and music for instance, and the star phenomenon, which assumed gigantic proportions.

While songs and music in the early cinema were linked to the Parsi theatre tradition, with the introduction of sophisticated sound equipment and playback singing, actors and actresses began to move freely in song sequences - and these were even picturised on out door locations. Song picturisation became a distinctive feature of Indian cinematic culture. Unlike folk theatre, songs in films did not carry the narrative forward. With dance, they "provided conventionalised substitutes for lovemaking and emotional crisis". (Krishnaswamy and Barnouw, ibid)

The popularity of film songs was truly phenomenal. Among the factors that strengthened their position, was the fact that in north India, music had remained the monopoly of courts and 'kothas'. The only music available to the masses was either the devotional music of 'kathas', 'kirtans', and 'bhajans', or of 'qawwalis', 'mushairas', or 'shehnai'. Cinema smashed this monopoly and gave an unforeseen gift to Indian music - the orchestra". (Hameeduddin Mahmood, ibid) Added to this were the voices of talented playback singers and Urdu poetry which inspired the lyrics for film songs.

By this time, film producers had adopted Western instruments and combinations of instruments. "Many Bombay producers were using lush combinations of fifty or sixty instruments, foreign to Indian classical tradition, and film audiences responded with ecstasy." (Krishnaswamy and Barnouw, ibid) They responded likewise to the borrowing of American jazz and Latin American rhythms. Exhibitors and distributors demanded 'hit' songs, which they recognised as the key to successful film promotion. The films now had a plethora of songs, and the music director was next in importance to the star.

To cater to the exhibitor-distributor's demands, some film-makers introduced songs regardless of the overall structure of their films. The audience, too, began to accept and even expect songs in situations as diverse as the hero dying, a teacher teaching, a rickshaw puller plying his

customers, and of course, the hero and the heroine romancing. Other directors integrated songs imaginatively and carefully and become known for their song picturisations. For the public, the Hindi film song assumed functions akin to 'pop' music in the West. It was heard on the radio, whistled on the streets, and (this was distinctive to India), even played by wedding bands.

In the early talkies, although some performers were 'stars' in that they were widely known and featured in publicity, no real star system had as developed. In the late '40s and '50s, the stars were considered the most important element in box-office success, and producers "found themselves bidding competitively - and suicidally - for the small group of "big" stars so designated by distributors and exhibitors." (Krishnaswamy and Barnouw, ibid) The public, indeed, no longer went to see a "Prabhat Film" or a "Barua Film" but a Raj Kapoor Film, a Dilip Kumar Film or a Nargis Film.

With the rise of the star system, there was a corresponding decline in the attention film-makers gave to scripts and stories. Barring a few, the majority worked with stereotyped characters, cliched plots and emphasised the projection of 'star' qualities by the main performers. While some of the stars were indeed very talented artists, the standardised performances they often gave were dictated by the poorly written scripts, by their involvement in several productions at a time, and by the film-makers anxiety

that they retain their identifiable mannerisms in film after film. The art of screenplay writing which was gradually evolving in the last decade or so, was considered redundant by most film-makers now.

The Hollywood influence, which had also existed earlier, became more pronounced in this period. With greater finances pouring into the film industry, more film-makers took up the challenge of imitating extravagant Hollywood products. Hollywood itself was developing along lines dictated by the changing media situation in the USA: the advent of television and the conse uent threat to the popularity of films. Hollywood strove to provide in super-abundant measure what TV could not possibly provide: grand spectacles and landscapes on wide screens, 3-D and stereo-phonic sounds.

In terms of form, Hollywood by now had perfected what may be termed a "Hollywood Grammar". In fact, by the early 1940s, "Hollywood had evolved a very smooth, efficient, and clearly understood idiom of point of view. The establishing shot - a long shot - established place, often time, and sometimes other necessary information." The Hollywood dialogue style was equally efficient, so that the rhythms of "the careful, insistent, and intimate shot-counter-shot technique are often intoxicating: we surround the conversation. This is the ultimate omniscient style, since it allows us to see everything from the ideal perspective." (James Monaco, ibid) The editing practices of

the Hollywood grammar were designed to permit seamless transitions from shot to shot and to concentrate attention on the action at hand. The star system was intimately linked to this form. The 'ideal perspective' the films provided, depended on creating a strong identification between hero and audience. We see things from his point of view, and the effect is subtle but pervasive. (James Monaco, ibid) Indian films, by and large, with varying degrees of sophistication, followed this Hollywood pattern of a cinema of psychological guidance.

The Russian films that influenced Indian cinema at this time, were mainly products of the school of Socialist Realism that dominated the arts in the USSR under Stalin. The heroism of Russian soldiers during the War; the victorious working class after the revolution; peasants working on collective farms; these were portrayed in glowing larger than life terms. They were essentially propaganda films: products of ruthless political censorship which condemned self-expression as formalism. The masterpieces of Soviet film-makers like Eisenstein and Dovzhenko were accessible to only a few Indian film-makers, who were, indeed, influenced by them. But it was the melodramatic, baroque qualities of Socialist Realism that inspired some of the film-makers of Bombay.

The Indian film-makers' encounter with continental cinema really took place only in 1951 - when the first

International Film Festival was organised by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Important classics like "The Bicycle Thieves" and "Shoeshine" were screened. It was an eye opener for the majority who had equated cinema with Hollywood. Elements of neo-realism were absorbed by a few Indian film-makers, though, in the ultimate analysis, the festival was too fleeting an experience to affect the environment of a cinematic culture which continued to be fed regularly by products from Hollywood in the years to come.

It may be a worthwhile exercise to see how elements from these various sources were used by some individual film-makers working within the commercial framework.

Among the films made by Raj Kapoor in this period, for instance, were 'Awara', 'Shri 420', and 'Boot Polish'. These films, which were extremely popular, may be described as musical comedies. They featured Raj Kapoor as a romantic young man, a bit of a buffoon, with mannerisms which were, for good reason, reminiscent of Charlie Chaplin. Unlike Charlie Chaplin, however, Raj Kapoor sang (via the voice of a playback singer; and the songs of these films were among the most popular in this period); and what he, as a hero came up against were not the heartless structures of the machine age, or the snobbishness of the aristocracy, but the chicanery and indifference of city life and people. The village simpleton in the big bad city of Bombay was in some cases a medium for a neo-realist inspired portrayal of the pavement dwellers in cities, and in some films, even for

communicating a socialistic message. The big city motif and their lightheartedness also made these films akin to Frank Capra's films like 'It Happened One Night', 'Mr. Deeds Goes To Town', and 'Mr. Smith Goes To Washington'. But stars, romance, and music were intrinsic ingredients of all these films.

Also in this period, the film-maker Mehboob, after making 'Aan', a big box office success, made 'Mother India'. Apart from the fact that 'Mother India' was also a box-office hit, the film is significant because it was considered a landmark in terms of its social value. With star Nargis in the leading role, catchy songs, and skilful technique, including the use of colour, the film established characters and situations which may well be considered part of Indian film mythology today. The villainous money lender, the strong self-sacrificing mother, the hardy peasants; the 'good' brother and the bad brother, were characters who moved within its melodramatic plot structure. What is also interesting about this film, is the fact that it is an instance of the popular cinema's corruption of our epic traditions, by which "the larger than life characteristics of concept in the epic are transformed into incredible melodramatic exaggerations" (Kumar Shahani, 1980), while its visual values (shot compositions and so on) seem to have been inspired greatly by the Soviet Socialist Realist style discussed above. Thus, melodrama in Indian cinema had found a visual idiom suited to it in the melodramatic propaganda films from the Soviet Union!

The film-making of V. Shantaram, a film-maker who was continuing from the earlier period, is also worth viewing in terms of the elements he synthesised. While his 'Do Aankhen Bara Haath' won awards in Hollywood and Berlin, 'Navrang' and 'Jhanak Jhanak Payal Baaje' also made in this period are particularly interesting in this context. In them, Shantaram has built upon the visual aesthetics of the Parsi theatre, and strung together innumerable song and dance sequences, revolving around romantic themes. To do so, he has borrowed techniques from Hollywood resulting in spectacular, colourful and extravagant productions. What is particularly worth noting in Shantaram's case, is the fact that he claims to have projected and preserved India's rich artistic heritage through his films. In fact, Shantaram had equated the Parsi theatre aesthetics with Indian aesthetics and while it is true that his films do actually contain sequences in Kathak and other styles of Indian dance, as well as songs inspired by Indian classical music, the overall form including the way in which colour has been used, is derived from the illusionist, effete tradition of art which came into being in the late 19th century. The tendency to consider artifacts bearing such stylistic features as examples 'par excellence' of Indian art is quite common among urban upper and middle class Indians. It is therefore no wonder that Shantaram's claims have been taken seriously all these years.

We will now move on to a consideration of some of the sociological aspects of the thematic content of Indian

films made in this period, including the delineation of characters.

We have already noted that the majority of films made were musical romances, with rapidly diminishing complexities of plot, character and story line. Moreover, since in India, unlike in most Western countries, there was neither the stage, nor the book trade sufficiently developed for film producers to draw upon for safe commercial propositions, i.e. to select what had already won popular approval, they took the line of least resistance by remaking or adapting or plagiarising successful films from other languages (K.A. Abbas, ibid)

Within the boundaries of stereotypes, and thinly sketched scripts, it is important to note the nature of the social world presented in these films. The analysis made by Asit Baran Bose of sixty Hindi feature films in the '50s revealed that "they dealt primarily with the unmarried and educated young of the upper and middle classes, living in cities. In roughly half the films, the hero had no occupation; in almost two thirds of the films, the heroine had no occupation. In most films the obstacles were provided not by a social problem but by an evil character. Most films had an evil male character, roughly half the films an evil female character". Further, he notes that "In roughly half the films the hero lived alone; in one thirds, he lived in a family. The heroine generally lived with a family" and "the young people whose love for each other was the main

concern in these films, moved through a diversity of settings, exuding vigour and radiant health and usually surrounded by consumer goods. Always singing at the top of their voices - via voices of playback singers, the young people went motor-cycling, speed-boating, skiing, water-skiing. Always the lavish background, radiant health, laughter, seldom the joint family, the arranged marriage, work and poverty" (cited in Krishnaswamy and Burnouw, ibid).

The components of song and romance, noted by Bose, were as we have ourselves iterated time and again, by now firmly established as ingredients which appealed to a wide audience. Some of the other factors noted by Bose, however, provide fresh insights into the sociological dimensions of Indian cinema. We have to view them in relation to the composition of film audiences and the general social structure.

Since relevant statistical information regarding audiences is available only for 1962, our attempt at analysis rests upon the assumption that audience composition remained relatively unchanged from the fifties into the early '60s. It has been noted, for 1962, that more men than women viewed films; that the audience was composed mainly of young people; and that in terms of their economic background, the majority had an income of below Rs.300 a month (R.D. Jain, 1962) Since most cinemas were in urban areas, this last factor can be interpreted to mean that unemployed youth, and individuals from the working class, and the lumpen proletariat constituted the bulk of cinema audiences.

Further extrapolating from the above profile and linking it up with Bose's account, we can glean the fact that while sharing certain characteristics with the leading characters in the popular film, the majority of the audience followed a life style strikingly different from that of the characters on screen.

What the audience and film characters shared was the urban environment; the fact of being young, and of being unmarried. A large segment also shared the fact of living away from their families (this was particularly true of migrants from rural areas). These may be considered the points of identification which made it possible for the majority of Indian films to operate within the framework of a cinema of psychological guidance.

On the other hand, the screen characters and the audience differed in terms of class-background (the hero and heroines belonged to the middle and upper middle classes, unlike the bulk of the audience); also, the latter did not possess consumer goods in superabundance (i.e. if they did possess them at all) as the film characters did; in the fact that arranged marriages and the joint family were the norm for the audience (and the latter was true even for the migrants from rural areas who maintained economic and ritual ties with their families in their villages); in the fact that the economic background of the audience made poverty a very close experience, which it was not for the heroes and heroines on screen.

In looking for a rationale behind the creation and popularity of such screen characters, with a mix of the above characteristics, one is tempted to see the films as providing imaginary wish-fulfilment for the materially deprived audience; as fantasies created by the film-makers to allow their audiences to escape from reality into a desired dream world. However, both the fact that not all films with such ingredients did well at the box office, and the fact that the aspirations of the audience were probably not, to begin with, of the same scale as realised by the heroes and heroines on the screen, should caution us to not jump to such a conclusion. It should also be noted that the audience was, despite certain common characteristics, still fairly heterogenous, so that even if the businessmen in the film industry were shrewd enough to know that a wish-fulfilling cinema would certainly bring profits, to arrive at the perfect surrogate experience was well nigh impossible. Essentially, film-making was a gamble, and if film-makers foisted on their audience their own views of the good life and in a number of cases this worked, the reason was because wider economic forces were drawing almost all sections of society into the fold of consumerism. Pushed about by unfathomed social forces, often into alien surroundings, the audience found a few rupees a cheap price to pay for the comfort of the movie theatre and for the effortless unfolding of a glamorous dream. Imagination, which, left to its own devices, might well have created a

nightmare wrought with anxiety and nostalgia for home, was a willing captive of the flow of events on the screen. That a certain world view and a set of values was also being communicated was something that the audience as well as the filmmakers were conscious of only to a limited extent. In fact, the films were propagating the adoption of middle class values, and the spectators were unconsciously gathering material for making sense of, and interacting with their changing social landscape.

Focussing again on the characters on screen, we have noted that in about half the films selected by Professor Bose for analysis, the heroes were educated and belonged to the middle and upper middle class. A striking feature of cinematic culture in this period was also the emergence of heroes who were representatives of the lumpen proletariat: uneducated taxi-drivers, shoe-shine boys and tramps. The popularity of such heroes is undoubtedly linked to the fact that the cinema audience itself was increasingly composed of such elements. Most of them, however, shared with the other heroes a romantic and light hearted image.

The doomed 'Devdas' type hero also made an appearance in an occasional film or two (Devdas was remade by Bimal Roy in 1955) but the carefree romantic hero was far more popular. Dev Anand appeared in such roles in film after film, including a number of urban crime thrillers.

The tragic hero in some of Guru Dutt's films was the sensitive but misunderstood artist. The aggressive go-getting hero was yet to make an appearance on the Indian screen. When the hero was educated and had an occupation, he was usually a lawyer, a doctor, a journalist or a social worker. These were still the middle class ideals: professionals who had assumed leadership of the nationalist movement. Rarely, if ever, was there a shopkeeper, a businessman, industrial worker or agricultural labourer as hero.

Unlike the patient, suffering heroines of the early talkies, there were now stronger and more vivacious female stars. Though upholding the same basic orthodox values, they were more articulate and sometimes even aggressive in their defence of these values. This change is probably linked to the active participation of women in the nationalist movement, and the general optimistic mood of the middle classes in the period immediately after independence.

Family dramas, however, continued to feature the patient, passive suffering woman. It was in this genre that the preoccupation with Westernisation as a negative disrupting force found expression: a concern also of the early talkies. To it was added a concern with the rural-urban dichotomy: rural signifying the good, and the urban the bad. A particularly appropriate example is the film 'Grahasti' which was a big box office hit. It has been described as portraying how the fasionable wife from the

city creates problems for the boy's mother and sister who are neglected. "The wife is made out to be a vamp and the contrast is provided by another couple with a very understanding wife". (Feroze Rangoonwala, 1979) The Bombay film was rapidly becoming a solid bedrock of reactionary values, exploiting a situation of real strain and change by fanning popular fears and sentiments.

The issue of national integration which erupted soon after independence, assuming grave dimensions due to border disputes and linguistic clashes, was introduced in the Bombay film in a manner which was superficial and vulgar, but is nevertheless repeated in films even today. Physical and cultural characteristics of different communities were caricatured, and bonhomie between them established through comic sequences. Thus, you had the 'Madrasi' speaking an accented Hindi, the 'Marwari' money lender with his yellow turban and wily looks; the poetry-spouting wishy-washy Bengali, and so on. The attempt by film-makers to be in official good books could not have taken a more ugly form, and the effect on the public, once more was to block rather than to facilitate communication.

The Dominance of the Bombay Film

While the regional film industries were expanding right through the late 40s and 50s, the kind of films made by them by and large were modelled on the popular Bombay

film. There were several factors which had led to the establishment of the cultural hegemony of the Bombay film. There was, firstly, the fact that the Bombay film was specially designed to have an all-India appeal. It was accepted by audiences in all regions, precisely because it itself lacked identifiable regional characteristics. Also, the Hindi-speaking audience being the largest in the country, a lot more finances were poured into the Bombay film industry, than in any one of the regional industries. The popular Bombay film could thereby afford to be more glamorous and to introduce and develop more spectacular techniques. With the establishment of Hindi as the national language in the post-independence period, moreover, a larger number of people were attracted to see the Bombay film, including those who were keen to learn the Hindi language.

Films by the Socially Concerned

There also appeared in this period, films with a definite leftist ideological stance. The films of K.A. Abbas, Sarhady, the IPTA film 'Dharti Ke Lal' and Chetan Anand's 'Neecha Nagar' are examples. Most of the film-makers still were, or had been associated with the Indian People's Theatre Association, the cultural front of the Communist Party. While sharing a common ideology, their films varied in terms of the form they adopted. The films of K.A. Abbas, for instance, while they reflected a neo-

realist influence, had a melodramatic framework. The social types he created shared with the Bombay film characters an element of 'fantasy' in that they were portrayed in black and white tones. This conventional approach weakened the impact of his progressive stance. The film 'Dharti Ke Lal', closer to the neo-realistic mode in terms of form, incorporated song sequences within it. Apart from featuring non-professional actors, and actresses, the film was made on a very low budget, and there was no doubt about the social relevance of its theme as well as its mode of production. While it was hailed by critics as a landmark of Indian cinema, in the context of the commercial film industry it did not find many exhibition outlets; nor did it attract the general cinema-going public in a big way.

A unique film made in this period, was dancer Uday Shankar's 'Kalpana': a synthesis of dance and film, portraying the artist's struggle against reactionary social forces.

'Gramin' Films

In Maharashtra as in Bombay, certain formulae and stereotypes were established in this period. A new, but particularly powerful formula appeared in what were termed 'Gramin' films. The development of these films was linked to the growth of a new kind of audience for cinema: part rural-folk and part urban-mass. These films were supposed to be a 'realistic' portrayal of life lived in Maharashtra's villages,

with a special emphasis on the simplicity ruggedness and the essential goodness of the villager and his life (Pramod Kale, ibid) Since the 'tamasha' form of entertainment was incorporated within these films, they have also been termed 'tamasha' films.

One of the sources which influenced the development of such films, was the emphasis on the idyllic and pastoral aspects of nature and village life in Marathi literature, which during the second World War, popular middle brow magazines substituted with a 'realistic' one. "This realism aimed at creating a picture of village life where strong men lived and fought with each other for the sake of women, land and family honour" (Pramod Kale, ibid). A second source of influence was Maharashtrian nationalism, with its manifestation in literature as the vision of the proud, defiant and virile spirit of the Maratha peasant. The development also found its ideological support in the 'back to villages' slogan of Mahatma Gandhi and "the subsequent custodial interest of the leaders of the Indian National Congress in the welfare of peasants and farmers and their very effective use as a basis for political power in Independent India". (Pramod Kale, ibid)

The other popular formula in Marathi films was the family drama which extolled traditional virtues, and the institutions of family, religion and nation. The characters for these films, which are made even today, are drawn from

the middle class. "They are clerks, lawyers, engineers and small entrepreneurs, though this, beyond providing professional tags, plays no role in characterisation". (Shanta Gokhale and Arun Khopkar, 1980)

Stunts and Fantasies

While an independent genre of popular stunt films more or less ceased to exist in this period, a few stunt films were made in Tamil Nadu, that became linked to the politics of the DMK. Made in the Douglas Fairbank's tradition, they featured actor-politician M.G. Ramachandran as a folk hero, "battling royal usurpers and their henchmen, fighting against innumerable odds". As explained by M.G. Ramachandran, "the long entrenched Congress leadership in New Delhi had become a species of royalty, and the folk hero symbolised the Southern Dravidian struggling against odds to establish justice". (Krishnaswamy and Barnouw, ibid)

It is relevant to note that there was nothing specially incorporated within the films themselves to suggest their link with contemporary politics. They could easily be viewed as pure fantasies: escapist entertainment. But, in the context of the growing popularity of the DMK movement in the early 50s, Ramachandran's involvement in DMK politics in real life, and his statements explaining the allegorical content of his films, they became forceful vehicles for communicating and reinforcing the DMK viewpoint.

The DMK leader C.N. Annadurai became involved in film at about the same time as he formed the DMK in 1949. A number of film stars and writers rallied to his party, and symbols of the DMK began to appear in films with apparently no specific relation to the story of the film. There were also casual references to the symbols in dialogues, which the audience at once recognised and cheered. Thus, for instance, there were references to the motif of the rising sun: the party emblem; to 'Anna', as C.N. Annadurai was popularly known; to the north, as signifying New Delhi; and to the south, signifying Dravidistan. The active participation of the film actors and writers in the politics of the DMK which continued through the years, was the only instance in the country after independence of an overt and sustained link between cinema and politics.

Thus, even as the popularity of the Bombay film was contributing towards making Hindi an all-India language, there was the anti-Hindi campaign of the DMK gathering strength through the medium of the films being made in Tamil Nadu, the second-largest film-producing region in the country.

Also in this period, Madras entered the field of Hindi film production in a big way; and the film 'Chandralekha' by S.S. Vasan, which he described as "a pageant for our peasants", proved to be a sensational hit all over the country. Essentially a fantasy, it had spectacular sets, costumes, dance-sequences and music. It also incorporated

daring horsemanship and dazzling sword-play. Grandeur and spectacle on such an elaborate scale had never before been seen on the Indian screen. With its success, S.S. Vasan became virtually the leader of the all-India film industry.

Films based on Literary Works

A number of films based on Indian novels were made in this period, and these included 'Mr. Sampat', based on R.K. Narayan's novel; 'Parineeta', and 'Biraj Bahu', based on Sharat Chandra's novels and directed by Bimal Roy; 'Ananda Math', based on Bankim Chandra's novel and directed by Hemen Gupta; and 'Heera Moti' based on Premchand's novel, among others. Compared to the earlier periods, there was definitely a more meaningful interaction between literary content and cinematic form. But, the persisting and in fact, increasing hiatus, between the statuses of literature and cinema as creative media, continued to provide great prestige to even uncinematic versions of literary works. This is what explains the seemingly extraordinary phenomenon of the very first National Film Award, being conferred on the Marathi film 'Shyamchi Ai', a film theatrical in form but based on a highly acclaimed novel by Guru Sane.

Even though Bengali cinema was one which had been most bogged down by a literary approach, it was a Bengali film, Satyajit Ray's 'Pather Panchali' based on Bibhuti Bhushan Bandopadhyay's novel that exemplified a truly

masterly rendering of literature into cinema. With 'Apur Sansar' and 'Aparajito' which were also made in the '50s, the film formed part of Ray's 'Apu Trilogy'. Yet another film made by Ray in this period, 'Jalsaghar', was also based on a novel. The author was Tarashankar Bandopadhyay.

Satyajit Ray

While it is not possible to discuss in detail all the sociological aspects of Satyajit Ray's films here, we can try to delineate some general features, related to the films made in the period under study. These are 'Pather Panchali' (1954), 'Aparajito' (1957), 'Jalsaghar' (1958), and 'Apur Sansar' (1959). The first, second and fourth, as noted earlier form the 'Apu Trilogy'.

The 'Apu Trilogy' based on a novel by Bibhuti Bhushan Bandopadhyay narrates events in the life of Apu who we see as a child in a village in Bengal, in 'Pather Panchali', as a young boy in 'Aparajito', and as a young man in the city of Calcutta in 'Apur Sansar'.

If we consider the factual nature of the film world, and its thematic structure, we find that the Apu Trilogy forms "an epic that moves from the village to the city, from the distant past to the recent past, from a structured rural life to an anarchic metropolitan milieu, with all its uncertainties for the future". (Krishnaswami and Barnouw, ibid). As the above description indicates, the social world

language of the silent, purely image based cinema developed by the Russians. The formal qualities inherent in the novel were realism of detail, the chronological and sequential development of narrative, and lyricism. Also inherent were contrasts - both pictorial and emotional - such as "The rich and the poor, the laughter and the tears, the beauty of the countryside and the grimness of poverty existing in it." (Satyajit Ray, ibid) The meaning of these contrasts can be related to a certain world view, which is not stated verbally in the films, but is conveyed by their form. It is a humanist hopeful view of reality. It is a view that can perceive the beautiful in the midst of the ugly; love in the midst of meanness born of want; and a view which engenders faith in human beings. Far removed from the tragic view of life of Western literature, it may be traced to the philosophy of Tagore.

Ray's choice of a novel with such a world view was no doubt inspired by a correspondence between his own world view and that of the novel. This in turn can be related to the social background of Satyajit Ray: his birth and upbringing in an educated middle class family of Bengal, influenced by Tagore, who was personally acquainted with the family, and Ray's own education in Santiniketan.

The fact that Ray was able to evolve a personal cinematic form can also be related to the early training

he received in the graphic arts, in Santiniketan, which was in the forefront of the evolution of modern Indian art. (Marie Seton, 1976)

In fact, Satyajit Ray's art went totally against the dominant form of cinema in India in this period. The cinematic culture of which Ray was a product was an exceptional one: confined to a coterie of young intellectuals in Calcutta, who formed the Calcutta Film Society in 1947. Ray, an ardent film goer in his teens, selected films according to their directors rather than stars (this at a time when, as we have noted above, the public was increasingly seeing films because of stars). He not only studied the theoretical writings of Eisenstein and Pudovkin, among others, but also film scripts, and was writing his own scripts many years before he actually made his first film (This, again, at a time when many films in India were being made virtually without ~~a~~ script~~s~~). Ray, in fact, who wrote his entire screen-play before approaching potential backers for his 'Pather Panchali' was considered a strange specimen by financiers who were used to the ways of the commercial film industry. When he finally got an opportunity to make his film, he was clear about the fact that he wanted a new cameraman: a cameraman who was not saturated in the pictorial formulae of the industry. The music was provided by Ravi Shankar, who was not ~~only~~ associated with 'film music'. And what he

created was, "for those who look upon cinema as action and drama", (as did most who viewed and made films in India) "an anti-film". (Chidananda Dasgupta, ibid)

In terms of cinematic social structure, the significance of Ray's first film lies in the fact that it demonstrated how an alternative source of capital, controlled by a different set of values could liberate a film maker from success formulae. (Ray's film was financed by the Government of West Bengal) Not only was it instrumental in the decision of the gover ment to form a Film Finance Corporation, but also in encouraging a few independent financiers to take up film projects which were not based on formulae.

Ray's 'Jalsaghar' is concerned with the passing of the feudal system and is centred around an aging, decadent landlord. Satyajit Ray's distinctive world view manifested itself again in the fact, that he took a story with great 'dramatic' potential but underplayed the element of conflict and highlighted the element of contemplation. (Chidananda Dasgupta, ibid) His craftsmanship was apparent, too, in his brilliant creation of mood and atmosphere.

Ritwik Ghatak

The '50s were also the time when the brilliant film-maker Ritwik Ghatak began to make films. His films which appeared in this period were 'Nagarik' (1953), 'Ajantrik' (1958), 'Bari Theke Paliye' (1959) and 'Meghe Dhaka Tara' (1960). Though some were released later, his film 'Nagarik' was never released at all. We shall consider, briefly some of the socio-logical aspects of 'Ajantrik' and Meghe Dhaka Tara' here.

'Ajantrik', at one level, is the story of Bimal, an eccentric taxi driver, in a small town in Bihar, and his jalopy, Jagaddal. Bimal loves and treats his taxi almost as a human being. He refuses to part with it for something new. As a result Bimal is regarded as a madcap by the town folk as well as his colleagues at the taxi stand. But there comes a time when Bimal has to part with his jalopy, now completely broken down. It is sold as scrap to a dealer. Bimal is heart broken, literally in tears. Suddenly he hears the sound of its horn, and turns around to find

a small child playing with the discarded car parts. And Bimal smiles through his tears.

In creating this film world, Ghatak is a neo-realist with respect to settings and appearances. But in other ways, he can be seen to be evolving his own particular mode of film-making: what can be discerned in this film is a combination of the dramatic and the neo-realist traditions. And also there is the symbolic and commentative use of music which was to become an integral part of his style of film-making. Ghatak with Ray, was thus a category apart vis-a-vis the film-makers of the Bombay commercial film industry: a truly creative film-maker.

But what is most significant about his texts, when they are considered from a sociological point of view, is the fact that the characters he creates are not just particular individuals in defined social contexts, as in the neo-realist tradition, but are in fact universal human archetypes. In 'Ajantrik', for instance, Bimal is an archetypal character representing "the tender-minded, the living progressive impulse. Yet another character in the film, a madman, is his extension, "and the dancing Oraon tribal" (who appears in a sequence in the film) "is his sublime extreme. The opposite is also represented through a character, Piara Singh, "the strong-mind as opposed to the tender-mind of Bimal". And some children who appear at a point in the film, jeering Bimal, and splattering him with mud, "are an extension of the image of Bimal and at the same time, the symbol of cruelty in the life of the

poet". (Ritwik Ghatak, 1981(b))

Ghatak's choice of an authentic milieu and characters including the Oraon tribals, is clearly indicative of his concern for the immediate, living reality of Indian society. His creation of archetypal characters is linked to his quest for a deeper penetration into and understanding of, the socio-cultural milieu; the cinema medium being used to express his perception, including his reactions to it. Symbolism, realism, and drama therefore create a vocabulary intrinsically linked to the content of his communication.

Ghatak's concern with the national culture-complex, reflected in his use of archetypes, was related to his intense and sensitive response to the facts of Indian society. The partition of the country (he was himself a refugee from East Bengal) and the consequent division of culture, shocked him and made him angry. As he himself said in an interview, "During the partition period, I hated those pretentious people who clamoured about our freedom, our independence. I just kept on watching what was happening, how the behaviour pattern was changing due to this great betrayal of national liberation." (Film Miscellany, 1976) This concern led him to the unconscious determinants of behaviour, to the archetypes that govern our subconscious. His involvement with the IPTA, in 1948, as play-wright, director and actor, had sharpened his perception of Indian folk culture: the rituals, the myths, the manifestations

of the collective unconscious. In 'Ajantrik' therefore, socio-cultural patterns are seen in relation to archetypal forces, Bimal's near 'tribal' communion with his taxi, being the focal point.

Between 'Ajantrik' and 'Meghe Dhaka Tara', came a children film called 'Bari Theke Paliye'. The film is significant in that it reflects Ghatak's position within cinematic social structure. Though undoubtedly a cut above the usual children's films made, Ghatak would perhaps never have made it, were it possible to survive as a film-maker without making an occasional cinematic compromise, thanks to the structure of the industry. Ghatak's struggle in the world of Indian cinema was bitter; the odds against him were staggering.

And yet he made 'Meghe Dhaka Tara' in 1959 - a film in which Ghatak's control over the medium of cinema is more apparent; and the milieu of the film: that of a refugee family in Bengal, closer to his biographical experience.

The film, working at various levels simultaneously, depicts the struggle of a working girl to support her refugee family in post-partition Bengal. As it moves on it narrates the pressures mounting up against Nita, preventing her from being able to live a happy contented life: pressures linked to the social situation and individual demands of her family members. When Nita discovers she is suffering from T.B. she is moved to a sanatorium in the hills. Here an overwhelming longing for life wells up within her, but it is too late.

Nita symbolizes the mother goddess 'Durga'. Ghatak integrates the form of the ritual worship of Durga into the structure of his film. Nita is the nurturing force, on which her family grows, representing Jagaddhatri the benevolent, eternally giving Mother Goddess. But like Durga, Nita, too, is deconsecrated when her utility is over. "All the implications of the archetype that Nita is living are set off by the Baul song, used repeatedly in the film. Evoking the ritual of the immersion of Durga, it foreshadows the end of Nita herself". (Ira Bhaskar, 1981) It is in death that she is united with the mountain with eternity. What is important however, is that the ritual of destruction makes possible release and regeneration. Nita's tragedy is linked to the inexhorable movement of objective social forces. It is structured neither within classical supernatural concepts, nor within romantic individualistic ideas. The transcendence she achieves through death is that of Uma united with Mahadev in the context of Hindu mythology. In the film, transcendence is achieved by a world view that perceives the dialectical movement of real, lived history: the forces of creation, destruction and re-creation.

The incorporation of mythology into film could not be more different from its use, by the popular makers of mythological films discussed earlier.

Ghatak's films were examples of the cinema of struggle: the beginning of a force which has been gathering momentum slowly over the years.

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CONCLUSION

We began our study with an overview of the sociology of cinema. What emerged from it was the fact of, on the one hand, intellectual ferment and rapid developments in the field of the sociology of cinema in general, particularly in recent times, and, on the other, of the near absence of a sociology of Indian cinema. Perhaps it ought to be noted here that this, in a sense, provides a confirmation, clarification and substantiation of what was apprehended as being the case at the point at which this research project was undertaken, a situation that spurred one to attempt to take a step, however small, towards bridging the hiatus. The overview also suggests the various dimensions of a sociological study of cinema; the areas of overlap between film theory and the sociology of cinema, and also the insights provided by the more seminal works in the field which appear to be valid for the study of cinema anywhere and at any time. What is particularly exciting is the fact that after a scrutiny of data related to Indian cinema, some of these observations come alive in a way that heightens our appreciation of the vision of some of those who have contributed to the study of cinema. To take an obvious example: a study of the institutional

and infrastructural context of the popular Indian film (Chapter II) in conjunction with an analysis of its content (Chapter IV) gives an immediate resonance to Balazs' view discussed in Chapter I, that the economic foundation of film is the prime determinant of film aesthetics. So also, his observations that the very landscapes we choose as backgrounds for our dramas are the products of the cultural patterns within us, makes more sense when we note, for instance, the extent to which in the popular Indian film of the '50s the landscapes consist of consumer goods, al beit the form in which they are presented, creates ~~a sense of~~ visual dissonance. (Satyajit Ray, ibid) The peculiar nature of the growth of consumerism in Indian society; of the uneasy coexistence of the products of highly developed technology with slow industrial development, and the consequent fascination with technology, rather than its rational integration into patterns of living, are cultural factors which appear to be reflected in this element of the form and content of films.

The links between changes in society at large, and the growth of popular art, of which cinema is an instance have been discussed in some detail in Chapter II. The fact that while using a new technological device, cinema interacts with cultural phenomena which have a longer history, draws our attention to the need to root a study of the creation of cultural objects within the framework of particular socio-historical contexts. To talk of cinema in

general is thus to exclude an intrinsic component of what cinema is. Also, as noted in the concluding section of the Chapter, the area of the interaction between other art forms and Indian cinema needs to be explored further by specialists in the respective fields. Such an activity would not only serve to document an important aspect of creativity, but may also generate new forms of creation.

Our account of the institutional and industrial structures related to Indian cinema hopefully does convey to some extent the nature, complexity and dimensions of the forces that constraint the development of cinema in this country. The account, of course, is far from exhaustive. The relationship between structures of cinema production and legal institutions, and between these structures and political institutions, for instance, have not been discussed, though the account does allude to some links. The area of film export in fact has also not been considered here. These areas demand independent exhaustive studies. The conflict between various sectors within the film industry itself; the links between other industries and the film industry, the creation of alternative modes of cinema production, are other topics which need to be researched and analysed in depth.

Our discussion of the texts of films in Chapter IV is similarly only a step towards more detailed and comprehensive studies. What perhaps it does manage to

demonstrate is the usefulness of viewing texts not in terms of thematic structures alone, but also with regard to their formal structures. This is important for an adequate sociological understanding of the interaction between forces within cinematic culture itself, which, in combination with other social determinants result in the creation of particular kinds of films. It is also particularly necessary for assessing correctly the effects of films upon audiences. In the context of Indian cinematic culture, for instance, the incorporation within the Bombay film of the Hollywood technique of psychological guidance, and the melodrama of the Parsi theatre: itself a product of the distortion of the epic structure, provides a backdrop for viewing the interest of some creative film makers today in the epic tradition in the arts and in cinema, as part of their attempts to create a new Indian cinema. That the form of the Bombay film, is directly linked to the structures of colonialism and neo-colonialism is an important sociological observation, which the new historically self-conscious film-makers are coming to grips with and incorporating within the very practice of film-making itself.

Finally, we may note that a study of film audiences which we have excluded here, demands field work and the development of methods of data collection appropriate to the Indian situation. We may draw some lessons from the attempt to study audience reactions in a village in Karnataka - though

its context: that of a rural film society which screens international classics: is a-typical, al beit indicative of the growth of new structures of cinematic culture. Thus, for instance, a report notes that "eliciting responses from the villagers is an extremely difficult thing, especially if they are illiterate and uneducated, mainly because they feel that their views are not so important as those of the educated....So a conversation becomes a must where only a question would suffice." (See bibliography, K.S. Raghavendra, 1978)

A study of film-makers' conceptualizations of their audiences can also be a very revealing area of investigation: but here again, methods of data collection have to, among other things, take account of the fact that verbally articulated answers may not correspond to real attitudes and convictions.

The study of certain other aspects of the film audience such as its class composition; composition in terms of age; frequency of cinema attendance, and so on, requires statistical documentation, which, again, may mean collection of data through indirect sources. That such information is crucial for a sociological study of cinema, is, of course, apparent.

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