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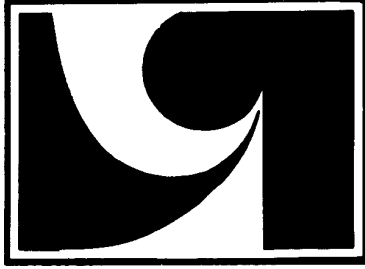
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**Golden Jubilee Special**

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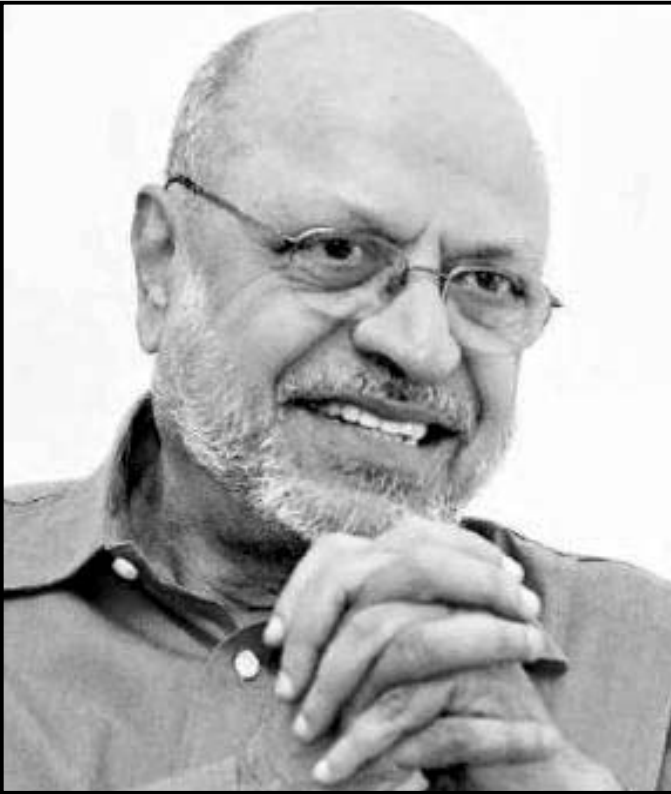
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I, Sudhir Vasudeo Nandgaonkar, the printer and publisher of Indian Film Culture, declare that the particulars stated above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Dated, 15 August, 2010

**Sd/- Sudhir Vasudeo Nandgaonkar**  
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Message from

## Shyam Benegal

**A**s I give way to a new incumbent to take over the Presidentship of Federation of Film Societies of India (FFSI), I am happy to note that the outgoing General Secretary, Mr. Sudhir Nandgaonkar and the able office bearers of all regions initiated a number of programmes to take the Film Society Movement to the next phase of evolution. The Film Society Movement started with the fundamental ambition to help in the appreciation of Cinema as an art form and to deepen the understanding of cinematic art; its aesthetics, its changing vocabularies, and to sensitise film goers to the diverse approaches to film making in different countries and regions not only of the world, but even within our own country. Cinema, being a cultural product, is closely connected to the cultures of the region in which it is produced

and yet, while being culturally specific, speaks a language that can at once be local and universal.

In the year 2006, in order to improve communications between the Central Office and individual film societies all over the country, the FFSI E News Letter was started from November 2006. It has since been published every month and sent to member film societies and also to Embassies and Consulates of countries that help Indian film societies with films from their respective countries.

In 2007, it was decided that unless young people were brought into the Film Society Movement, it would no longer be relevant since the average age of members in the country was between 40 and 45 years. In order to target the population of between 16 and 25 years, it was decided to start Campus Film societies at various colleges and universities.

Mr. Sudhir Nandgaonkar was personally responsible in creating over 20 campus film societies in the Western region, while the Southern region has so far succeeded in creating ten such societies. This initiative has been supported enthusiastically by students in colleges and universities and it appears that with each academic year, new film societies will start in various colleges of the two regions.

In 2008, it was decided to start film appreciation courses in regional languages in partnership with the National Film Archives of India, Pune. The first seven day course in Marathi with the cooperation of the Pune University is presently being held every year in the last week of December. This year the film appreciation course in regional languages will begin, and, in its first phase will be held in Indore in *Hindi*, in Dharwar in *Kannada* and in Hyderabad in *Telugu*. I sincerely hope that other regions will decide and adopt the film appreciation course in their regional languages which will help enormously in developing well informed and discerning cinema audiences in the country.

In 2009 which was the Golden Jubilee Year of FFSI a book entitled **History of the Film Society Movement in India** was edited by Mr. H.N. Narahari Rao. This 300 page book was sent to all the member societies free of cost. The Indian Film Culture Magazine which was discontinued for long has been revived and its 15th issue will be published in August 2010.

As the next team takes over we believe that their initiatives in addition to what has been done in the last 4 years will add not only to the relevance of the Film Society Movement but also add exponentially to the Cinema literate audiences in India.



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*Film Maker Shyam Benegal  
President of FFSI 2004-2010.*



## Editorial

# The Long March on the Little Road

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■ Sudhir Nandgaonkar

When Lumiere Brothers first screened their film strip of “Arrival of Train” made in 1896 in a Paris café, the close up shot of the approaching train frightened the audience, and many of them ran out of the café apprehending that the train would crush them. Six months later, the same film strip, widely regarded as the world’s one of the first ever film, was screened at Novelty theatre in Mumbai, no spectator left the theatre in panic.

Why did European and Indian audiences react to the same film in two different ways? I feel this has to do with the Indian value system. When cinema arrived as the western import to India, Indian audiences took to it as the marvel of the century, but to the feudal Indian mindset the new medium was closer to the folk arts – the oldest form of entertainment in India. Their expectations from cinema were similar to what the folk arts provided as entertainment.

Unlike the Europeans, Indians patronized traditional art forms like Yaksha Gaan, Jatra, Tamasha, Naman etc. Centuries before the scientific invention of cinema, the folk arts formed the popular diet of entertainment. Folk arts were performed by the local artists. A person known to the entire village played Rama in a Ramayana enactment. Therefore, the village knew it well that the artist is not Rama; he is enacting Rama. A similar reaction came from the audience at Novelty cinema when “Arrival of Train” was screened. The audience was already aware that cinema –

the train — was not true. Though the Indian audience reacted in a matured manner in comparison with its European counterpart, the audience did not accept cinema as an art form. Cinema remained a medium of entertainment, like the folk arts. The early Indian film-makers, with some notable exceptions of course, also developed new cinema on this premise. Many times cinema was mistaken as a composite art of all other arts. Even Western film-makers like Charlie Chaplin and John Ford counted themselves as “entertainers”.

Satyajit Ray, perhaps, was the first Indian film-maker to regard cinema as an international art form. Though Hollywood cinema nurtured his sensitivity towards cinema, he had a clear vision of cinema medium, and he was disturbed by the degeneration of Indian mainstream cinema in general and Bengali cinema in particular. Therefore he took the initiative and started Calcutta Film Society on October 5<sup>th</sup> 1947 - barely two months after India won independence - to liberate cinema from the shackles of commercialisation.

Ray’s vision was clear that unless attitude of audience changed, Indian Cinema will not change. He strongly believed that Indian audience should be provided a true and pure cinematic experience to enable them to understand the difference between good cinema and bad cinema. In the initial days of the film society, it faced opposition. “We were also being subjected to a two pronged attack. One came from the film trade which spread the word that a group of subversive youngsters was running down Bengali films at meetings and seminars. The other came from a household which included one of our club members”, Ray wrote in the introduction of his seminal book *Our Films, Their Films*.

For the first two years, the membership of the Calcutta Film Society did not cross 25. Capturing the atmosphere at the time, Ray wrote “Our enthusiasm was beginning to acquire a tinge of cynicism. We could see we did not have

much of field to disseminate over". The dismal picture began to change when Indian constitution was born on Jan 26, 1950. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru unleashed several reforms with the desire to change the feudal Indian society towards his vision of an industrial and modern society.

Pandit Nehru created five year plans for economic development and initiated projects like big dams for hydro power generation, new industries, industrial zones etc. However, he was aware that the feudal Indian mindset will not accept these reforms easily. He felt that the paradigm shift in the social outlook towards life would need other means. Therefore, he set up and became the first president of Sahitya Akademi to encourage literature, and encouraged the establishment of Sangeet Natak Akademi and Lalit Kala Akademi among others. However cinema was a huge challenge, and therefore he appointed the S K Patil Committee or Film Inquiry Committee to study cinema and recommend a 'Film Policy' to the government of India.

The idea of the committee was to encourage the making of good cinema, which could be better than the prevailing commercial cinema. S K Patil Committee thorough enquired into the evils of film trade and suggested remedial measures in its Film Policy. The committee thourouy studied the four pillars of cinema industry – production, distribution, exhibition and audience tastes. The government accepted the report.

Later, the government initiated several cinema institutions to promote and nurture good cinema. The Film and Television Institute of India was born for training filmmakers, the National Film Archive of India was created to preserve films, the Film Finance Corporation was set up to finance good cinema, IMPEC was created to promote export of Indian cinema, and Hindustan Photo Films was created to manufacture raw stock. Moreover, India also launched platforms like the International Film Festival of India, and the national awards to encourage cinema, artists and filmmakers.

However, the SK Patil Committee also noted that to keep good cinema alive, it needed an "aware audience", and recommended that this job of creating an aware audience should be entrusted to the nascent Film Society Movement. It did not want to entrust this job to the government babudom.

Meanwhile, Ray's efforts began yielding just fruits. More film societies were set up in the country though they numbered six or seven. Ray's close friend and co-founder of Calcutta Film Society Chidananda Dasgupta had moved

to New Delhi to edit *Span* magazine published by the American embassy.

Dasgupta and Krishna Swami, who was heading the Films Division, took the initiative to make the Film Society Movement a country-wide movement. The idea of the Federation of Film Societies of India (FFSI) was born. A meeting was called at the residence of Krishna Kripalani, the then Sahitya Akademi Secretary, and FFSI was formed on Dec 13, 1959. Satyajit Ray, and Indira Gandhi became the President and Vice President respectively of the new body.

FFSI's initial objective was to form an all India Film Society Movement to introduce film policy in its truest sense and work as a liaison between the movement and the central govt. In late 1950's, the film society movement began to gradually spread out and more film societies began to come up in different states.

***The Film Society Movement  
is also known as  
Film Appreciation Movement.***

During the mid 1960s, three major film societies were formed - the Film Forum in Mumbai, the Cine Central in Calcutta and the Delhi Film Society. Each boasted a healthy membership of around 2500 members. The success of these societies paved the way for the formation of more film societies. A Film Society was the only source to watch international cinema at local level in those days. The International Film Festival of India started in 1952 had come into its own, and helped to create awareness about international cinema. Its presence helped the Film Society Movement fan across the country.

Though the FFSI existed since 1959, in a literate state like Kerala, the movement could not percolate until 1966. Malayalam film maker Adoor Gopalakrishnan had just finished his Diploma in Direction from Pune's FTII, and he returned to Trivandrum. On return, he initiated the Chitrlekha Film Co-operative to make films, but he soon realized that the Kerala audience was not yet ready to accept the kind of films that he wished to make. Therefore, he set up Chitrlekha Film Society, Kerala's first film society, in Trivandrum in 1966. It screened 16 mm films and had a motley membership of 200 members. It may sound funny today, but Gopalak-rishnan himself operated the 16mm projector with the help of a sound engineer.

With a high literacy rate, the movement picked up speed in Kerala in no time. Within next five to six years, the state

boasted 25 film societies in its major towns. As the movement began spreading, Gopalakrishnan made his first film, *Swayamwaram* in 1972. The film achieved success, and the film co-operative returned the loan it had taken from the Film Finance Corporation. Today, Kerala boasts the highest number of film societies in India.

While film societies created awareness about good cinema, the FFSI also did its liaisoning job with the central government, and obtained censorship exemption for foreign films. Vice president of FFSI, Smt. Indira Gandhi became the Information and Broadcasting Minister, and opened up several other avenues for the Film Society Movement. One of them was the entertainment tax exemption, from the state Govt. which was a shot in the arm for the progress of the movement.

Two other factors also helped the movement grow directly or indirectly. The first was the signing of a cultural pact between India and 40 other nations. This paved the way for importing 16mm films and the Japan Foundation provided works of Kurosawa and Ozu to film societies. During the 60's, other Asian countries like China, Korea, and Iran were busy developing its film industry and therefore no films were available from these countries.

Another factor which helped Film Society Movement grow in 1970s was the role played by the Pune based National Film Archive of India under the able leadership of its then director, PK Nair, Nair initiated a one month Film Appreciation Course in English at the Film and Television Institute of India with the help of Prof Satish Bahadur, the professor of Film Appreciation at the institute. The Course gave priority in admissions to film society activists. The course went on to be very popular for anyone who appreciated world cinema.

**National Film Archive,  
Parelle Cinema Movement  
in Hindi, International  
Film Festival of India  
Contributed  
to the Spread of Film Society  
Movement in 1970's**

The course created a conducive atmosphere for true film appreciation. It is pertinent to note that when this course was initiated, film reviews in the newspapers was the only means of evaluating cinema. There was no serious film criticism existent at that time. With his dedication and hard work, Prof Bahadur helped change this situation and set

the solid foundation for serious film writing.

Besides, the month-long course, Nair and Bahadur also devised a short film appreciation of one week duration. Not stopping at that, they also conducted the courses across India with the help of film society network. The short film appreciation course soon became the model for dissemination of film culture in India. Archives also replied films to the film societies and special packages for the festivals. FFSI-Archive it. Screening were started in Mumbai, Kolkata, Benglore etc.

This provided impetus to the Film Society Movement, and created a generation of true and hardcore cinema lovers who appreciated the nuances of the film art. Many of those youngsters who joined the movement in the 1970s continue to do be active in the Film Society Movement, till today.

Indirect help also came from the Parallel Cinema movement, which stood on its feet with the financial assistance from Film Finance Corporation (FFC). B K Karanjia, then editor of Filmfare, was the chairman of FFC, while Chidananda Dasgupta, one of the FFSI founders, was also a director on FFC. Board, These two scripted the new policy for financing films. Mr. B. K. Karajia Wroke.

“Financing low budget films was not the only plank in FFC’s new policy. This policy itself evolved out of conditions of film making which were in some ways peculiar to India. For one thing, it was difficult, if not impossible, for a newcomer in India, however, talented he might be to get finance for making a film from the conventional sources – unless of course he was able to sign up a male and a female star in order to attract the conventional finance. For another, a weakness, particularly of the Hindi film makers, was to copy from foreign films when not copying from one another. This was the major reason why Indian Cinema had almost ceased to be Indian.

These two considerations formed the major planks of FFC’s new Policy – firstly, to sponsor talented and promising newcomers from the FTII or outside, and secondly to encourage these newcomers to film the works of our own eminent writers in Hindi or regional languages. This, then, was the ‘formula’ adopted by the FFC – low budget films, talented new comers and Indian stories.”

This was a new approach in the realm of mainstream film-making prevalent during mid 1960s. The mantra of the film industry then was “Star is the theme and star is the director”. The FFC financed Mrinal Sen’s Hindi film *Bhuvan Shome* and released it in 1969, and followed it up with Basu Chatterjee’s *Sara Akash*. This sparked off a new wave in

Indian cinema which came to be known as the “Parallel Cinema”. This term was first used by Arvind Kumar, editor of *Madhuri*, a Hindi film magazine of the Times of India group.

Many of these “Parallel Cinema” directors came from the Film Society Movement directly or indirectly. This gave a further boost to the Film Society Movement in states other than West Bengal and Kerala, where Satyajit Ray, Mrinal Sen and Ritwik Ghatak, and Adoor Gopalakrishnan, G Arvindan and others had already created a model representing good cinema. The Parallel Cinema made in Hindi provided a similar model representing good cinema to Hindi cinema viewers. The new awakening generated by *Pather Panchali* (1955) in Bengali slowly reached other languages. Kannada cinema witnessed it with Girish Karnad-written *Samskara* (1970), while in Marathi, prominent playwright Vijay Tendulkar penned *Shantata Court Chalu Aahe* based on his own play.

These models of unconventional cinema made it easy for film society activists to garner more strength and vigour to further the movement. The 1970’s was the golden decade

for off beat cinema. Shyam Benegal came on the horizon in 1972 with *Ankur* (The Seedling). Film-makers like Girish Kasarvalli with *Ghatshradhha* (1978), Dr. Jabbar Patel with *Samana* (The Confrontation, 1975), M S Sathyu with *Garm Hawa* (1973), Arvindan with *Uttarayan* (1974), and Ketan Mehta with Gujarati film *Bhavni Bhavai* (1980) brought this cinema into other Indian languages. The International Film Festival of India (IFFI) took note of this development and introduced the ‘Indian Panorama’ section at Chennai Filmotsav in 1978. The section has since been an intrinsic part of the IFFI till today.

The Film Society Movement registered 300 film societies all over India during this golden decade. The growth of the movement was robust in comparison with the earlier decade. However, the entire movement remained centred on urban areas, and spread across largely to metro cities and semi metro towns. It could not widen its base to rural India except in Kerala.

The long march of the movement was abruptly jolted by the arrival of colour television in 1982. Home viewing received another boost two years later when Doordarshan

was allowed 24-hour telecasting, and video technology also arrived in the Indian market later in 1984. The home entertainment craze created by colour television and video first hit the collections of the mainstream cinema, and later the Film Society Movement. By 1990, many film societies shut down due to lack of response. Those who survived, they had their memberships reduced drastically. In hindsight, we can deduce that film society did not brace this attack with innovative changes. They continued to merely screen films, and neglected the other aspect of the movement – the study of cinema. The handful of societies which survived during this period performed the balancing act of screening films as well



*Hon. Buddhadeb Bhattacharya Chief Minister of West Bengal lighting a lamp to inaugurate the Golden Jubilee Celebrations, Sandip Ray, Sudhir Nandgaonkar GS, Pradipto Shankar Sen of Calcutta Film Society & Bijan Sen Sarma RS. looks on*

organising film appreciation and academic activities simultaneously.

The downward slide of the movement continued for the almost 10 years — from 1984 to 1994. However, in 1992, Hollywood took note of Satyajit Ray's contribution to cinema, and honoured an unwell Ray with a Special Oscar for lifetime achievement. Ray was hospitalized at that time, and soon passed away. However, the Oscar created a buzz about the legend and his cinema, and generated fresh enthusiasm in the movement. It created a curiosity about the movement among lay cinegoers.

In 1991, India adopted market economy, and joined the globalization bandwagon. Globalisation opened up the skies and satellite television followed cable television into India. It also brought a slew of television channels, and killed the video craze. In 1995 when cinema celebrated its centenary, DVD and CD technology was introduced in India. *If the video technology hit the Film Society Movement, the DVD technology rejuvenated it, and put life back into it.* The FFSI sniffed a good opportunity to revive the movement with easy availability of films on DVD.

The 7<sup>th</sup> Triennial conference held in Pune discussed the possibility of adopting the DVD format in the film society screenings. Foreign embassies and consulates informed the FFSI that henceforth they will not bring in 35 or 16 mm films, but only DVDs of the contemporary cinema made in their respective countries. Since the birth of the movement, the FFSI had relied heavily on foreign films supplied by foreign missions of various countries. With this change, film societies gradually began showing films on DVD, and it triggered a revival of the movement. After year 2000, new film societies began coming up. Some of the closed societies began reviving, and the membership strength of each society began improving.

In 2006 the Central Office of the FFSI shifted to Mumbai. Shyam Benegal was President and I was elected as a General Secretary. We conducted a survey of the memberships of film societies and found that the average age of film society member was between 40 & 45 years. It meant that youngsters between the age group of 18 & 25 years were fewer in numbers. Benegal then gave a call for forming 'Campus Film societies' in Colleges and Universities. Accordingly, the West and South Region made the first efforts in this direction and Campus Film Societies began coming up.

In 2008-09, the FFSI decided to celebrate its Golden Jubilee (1959 – 2009) in a big way. The purpose of the grand

celebrations was to reach out to people outside the film society circuit. We also noticed that the National Film Archive of India had been organising film appreciation courses in English since 1967. Realising that film culture could not be spread only in a foreign language, the FFSI decided to organise film appreciation courses in local languages to reach out to cinegoers.

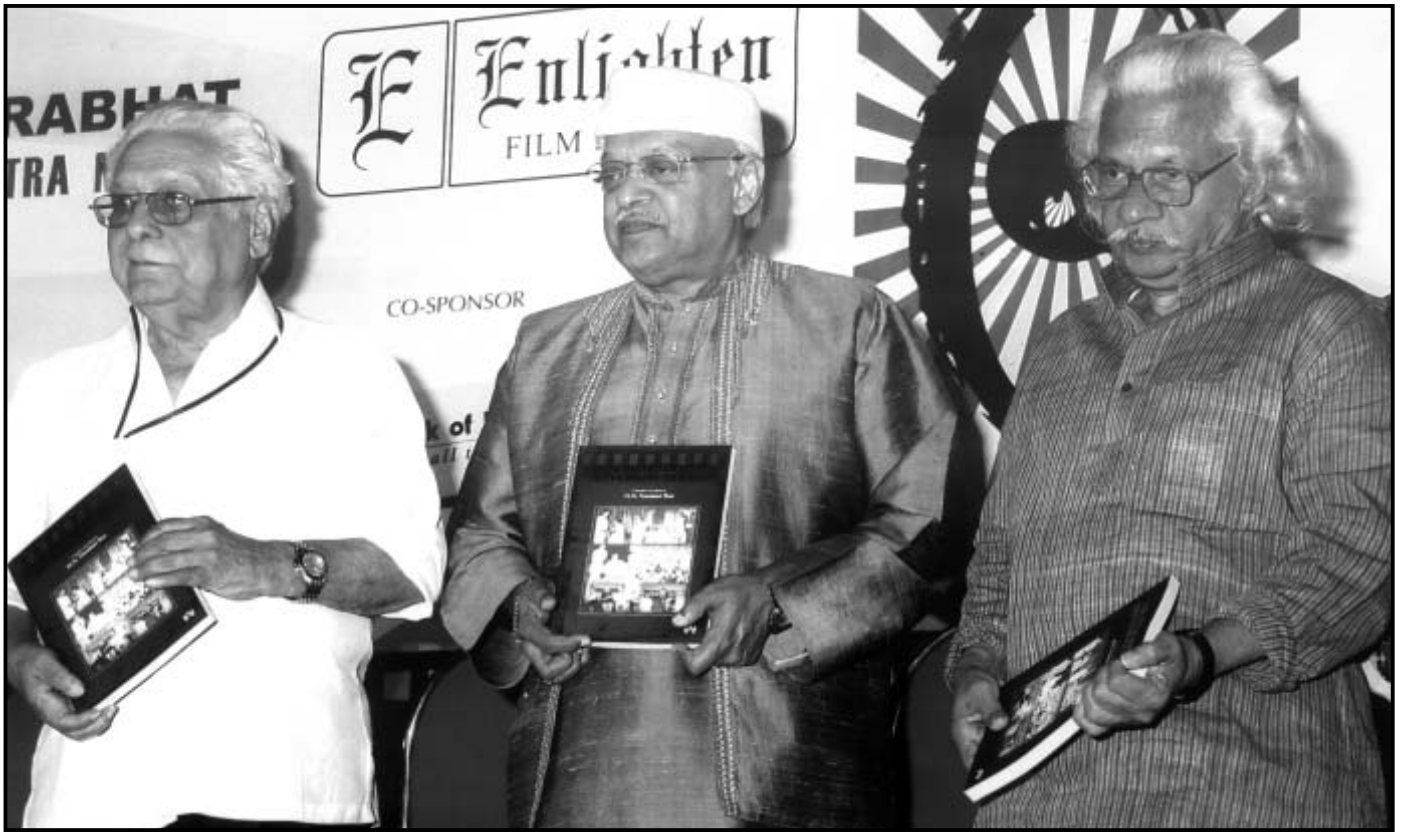
The Maharashtra Chapter of the FFSI took the initiative and organised the first Regional language Film Appreciation Course (Marathi) at Pune in collaboration with Pune University in 2007. The National Film Archive of India also joined hands, and from 2010 the FFSI and NFAI will jointly organise F.A. Courses in Regional languages. Four F A Courses are in the pipeline in Hindi (Indore) Kannada (Bangalore) Telugu (Karim Nagar) and Marathi (Pune). It is expected that these language courses will take the movement beyond big metro cities and will also help impress upon film societies that they should lay a special emphasis on academic activities along with film screening. Activities like discussions on films screened, short film appreciation courses, seminars could be organised. And this has become possible due to the DVD technology.

Critics of the movement often ask me what is the relevance of the Film Society Movement today when three 24-hour TV channels beam world cinema into satellite homes? Moreover, they say, DVDs of world cinema can be accessed by a lay cinegoer at the neighbourhood DVD library. On the face of it, this argument looks absolutely right. However, the fact is that even bad cinema has reached our homes. Not all films screened by the TV channels are classics of cinema. I feel that it is because of this that the Film Society Movement remains even more relevant today.

World literature is available in book shops as well prominent libraries in a city like Mumbai. Yet why do colleges and universities teach literature in classrooms? It is to establish the nuances and create a deeper understanding of global literature. I, therefore, feel that doubts about the relevance of Film Society Movement's should be a closed subject henceforth. Film society activists who work so selflessly, without any recognition or remuneration, should continue to work towards achieving the goal of disseminating film culture.

To celebrate its Golden Jubilee, the FFSI has, in collaboration with Asian Film Foundation, published a book, *History of Film Society Movement* edited by H N Narahari Rao. The book records with great care the rise and fall and the revival of the movement. More such books should be published in regional languages to reach out to a





*The book 'History of Film Society Movement in India' was released by Basu Chatterjee, Kiran Shantaram Vice President of FFSI & Adoor Gopal Krishan during 8th Third Eye Asian FF in Mumbai.*

wider audience. Though Film Society Movement has been active for 50 years, the Indian society has not recognised its self less work to popularize cinema as an art form. That is because even today, cinema has not been accepted as an art form like literature or music. Writing on British cinema in one of his books, Satyajit Ray observed, "But if the British lacked the ability to create, they were certainly not lacking in the power of appreciation of the films as an art form. The film society movement grew and spread quickest in Britain." Indian society has not achieved this state of the mind, and hence there is no recognition of individuals who spent their entire life to establish cinema as an art form. The Third Eye Asian Film Festival in Mumbai of which I am director has made a small beginning in this direction, and instituted an award to recognize such individuals and their work. The Satyajit Ray Memorial Award is given to individuals those for whom spreading film culture has been a lifetime mission. In last four years, the award was conferred upon Prof. Satish Bahadur, who taught film appreciation at the Film and Television Institute of India, P K Nair, who built the National Film Archive of India single handedly, film-maker Basu Chatterjee, who introduced film society in Mumbai through Film Forum, and Aruna Vasudev, who introduced Asian Cinema through film

festival in New Delhi. The Indian government has to one day recognise the contribution of Film Society Movement.

Even after the Golden Jubilee celebrations, the long march of the movement has not stopped. And it is still on a little road. India's population today has crossed over one billion. But, how many film societies exist today? Only 300 and their countrywide membership strength does not exceed 1.5 lakh. *These numbers may certainly increase in the near future*, but in comparison with our population, it is but a drop in the ocean. That is why the long march has to continue with renewed determination of transforming the *little road into a highway for good cinema*.

Despite the voluntary work that the Film Society Movement does, it is not considered a Non Government Organisation. I hope that our society accepts the movement as a cultural NGO. I think that change would happen when a majority of this population accepts cinema as an art form on par with literature, theatre, and music.

●●●

*Sudhir Nandgaonkar, General Secretary of FFSI (2006-2010) is film critic, founder of Mumbai International at film festival and third Eye Asian film festival, Mumbai- Currently he is Director of Third Eye Asian FF.*

# I invest myself in my films:

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## Adoor Gopalakrishnan

■ Bikas Mishra.

**H**ow did the Journey begin? Cinema by its very nature is dynamic and evolving. I can't make a film today that I had made in 1972. What I invest in my films is my experience, my culture. The function of cinema is not just mere delineation of a story or a plot. I invest myself in my films.

That means whatever experience you carry with you, changes you undergo, things that you imbibe, get reflected in your work and that's true of every artist.

I was very surprised when I watched a film like "Mamma Roma", Pasolini's second film. It gave no clue to what he was to do in his life later. You watch his progress. By the time he comes towards the end, he goes mad, really mad; you can't call him crazy, he is gone beyond all that. It tells upon the life he has lived, the life he perhaps chose to live. In the very truthful pursuit of art, there is nothing that you can create outside of yourself.

It is not uncommon for people to ask me why I had not made a film like one of those I had made earlier. I tell them I had already made those films and it was unfair to expect of me to replicate it. I can't copy myself. I don't think any self-respecting artist would do that. Some critic or scholar may evaluate your work and say- during this period you did your best work; during another period there is a decline, things like that. But these are all relative, depending on what yardsticks they've used to measure your work.

Even in your physical being, one goes through several stages of growth – childhood, adulthood and youth and the inevitable old age and degeneration, decline and death. Your mental and spiritual health cannot be entirely divorced from the physique. And each stage of your life is filled with interesting experiences and one only needs to be perceptive and taking positively to the many splendours of ageing.

I don't know whether it is conscious or unconscious but there is a sustained effort on the part of the artist not to go back to where he started from. Many of the scholars and researchers do not understand this.

Take for instance Satyajit Ray's work. It is true of many known filmmakers of the world. I love Tarkovsky's "Stalker" and "Andrei Rublev" but can't appreciate his later films. I realize, I have my limitations when it comes to certain important works of world masters. There is always a certain degree of subjectivity in our approach and it should not be taken for final assessment of a work.

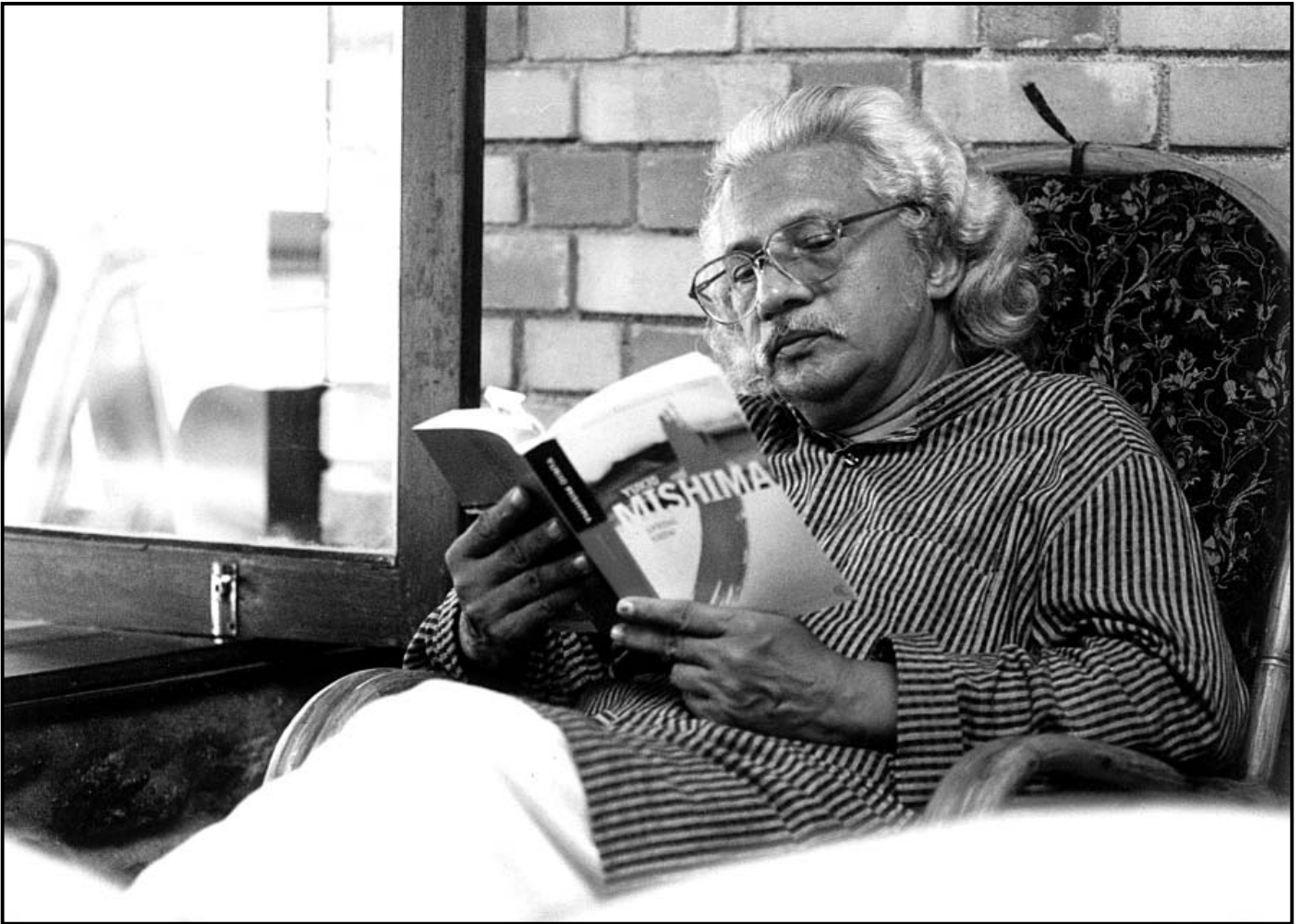
### **Do you think of an audience while making your films?**

When I make a film, I'm the creator, critic and audience – all together. That's how I am able to create and, look at my own work critically with a certain degree of detachment. These three roles you combine in yourself when you also write your own script.

### **Do you revisit your films and certain films you tend to like more than the others?**

There are very few occasions for this. One is when there is a retrospective of your films. Invariably you introduce the film and you've to stay on in the hall until the end of the screening. In Europe the audience stays back for an interaction with the director after the film. My last film lives with me until I make my next. I do need to forget it before I can think about a new one. It takes a sincere effort to wean myself away from its influence. It's at

once a conscious as well as unconscious act.



**Your own assessment when you sit inside an auditorium and watch your film with others?**

The same film can be felt differently with different audiences. And I tell myself, you can't trust this feeling because you're being influenced by the people sitting around you. Some audiences radiate their feelings, some don't. You would never get to know what they really think. Only after the screening if they feel like talking to you, they come and tell you their impression of the film, that's all. Let me explain: I wouldn't let any film of mine be taken to an audience without having done everything possible according to my own judgment and conviction. There have been instances when important film festivals had asked me to hurry and complete a film before their deadline. Happily, I have not yielded to such temptations because I think my films should have a life of its own long after those deadlines. I can't rush through my work. I take a considerably long time to edit as well as to do other post-production. Not even once have I made a film with a release date before me.

From different audiences you may get different feedbacks but you shouldn't either be carried away by it or be upset

about it. Your own assessment of the work is the thing to go by. I don't know why but some films work better in some countries. For example, Mathilukal (The Walls): the best audience I've had for the film was in France. The response there had been very heartening. A few years back, at the Manosque film festival in Southern France, the master filmmaker Jean Rouche, who propounded the theory of Cinema Verite, was in the audience, when as part of a tribute to me, the festival showed Kathapurusham (Man of the story) and Mathilukal (The Walls). On the second day after the screening of Mathilukal, when the interaction session began, Jean Rouche, the grand old man, who was past 80, got up and started talking. I never had such an over-whelming response from another filmmaker in Europe. He went on talking about the film excitedly. He told the audience that he was going to recommend the film to the National Centre for Cinema for compulsory viewing by every new entrant to cinema in France.

Thirteen years after the film was made, it was in a competition in a special festival for youth in one of the districts of Paris, and this film was voted as the best and it also won the award for best director.

**The Walls was your first adaptation from a literary source?**

Yes, it was a free adaptation of a short story by Vikom Muhammad Bashir. And then, film *Vidheyan* was loved by people in Japan and Germany. The well known Japanese director Kohei Oguri happened to see this film in a festival and recommended that the Japan Broadcasting Corporation co-produce a film with me in their first ever venture with another Asian country (It resulted in Kathapurushan). Like that *Swayamvaram* for instance, was very popular almost everywhere it was shown.

Last May I had a retrospective of my films at the Cinematheque in Munich. On the first day *Swayamvaram* was shown and after the screening people came out and told me that they thought it was a masterpiece. The same experience I had in France. Again at a retrospective at the Paris Cinematheque. I was very apologetic while introducing the film. I said I had made the film long back in 1971 and it was my first film. I did not stay on until the end of the film that day and got no inkling of how the audience reacted to it. But the next morning, the director of Cinematheque called and congratulated me. The young people who came to see the film were thanking him for screening it. They were so deeply affected by it. It is not the year of production of a film that counts but how it impacts an audience.

*Four Women*, again now turns out to be my most popular film in terms of festival participation, it has already gone to some 45 international film festivals. Even after two years of screening around the world, it's still circulating.

So it happens, it appeals in some way. But the appeal of this film is not restricted to Europe or Asia or the US. Everywhere it had a direct appeal to women. In fact, 80% of the audiences everywhere were composed of women and they simply loved the film. If you look at it, it is set at least 50 years back in time. It covers the period between the 40s and 60s. It is set in a remote village in Kerala and talks about the women there.

But it appeals to the present generation in London and other modern cities of the world, its appeal transcending time, place, culture etc.

**Does it matter that how many festivals a film travels to and what kind of response it gets? Does that affect you as a filmmaker?**

Yes, in some ways it does. Basically it establishes the fact that your film has a universal appeal. Secondly, in terms of aesthetics and technique and also style, you are seen and appreciated at a level that is considered high. When a festival of repute invites me to present my film, I

respond and wherever it is obligatory to sit with the audience, I do oblige. Usually one is required to do so for the main/evening screening.

**Coming to a very basic question, why do you make films?**

Firstly, this is my profession. I am a fully qualified and equipped professional constantly keeping abreast of the new developments in my medium. Not only do I make a living out of it, but it is my life as well. If I were very detached and had perceived my profession as a business I could have churned out very popular cinema and made lots of money. In short, having learned and tested the mechanics of the medium, I could have sold myself. But more than anything else, I attach so much respect and sanctity to my profession that I can't think of compromising. I do things I enjoy doing and have full conviction in what I do. Basically, it is to share an experience with other people, my fellow beings. It should be an experience I had relished and it should be worth sharing with others. It is immaterial if the audience is foreign or domestic. Imagine a scene - as soon as the screening begins, the audience starts walking out of the hall: it really affects you. It has a very negative impact. It's not about the number of festivals or the number of people who come but the level of their understanding. *Four Women*, right from the first festival was a sell out wherever it was shown. That was a unique response. In a big festival, there are only a couple of films that get sold out for every show. So that is a very pleasing and flattering response from film lovers of a certain caliber.

**You haven't made a film in any language other than your mother tongue?**

For me language is not just a medium to convey ideas, it is a lot more than that. Actually language is the flower of a culture. I don't have a deep knowledge of any other language. Malayalam is one language I was born into. That is the language I started listening to, then speaking and also reading and writing. I may even have genetically imbibed the bond with my mother tongue from my parents and siblings. When I talk in English, I am not exactly talking like an Englishman. I cannot. If I make a film in Hindi, I cannot make a really truthful Hindi film. There should be a reason for one part of the country speaking in Hindi while another speaks Bengali. I think it is because our languages had got evolved in a particular milieu. Life lived in a certain manner, the climate experienced, the kind of food eaten, the clothes worn ... all have contributed to the evolution of each language. Each of them has its own rhythm, its own intonation, its own beauty and poetry. That's why I dare not stray into

another language. Many well meaning people have told me that if I make a film in Hindi, I would have better exposure and wider audience. The truth is far from it. When they say Hindi film, it is not the language spoken that they are referring to. It is the kind of Hindi films that are being made. There have been many good films produced in Hindi but they languish in cans for want of distribution and visibility.

### **Are you in touch with contemporary popular Hindi cinema?**

I have seen a few, not too many. I get the feeling that popular Hindi cinema is becoming more and more professional. When confronted with some of the popular films, I used to wonder as to where could all the money reported to have been spent gone – definitely not in the production of the film because they used to terribly lack in production values.

I think, all that is changing now. One spots good professionals in the field. Popular Hindi films did not seem to have any ambition before, now all too soon they have become ambitious. This is a positive sign, which I admire. I was chairing this Jury in Cairo, where one of the films in competition was the Indian entry, *New York* (Kabir Khan). I was very pleasantly surprised by its professional quality. Very competently made, it looked like a Hollywood film. And of course that is their dream, to make films like Hollywood. In fact it is a much better film than *Slumdog Millionaire*.

### **What is it about *Slumdog* that wins it audiences all over the world?**

I think it does because the film is very direct and simple, and also slick and simplistic. It very cleverly endorses what the west thinks about India. If you look at it closely, it is a very anti-Indian film. It looks at our polity in disdain, shows scant regard for our legal system, it presumes that our society has no sense of values, we are primitive and that there is no rule of law.....it looks at the country as a slum. India may have the slums. But we are not the only country that happens to have produced slums. May be we are more visible. We have many drawbacks, many inadequacies, many ills but we still attach a lot of importance to values and ours is a very humane civil society. India is an ancient culture (not a quote from the Dept. of Tourism) and may be it is not discernable to a casual foreign visitor. If one gets so entrenched in the slush of the slum may be it is difficult to look beyond and learn about our life. The person who is responsible for the film has no idea about Indian psyche at all. The American belief that all poor people are unhappy people is absolutely wrong. Recently I was

traveling in the U.S and everywhere people kept asking me what I thought about *Slumdog* and I told them- ‘the most terrible film I’ve ever seen’. Then I would explain to the person standing before me in utter disbelief, “Every turn in that film’s plot is built on falsehood, there is not an iota of truth in it. For instance, do you think any police inspector will take a boy to the station and torture him with third degree methods for giving correct answers in a quiz programme? And then, do you think this illiterate boy will know whose picture it is on the dollar note-whether it is Roosevelt or George Washington? I deal in different currencies, dollar the most when I travel, but to this day I do not know whose picture it is on it. A dollar note is thrown at this boy and the boy seems to know everything about the dollar. In India nobody will insult and ill treat you for being poor. No body will tell you on your face that you are a *slumdog* and good for nothing. On the contrary, we have glorified poverty so much that it is considered virtuous to be poor. This filmmaker doesn’t seem to understand it. It is a typical American attitude that the dough is above everything in life.

About the beginning of the film you see the boy jumping into the make-shift lavatory’s deep shit. It does not take long to realize that this act very well defines the nature as well as the approach of the film.

### **Your impression of contemporary young mainstream Hindifilmmakers?**

I have seen only a couple of their films. It will be wrong to make any judgment. At the same time, you cannot have the two things together: to be brave and also popular. I think you have to make a choice. You have to take the risk of possible failure. Hindi cinema is of course changing – changing for the better. It had declined so much in the recent past that now it has to come up. The period of great filmmaking in Hindi popular cinema with Bimal Roy, Guru Dutt, Raj Kapoor etc. is now in the past. May be it is high time it made a come-back.

### **Are there any patterns in your visualization? How do you begin a film?**

There is no fixed pattern. The seed of a film often emerges from an idea – an exciting idea, an idea or thought that keeps bothering you. An idea is not immediately translated into a story or a script. In fact, as a matter of practice, I leave it aside for some time - days, months and even years. It is possible that while keeping one in abeyance, other ideas may occur. You don’t go after the ideas, they come to you. What is important is to keep your self free and open. Sometimes you feel that you have struck an idea that is unique and exciting. But you sleep over it, and find it not that very interesting. If the initial feeling

of excitement does not sag with the passage of time, then it's something worth working on. But it's a long process. The rate of rejection is so high that you will have rejected all or most of it over a period of time. Sometimes some ideas come back in different forms offering a strong potential for very interesting dramatic treatment. When you are creatively provoked and led to newer possibilities of plot structure and treatment, you start writing.

An idea is developed into a script through several stages. The synopsis or the story outline in brief is the second stage. The story is told through several incidents involving interesting characters and their interaction. The emerging structure is the plot. A detailed, dramatic delineation of the sequence of incidents make up the treatment. Usually, I write a treatment and I leave it aside. Then I read it after a few months as if someone else wrote it. By then you will have detached yourself from it. If it is still interesting, then it is well worth working on. Such material in hand, I shall feel confident to go ahead with the logistics of filmmaking.

While working on a script, it is important that one does not take historical facts as well as contemporary realities for granted. There are legal as well as social mores that have to be thoroughly researched before attempting filming. Any misrepresentation of facts would nullify the effect of your work because I think my films are at one level social documents.

#### **What are your views on the Digital format?**

Optical film will be gone before long. The digital medium has so far not been able to match the resolution of cinema film. But I think it won't be long before this is achieved. With that many things are set to change – film projection, distribution—the very concept of filmmaking itself.

#### **Are you open to making your films in digital format?**

There won't be any chance to make a choice. All the processing labs are already in a crisis now. People are not making that many prints any more. In place of release prints, the trend now is to go for digital release beaming the film directly to theatres through satellite. The advantage is that through digital you can increase the number of theatres where you show your film provided the exhibitors are co-operative. New technology is fine but those who command it should take kindly to the off beat cinema.

#### ***Mukhamukham* (Face to Face) is one of your most intriguing films; where did it begin?**

The film is about a question, 'What happened?'

Those who seek the answer are very ordinary people. They had been offered a dream but it was not fulfilled. Facts often are too harsh to be accepted. We prefer the image to the real. A distance from the real in terms of time lets it collect a certain halo around it. You prefer such a romantic image to a reality which is too hard to accept. That's an everyday experience. The film has a very complex structure. It is about youth, revolt, ageing, memory and imagination. The hero of the film materializes before the audience through the 'blocks' of memory of different people progressively built to construct a small time revolutionary from the past and then they collectively wish his return. This is both real as well as conjectural. And then his coming back is just a possibility. The old hero who returns is again built up of the bits and pieces of information that they have of him.

The response of the politicians to this film was very simplistic. They thought it was not favourable to them. They did not concede that there could a film without being opposed to or in praise a political party or faith.

#### **Mathilukal (The Walls) also ends with an ambivalent feeling....Was the woman actually there?**

The writer had always been affirmative that there was a real woman on the other side of the wall. She was serving her term there because she had murdered her husband. But in my film, I brought in the element of ambivalence. Maybe she was a real character, also, may be not, she could be a figment of the writer's imagination. This way a new dimension is brought in.

#### **Do you think it is necessary for a filmmaker to get professional training before making films? Had you been as good a filmmaker if you had not gone to the Film institute?**

I would not have been practicing cinema at all. My area of specialization was theatre. I thought my professional life would be in theatre. Even before I joined the institute, I had published plays. I was a *pucca* theatre person. Actually I had planned to go to the National School of Drama. But then I learnt that the medium was Hindi. I thought what was I going to do after I come back? Going to produce Hindi plays?

Then I chanced upon this advertisement of the Film Institute (FTII); that was in 1961. I joined the Institute the next year. And the course of my life changed with that.

Yes, it helps a lot to get formally trained.

#### **So, did this change happen during your 3 years at the institute?**

**Can you please share your experience of starting the first film society in Kerala. Why did you feel the need for the same?**

Half way through the first year of my study at the Film Institute, Prof. Satish Bahadur joined there as the professor of Film Appreciation. Although the Institute had started a year before in 1961 and there was a subject of study called Film Appreciation, the teachers who were put in charge hardly knew what to teach. The allotted periods were filled with the screening of films for most of the duration and if time allowed, the teacher would tell us how beautiful the film was. But with the joining of Prof. Bahadur everything changed. He started analyzing the films he showed in great many details. The structure of the film, characterization, composition of shots, lighting, sound, movement of the camera and characters — everything was scrutinized and studied. Suddenly instead of being an appendage to the curriculum, film appreciation became a vital part of our study.

Professor Bahadur was earlier teaching in the Agra University and he was actively involved in setting up and running the Agra film society. And Ms. Marie Seton who had come to India at the invitation of Indira Gandhi to introduce and activate the study of film aesthetics and appreciation happened to spot the energetic and enthusiastic professor in Agra. She found in him the best person to teach film appreciation at the Institute and recommended him to the Ministry of I&B. Prof. Bahadur was a die-hard film society man. And I was immensely influenced by Prof. Satish Bahadur's single minded devotion to the cause of spreading film culture. Also Ms. Marie Seton herself who taught us for a short period had influenced me in thinking on the lines of starting the film society movement in Kerala. Any way, I had to wait until I finished my studies in Poona.

## **Film Societies should set up art cinemas:**



Barring a couple of bold exceptions, Malayalam cinema was mired in insipid formulae and conventions. It copied bad theatre practices and there was little scope for being influenced by what was happening in the rest of the world. Cinema, quite deservedly enjoyed little esteem compared to literature or theatre, or dance and music. My intention in starting the movement was to introduce world cinema as well as the best of Indian cinema to the public, to the University students and professionals. The first film society, named Chitrlekha was started in Trivandrum in July 1965 soon after I came out of the Institute. A large number of friends and well wishers helped the movement come true. And then in January 1966 came the 5th All India Writers' Conference. The men behind it were literary stalwarts like M. Govindan and CN Sreekantan Nair. Sensing my passion for cinema and enthusiasm to spread film culture, they proposed a film festival which I was to organize to coincide with the conference. I readily agreed because I saw in it the best opportunity to put cinema on a par with literature and gain some degree of respectability to it in this part of the world. The film festival featuring many world classics was conducted in ten district capitals and it became a big cultural event. The plan was to start a film society in each town where the festival was held. Within five years the movement had spread all over the state of Kerala and the societies in the state outnumbered those in West Bengal the leader of the movement until then.

I also had a secret agenda in starting the society in Trivandrum, a very selfish one at that- I had to keep myself abreast of what was happening in cinema around the world.

### **What are the challenges before film societies in the current era?**

Of late the situation has changed completely. Enthusiasts came together to form film societies because that was the only opening to a different kind of cinema. Today there are many channels showing off beat films. And all the classics are available in DVD format.

I think the film societies should now change its mode of functioning. A logical next step should be the setting up of Art Cinemas where worthy films are programmed and shown to the public without the postures of exclusivity.

One area where there is a total absence is that of serious periodicals on cinema. This lacuna should be addressed immediately not with yearly or quarterly publications but with that of more frequent periodicity.

### **What's your opinion on the better availability of films, especially world cinema ones on DVDs and specialized television channels?**

At the moment only foreign films are being shown on some of the Indian channels.

Today Doordarshan is a 'happy' organization at the public expense showing only Hindi commercial films. They have discontinued screening the Indian Panorama as well as award winning films. I think the attitude of the DD is shameful. This resistance to anything that is positive and worthwhile is beyond my comprehension.



***A true work of cinema is not communicating everything through dialogue but it takes you to the core of life's experience. Dialogue is just one of the many tools used to aid in that process.***

I joined the Institute all right, but I was pursuing my interest in plays and play production in my leisure time. We had a very well stocked library there. But you don't see any influence of theatre in my films. In fact, my theatre background has helped me a lot in handling my artistes. Being an actor myself, I can help my artistes a lot.

**While a student at the FTII, which filmmakers did you particularly admire?**

There were several of them. While you are a student of cinema, the advantage is that you get to see the work of all the great masters. And my learning didn't stop at the institute. In fact, one of the reasons why I went back to Kerala and started a film society was that I wanted to keep watching films. There was a personal interest in it. There of course was the public interest as well because I wanted the audiences to know that there existed outside the confines of the state as well as the country a different kind of cinema. Cinema in Kerala was in a pathetic state at that time. Barring a few exceptions every one was churning out the same inanities taking no risk at the box office. Basically cinema here was photographed bad theatre.

**Is there any particular film that you remember which completely changed your perception of the medium?**

There is no one film. It's not like some one without any background in cinema going to see a film society screening and getting immensely influenced by the great work you witness there. No, it's not like that. Here you are systematically studying cinema right from Lumiere's 'Workers leaving a factory' or 'A Child having breakfast' etc. From that to the most complex ones, you get to see all that in a systematic way. You discuss it, you study it and you learn the evolution that cinema has gone through the decades.

**You are often called cinematic successor to Satyajit Ray. How do you look at him as a filmmaker?**

I admire Ray and his work a lot. People often connect Ray and me because it so happened that I am one filmmaker that he kept saying he liked the most. I don't think it is because I make films like he did. I make my films in a completely different milieu and the concerns of films are very different from his. Ray never touched that area called politics, (except in *Gana Shatru*). Romantic realism was his forte, I think. There are areas

where we completely differ. When he saw *Mukhamukham*, he said that it takes real courage to make a film on a sleeping man. When he saw *Mathilukal*, he came out of the screening and said- *Marvelous Adoor, marvelous!* And a film like *Anantaram*, I could see that he was a bit puzzled but was very positive in his response. His films are essentially very lyrical. But, my films are not.

**Your films have some intriguing quality.....they cannot be understood.**

I always deal with ambivalences. A film like *Anantaram* is talking about the dualities, about something being like the other but not the other. I see this fact of ambivalence in our lives a lot. I am both interested and intrigued by it. Ray's eye for details really marks him out from the rest. And that is one lesson I have learnt from him-looking for the details.

Nothing is told directly but being subtle and specific in minute details makes the films authentic.

But the audience at large is not attuned to watching films. The popular cinema has taught them to look for fights and spectacles only. The film needs to tell them everything orally through long sentences of dialogue.

The audience has been made very lazy. An unthinking audience suits them. They have to be verbally told even about the visuals. A true work of cinema is not communicating everything through dialogue but it takes you to the core of life's experience. Dialogue is just one of the many tools used to aid in that process. In popular cinema, dialogue stands for everything.... the introduction of characters, building up of the conflict, and also the final resolution.

**Since your films are so different from each other, there is no one kind of filmmaking that can be associated with you.**

Every film is different, may be because of the long intervals between films. Every time I prepare a new film, I get the feeling that I have lost touch with the nitty-gritty of filmmaking. So it is always like I am making my first film. In the beginning, after I passed out of the Institute, it took seven years to make my first film. Then for various reasons, I could not make a film even once in two years. Once Ray asked me, 'Why do you take so long to make films?'. He suggested, 'You have enough recognition, people accept you, and you should make at

(Conti..on pg 20)





# NFDC is fulfilling Developmental Role

asserts Nina Gupta, M.D. National Film Development Corporation

■ Sudhir Nandgaonkar

**Q** : Post-globalization, the government withdrew the canalization fee of two percent on excise duty on film rolls imported. How is NFDC raising finance? Is the government giving any grants like they give Rs. 20 crores to Films Division, and Rs. 10 crores to NFAI belonging to central government?

**A:** After canalisation, NFDC was earning its revenues from the TV marketing business wherein NFDC was procuring films for and supplying to Doordarshan. Since 2007-2008, the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting provides funds to NFDC under the 11th Plan (totalling 36 crores) for production of feature films in various Indian languages.

**Q:** But canalisation fee dried up. Your TV revenue was also stopped. So the only part where NFDC can get revenue is the subtitling unit?

**A:** No, that's not true. We have many other activities apart from subtitling. We have equipment hire but that's a very small section of the revenue. This equipment is old and does not generate the kind of money that it did earlier. Apart from monetisation of our films, NFDC also produces and releases a lot of advertisement and short films for the government. That's a major source of revenue that helps us to meet our operating costs. This is a new activity we began last year.

**Q:** NFDC is increasingly announcing co-production. Have you stopped 100 per cent finance?

**A:** No, it's not been stopped. It is determined by the number of projects and how many actually get selected. It depends on the quality of the projects. On an average, we would like to make at least four to five films a year. In the last two years, our films *Man Beyond the Bridge* (Konkani), *Haat* (Rajasthani), *Bioscope* (Malayalam), *Mayabazaar* (Bengali) and *As the River Flows* (Assamese) have been NFDC productions.

**Q:** In this context, I want to point out that the NFDC Board in 2004 had passed a resolution that since NFDC cannot finance more than Rs. 40 lakhs and the production costs have gone up, the NFDC could look at financing digi-beta films. The resolution also said that if the film is good, it could be transferred into a 35 mm film. The idea was to encourage regional filmmakers who have average budgets up to Rs. 60-70 lakhs. We don't know if the government has accepted it. So, what is the factual position of this resolution?

**A:** I don't recall seeing any such resolution from my reading of the minutes. I will check again.

**Q:** Earlier, NFDC had produced some films in collaboration with Doordarshan and the telecast rights were with DD. Tapan Sinha's film in which Amol Palekar acted was such a collaboration. Does that scheme still continue?

**A:** That was discontinued a long time ago.

**Q:** In other countries, many TV channels are producing films...

**A:** Yes.

Q: I had been to Karlovy Vary this year where there were five films produced by TV Polska. They say they produce 5 to 10 films every year. Even big films like Andrej Wajda's *Katyn* have been produced by them. In Poland, the directors have to approach the television channels. Is NFDC considering such collaborations with TV? Is there a possibility of reviving this?

A: *Not at present. We have spoken to Doordarshan, but nothing has been finalized yet.*

Q: What is the average yearly production of NFDC – co production, part finance and 100 per cent finance?

A: *As I said, it could be anywhere between four to six films.*

Q: The general impression in the industry is that NFDC is not producing films anymore. Last year at AFF, the Konkani and Rajasthani films from NFDC were entered in the competition section. During the festival, we heard filmmakers saying that they thought that NFDC had stopped production. Is the process still the same? The script committee has to approve it before it is financed? Do you still have the script committee and the NFDC Board?

A: *Yes. The script committee has to approve the script and recommend it for finance and the approving authority for a film is the Board of Directors. Om Puri is the Chairman of the Board. Apart from ex-officio and functional directors, Jahnu Barua and Ketan Mehta are also members of the Board.*

Q: Earlier NFDC would export even films from private producers and put up stalls at various festivals. Have you stopped doing that as well?

A: *We still do that. But now, the ministry has a scheme and it sets up an Indian Pavilion.*

*I admit that as far as independent filmmakers are concerned, we are not doing as much as we would like to do. Since we also had to carry out significant internal restructuring in NFDC, that took priority. Given our constraints of finance there was no point in taking up a film and not being able to deliver on it.*

*In this scenario, there was a brief period where NFDC was almost inactive on not just export of films but on all fronts. In general, there was a widening gap between the NFDC and the film industry. So the perception that went out was that NFDC was no longer around. To regain the trust of filmmakers will obviously take sometime. It will not happen overnight.*

Q: What is the scenario regarding NFDC's distribution of films?

A: *Distribution is a very difficult business. I also acknowl-*

*edge that this has been a critical failure for NFDC. I think the small theatre scheme floated by the founders of NFDC was an excellent idea. It was similar to what is done globally. In every country, there are art theatres or specialty theatres where films that cannot generally make their way through the commercial distribution system are released. That is missing in India. NFDC had envisaged this but somewhere the theatre financing model ceased to work. We can only try to learn and attempt to make a difference. I do believe that, in order to be a really meaningful institution vis-à-vis the film industry, NFDC has to develop some kind of a distribution system.*

**Now, there is recognition within the government that the developmental mandate is important. There is a clear cut demarcation of our developmental activities and the business activities. Our developmental role is to fulfill the mandate for which it has been set up i.e. to facilitate the growth of Indian film industry.**

Q: Distribution has become difficult now as the so-called parallel cinema which NFDC was promoting in a big way is out of theatres. The multiplex culture demands stars and makes it even more difficult. But there is a ray of hope. For example, in Karnataka, all the Kannada distributors have joined hands and have taken Chitra theatre and started a programme called Chitravarsha. Every month on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, they show films with tickets, publicise them, and they are doing well. NFDC has a lot of films and it could consider doing this. Is this under consideration under the new scheme?

A: *Yes.*

Q: Why has NFDC withdrawn the scheme where producers were mandatorily told to give another print exclusively for Panorama weeks?

A: *There is no withdrawal from any kind of schemes. As I said, there was a discontinuation of many activities like production, distribution. All those challenges needed to be addressed at once and one had to prioritise them. For us it was critical that we start production, and the government is very supportive. If the developmental mandate has to be meaningful, then that mandate should not be dependent on the annual earnings of the Corporation. It was the cross-subsidisation of NFDC's developmental mandate from rev-*

venue generation that affected NFDC's developmental mandate.

**Now, there is recognition within the government that the developmental mandate is important. There is a clear cut demarcation of our developmental activities and the business activities. Our developmental role is to fulfill the mandate for which it has been set up i.e. to facilitate the growth of Indian film industry. The more critical aspects of the mandate is to promote new talent, to promote language cinemas of India and we are doing that. Through Film Bazaar, NFDC is attempting to fulfill its mandate of promoting Indian cinema internationally and domestically, which has grown since its inception in 2007. In Film Bazaar, we are trying to address the need for development across the board – from script development and presenting projects to co-producers, distributors, buyers to providing a sales platform.**

*We realise that, compared to other countries, India has not really collaborated with other countries. International collaborations not only facilitate film financing but also open avenues for distribution of these films in various countries. Internationally, from the stage of script development, there are partners and stake holders from various countries who involve themselves in the films, and therefore there is a greater chance of taking these films to new markets. It is really important if we are serious about taking Indian films beyond the diaspora.*

Q: Till 2003, NFDC was getting Rs. 20 lakhs for making prints for Panorama Weeks. Are you still getting the funds?

A: No. We only do subtitling for the Directorate of Film Festivals.

Q: NFDC has a script competition in collaboration with Locarno and Goa International Film Festivals. Is it connected to Film Bazaar? What exactly does NFDC do in this regard?

A: *We have a partnership with the Binger Film Lab, Netherlands and Locarno International Film Festival. The workshop is conducted in two stages. Stage one takes place in Locarno in August, and stage two in Goa at Film Bazaar. The purpose of the Screen Writer's Lab is not to teach people to write a script. The presumption of the Screen Writer's Lab is that the writer has already written a script and is looking for a producer. We are not training writers, we are selecting scripts that have already been written and fine tuning the scripts with the aim of fine-tuning them and making them production worthy from an international perspective.*

Q: The Pusan Festival also has a film fund. Many directors send scripts to them and Pusan keeps them in the film mar-

ket, and allows producers to pick a script and fund it.

A: *Film Bazaar has a similar co-production section where ten Indian projects are presented.*

Q: If some European country wants to pick up a script and wants to produce, then will NFDC be a co-producer?

A: *NFDC's production activities are separate from Film Bazaar's co-production market. Film Bazaar has been set up for the film industry. We are trying to connect them to the global fraternity. We connect the film maker with prospective producers within India and outside. Of course, some of the projects may well be produced by NFDC too, if applied to by the applicant.*

Q: Who approves these scripts?

A: *We have a script evaluation committee in NFDC comprising a panel of writers drawn from the film industry. A script is short listed, and a final committee selects. The final committee for Screenwriters Lab consists of Binger Film Lab, Amsterdam, in consultation with Indian representatives. This year we have Aruna Vasudev and Sooni Taraporewala on the final committee.*

Q: What are NFDC plans in the pipeline?

A: *We hope to play a greater role in promoting new talent, in enabling greater promotion of Indian cinema both within India and abroad, and in setting up exhibition/ distribution facilities for films.*

Q: There are 12 private film festivals in India apart from Goa, Kolkata, Kerala which are government-funded. In Mumbai, we have MAMI and AFF. Will it not be possible to collaborate with them?

A: *We have been collaborating with festivals.*

Q: You are helping us to hold the festival. NFDC has to take advantage of the festival. For example, you have a Film Bazaar in Goa. I don't know how many distributors you are inviting. At Teheran festival, they promote the films by two ways. They invite festival directors and show 15 films of that year along with representatives of European distributors. That's how Miramax bought *Children of Heaven*. Can we not do it here in Mumbai?

A: *We are already doing that in Goa. Directors from Cannes Film Festival, Locarno Film Festival, Rotterdam Film Festival, Sundance, IFFLA, MIAAC etc. came to Film Bazaar in 2009. We invite major film distributors also for Film Bazaar. Fortissimo Films, for instance, has been coming for three years and they have bought films also.*

Q: It is surprising that no European distributor has picked up an Indian film? They take Korean, Chinese, Iranian films?

A: *That's not strictly true, However, I agree that much more can be done.*

Q: I can understand that films which are three hours long and have five songs each will not appeal to European distributors. But, films made by directors like Shyam Benegal, or Aloor Gopalakrishnan or so many Bengali directors could be bought? What do you think is the reason for distributors not touching Indian films?

A: *It is not about the length of the Indian films... I think it is many factors. One factor is that we tend to position our films internationally only when the film is ready, unlike other countries where there is greater communication of impending projects. It makes a very big difference. Internationally, there is limited awareness regarding what is happening in India. That is what we are trying to change at Film Bazaar. You have to start connecting people from the basic level. However, we recognize that nothing happens suddenly. It is going to take time. One cannot expect instant sales - the interest has to be sustained over a period of time and only then there will be results.*

*It is also not completely true that no Indian film has been picked. As an example, an Indian Panorama documentary film, 'Children of the Fire' was acquired by a European distributor at Film Bazaar. But this change will not happen overnight. There needs to be a sustained, long term strategy. It is not that Korean films were sold overnight.*

Q: True. After 1990, Korean industry made a lot of efforts. It took 10 years for them to make a mark.

A: *Yes. Film Bazaar has just started in 2007. So it will take time and sustained efforts.*

Q: Wide Management, Miramax, Fortissimo and other foreign distributors have an International Relations Officer to deal with international films. 90 per cent of the Indian film makers do not know about it. Why doesn't NFDC have an officer who can provide these services to Indian filmmakers?

A: *We have been doing this for three years. Anybody who comes to us with a query, we try to help. To promote greater interaction, for instance, NFDC issues a press release and also inform all trade associations when a film festival programmer visits India and to select films. We offer the NFDC premises as the central venue for all festival programmers to view films, and to meet with filmmakers. Also, all attempts are made to address queries sent to [nfdc@nfdcindia.com](mailto:nfdc@nfdcindia.com) and send an immediate reply.*



## **(Aloor conti.....Conti..from pg 16)**

least one film a year'. I said it was my wish too, but did not work that way. He asked why. Then he saw this film *Mukhamukham*. He asked if I had adapted it from any literary source. I said it was my own story. Then he looked at me for a moment and said, 'Now I understand why you take so long'. I was of course very pleased by that comment.

## **Did you initially face problems of funding?**

In the very beginning, yes. Before *Swayamvaram*, I did approach many regular commercial producers. After a couple of such encounters I learned that they would not support me. That was the time when the so-called film industry people did not believe that cinema was something that could be taught formally. They were under the firm impression that there was only one way of learning filmmaking; that was to go and apprentice under an established director. They thought that we only read textbooks. They didn't even know that in the Film institute you make several films and go through all the processes of filmmaking. They imagined that in the classrooms; you read the text books and get all the wrong ideas. So I quickly realized that no finance will come from the conventional sources. That's why with my friends I formed a cooperative society to make films. But the society couldn't raise a sizeable fund. All that we could garner was a small share-capital through membership which didn't account for much.

So in the beginning I had to make documentaries. Whether I liked it or not, whether the subject was interesting or not, I had to make them. It was also a period of study because while making the documentaries, I started doing everything. I shot the films myself, I also edited them physically, and I scored sounds for most of the films. In fact all the sound effects of *Kodiyettam* were recorded by me. Although I had theoretical knowledge, I gained practical experience with these films.

## **How soon we get to see your next film?**

I don't know what I am going to do next. I have no idea



*Bikas Mishra is the editor of Dear Cinema.com a Website devoted to cinema and teaches film appreciation in sophia College, Mumbai.*



# Digitalization : New Mantra of Preservation

■ Satish Jakatdar

**F**ilms are a valuable record and an integral part of a National cultural and historical heritage. They are invaluable cultural assets reflecting the history, art, culture, and life styles across generations. In last hundred years Indian cinema has flourished and prospered. Last year alone India has produced more than thousand films. This staging peak number and this breath taking pace production of films make the task of archiving and serving more compelling and urgent. For last two years this responsibility is being handled by a bright young officer Mr. Vijay Jadhav. He is a chemical engineer from VJTI and held various important positions in Dept. of Information and Broadcasting. He was entrusted the responsibility of heading National Film archive of India (NFAI). He with his usual vigour and a sense of dedication has launched several initiatives schemes and programmes not only in archiving and preservation efforts but also for more vigours promotion of film culture.

Following is the interaction with him that portrays several new issues and that new digital age poser.

**Q:** What is the principal mode which NFAI follows in its preservation and archiving responsibility?

**Jadhav :** Traditionally, film archive use various means of preservations including physical storage of the films in a climate controlled vault and to repair and copy endangered work on to more durable film stock. Additionally, efforts are being made to digitize the films and preserve informational contents contained in decaying of films and further return the films to a version most faithful to its initial release.

The Archive is also in a way of 'asylum' for films. Very few of them, reach here and in 'desirable' and 'honourable' conditions!

Likely hood, of damaged prints reaching here is inherently higher. One has to mend them approximately before preserving a mal nourished child and make it fit to survive.

The new digital age today offers very novel techniques, facilities and modalities. Digitalization at 2 k/4 k resolution is ideal for film preservation. Efforts are on to convert movies to digital films before more film heritage is lost.

I was very determined to improve the technology and equipment which were using. We not only radically improved the mechanism of checking and rewinding but also entered into several agreements with different laboratories. We have also improved the storage condition through Phase II of Archive expansion. Where not only films from Archiv are stored but of film sister concerns like Films Division, NFDC, children film Society are also preserved.

**Q:** Besides preservations and archive function NFAI also pursues the objective of promoting better and deepened film culture. What have been your new initiatives in this domain?

**Jadhav:** Digitalization has rendered the research and exploration of film culture more versatile and refined. It makes the compitation and retrieval of information considerably easy. Hence number of Indian and International researchers have been attracted and benefited from this technological change of NFAI

We have undertaken 'digitalization' of several rare films. Archive also has an enormous treasure of several an-

**Conti..on pg 23)**

## Vijay Jadhav

Director NFAI

Though National Film Archive of India was established half a century later after first birth of cinema in India in 1913.

Archive is doing commendable job in preserving films.



# Iffs Activities in the Last Decades

■ Paolo Minuto

**T**he International Federation of Film Societies (IFFS) has taken a new shape since a decade of years, but this shape has been reached after a long work of diplomacy and cultural exchanges and activities.

In the 1997 I was for the first time the delegate representing Italy at the IFFS General Assembly, held in Thessaloniki, Greece. That year the President of IFFS, re-elected, was the eminent Indian film director Mrinal Sen. I saw very few delegations from outside Europe and Indian Federation was not among them.

In the 1999 the IFFS General Assembly was held in Cottbus, Germany. At that Assembly only Argentina participated from outside Europe. I took the floor and in my speech the topic was this sentence: "We are an International Organisation with a continental group of member, so we are not a world organization like we used to be in the past. I will fight for a new and real international IFFS". In that year me and the Italian Federation created the new edition of the International Festival of Film Societies.

This Festival, held for the first and only time in France in 1984, was decided by the Italian Federation to restart it and was given to me the responsibility to direct it.

This Festival was an important instrument for me to develop the idea to rebuild the IFFS giving it the worldwide diffusion that it deserved. In fact thanks to this Festival, in nine years many nations were reached and invited, some of them for the first time at the international stage. Some of them, like India, reached again this family after some years, and it's very important for us that such a big and fundamental Federation of Film Societies is again an IFFS member.

So many people and nations, that were so gathered for nine years in a row, brought to the IFFS the richness of the differences, of the different ideas of cine clubs (film societies) and, why not, of the different ways of life.

In the three different General Assemblies after Cottbus we reached many goals, basically inspired by the ideals of the Audience Rights Charta (approved by IFFS in 1987). We reached, consequently, the goal to have finally an Executive Committee made by people coming from all the continents.

One fundamental element we reached and that we have to preserve is the unity of the international federation: I ever repeat that we need to build and to preserve it in order to obtain the maximum of cultural and social results, never forgetting we are the audience. We are representing also the smallest film society in the most remote village in the world, where we have to bring together with the cinema culture also the wider education that is possible and the consequent emancipation of the human beings involved.

The audience rights: yes, therefore this is the path of our actions in the next future as it was in the last decade. The audience rights means that we have to struggle in favour of the widest diffusion of the cinema, we have to work to guarantee the diffusion of the movies in all the world, especially concentrating our energies in to reach the most lonely parts of the globe. And we have to work together also in order to guarantee the maximum of the ex-

## Paolo Minuto

Born in Reggio Calabria (Italy) the 20<sup>th</sup> April 1966. GRADUATED in 1992 at Rome University "La Sapienza" in "Liberal Arts" with specialization in "Theatre and Cinema history, theory and critic"; Executive PRESIDENT of the International Federation of Film Societies since 2006; DIRECTOR of the International Festival of Film Societies since 1999; Teacher of "Italian language in the audiovisual texts" and of "History of the Italian Cinema" at the University for Foreigners and conducted. Lectures, Papers and Classes since 1995. He has also written in many magazines on cinema and organised film festivals and served as Jury.

changes of films around the world. To serve this purpose inside the Iffs was created an international catalogue for the exchange of cinema that is called "Cinema Sud". This is a very important tool for the goal I mentioned above. So I hope it will be used by all the film societies in the world much more than in the first years of its life. All the film societies people are entitled to add titles to this catalogue and all the film societies are entitled to ask titles to be screened for their audience. Here I put a list of results of the last years of activities of the International Federation. The action of Iffs was de-

veloped trying to extend the area of the Iffs presence in the world. In particular a special focus very recently was put to follow the interesting developments of the Film Clubs movement in the African countries, where Iffs was less present before. Another goal was to support the growth of the Latin America and Asian Groups. I visited many countries in order to ensure the maximum profit to this project. Also the unity of the Association was one of the most important target fixed in this period. A very warm welcome we have to tribute to the new membership of the Kabul Film Soci-

ety, a window of hope is now opened also in the suffering Country of Afghanistan. Now I'm going to end my second and last term as Iffs Executive President. In November in Poland there will be the next General Assembly and I hope finally the Executive President will be an extra-European leader.

I wish to all the friends and film societies people of India the best for their work and their struggle in to spread inside this wonderful Country the cinema culture from all over the world. I'll remain always beside you!



**(Digitalization Conti. from pg 21)**

cillary materials such as films booklets, pamphlets, still photographs. We are doing the 'digitalization' of such materials as well. Digitalization has dual advantage on one hand it reduces the damage due to handling and its access to it becomes more flexible and enlarged.

Q: NFAI has been offering fellowship or scholarship for film researchers. Any new initiative in this new promotional effort?

Jadhav: Several years, much before I joined here, I supposed till 1989, several fellowships and scholarships were awarded. The recipient scholars prepared and research monographs and submitted them to NFAI. However, for one reason or the other these remained unpublished. In last two years we endeavour to remove this back log and published nearly 8 – 10 monographs. These deals with many luminaries of silent and 'talkie' era. e.g. Himanshu Roy, Nemi Ghosh, Mrinal Sen, Raja Paranjape. We typically organized special functions while releasing these publications. We have revitalized the fellowship, scholarship schemes. It is in the pipe line.

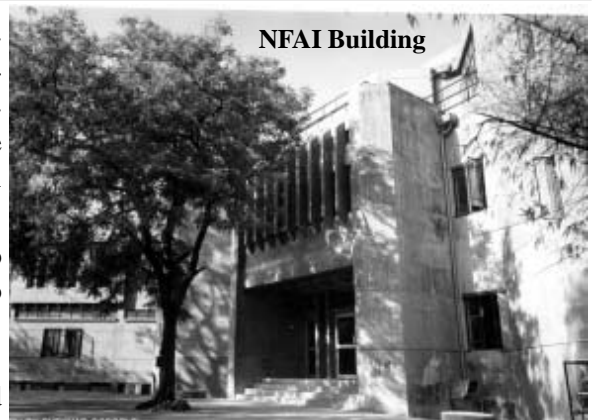
Q: There has been 'oral history' project which documents the memories, recollections and representation of the

'persons' who made the history or mere witness to history. Has the new audio visual technical change made any substantial difference in this Endeavour?

Jadhav: Oh, Of course! So far we would only an audio recording on cassettes. This has change very radically. Thanks to new powerful and extremely flexible affordable technology; it is now audio visual. Several Artists, Actor, Technicians, directors, film Critics, have invited for this project. Madhukar Pathak, Chittaranjan Kolhatkar, Basu Chatterjee, Bharti Devi all of these luminaries been invited for recording their version and history. Several of these are in pipe line. In fact, NFAI is very proud of this novel audio visual history in its archives.

Q: Film Appreciation Course is yet remarkable activity of Archive in collaboration with FTII. Perhaps this is the only course in film appreciation of one month duration. So many aspirants across India have been desirous for attending this course. What are your plans about this unique activity?

Jadhav: Plan! We have already been doing differently now – almost two



years now. We have been organizing a shorter version of this course. Its duration is one week. It is held in various places now. Delhi, Guwahati, Simla, Bangalore. We intend to hold it in major cities across India. These courses are conducted not only in English but also in the regional languages. These courses are held in collaboration with Federation of Film Societies of India. We commenced this mode first time in Pune. The regional and local film societies are now partnering with us. So not only more coverage and frequency but also great intimacy through local language in communication. This is not all. We are holding several kinds of Festivals or supply films for festival which are organized Nationally or Internationally. All this is aimed enhancing and consolidating film culture.





# Building a Film Culture

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## A New-Mission

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### Accomplished

■ Madhu Eravankara

**C**inema came to India in July 1896 within months of its advent in Paris. But till mid 50's

Indian cinema was in hibernation without caring for the advancement in this new art in the other parts of the world. Our cinema was contented with the devotionals, unskilled adaptations from epics and 'puranas' and other shallow stuffs meant for entertainment only. Imitating Parsi theatre with all its extravaganza of colorful sets and costumes, our cinema incorporated songs and dance in its body and it was treated as a concoction of all art forms. Noted film teacher Prof Satish Bahadur is genuinely evaluating the early period of Indian film history when he states 'Indian cinema had been isolated from the mainstream of creative developments in the international art of film till early fifties and the average Indian film showed little awareness of the expressive possibilities of the film language'.

Films set in the same pattern without itself undergoing any progressive change continued to be produced. The producers corroborated their position by formulating an indigenous theory of 'escapist attitude' of the audience. They reiterated that people tired of the boredom and fatigue of daily life wanted to escape from it for a short span of time and movie house would be the best place suited for it. The creators of the popular cinema are still exploiting this 'fictious' theory related to the audience. Here lies the relevance of 'good cinema' where it is treated as an art form best suited for the illustration of modern life with all its trials tribulations.

Even though film societies originated in different countries of the world in 1920's, we had to wait till 1947 to Calcutta film society, the first of its kind in India. Satyajit Ray and Chidananda Das Gupta founded it. The first International Film Festival held in 1952 was a great fillip to the film society movement in India. With the establishment of Federation of Film Societies of India (FFSI) in 1959, a new horizon was opened up to co-ordinate the activities of film societies and to meet the demands for films. The film society movement rose to its zenith in 60's and 70's but quite unexpectedly by the middle of 80's it witnessed its decline. But still the movement is on, with lesser pace, catering to the needs of the minorities of film devotees.

The first and foremost objective of any film society movement is to build a film culture.

The word film culture is to be defined specifically in the context of film society movement. One should not be confused with the 'Popular film culture' that has been developed unknowingly by the so-called entertainment movies.

Cinema is only of two kinds; good and bad. Good films are the one that show allegiance to the medium and depict or interpret life in its varied manifestations. By film culture, here we mean the combination of all faculties put together to facilitate the appreciation and enjoyment of

**Madhu Eravankara** is an internationally acclaimed film critic and writer. Recipient of the National and State Film awards for the Best Book on Cinema and State Film and Television awards for the best documentary. Served on the jury of International Film Festivals in Mumbai (2003), Yamagata (2005), Brisbane (2006) and Istanbul (2008). Author of several books on Cinema, Madhu Eravankara has received Research Fellowship from National Film Archive of India for the project 'Malayalam Literature and Cinema' and Senior Fellowship from Department of Culture, Govt. of India for the project 'Indian Literature and Cinema'.



cinema as an art. The development of a film culture is the sum total of the contribution of so many factors. The regular viewing of good movies, exposure to writings on cinema, participation in discussions, seminars and conferences on cinema and attending film festivals are the essentials required to build up a film culture. Let us put to test how far the film society movement was successful in building up a film culture in India.

**'Conditioning', a term often used in psychology, is a major impediment in the appreciation of a work of art. If you are constantly exposed to a certain kind of thing, you will become addict to it. This was happening to the Indian audience of cinema.**

They were constantly watching a typical kind of 'escapist cinema', away from the realities of life, packed with romantic fantasies, songs, dances and stunts presented in a melodramatic way. Indian audience was addicted to this kind of cinema and the state of affairs continues till now. The mission of the film society was to interfere with this 'conditioning' effect and inculcate a new film culture allied to good cinema. Here I would like to relate the experience of the International film festivals organized in Heggodu, a remote village in Karnataka. The illiterate villagers of Heggodu were not exposed to any kind of films before. World film classics like 'Battleship Potemkin', 'Bicycle Thieves', 'La Strada', 'Seventh Seal', 'Wild Strawberries', 'Pather Panchali' etc were screened at the festival followed by discussions on the films. They were able to grasp the film even though ignorant of the intricacies of the media. The astonishing fact is that they developed a liking for these sorts of films and were eagerly looking forward to the coming festivals with fervor. This divulges the fact that it is not a quandary to build up a pure film culture if the subject of 'conditioning' is absent.

The film societies organized regular screenings of world classics; off-beat regional films and other films of educational, social and cultural values. National Film Archive of India (Pune) was the major source films. Various embassies, foreign archives and some production houses were also of immense help in getting films. FFSI, with their organizational set up and concerted effort, ensured that the network of film circulation is flawless. It was true that Hollywood films found their way to Indian film circuit so easily since the beginning. But European

films, especially those from East European countries had no run in Indian theaters. And so was the case of films from Brazil, Cuba, Mexico, Argentina and other Latin American countries. Films from Egypt, Israel, Iran, Indonesia, Thailand, Japan and South Korea too demanded a serious viewing. Film societies could screen the films from these countries profusely, which enabled the viewer to have a closer understanding of these films. With Mrinal Sen's 'Bhuvan Shome' (1969), Indian 'New Wave' also emerged as a movement and a series of new films were made in regional languages, especially in West Bengal, Kerala and Karnataka. These films also had a good exposure through the film societies. Thus the constant viewing of a different class of films naturally altered the response of the ordinary viewer to films and they imbibed a new film culture akin to good cinema.

Film societies made it a point to collect all information regarding the film, its historical, social or political background, all about the filmmaker, and the main technicians and artistes and provide them to its members before the screening, mostly in printed formats. Most of the film societies had news bulletins, house magazines or special issues on film, which served the purpose of educating the viewers. Elaborate and fruitful discussions were held after each screening, sometimes in the presence of the director of the film himself or some experts in film. So the film audience could catch up the soul of the film, the context in which the film was made and the style of the working of the filmmaker.

Film societies also organized Film Appreciation Courses; Meet the Director's program, seminars and conferences on cinema. This has enabled the members to acquire first hand knowledge of the language of the cinema and its syntax. The exhaustive Film Appreciation Courses conducted by National Film Archive of India annually could produce a bunch of experts on Film Appreciation, who in turn served as resource persons in the various film appreciation courses conducted by the film societies and other institutions.

Serious writings on cinema were an area totally neglected. Apart from the conventional film reviews, mostly done by film journalists, films were not subjected to scientific analysis and assessment. The reviewers were not competent enough to follow the language of cinema and interpret them as per the demand of the media. The film society movement had definitely changed the situation and gave new insight to the writings on cinema. Here we may recall the case of 'Cahiers du Cinema' published under the leadership of Andre Bazin in Paris. In fact the publication 'Cahiers du Cinema' was responsible for the

evolution of 'French New Wave'. The writers turned directors like Jean- Luc Godard, Francois Truffaut, Jacques Rivette, Claude Chabrol and Eric Rohmer made the French New Wave possible. The new film culture propagated by Indian Film Society movement could also produce a series of serious writers on cinema, film critics and young filmmakers. The film critics excitedly engaged in 2 'journalistic, essayistic or academic criticism' according to their taste, training and expertise. Writers also did studies on various aspects of films like its history, genre, schools of filmmaking, styles and aesthetics.

Publications on cinema also gained momentum. Mainstream publishers got interested to publish books on cinema, especially in regional languages. The nature of contents of the film weeklies and magazines was changed to some extent. Even the publications specialized in the gossips, set apart some spaces for serious writings on cinema or for the news items pertaining to good cinema.

The exposure to good cinema and the new writings, in fact, enabled the viewer to whet his attitude to the medium. He could differentiate film from other arts and identify the independent nature of the medium. The so-called filmed theatre ceased to catch up his attention any more. They accepted film media as a means of self-expression as with every art. They could approve of the supremacy of the director in the making of film.

Thus the orientation strived by the film societies was, in fact, congenial to create an atmosphere of good cinema, there by producing an aura of a new film culture hitherto unknown. Film Festivals of varied nature could be considered as the outcome of the work of film societies. It could be stated that the effect of them are complementary. Film festivals were organized at different levels varying from national to international. Members attended the festivals with new vigor and eagerness to know the Indian and World cinema. Film centers under State and Central Governments also began to organize International Film Festivals. The International Film Festival of India, Calcutta and Kerala are, in a sense, the outcome of the activities and support of film societies and FFSI. Film societies are also responsible for the conduct of International film festivals organized in the private sector like MAMI (Mumbai), Bangalore (Suchitra Film Society), Hyderabad, Karim Nagar, Chennai, Delhi, Trichur (Kerala) and a host of others. Film festivals could also be deemed as an effort to sustain the film culture developed. The incredible participation of film enthusiasts in International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK), more than seven thousand delegates in 2009, truly supports this argument.

As some film societies started to impart training in filmmaking, they came forward to produce films too. The efforts made by Calcutta Film Society (Portrait of a City, Durga Pooja ), film forum ( A City by the Sea ) are to be referred to. The successful attempt by 'Odessa' Film Society in Kerala to produce a feature film 'Amma Ariyan' directed by the late John Abraham is to be placed on record.

**One cannot appreciate art without having the awareness of its nature and structure. Look at poetry, novel or short story. The more you know about the nature and style of these media, the more you appreciate.**

The new filmmakers, of course the product of film culture cultivated by the film societies, worked closely in association with the movement. Film societies happened to be the maiden-screening place of their products too. In fact, the film societies were paving the way to welcome the new comers and their films. The efforts made by 'Chitralekha Film Society' of Kerala under the captainship of Adoor Gopalakrishnan is to be recognized. Chitralekha was founded in 1965 followed by film screenings throughout the length and breadth of Kerala. Apart from screenings, Chitralekha aimed at imparting film education to the masses through literature on films, thereby building a new film culture. The new cinema movement in Kerala was solely possible because of the labors of Chitralekha and the film societies organized later. Chitralekha film co-operative also provided a model by producing films, Swayamvaram, and Kodiyettam both by Adoor Gopalakrishnan, which were instrumental to earn unprecedented status to Malayalam cinema in the international arena.

The emergence of a bunch of film producers also was the outcome of the new film culture flourished. Film enthusiasts with good financial base came forward to produce good films, experimenting on new themes and directors, proved to be successful. This was especially true in the case of producers from Bengal, Kerala and Karnataka. In Kerala, Ravi of General Pictures was a beacon to good cinema. Many of the films of Adoor Gopalakrishnan, G. Aravindan and the film 'Manje' by M.T. Vasudevan Nair would not have been possible if Ravi, the connoisseur of art, had not come with his timely intervention. There shall be a determined effort from the part of the reader to appreciate a (Conti.on pg 29 )



# A Confusing Spectrum

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## Recent Writing on

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## Indian Cinema

■ M. K. Ragahavendra

**MK Ragahavendra** is a film critic/ scholar and a founder-editor of the film journal *Deep Focus*. He received the National Award (the *Swarna Kamal*) for best film critic in the year 1997. He was awarded a two-year Homi Bhabha Fellowship in 2000-01 to research into Indian popular film narrative as well as a Goethe Institut Fellowship in 2000 to study post-war German cinema. His book *Seduced by the Familiar: Narration and Meaning in Indian Popular Cinema* was published by Oxford University Press in 2008. His essay *Local Resistance to Global Bangalore: Reading Minority Indian Cinema* appeared in *Popular Culture in a Globalised India*, published by Routledge London in December 2008. His book *50 Indian Film Classics* was brought out by HarperCollins in 2009. He has taught cinema in India and abroad. He has written extensively on world cinema.

The last ten years has seen a spurt in writing on cinema but there is some confusion among students of cinema about the kinds of critical literature produced and what each kind sets out to do. The earliest film criticism produced in India was by stalwarts like Chidananda Das Gupta, who were basically cinephiles interested in evaluating cinema as art. Since then, however, film studies as a discipline has taken a course that has tended to divide film criticism – without film critics fully comprehending what has happened. *Criticism is generally believed to be of three kinds*: ‘Reviewing’ is essentially the immediate evaluation of a film and is usually done for newspapers and magazines. The second kind of criticism can be termed ‘*essayistic*’ and is usually published in specialist/ intellectual monthlies/ quarterlies. It is more contextual in nature and can be a comparison of various works or the examination of a body of work (genres, films by an auteur) from a distance. Essayistic criticism is less evaluative and more interpretive than reviewing; it is not immediate and is reflective. The third kind of criticism is best termed ‘*academic criticism*’ and is usually affiliated to ‘schools’ such as psychoanalysis, feminism and cultural studies. The third kind of criticism is entirely interpretive and often ‘theory down’ in as much as it treats individual films as instantiations of theory - like the use of Freudian psychoanalysis to inquire

into the relationship between mother and son in Hindi popular cinema.

While the earliest serious books on Indian cinema (e.g. Chidananda Das Gupta’s *The Painted Face*, 1992) was partial to art cinema and treated popular cinema with thinly disguised contempt, the shift in emphasis to popular film texts in film study among Western academics has seen popular cinema gaining importance in India as well, but the tendency is to regard it as a symptom of other processes. Taken as individual expression, ‘symptomatic’ meaning may be treated as relating to the filmmaker’s obsessions. Taken as part of a social dynamic, symptomatic meaning can be traced to economic, political or ideological processes. Since Indian popular cinema has never been regarded as ‘personal expression’, it is the latter kind of meaning which is usually excavated from popular films by film interpretation in India.

Two broadly similar academic historical accounts by Sumita Chakravarty (*National Identity in Indian Popular Cinema*, 1998) and Jyotika Viridi (*The Cinematic ImagiNation*, 2003) emphasize how popular cinema assisted in the project of ‘creating the imagined Nation’ after 1947. M Madhava Prasad

(*Ideology of the Hindi Film*, 1999) undertakes a similar exercise although his approach can be categorized as post-Marxist and is less empirical than these two works.

While Hollywood has been studied in ways that serve the cause of cinema as an ongoing project - through studies of film style, genres, auteurs and conventions devoted to filmmaking method - such an approach was by and large lacking in studies of Indian popular cinema. My own book (*Seduced by the familiar: Narration and Meaning in Indian Popular Cinema*, 2008) attempts to correct this imbalance by inquiring into the grammar of popular cinema and also by 'surface interpretation' of films from the silent era to 2007. Where 'deep' interpretation reveals the meaning that the film divulges to academics with theoretical preoccupations, 'surface' interpretation is attentive to the concerns of the audience that the film is meant for, although the 'surface meaning' is often far from apparent. My argument is that Indian cinema's methods have an underlying philosophical consistency and that the surface interpretation of film texts demonstrates how cinema reconciles an inherited worldview with the historical demands of the present.

**It must be noted here that an overwhelming proportion of the serious work done on Indian popular cinema has been produced by academics in universities in the West – often as part of doctoral dissertations.**

While the above are book-length inquiries into the popular film that employ a single identifiable argument, there are also works that separately examine different issues relating to certain kinds of popular cinema like Lalitha Gopalan's *Cinema of Interruptions : Action Genres in Contemporary Indian Cinema* (2003) and Valentina Vitali's *Hindi Action Cinema : Industries Narratives Bodies* (2008). The demands of academia have also seen a burgeoning of anthologies - with accommodating titles like Raminder Kaur and Ajay J. Sinha (eds.) *Bollyworld: Popular Indian Cinema through a Transnational Lens* (2005). Still, influential writing on Indian popular cinema is not always book-length and the many important studies – in essay form - are often found in well known anthologies like Ravi Vasudevan (ed.) *Making Meaning in Indian Cinema* (2000).

This suggests that much of it has been overseen by those with little familiarity with Indian cinema – the actual shape it has taken and its attractions to its audience. Their emphasis – judging from the writing – is more on the intellectual tools to be employed than on the objects upon which the tools are to be used. Critics/ theorists are apparently preoccupied with cinema's influence in the public space rather than in cinema itself. This is the expressed approach of Ashish Rajadhyaksha in his recent *Indian Cinema in the Time of Celluloid: From Bollywood to the Emergency* (2009).

While academic study of Indian cinema is the kind most favored in film studies departments, there have also been other books that are not academic. Among those that can be called 'essayistic' - because they are taken up with a certain aspect of a certain kind of cinema – are Ranjani Mazumdar's *Bombay Cinema: An Archive of the City*, (2007), which tries to look at how Mumbai is dealt with in the Hindi film, Rachel Dwyer's *Filming the Gods: Religion and Indian Cinema* (2007), Vijaya Mulay's *From Rajahs and Yogis to Gandhi and Beyond: India in International Cinema* (2010) and Rajinder Kumar Dudrah's *Bollywood: Sociology Goes to the Movies* (2006). Equally important are anthologies like Vinay Lal and Ashis Nandy's (eds.) *Fingerprinting Popular Culture: The Mythic and the Iconic in Indian Cinema* (2006). There are also appreciations of film directors and film actors, which are more biographical than critical: Nasreen Munni Kabir's *Guru Dutt: a Life in Cinema* (2005), Jerry Pinto's *Helen: The Life and Times of an H-Bomb* (2006) and Meghnad Desai's *Nehru's Hero: Dilip Kumar in the Life of India* (2004).

Surprisingly, 'reviewing' has never done well in India and it is an art that few critics have pursued successfully in book length. Khalid Mohammed was perhaps our most successful newspaper reviewer but he does not appear to have produced a book of his reviews. TG Vaidyanathan's *Hours in the Dark: Essays on Cinema* (1996) was perhaps the first important collection of reviews after Chidananda Das Gupta's reviews and Satyajit Ray's *Our Films: Their Films* (reprinted 2001). Chidananda Das Gupta's best writing is also collected in *Seeing is Believing: Selected Writings on Cinema* (2008). Since the most acclaimed works in Indian cinema has never been reviewed alongside each other, I tried to find a remedy in my own book *50 Indian Film Classics* which was brought out by HarperCollins in 2009. It includes critical studies of films

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in most Indian languages (Manipuri to Malayalam), examples from art cinema (Ghatak, Ray, Adoor, Aravindan,) middle cinema (Hrishikesh Mukherjee, Shantaram, Bimal Roy) 'massala' films (like *Amar Akbar Anthony*), mythological films (*Sant Tukaram*) and political films (Mrinal Sen, John Abraham), and it tries to be fair to all of them without favoring one kind of cinema over another.

Apart from all these books, which are text-heavy, are also picture books and coffee table books like BD Garga's *So Many Cinemas: The Motion Picture in India* (1996) and Lalit Mohan Joshi's *Bollywood: Popular Indian Cinema* (2002). I have been generally speaking of Hindi cinema as though it were the only 'Indian' cinema available. Writing on Indian regional cinemas, although behind Hindi cinema, has taken off and there are several books in English on Tamil, Malayalam and Telugu cinema. The books by Theodore Baskaran on Tamil cinema (*The Eye of the Serpent*, 1996) and SV Srinivas (*Megastar: Chiranjeevi and Telugu Cinema after NT Rama Rao*, 2009) are especially significant. There is also a huge quantity of writing in the vernacular languages which I have not touched upon. Reflecting upon the quantity of writing on Indian cinema in the past decade or so, the reason is primarily the enormous amount of interest abroad in Indian cinema. While this should make Indians proud, there is also the fact that this interest is not so much because Indian cinema is better - than it was once regarded as being - but because India is more important as an economic power.

Indian popular cinema has also held its own commercially against Hollywood when cinemas in the developed countries have succumbed. Satyajit Ray once lamented the poor quality of writing on cinema in India but one wonders what he might have said today, when literature on Indian cinema is intellectually ahead of the cinema itself. ●●●

### **(Building a Film Culture Conti..from pg 26)**

good work of art. It is the case with painting, music, classical arts and theatre. For instance in Kathakali, the celebrated classical art of Kerala, one should be well versed with the meaning of the lyrics, and the various 'mudras' ( signs ) performed by the dancer to understand and appreciate it better. Cinema is ultimately an art form, even though technology makes a major contribution in its make up, and so a thorough preparation from the part of the spectator is essential to appreciate it fully. Thus the awareness of the new media could be achieved by cultivating a film culture. Film society movement, in India, was taking up this mission of divulging film awareness to the common audience.

Many factors led to the demur of the film society movement in India. The change in the socio-economic order and the passive attitude of the masses in the development issues were the major causes. The rotten political system and the lack of commitment to the causes aggravated the situation. The popularization of television and the availability of cheap and sub-standard entertainment materials affected serious cinema. The temperament of the people not to welcome anything serious and the paucity of strong bond to the society and life as a whole became the order of the day. 'Simplification of Art' is a major challenge experienced towards the close of the last century, which perseveres. It is inspirational that the film culture, which was the direct outcome of the film society movement in India, still exists, with the support of the film societies, film lovers, filmmakers and the host of new films emerging in the wilderness of meaningless extravaganzas.

### **Notes**

1. Bahadur, Satish : *The Context of Indian Film Culture*, Film Miscellany, FTII, Pune, 1976.
2. Raghavendra, M.K: *Cinema, Appreciation and Film Societies*, Celebration of Moving Images, Suchitra, Suchitra Bengalooru International Film Festival, 2006.
3. Gopalakrishnan, Adoor: *Film Societikal*, Cinemayude Lokam, State Institute of Languages, Thiruvananthapuram, 1983
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## Zhang Yimou and his Images

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■ H. N. Narahari Rao

*Zhang Yimou's films are always a treat to watch. When his film Red Sorghum (1987) won the Golden Bear at the Berlin Festival in 1987, it heralded a new era of Chinese films from the Fifth Generation Filmmakers that made a big impression on the western critics' world. His subsequent films have always won wide acclaim and are well received by the film society members in India as well.*

**T**hang Yimou is undisputedly one of the universally acclaimed filmmakers who is able to deservedly enter the field to occupy the void created by the end of the celebrities of the erstwhile era, of the 1950s and 60s like Bergman, Fellini, Kurosawa, Ray and the other masters. He is identified as one of the prominent representative of what is gener-

ally known as the Chinese Fifth Generation Film directors. If one has to make an in-depth study of the works of Zhang Yimou it is quite essential to know something, at least briefly about his early life which plays a significant role in all his films that made a big impact at the international level.

Zhang's early life was quite a tough one. His father served under the rule of Nationalist party of Chiang Kai-Shek,

and for this reason the family was not treated well by the subsequent regime, particularly during the Cultural Revolution of 1966 which had a tremendous effect on the lives of the entire Chinese society. Zhang, who was in his early years, was no exception and he came under its influence and had to suffer heavily. He was forced to abandon his education and take up jobs as a laborer in farm land and textile mill to earn his bread. Zhang had a penchant for painting and still photography. He had to sell his blood for several months to own a camera. It was only when he was 27 that he got a seat in Beijing Film Academy for studying Cinematography. His application was initially rejected as he was overage for the admission. However it was only after the concerned minister intervened that he was admitted for the course. It was here in this institute that Zhang had a glimpse of the classics of the world cinema from Europe, Japan and America. He also had close association with his colleagues Chen Kaige and Tian Zhuangzhuang who are collectively termed as the main group of Chinese Fifth Generation Film directors.

After graduation from the Academy, Zhang Yimou worked with Chen Kaige, who studied Direction in the Academy with him. He assisted him as his cameraman for his first film *Yellow Earth* (1984) which created a big awakening



*Raise the Red Lantern*

by breaking the established convention of making only propaganda films that faithfully toed the line of the Cultural Revolution. It was a new beginning and this bold venture meted out a rude shock to the establishment. For Zhang it was an experience that shook his mind to cut out a well structured plan for his career. His next assignment was as an actor and cameraman for another film *Old Well* (1986) directed by VVu Tianming. Incidentally it fetched him the best actor award at the Tokyo International Film Festival.

Zhang's first breakthrough as an independent filmmaker came in 1987 when he made his first film *Red Sorghum*. By introducing Gong Li for the first time into films, and in the main role that provided abundant scope for exposition of her beauty and talent as an actress, Zhang formed a formidable combination with her for many of his later films which won him international recognition. He had a clearly defined vision for his films. He made it an avowed objective to showcase the Chinese history, its culture, and also the sufferings that was heaped on the society by the Cultural Revolution.

The film deals with the story of a young bride who is married to a 50 year old leper for a mule, but the bride does not accept it meekly. She has her own designs and schemes to achieve her ambition of enjoying a marital life with a person of her choice.



*Red Sorghum.*

## JU DUO



In *Red Sorghum*, Zhang establishes a style which is unique. He fully utilizes his knowledge of cinematography to portray the film in its true rustic depiction. The basic instincts of human beings like emotion, passion, desire, love and pleasure, violence and revenge all appear in their original form. The story of the film is of 1930's but his treatment appears timeless as everything that happens takes place in vast canvas of landscapes directly under the sun, amidst natural surroundings. The script which maintains a firm grip over its visuals slightly drifts in the concluding stages with the arrival of Japanese invaders on the scene. The film is studded with well composed images that are strikingly impressive with vivid colours and forms. He shot into fame when this film won the Best film Award, Golden Bear at the 1988 Berlin Film Festival.

Zhang Yimou's next important film is *Ju Duo* (1990), which again scored high points for the photography that sumptuously provided images skillfully blended with colours. The story is again similar to the one as in *Red Sorghum*; here it is an old, wealthy textile factory owner who by using his clout marries a young girl, again played by Gong Li. The old man is unable to satisfy her passion and she develops an affair with his nephew who works in the factory as a slave. The story takes place in a factory where cloths are dyed in bright colours and these lengthy pieces of dyed cloth are hung for drying and this provides Zhang to use them as colors of passion and the images are brilliant. The film won high critical acclaim at various international film festivals, won awards at Cannes and Chicago, and won Academy Award nomination for Best Foreign film with official objection from

Chinese authorities. The film did not go well with the Chinese Government as they felt it was a satire on the Maoism represented by the Old factory owner.

Zhang did not stop at this, he continued his work with a similar subject again, and captured classic images for his next film *Raise the Red Lantern* (1991), considered as the third part of his much acclaimed trilogy. Gong Li again plays the role of an young 19 year old girl who is forced to discontinue her studies after her father's death and married to a relatively old man to become his fourth wife. The sufferings of this young girl who is imprisoned in a castle with no escape

root forms the crux of the film. The film in its entirety is shot inside the spacious rooms of a tiled castle. The four mistresses live in different rooms and the arrival of the latest causes enough disruption in the already disturbed atmosphere. The wives who are called as mistresses vie with each other jealously to get the attention from the master. Every activity that takes place in the film is at the command of the master, but interestingly he is never shown in the film at all except in some long shots that too not focusing his face. The film concludes with a grim ending, the old master getting married to his fifth wife who is in her teens, and this conclusion adequately describes the gloomy situation that enslaved women for economic consideration. This film also won international recognition for Zhang by winning an award at Venice. In the limited space available in the castle, Zhang's innovative camera mirrors some of the outstanding images that make the film memorable.

Immediately after the completion of the trilogy, Zhan Yimou again teamed with his favorite heroine Gong Li for his next film *The Story of Qui Ju* (1992). The film distinctly deviates from the style he so far followed in his earlier films with subjects that created enough consternation both at the national and international level. Surprisingly, for this film he opted for a story which appears to be little amusing and lighter. However, Zhang continues with his artistry of providing us with some of his magical touches in creating images that linger long in our memory. Qui ju the main protagonist, played by Gong Li, is a very ordinary village woman, a pregnant, who is determined to get justice from the establishment. Her husband had an unsavory argument with the village head,





*The Road Home*

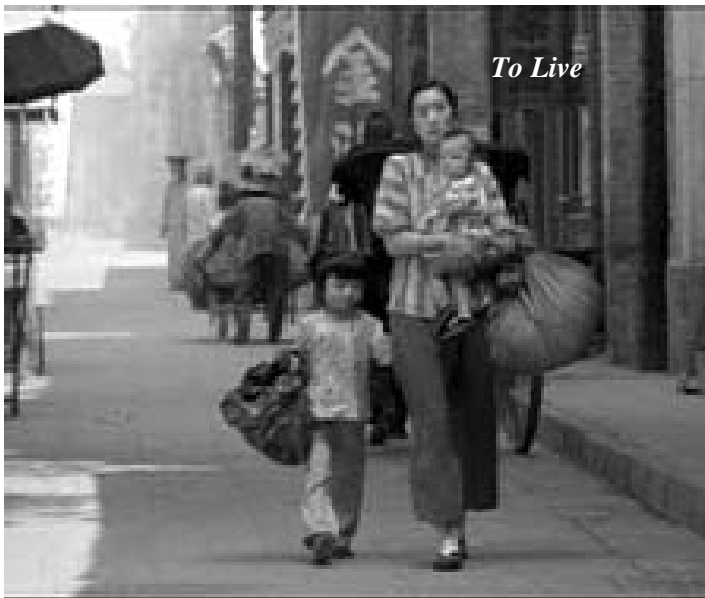
a local political figure, and is kicked in his abdomen. While her husband relents to take it in his stride, Qui Ju does not take it lightly. She embarks on a mission to get justice, she does not want to take any revenge, but she wants to prove that what the village head has done is wrong and he should apologize. The Village head is also adamant, and does not budge. Her fight continues, moves from one level to the other till she steps in to the court. That is the climax. Her journey from place to place, in her advanced pregnancy, village to the city, then from one office to the other, and her entire crusade is filmed beautifully. One special feature of the film is the hidden camera that Zhang uses to capture images, without focusing the main characters, this gives us an authentic documentation of the streets in the cities, market place, and many other locations of that period in China. The film was awarded at Venice, and by this time Zhang established himself with the western critics as the one whose works are eagerly awaited.

Zhang Yimou returns to his elements with his next film *To Live* (1994). Unlike in his earlier films where he left it to the audience to link it with the political situation that prevailed, he now makes a direct reference to the political upheavals that took place during the turbulent period of three decades that made common man to struggle for survival. It is the story of a wealthy family, with Fugui, his wife Jiazhen, played by Gong Li, and the

two children, they lose all the wealth because of Fugui's addiction to gambling. Jiazhen's patience, perseverance and resilience keeps them together and ultimately they survive the onslaught of the political turmoil created by the communist Cultural Revolution that plays havoc with the people. It is evident in this film that Zhang Yimou is more concerned with the narration of the story. Probably he knew well that it may not go well with the ruling establishment. He could not escape from indictment, the film was banned in main China and the two, Zhang and Gong Li were banned for two years from further productions. Zhang won a number of international awards for *To Live* including a prestigious one at Cannes.

*To Live*, along with other Chinese films of this period like *Farewell My Concubine* (1993), *Yellow Earth* (1984) and *Blue Kite* (1993) give us a brief but definitive introduction to the nation's history that is more than the routine information that we are normally exposed to. With the release of *To Live*, Zhang's first phase of his film-making career comes to an end and in this period his films have given us something to churn about seriously, as he himself expressed: (quote):

*"The Cultural Revolution was a very special period of Chinese history, unique in the world. It was part of my youth. It happened between when I was 16 and when I was 26. During those 10 years, I witnessed so many terrible and tragic things. For many years, I have wanted to*



*make movies about that period - to discuss the suffering and to talk about fate and human relationships in a world which people couldn't control and which was very hostile. I would like to make not just one but many movies, both autobiographical and drawing on other people's stories. I'll just have to wait."*

Zhang now enters a period when he takes up films like **The Road Home** (1999) which does not symbolize the usual statements of political undercurrent that he is normally associated with. It is also Zhang's first film that does not have his favorite actress Gong Li's presence. It is the story of romance of his parents told as a flash back by the son. The son who is a successful business man in a city has returned to his village to be with his mother for the cremation of his father who has met with sudden death. While the actual current events, in the beginning and end are filmed in black and white the flash back portion is filmed in color to give special effect. It is true that this film lacks the real punch that was experienced in his earlier films, but it is not disappointing in any manner as far as the quality is concerned. It stands out as an outstanding film that depicts some of the wonderful landscape images of the sparsely inhabited village that narrate the touching story of romance and a melodrama. Nevertheless Zhang's talents are abundantly visible in all the images that he has imaginatively captured. The film won awards at Berlin and other festivals.

Zhang's next film, **Not One Less** (1999), is a simple story of a 13 year old girl who temporarily takes up the job as a teacher in a village school where the regular teacher is away on leave. Her job is not limited to merely teaching, she is assigned with the responsibility of keeping all the students intact in the class (Not One Less),

without letting anyone to drop out. This becomes a daunting task when one of the students escapes to the city to look out for a job. The struggle that she puts up to go to the city and locate the student in that vast jungle of humanity is the main content of the film. With this film, Zhang has now come to live with the main stream cinema that shows the daily life of China, its rural poverty, its bureaucracy and the film goes well with all. The film won him the best film award at Venice. His next film **Happy Times** (2000) is a very light comedy entertainer nurturing hopes for happiness.

In his two subsequent films **Hero**(2002) and the **House of Flying Daggers**(2004), Zhang totally changes his style and makes Block-Buster commercials, concentrating on martial arts of the Chinese tradition. His experiment was a big success at the box office. Interestingly they won critical acclaim also by winning a number of awards. In his own words quoted below he makes his intentions clear:

*"When I look back at the times I shot artistic movies, I found I learned quite a lot from them. So in the future, I hope to do both - make more personal films which I prefer; and in certain circumstances, I will shoot some other commercial movies like these two [Hero and House of Flying Daggers.]"*

**Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles** (2005) is another sentimental portrayal of a coproduction with Japan. It is the story of an aged father in Japan who has a rift with his son suffering from cancer and is under treatment in the hospital. As a gesture of reconciliation the father decides to complete his unfinished job of recording the live performance of a master singer in China. Through this road movie Zhang captures some of the stunning images of the interiors of rural China. It is a highly enjoyable film. Gong Li returns to Zhang's film **Curse of the Golden Flower** (2006), an action and adventure drama, a spectacle made on the lines of **Hero** and **House of the Flying Daggers**. It is a period drama with a contrived story that is written to provide entertainment and it is again the rich beauty of the images pleasingly captured that makes the film highly enjoyable.

Zhang Yimou is now in the good books of the establishment and had the privilege of functioning as the Chief Director of opening and closing ceremonies of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games.

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# Corporatisation Of the Indian Film Industry

■ Premendra Mazumder

**V**isionaries of Indian cinema realised at the very initial stage that film industry would succeed as an excellent medium of art and also as a highly potential industry as well in this land of epics and legends having a tradition of being the mature connoisseur of audio visual culture in the form of performing arts of innumerable schools for thousands of years. India's first feature film *Raja Harishchandra* made by Dhundraj Govind Phalke, popularly known as Dadasaheb Phalke, was released in 1913. By next seven years film production in India became an industry. By 1930, companies like *Hindustan Studios*, *Sharda*, *Maharashtra Film Company*, *Krishna*, *Imperial*, *Sagar Movietone* produced more than 800 films in Bombay alone. Between 1930s and 50s big film studios like *Filmistan*, *Ranjit*, *Bombay Talkies*, *Rajkamal*, *Mehboob*, *RK*, *Nataraj* dominated the industry. But the World Wars, partition of India and so many other socio-political factors dragged down this popular industry under the cloud of enigmatic suspicion. After so many ups & downs government finally recognized it as an industry during the fiscal year 2000-2001. Corporatization of the Indian film industry was still a far-off dream for the *movie-mughals* so far. Extremely professional film personality Amitabh Bachchan, during his second round of entry into Bollywood, first realised that corporatization of the film industry was the need of the hour for its survival in the global market. In 1996 *Amitabh Bachchan Corporation Limited* (ABCL) emerged as

the pioneer of this new approach towards corporatization of Indian cinema. Though over dependence on the business school grads turned down this project as an unsuccessful one, still it worked as the groundbreaker to show the right path to the next-gen movie-barons. As a result, Indian Film Conglomerates like *Mukta Arts*, *Yash Raj Films*, *Dharma Productions*, *Adlabs Films*, *PVR Cinemas*, *Pritish Nady Communications*, *K Sera Sera*, *Shringar Cinemas*, *Inox Leisure* and many others came into the market in a new shape of corporate ventures. But there was a long journey before that. In 1925, Himansu Rai made the first international co-production, an Indo-German joint venture *The Light of Asia*. The first cinema trade organisation *The Bombay Cinema and Theatres Trade Association* was formed in 1926. On 6th October 1927 Government of India appointed the *Indian Cinematograph Committee* under the Chairmanship of Dewan Bahadur T. Rangachariar to study the status of film industry. In 1920s there was a mushroom growth and high rate of mortality as well among the exhibitors. Number of theatres in India increased from about 150 in 1923 to about 265 in 1927. By 1927, the exhibition chain of *Madan Theaters Ltd.* comprised of 85 houses, out of which 65 were directly owned by them and 20 were under contract.

In 1929, V. Shantaram founded *The Prabhat Film Company* in Kolhapur. *The New Theatres* was founded by B.N. Sircar in 1930 in Calcutta. Ardeshir Irani, who founded *Imperial Films* in 1925 and made 62 films, became the pioneer of the sound era in Indian cinema by making the Hindi movie *Alam Ara (Beauty of the World)* released on 14th March 1931. For this movie, the first Indian film song “*de de khuda ke naam pe*” was recorded in 1931, sung by W.M. Khan. In 1932, *Madan Theatres* produced *Indrasabha* with 71 songs, so far which is a record. In 1933, number of Hindi films released was 75, all packed with so many songs and dances. Shantaram shifted *The Prabhat Film Company* from Kolhapur to Pune to build up a large studio complex. Another big studio *Wadia Movietone* was also founded in this year, which specialized in stunt films. English version of Himanshu Rai’s Anglo-Indian co-production *Karma (Fate)* premiered in London in May 1933 and Hindi version released in Bombay on 27th January 1934 starring Devikarani as the heroine and founding *The Bombay Talkies Limited* popularly known as the *Bombay Talkies*. It was a high-tech film studio with sound and echo proof shooting zone, editing rooms, laboratories, preview theatres and all other modern facilities available at the time. *Bombay Talkies* was the first Indian film studio registered as the public limited company under the *Indian Companies Act*. Its well-organised management expertise, profit-yielding performance, payment of dividends and bonus to the shareholders established itself as one of the leading companies, which was also quoted in the list of *Bombay Stock Exchange*.

In 1941, independent productions started to make films countermining the big studios. Film business became very lucrative to attract new producers. Already famous filmmakers were motivated to come out of the studio system to make films independently. In 1941, V. Shantaram left *Prabhat* founded by him to make films under his own banner. In 1942, Mehboob Khan, the most famous director of *Sagar* left the studio to make films independently. Stars also realised that independence would earn them more money and fame than that they were earning in the payroll of a big studio. Same thing happened for the directors, cinematographers, lyricists, other cast & crews. Independence, out of the studio system, found them new avenues to earn more money and fame without any permanent obligation as a studio employee. Under such a changed circumstance, it was also quite difficult for the big studios to survive by maintaining so many staff. Obviously, the big studios began to diversify their activities. Some were closed. Out of 61 films produced in

Bombay in 1941, total 21 films were made by the independent producers who had no permanent studio, staff, laboratory or any infrastructure needed to make a film. Ambience of the film industry started changing rapidly. Big stars started signing two three or more films at the same time demanding very high remuneration. Infiltration of black money in abundance corrupted the value system and morals of the industry and the film industry became the best place for the black marketers to invest for quick and high return.

Late 1940s to 1960s are regarded as the ‘Golden Age of Indian Cinema’. So many highly critically acclaimed and commercially successful films came out. Chetan Anand’s *Neecha Nagar* (1946); Ritwik Ghatak’s *Nagarik* (’52), *Ajantrik* (’58); Bimal Roy’s *Two Acres of Land* (’53), *Madhumati* (’58); Guru Dutt’s *Pyaasa* (’57), *Kaagaz Ke Phool* (’59); Raj Kapoor’s *Awaara* (’51), *Sree 420* (’55); Mehboob Khan’s *Mother India* (’57); V. Shantaram’s *Do Ankhon Bara Haath* (’57); K.Asif’s *Mughal-e-Azam* (’60) and so many others glorified the Indian film history. Tamil superstars M.G.Ramachandran and Sivaji Ganeshan also emerged at this time. During this period also started the *Indian New Wave Cinema* through *Pather Panchali* by Satyajit Ray (’55). His *Apu Trilogy* (1955-59) established Indian cinema to the height of respect. Following Ray a band of talented directors – Mrinal Sen, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Shyam Benegal, G. Aravindan, Mani Kaul, Girish Kasaravalli, Kumar Sahani, Ketan Mehta, Govind Nihalani and several others honored Indian cinema with their talents and intellects. 70’s also saw the rise of commercial cinema to capture the market in most remunerative manner. Ramesh Sippy’s *Sholay* (’75) shook the market tremendously breaking all the earlier records. Same year, Yash Chopra’s *Deewar* also hit the box office as one of the highest grosser of the decade. *Jai Santoshi Maa* (’75), a typical mythological film, also grossed astronomically.

1980s and 90s further extended the market of Bollywood to a new dimension with different content and approach. *Mr. India* (’87), *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* (’88), *Tezaab* (’88), *Chandni* (’89), *Maine Pyar Kiya* (’89), *Baazigar* (’93), *Darr* (’93), *Dilwale Dulhaniya le Jayenge* (’95) and *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* (’98) created storm in Indian as well as in overseas market. From South, Mani Ratnam came out with his super hit *Roja* (’92) and *Bombay* (’95). *Time* magazine’s ‘*All-time 100 Best Movies*’ included Mani Ratnam’s Tamil film *Nayagam* (’87) attracting the attention of the world to the South cinema beyond Bollywood. Academy Award winner A.R.Rahman’s debut soundtrack for *Roja* was also included in *Time* magazine’s

“10 Best Soundtracks” of all time. The period also accommodated the great masters to continue their works and to invite new breed of young and talented directors to carve their niche. Shaji N. Karun’s debut film *Piravi* (’89) won the *Camera d’Or* at the Cannes Film Festival. So many other coveted awards and honors enriched Indian cinema. Commercial success and critics appreciation of Ram Gopal Verma’s low budget films *Satya* (’98) and *Company* (2002) created a distinct genre known as ‘*Mumbai Noir*’ dealing with the urban problems of the city of Mumbai which included Madhur Bhandarkar’s *Chandni Bar* (2001), *Traffic Signal* (’07), Anurag Kashyap’s *Black Friday* (’04) and several others. In 1995, as a commercial enterprise, Bollywood registered an annual growth rate of 15% establishing its strength as a key player of Indian economy.

Beyond Bollywood and Bangla cinema, Telugu and Tamil are the two giant players of Indian movie industry. Telugu film industry is based in Andhra Pradesh which has more than 3,700 theatres of which the capital city Hyderabad alone has got more than 200. It produces more than 150 films every year which touched a record mark in 2008 when it produced 275 films. In 2005, its total business reached 2,550 million Rupees. Tamil cinema has a profound effect in Indian film industry as well. Chennai, the capital city of Tamil Nadu, is the main hub of entire South cinema and even of the Sinhalese cinema including the Sri Lankan Tamil cinema. Beyond the land, Tamil cinema has a great overseas market especially in Sri Lanka, Singapore, South Korea, Malaysia, Mauritius, South Africa, West Europe and North America. India is the largest producer of film in the world producing more than a thousand full-length feature films every year. Highest number of film produced in Hindi and Telugu. Next comes Tamil, Malayalam, Bengali and other regional language films. Hindi film accounts for about half of the total revenue generated in the Indian film industry as a whole. In 2006, it was a 1.6 billion USD industry which grew faster than Indian economy. In 2005, India produced 1,041 films, much ahead of the United States which produced only 611 films. In 2007, India produced 1,132 feature films, whereas in 2008 total number of production in America, China and Japan was 520, 400 and 418 respectively.

As for the theatre admissions, India’s count of 3.3 billion for 2008 was higher than the combined total of the next nine biggest film producing countries of the world. The fact has been revealed by the *European Audiovisual Observatory* in its publication *Focus 2009 – World Film Market Trends*. It has also disclosed that India has the

cheapest ticket price with an average of 0.50 USD (22 Rupees approximately) whereas the average price of tickets in China is 2.20 USD and in Japan it is 11.70 USD. This low price of ticket causes the low collection in India, which grossed only 1.80 billion USD in 2007 when USA grossed 9.70 billion USD and Japan 1.90 billion USD in 2008. (Source: *India dominates world of films* by Atul Thakur, TNN, 28th July 2009). A recent survey by *Assocham* and *PwC* says that the Indian entertainment and media industry, which is mainly dominated by cinema, is likely to grow at a rate of over 11% and will reach an astronomical figure of Rs.93,000 crores by 2013. The current size of the media and entertainment industry is estimated at Rs. 60,000 crores. (Source: *PTI*, 6th Dec. 2009). But in India there are only 9,000 screens whereas in China there are 38,500 screens and in USA there are 37,482 screens.

Until late 1990s, film industry was not even recognized as an “industry” in the real sense of the term. Banks and other financial institutions continued to avoid film industry for its enormous risk factors, speculative nature and slag non-professional approach. Two nationalized banks, *Indian Bank* and *Canara Bank* have lost lots of money financing the films. But after government’s official acceptance it as an “industry”, the financial institutions started to take interest on it, though very slowly. Government of India accorded film production a status of industry in October 2000 vide its notification no. 2(C) (XVII) of the IDBI Act 1964. In December 2000, *Joint Institutional Committee on Financing Entertainment Industry* comprising of the members *Industrial Development Bank of India* (IDBI), *Industrial Finance Corporation of India* (IFCI) and headed by the *Department of Banking, Ministry of Finance* submitted an interim report suggesting the norms for financing in film industry. In 2004 nearly 100 films managed to avail organized finance amounting to about 160 million USD. (*Indian Entertainment Industry Focus 2010: Dream to Reality – a CII-KPMG Report*). The process was initiated by the *Industrial Development Bank of India* (IDBI) in 2001 when it invested 23 million USD in film production after its recognition as the industry. Government also approved 100% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to film industry. (Source: *Ministry of I&B*, Dec.25, 2005).

It is true that major portion of the investment in the Indian film industry used to come from the obscure sources on absurd terms and conditions which compelled the conventional banking sector of the country to keep itself in a safe distance from the film industry. Retained earnings of the production houses, funding from legal or illegal

sources, pre-selling of the rights, borrowing from private lenders mainly from those who do not have any idea about the aesthetics or technology of filmmaking have become the main source of funding for production. This nexus naturally reflects an overall nonprofessional attitude yielding cost overruns and poor productions without having any quality of art and entertainment. Even the government organizations like *Film Finance Corporation* or *National Film Development Corporation* (NFDC) failed to bring any substantial change in the scenario. The *Film Federation of India* was trying its best to pursue the banking industry to take interest in the film industry but the lack of professionalism was the barrier for the same. Entry of TNCs in the field is rapidly changing the scenario. The global players of the entertainment industry do care for professional expertise to safeguard their money and to get highest profit. Corporatization is reshaping the film industry in a professional manner. Banks are now taking interest for funding the production against different collateral securities which mainly includes the negative of the film. Banks also insist for the guarantee from the producer for timely completion of the film and appropriate insurance coverage as well.

*Alliance Insurance* has brokered all recent five films of Akshay Kumar – *Chandni Chawak to China*, *De Dhana Dhan*, *Hera Pheri 4*, *Tasveer 8X10* and *Blue* along with a reality show of Akshay with a collective riding of Rs. 200 crore on the actor. Recent disaster in the multiplex business from Mumbai to Pune which hit *Kaminey* very badly due to swine flu have not created any big problem for *UTV Motion Pictures* as their distribution rights was insured with *Marsh India Insurance Brokers* which usually is effective up to 60 days from the date of release. *Allied Insurance* had to pay Karan Johar a substantial amount under his insurance coverage for the film *My Name is Khan* due to postponement of the shooting schedule for unusual snowfall in November in Los Angeles. (Source: *The Hindu Business Line*). High-tech equipments, fabulous sets, risky stunt sequences, fat remunerations to the star actors, uncertain returns and so many other factors have caused the filmmaking a highly risky business. These demand a safeguard to ensure losses in every field as far as possible. Role of insurance in the film industry is therefore increasing day by day. And if the business is insured properly, banking sector will certainly take interest to invest money in it. As the insurance is a prerequisite for sanctioning a bank loan, the producer who intends for it has to take insurance coverage for his film. Arrest of Sanjay Dutt during *Khalnayak* first prompted the great entertainer of Bollywood Subhash Ghai to take insurance

coverage for his big budget *Taal* (1999) with *United India Insurance Ltd.* creating a new dimension of film business. Total production cost of the film was projected 110 million Rupees for which he paid a premium of 1.50 million Rupees. It attracted so many producers and distributors to bring their products under insurance coverage. For example, Shah Rukh Khan had insured his home production *Ashoka* for 70 million Rupees, Amir Khan insured *Lagan* for 150 million Rupees, Yash Raj Films insured *Mohabatein* for 150 million Rupees and Ramesh Sippy insured *Kuch Na Kaho* for 140 million Rupees. Thousands such examples are there. Presently the insurance premium is a compulsory segment of the film's overall budget. Besides feature films, ad-films are also taking interest in film-insurance. An ad-campaign produced by *Lehar Communications* at a cost of Rs.15.00 lac starring Hema Malini to endorse the product *Rahat Rooh Oil* is the first Indian ad-film to come under insurance coverage. The premium was fixed at 1.10% of the total production cost. Here also *United India Insurance Company Ltd.* took the pioneer role. (Source: *Film Insurance in India* by Anurag Dwivedi. *National Law Institute University*).

Before the open market policy, the *United Insurance India Ltd.* was the only company to provide for film insurance in India. But now there are several other companies doing the same business. The main areas which are covered by the insurance companies are: Personal Insurance, Property Insurance, Public Liability Insurance, Money Insurance, Workmen Insurance and Accident Insurance. Personal Insurance are generally meant for the high value actors, directors and technicians – for death, accident, illness causing hospitalization, death of immediate family members, kidnap, murder, injury, absence due to riot / strike / natural calamity / complete disaster in transport system / curfew / civil commotion etc. Property Insurance are done for sets, production equipments, negatives and other properties involving the production – losses for accident, fire, flood, storm, riot, strike, civil commotion, theft, burglary, dacoity, terrorist activities, loss in transit etc. Public Liability Insurance is for the injury or loss to members of the public during production, court fees, advocate fees, legal charges, defense suits etc. Money Insurance covers the loss of cash in transit between locations or at shooting spots. Workmen Insurance takes care of the physical injury of the workmen during the shooting causing death or disability and Accident Insurance covers the damage and injury due to accident for all members of the production on-location and/or off-location at a pre-agreed rate.

The insurance companies today offer various other packages to cater the needs of the producers, distributors, actors and technicians. Production insurance premium spends are directly linked with the cost of production which generally range around 0.5% to 2.0% of the total production cost. Distribution insurance policies are known as the “distribution loss of profit policy” which generally covers a period from the week before the date of release to 60 days after the date of release. Big distributors prefer to cover the entire period but the small distributors may also opt for the lesser period with smaller amount of premium.

Advertising in Bollywood is much less expensive than in Hollywood. Billboards, promos in different television channels, publicity through print media, stars making appearances are the main means of advertisement in Indian cinema. A statistics shows that in the year 2002 where Hollywood spent 47.7 million USD for advertisement & marketing Bollywood spent only 500,000 USD on that account. (Ref: Katharine Woodman-Maynard). As India’s online population is increasing very rapidly, marketing and advertisement through internet is getting very popular and profit-worthy. A recent *Hindu Business Line* survey reveals that 38.5 million Indians have got internet access and over 1.5 million home have got high speed broadband access. Obviously, it’s a highly potential area for advertisement and marketing of the movie business. More over 20 million Indians who are living abroad are keeping track with Bollywood through net. It has been noted that technophile young generation having disposable income are highly enthusiastic to explore the details of movies in net. R. Rajnish, Head of the Digital Marketing Revenue and Strategic Business, *MSN India* says that “People who use the internet are twice likely to go watch movies in multiplexes. Indians abroad go online to read movie reviews before they book a ticket or buy a DVD. So, the adoption of online media is attractive to new-age producers, who themselves are net-savvy”. Online promotion on big portals like *MSN India* costs around 17 to 25 thousand USD. Other standard portals generally costs around 1,000 to 25,000 USD depending upon several variables like target audience, regions, language, popularity of the portals and so many others. A top online promotion company *Hungama* has noted that some of their sites are visited by more than 12 million viewers a month. Individual film sites are also becoming very common and attracting a good number of viewers as well. Hollywood’s aggressive and all-out marketing strategy is also becoming popular to Bollywood, which is gradually migrating to more sophisticated and high-tech marketing strategies to grab the market.

Cinema is a medium as well as a product. It’s an art as well as an industry. So it is easy to promote. Its marketing aspects are highly prospective. Karan Johar is the one of the pioneers to give movie marketing a new height. From *Kabhi Alvida Na Kehna* he has changed the language of Bollywood movie marketing. He tied up with the reputed ad-company *Hewlett Packard* which masterminded and executed the promotion of the movie through aggressive marketing. (*Marketing movie brands by Ramesh Narayan. The Hindu Businessline. August 24, 2006*).

Entry of talents from the world of advertisement to cinema also enriches the quality of product in the industry. Right from the maestro Satyajit Ray who came from *DJ Keymer*, Shyam Benegal and Govind Nihalni from *Lintas* to the recent entries like Rensil D’Silva from *O&M*, R. Balki from *Lowe* there are many others who transited from ad-world to film-world with professional skills. John Matthew Matthan for *Sarfarosh*, Balki for *Paa*, Rensil for *Kurbaan*, Pradip Sarkar for *Parineeta*, Abbas Tyrewala for *Jaane Tu Ya Jaane Na*, Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra for *Rang De Basanti*, Prasoon Joshi for scripting *Tare Zameen Pe* should be acknowledged for putting their professional expertise in the industry. Scientific technology to communicate maximum number of target audience in the minimum possible message, understanding consumer behavior, proper tuning with changing time and taste of the consumers, end use of investment in appropriation with return et al helped a lot to the admen to increase the quality of product. (*Source: Advertising and Indian cinema: Relationship bound to grow. Harihar Narayanaswamy. The Economic Times. December 12, 2009*). Indian cinema emerged as global enterprise in 21st century. Technological development facilitated it to upgrade its market value. In the year 1938 *Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer* (MGM) acquired a land in Bombay to establish the famous *Metro Cinema* (1938-2005). It was quite difficult for this 1,491 seats single screen to survive during the period of transformation of the viewers’ choice. It was acquired by *Adlabs Cinemas* and reopened as a multiplex in August 2006 with Karan Johar’s blockbuster *Kabhi Alvida Na Kehna*. Now it is one of the largest multiplexes in the city with six screens. Since 1997, Indian cine-viewers started to experience a new impact of film viewing in multiplexes. Economic liberalization policy of 1991 brought a retail boom in the market, which imported the concept of shopping malls of the West, and included multiplexes as a compulsory to attract the new generation consumers. Complex multiplicity of cinematic mixing with films of different genres, tastes and languages helps the multiplexes to draw a substantial number of viewers of different tastes under the single roof offering

them a buffet of varieties to select according to their own choice. (Source: *The Hindu Business Line*).

Big budget Bollywood films with their high quality production standard found newer marketing opportunities in multiplexes to satisfy the viewers to whom the quality and ambience matter. Multiplex also offer a good marketing opportunity for the low-budget films to place their products for their selective target group. The reluctance of the big distributors and exhibitors about the low-budget parallel cinema has been wiped away while multiplexes offer their screens for this type of films as well. Their entry into the multiplexes was possible for the simple reason that the number of screens in the same place has been increased dividing the total seating capacity of the single screen.

In her article "*India's experience with the multiplex*" Aparna Sharma (*Unsettling Cinema – A Symposium on the Place of Cinema in India. May, 2003*) says "While the capacity at a single screen cinema is usually in the region of 850 to 1000 seats, or sometimes a little over that, a single screen in a multiplex seats a far smaller audience, because when a cinema is converted from one to multiple screens the seats get divided among them, though not equally. *Anupam PVR*, India's first multiplex situated in Delhi was converted to four screens, two with a capacity of over 300 seats and the others with 150 seats." Multiplexes generally prefer to create smaller houses with seating capacity ranging from 250 to 300+ to cater audience of different tastes at the same time. They also experience with show time and ticket price. Conventional *noon matinee evening night* shows on weekdays and an additional *morning* show on Sundays throughout the country has been drastically broken by the multiplexes with always changing show times. On some special occasions to cater with the craze for any particular film, shows in multiplexes even start at 6'O clock in the early morning. Time schedule can conveniently prepared with the varied running time of the films on platters. Undoubtedly, the Bollywood crowd pullers steal the attractive show times in most of the screens leaving behind the low-budge films, but as most of the parallel films have a comparatively lesser running time they can comfortably be accommodated in the schedule of the multiplexes as well.

Multiplexes have redefined the entertainment history of India. After metro cities now the multiplexes are spreading its chain in B and C class towns. *PVR Cinemas, Adlab Films, Inox Leisures, Shringer Cinemas (Fame), Fun Multiplexes, Cinemax India* are venturing in small towns of the country. They are mainly targeting the cities and

towns having more than a million inhabitants. About 38 cities in India qualify for that. Now the multiplex players even targeting to the smaller cities with 5 lac inhabitants also. Near about 65% of the total box office collection in the country comes from non-metros. *PVR Talkies* which raised 1.28 billion Rupees from its initial public offering (IPO) in December 2006 has already spread its network over 70 cities. *Adlab* also invested 2 billion Rupees. In November 2009 *PVR Ltd.* announced that it had acquired *DLF Group's DT Cinema* at Rs.20.20 crores in cash and gave 25.57 lac shares. Commenting on this acquisition Mr. Ajay Bijli, chairman and managing Director of *PVR Ltd.* said: "*The acquisition of DT Cinemas and long term strategic partnership with the DLF Group is part of our expansion strategy. PVR will now control 60-70 per cent of the market share in Delhi and Gurgaon market.*" *DLF* had planned mall development in Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Hyderabad, Jalandhar and Lucknow. The partnership with *DLF* would enable *PVR* to expand further. *PVR* also announced to offer 10% of its equity capital to Thailand-based *Major Cineplex Group Plc.* Investment of *Cineplex* into *PVR* would be 42 crores Rupees by subscribing 25.57 lac new shares. (Source: *The Hindu Businessline, Nov.14, 2009*).

Multiplexes are careful about the product placement in metros and non-metros. While the average price of ticket in Mumbai is Rs.150 it is less than even Rs.100 somewhere in the non-metros. Revenue earning from food and beverages (F&B) and advertisements in smaller towns are lower than that of the metros. While in metros the F&B revenues constitutes 20-25% of he total earnings, in non-metros it is only around 15-20% of the total earning. Same thing happens in earnings from advertisements also. While in metros, it comes around 10% of the total earning, in non-metros it yields only around 5%. Since the margin in F&B is as high as 65%, net earning falls down in non-metros in this particular segment. To make up the balance sheet, the multiplex owners compromise with the quality of service they are committed to offer. For example in place of installing air-conditioners in lounge, they just install air-coolers claiming that it suits the local ambience. But the fact is obvious. Still despite a lucrative potentiality in the movie business and with a deeply rooted foundation of more than a century India is still dawdling behind to cater the need of the entire country, ignoring its vast rural market and concentrating on urban market for quick profit.

*Mukta Arts Limited* promoted by Subhash Ghai is considered as the pioneer to induce professionalism in the Indian film industry successfully. It is ranked as one of the premiere Hindi film production houses with multiple



source of revenue. Besides producing films, the company has managed to build successful business network around other related value segments creating a more scalable structure causing a solid long-term sustainability and high rate of growth. It has diversified its activities to different allied fields to strengthen its leadership. Besides producing films (*Mukta Arts*), it is successfully involved in film distribution (*Mukta Movies Distributors*), television (*Mukta TeleMedia*), post-productions (*Audeus*), human resource development (*Whistling Woods International*) and putting its signature everywhere. (Source: *Mukta Arts Limited: Pioneer in Product Placement in Films* by Seema Agarwal and Joel Sarosh Thadamalla).

Another pioneer leader of professionalism in Indian movie business is Manmohan Shetty, the owner of *Adlabs* who has diversified into various aspects of filmmaking. It has got the biggest *IMAX* theatre of the world besides a host of multiplexes. Its strategy in smaller towns is based on lease contract model instead of building and owning strategy adopted by its competitors. It has also ventured into digital screens after its success in Singapore. (Ref: *Showin' and Growin* by Devendra Mohan). In South, *Ramoji Film City* has become a global hub for its fabulous open air sets, world class digital studios (*Symphony*), digital post production lab (*Mantra*), digital audiocassette duplication lab (*Rhythm*), world class film lab (*Rainbow*) all equipped with high-tech futuristic equipments. It provides services not only to the hundreds of Indian productions but also to so many other filmmakers coming from different countries of the world to get all the infrastructural facilities under one roof and in a single package. (*Where Dream Merchants Head* by L Melly Maitreyi). *Adlabs Films*, an Anil Ambani Group of Companies, raised Rs. 600 crores from the market through rights issue. The company decided to utilize the fund to expand its exhibition screens to over 570 by next one year. (*Business Line*, 13th August 2009).

Tie up of Steven Spielberg's *DreamWorks Studio* and Anil Ambani's *Reliance BIG Entertainment* is a major event of corporatisation of Indian film industry. The initial investment of this venture has been estimated 825 million USD. Formed in November 2008 the company has plans to produce five to six films every year. Initial phase of funding includes an equity investment of 325 million USD from *Reliance ADA Group*, 150 million through *Disney* and the remaining through debt financing from syndication of banks. *Disney* will look after the marketing and distribution worldwide while *Reliance BIG Entertainment* will retain distribution rights. (Source: *Business Line*, 16th July 2009).

The largest entertainment company of India *Zee Entertainment Enterprises Limited*, a subsidiary of *Essel Group* was known as *Zee Telefilms* till 2006. It currently operates over 15 different television channels, a cable company, a production company and several other business operations mainly related to media and entertainment. Launched in October 1992, *Zee* is a dominant player in the Indian entertainment market. Presently it has expanded its network in overseas market and many of its channels are available in different countries in Asia, Africa, UK and USA. As *Zee Telefilms* it formed a part of *BSE Sensex* during 2000-05. Established in April 1995 *Zee Cinema* is the first Hindi Movie Channel of the country. It broadcasts for more than 75% of the cable and satellite households across India.

Movies produced in the last one decade provide clear evidence of product placement. Producers earned approximately between 0.50 million Rupees to 50.00 million Rupees for including product placement in their movies. Brands such as *Coke*, *Pepsi*, *Castrol*, *Thumps Up*, service brands like *ICICI Bank*, *Aaj Tak* took lead in this area. Tourism industry directly profited from the Indian films. *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge* (1995), *Pardesh* (1997), *Kaho Na pyar Hai* (2000), *Salaam Namaste* (2005) were responsible for increasing tourism in Europe, USA, England, Australian and New Zealand. (Ref: *Films—An Advertising medium to Captive Consumers* by Seema Agarwal and Joel Sarosh Thadamalla).

Concept of product placements i.e. in-film advertisements was pioneered in Bollywood by Subhash Ghai's *Mukta Arts* when it made *Karz* in 1980. Its success prompted the company to continue this venture in all of its next productions. It promoted the motorbike *Hero Honda* in its next production *Hero* in 1983. Ghai's *Taal* (1999) earned about Rs.2 crores from corporate sponsorship. *Coca-Cola* alone met up the 20% of the production cost of the film. Besides that so many other products like *BMW*, *Diet-Coke*, *Honda*, *Forest*, *Fortune Magazine*, *Mercedes Benz*, *Nescafe*, *Screen Magazine*, *Sony Camera*, *Thums Up* et al were there. In his next production *Yaadein* (2001) Subhash Ghai again earned 20% of the production cost by placing three products in his final script for which we could see that Hritik Roshan, the hero of the film riding a *Hero Cycle* with *Coke* sharing the mouth-freshener *Pass Pass* with the heroine Kareena Kapoor. *Mukta Arts* bagged Rs.3.35 crores from these placements. Amitabh Bachchan starrer *Bhagban* integrated creatively the famous brands like *Tata Tea*, *Ford & Tide*, *Archies*,

*ICICI Bank* et al. Since 2004, brand association outside the film is becoming very popular while *Mujhse Shadi Karoge* associated with *Britania 50/50*, *Hum Tum* got associated with *Tata Indicom*, *Kyon Ho Gaya Na* with *Close Up*, *Lakshya* with *Airtel* et al.

*3rd Global Summit on Entertainment and Media: Focus 2009* of *Assocham* held in December 2009 concluded that Indian film industry though a global one still it would have to take so many measures to reach to the whole world. Madhur Bhandarkar told that the industry should improve a lot on its marketing techniques. Mukesh Tyagi noted that the film industry should nourish its talents to an international standard. Sandeep Marwah said even after all these drawbacks Bollywood films were watched by two sixth of the whole world. (Source: *PR Log*, 19th December 2009). Practically the main advantage point for the corporate houses is that the investment per film is very low in India. On an average where Hollywood invests 14 million USD to produce a film, Bollywood invests only 500,000 USD for the same.

Exporting of Indian cinema has also been increased substantially. In 2005 Bollywood alone earned more than 100 million USD from the United States. In UK Bollywood often holds its positions in top-ten most popular movies. By 2003, at least 30 film production companies had been listed in the *National Stock Exchange of India*. Millions of Non-Resident Indians (NRI) has helped to create a high potent market for Indian film industry outside the country. The earning accounts for more than 12% of the total revenue generated by a standard mainstream movie.

Erroneous taxation policy is a great constraint of the corporatization of Indian film industry. Entertainment taxes in India are the highest in the world. Film industry in India pays a bundle of taxes, viz. entertainment tax up to the tune of 40%, new release tax of 1%, show tax up to the tune of 2% and so many others. This trend automatically generates an ambience of corruption when the exhibitors under-report the sales to avoid taxes. The most important chamber of commerce of India *Assocham* has complained that while entertainment is one of the basic needs of life, the entertainment tax levied on the films are highly uneven across different States and is in excess of 30 to 40 percent. *Assocham* has demanded that *Govt. of India* should act as the coordinator to bring uniformity in entertainment tax rates throughout the country. (Source: *PTI*, 22nd November 2009). The *Indian Motion Picture Producers' Association (IMPAA)* has requested the Union Finance Minister to do away with the entertainment tax levied on tickets by the States.

*IMPAA* has complained that taxation varies from 30% to 100% from one State to other. According to them, three main segments of film industry – production, distribution and exhibition are already over burdened with various taxes. But all these three segments are dependent on the same box office collection. So if the entertainment tax on the entry tickets are so high it will be impossible for the industry to survive. Producers are paying service tax for hiring a location, hiring shooting equipments, paying for laboratory usages, dubbing, sound mixing, processing of films and so many other things. In addition, they are also paying Value Added Tax (VAT) and stamp duty for selling rights of their products. *IMPAA* said that compounding effect of service tax on the production sector accounts for as much as 40% of the total production cost on which 12.36% service tax is imposed. *IMPAA* finds no justification for imposition of custom duty and countervailing duty on negative raw stock of film as well as cameras and other equipments which have to be imported if not available in the country.

As per List-2 of Schedule-VII of the *Constitution of India* the Entertainment Tax is exclusively reserved for the State Governments as one of their main sources of revenue which is mainly collected from the film industry. Before the war, entertainment tax in India levied in the provinces was mostly on a uniform rate of 12.50%. Due to war, it was increased on an understanding that it was a temporary measure. But independence demanded a further increase for nation's development. By 1949, when the country was divided into States the entertainment tax went to the State-list and it ranged from 25% to 75% with a country-wise average on 33.50%. Ironically in June 1949, Britain exempted 677 cinemas from entertainment tax to patronize the British film industry. But in India increased State taxes were only a beginning. Even some Municipalities began to levy entertainment taxes.

There were several other taxations in different forms. By 1949 the film associations estimated that 60% of the total box-office collections were going to pay the taxes to the governments on several heads. To register their protest against independent India's taxation policies towards film industry the *Indian Motions Picture Producers Association (IMPA)*, *Bengal Motion Picture Association (BMPA)* and *South Indian Film Chamber of Commerce* jointly called for a strike of 30th June 1949 to observe the *All-India Cinema Protest Day* when all the cinema halls throughout the country were closed. Late this year the government declared the new *Film Enquiry Committee* under the chairmanship of SK Patil. This committee, like the previous one, also studied the problems of the exhibitors,

distributors and producers. The committee examined the problem of taxation very carefully and recommended that entertainment taxes throughout the country should be uniform and within a limit of 20%. It also criticized the charges of octroi duties, police charge and customs duties etc. But unfortunately the matter till remains same.

It is very much disappointing that though the Indian film industry is paying a lot but it is not being reciprocated properly by the Government who is responsible for its promotion. In one hand most of all the organisations of the Government to promote cinema are lagging far behind to keep pace with time due to its non-professional and bureaucratic nature of works, and on the other hand, the white atrocities in guise prevailing in the different acts and laws starting from the age old *The Indian Penal Code* to the *Indian Censor Board*, all ready to cripple the independence of the filmmakers to raise voice, are destroying the real growth of the Indian cinema – both in terms of art and industry. As a result, the body of the film industry is growing but its brain is trailing behind, which is not at all a healthy sign for survival.

Film industry is contributing substantially to the total amount of Income Tax collected by the Government of India. In 2003-04, Shahrukh Khan was the highest tax payer of the industry who alone paid Rs. 6.30 crores as Income Tax on his total income of the year of around Rs.18.00 crores. In 2004-05, Amitabh Bachchan paid the highest tax of Rs.6.35 crores on his total income of rs.19.00 crores. In 2006-07, Hritick Roshan and Shahrukh Khan paid Rs.15.10 crores and Rs. 14.00 crores respectively as Income Tax on their total declared earnings. Every year the earning from Indian film industry on Income Tax is growing.

Ironically, very recently, the *Service Tax Department* has sent notices to all film production companies to supply the details of each and every professional they have hired to work on their films since 2006. This means that all the professionals like the cinematographers, editors, sound engineers, choreographers, music composers, whose yearly income crossed Rs.10 lac per annum will be further taxed heavily by the Government over and above the Income tax they are already paying.

This is not very clear whether the actors will also be taxed but as the definition of ‘professional’ as per concerned Act is so obscure that it could be extended to them also. It is also not clear whether the stars like Amitabh Bachchan or Shahrukh Khan who are already paying tax for the service they provide for their endorsements will further be taxed. (Source: *Aniruddha Guha, DNA, 17th January 2010*).

*Cinema Owner and Exhibitor’s Association of India (COEAI)* claimed that due to heavy taxations 2,006(+) single screen cinema halls have pulled down their shutters during 1997-2007. According to the recommendations of the United Nations, India should have at least 100,000 screens whereas it has only 10,994. *COEAI* complained that cinema owners have to pay several taxes like entertainment tax, property tax, show tax, service tax and various other taxes which have made the cinema exhibition business very much unviable in the country. The Association has demanded that the government’s tax policies should be rationalized and abolishing so many different types of taxes a single channel should be introduced which may levy a maximum of 15 to 20 percent of tax on the similar line of the developed countries. (Source: *UNI, 6th February 2008*).

Film industry is the easy prey of the State governments to meet up their revenue deficits. Whenever needed they just impose additional taxes on the industry without giving back anything in exchange. For example, in last September the Uttar Pradesh Government has issued a notification to change its structure of entertainment tax collection. According to the new dictum, the entertainment tax is calculated on the total cost of the tickets. Which means the maintenance fees and film development fund are also be included to calculate the entertainment tax. 30% entertainment tax is payable on the tickets up to Rs.10/-. For the tickets ranging from Rs.10/- to Rs.30/-, cinema halls are to pay 40% entertainment tax and it goes higher for the costlier tickets. UP Government has also increased the one time entertainment tax for the makeshift cinema theatres in rural areas from Rs.500/- to Rs.2,000/- in one jump. (Source: *Outlook India, 5th September, 2009*).

Greatest threat to the Indian film industry is piracy. Practically it has become a nightmare to the industry. As soon as the films are released, or sometimes even before their theatrical release also, those are copied illegally in numerous discs and spread throughout the country corrupting a substantial share of the market instantly causing a big harm to the legal industry. Disc and cable piracy has caused a massive reduction in the number of video halls in the country. From 120,000 such outlets in India, the number has decreased to 30,000 damaging the prospect of the industry to build up a legitimate video market. *The Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act 1995* (amended in 2000) has the objectives and powers to refrain the cable operators from any unauthorized broadcasting whatsoever. But the cable operators desperately exhibit new releases without caring for any legal authorizations. It is estimated that about 40% of the

prospective legitimate earnings are lost due to cable piracy in India. More than 10 optical disc plants are operating in India with a capacity to produce 60 million discs. Out of these at least two plants have DVD-5 production facilities. Suspected that one DVD-9 plant is also there in operation. Thousands of video parlors, clubs, societies, cafeterias, tea-stalls, hotels, restaurants and so many other organisations are showing pirated discs abundantly violating the *Copyright Act* and thus ultimately damaging the legal growth of the film industry.

Millions of rental video libraries operating throughout the country, most of which do not even bother to differentiate between the authorized copies and unauthorized ones. Virtually there is no rental rights licensing business is legally in existence in India. As per laws of the land, it can be claimed that every video rental operation in the country is piracy. *The Copyright Act, 1957* which came into force on 21st of January 1958 has been amended in 1984 to address 'global problem due to the rapid advances in technology'. Besides protecting the loss of the right-owners the legislature also realised the losses to the exchequers by way of tax evasion. India's new *Copyright Law* passed in June 1994 and was enforced on 10th May 1995 establishes a new potential to reduce piracy in India.

It protects cinematograph films as a distinct work, giving the producer of the film the exclusive rights to make copies of the film, to sell or to give the films on hire and to communicate the film to the public. The Department of Education, Ministry of Human Resources Department, Government of India has constituted a *Copyright Enforcement Advisory Council* to review the progress of enforcement of the *Copyright Act* and to advise the government on measures for improving the enforcement. Separate cells in the state police headquarters have also been set up in different States and Union Territories to enforce the *Act*. *Society for Copyright Regulations of Indian Producers of Films & Television (SCRIPT)* is looking after the interest of film industry in terms of copyright issues. (Source: *The Film Industry and Copyright Laws* by Chander M. Lall, Advocate, Lall & Sethi Advocates, 2004). But practically everything remains in papers. Law-keepers are happy to get substantial amount to keep their "eyes wide shut" to overlook the activities of the law-breakers.

Still there is immense potentiality of expansion of the film market within the country itself. Indian rural market comprises of about 128 million households which is three times larger than the Indian urban market. 40% of the Indian middle class continuously increasing its affluence

with more than 50% disposable income belongs to this rural market which still remains mostly a virgin area to be explored. Rapid advancement of technology is making things easier. Now films of any country, of any genre are available on net. It could be seen online, or could be downloaded to see later on, as per convenience of the viewer. Fortunately the Indian film industry is also keeping pace with this fast technological advancement. Utilizing the advantages of the digital and satellite technology movies are now being released in hundreds of theatres on the same day.

Box-office collection of first couple of days run thus determines the profit return of a particular production. Simultaneously it goes on for the subsidiary potentialities like release of audio and video discs and now to net-marketing.

Bobby Deol starrer *Kismet* released in 2005 was the first Bollywood movie digitally transmitted through a satellite to the theatres in and around Delhi. The transmission carried through GDC technology. Now thousands such cinema screens are there in the country. Carrying celluloid prints to the theatres becoming an obsolete process day by day. Either satellite transmission or the chips have successfully replaced the hazards of transportation and maintenance of bulky celluloid.

Big budget films opt for overflowing the market with huge numbers of copies. In December 2009 Amir Khan's *Three Idiots* released with 1,550 prints. Shah Rukh Khan's *My Name is Khan* released in February 2010 with 2,000 prints. In May 2010 Hritik Roshan's *Kites* released with 2,300 prints. Akshay Kumar with 1,050 prints of *Sing is King*, Shah Rukh Khan with 975 prints of *Om Shanti Om* and so on (Source: *Anandabazar Patrika*, 20th May 2010). This trend of extravaganza works in many ways. First, it gives high publicity hype throughout the potential market; second, it rolls up maximum possible box-office collection within first three days; third, it can experiment with the new unexplored market abroad. For example, besides Hindi and English versions, Roshan's *Kites* has been dubbed in Spanish to explore the huge prospective market of Spain and Latin America. According to Sanjib Lamba, the CEO of *Reliance Big Pictures*, this is the first time any Indian film is trying to explore the vast Spanish speaking world with its Spanish version. Undoubtedly it will open a new dimension to Bollywood after its remarkable success in English speaking countries. And thus Indian film industry is expanding its dominance in the global market through corporatization with professional expertise.



## Section - II



### My days with **Film Society Movement:**

**During the 50 year-long journey of the Film Society Movement, several film society activists worked hard to run the film societies selflessly. The only common bond they shared was their love for cinema and dedication to spread film culture without expectations of either personal monetary gains or awards, and accolades. IFC asks such senior members to write their memories during this unique journey. Many may not be able to express it in words, but few could articulate their experiences.**



# Images that Moved Me

■ Subhash Desai

**T**he earliest encounter I had with movies was when I had just started schooling. Our neighbour in verandah of his huge bungalow used to screen Charlie Chaplin and Laurel & Hardy films for us kids on 16 m. m. projector. That was just fun and laughter. Next I remember that my elder brother used to take us to morning shows at Bandra Talkies.

Later, I distinctly recollect that once we bunked afternoon classes at school and rushed to see a film at Lido at Juhu. We mean four of us class mates. One of them was Haribhai. Yes! The same, who later became actor Sanjeev Kumar, In course of time we did meet a few times but he became really a star and unapproachable.

It was in National College Bandra another group of friends had formed a habit of not missing the first day first show of released film of that week. That time there was no dearth of theatres in Bandra area. Bandra Talkies, New Talkies and Neptune were there and we had gala time!

The fascination of the medium of cinema was growing in me. I was already a fan of Gurudutt through his earlier films. Then it happened! *Pyassa* was released. The impact of it took me to a unknown level. The poignancy of it shook me to the core. Urge for meaningful cinema became imminent. Choices from Indian films were really limited. But films from overseas could satiate my longing of real films.

A friend introduced me to Suchitra Movie club in 1965 which had just started. Their shows of films from world over were being held at Ramnord Laboratories at Worli. If I remember correctly the first film I saw was 'The Island' (Japan). There were no dialogues throughout the film! But unhurried narration was so much like a visual poetry.

Now the films had become a passion. Not to miss an important film was the criteria. Later

as a Jt. Secretary of Suchitra Movie Club arranging shows, discussing films with close group of film buffs became normal and understanding of the medium grew. Harish Mehta and Tarala Mehta of Suchitra being my mentors helped me to imbibe cinema more. Later visits to Federation's office became regular which was actually Film Forum's base at Dadar. Arun Kaul and Basu Chatterjee were at the helm of the affairs, then.

Mrinal Sen's '*Bhuvan Shome*' & Basu Chatterji's '*Sara Akash*' made on FFC's efforts brought an awakening in general audience. This was the beginning for what was then termed as '*New Wave*' in Indian Cinema. There was a time when shortage of films made us to run the Czech Consulate to Mr. Shankar. He gracefully used to handover films from their library of films. That was the time when we came across the beautiful films of Jiri Menzel and K. Katyana which really overwhelmed us all.

In 1969 IFFI was held in New Delhi. There were no delegate cards which are today. Four of us from Bombay Rashid Irani, Khalid Mohamad Prakash Motiwalla and myself went there and purchased season tickets of four theatres in Cannought place. To catch 9.00 a.m. shows we used to rush from Kashmiri Gate where we were staying. The vista of world cinema an experience for the first time. I still remember Coppolla's '*Apocalypse Now*' the anti war film and futuristic '*A girl on a Motor Cycle*' very distinctly. In 1971 I had an opportunity to attend All India meeting of FFSI at Calcutta with Harish Mehta I met veterans of FFSI viz. Ajoy Dey, Pradip Sen and Prabodh Moitra for the first

## Subhash K. Desai

After various jobs, joined Film Finance Corporation in 1973 which later on became National Film Development Corp.

Film society was immediate choice to join in 1965. Since 1975 involved in organizational work of FFSI on various posts. At present he is the Secretary of FFSI Western Region.

time. All India meeting was a revelation to me. Satyajit Ray was in the chair. The proceedings were going well till the afternoon. Then the accounts part was taken up. The hell broke down and arguments became almost like fights between representatives of Regions. Satyajit Ray's efforts to pacify them failed and ultimately he walked out of the meeting.

The year was 1973. Nitin Sethi General Manager of Film Finance Corporation who was earlier Jt. Secretary of Anandam with Uma Kripanidhi (later Da'cunha) called me up and wanted me to meet him. The out come of it was that I joined Film Finance Corporation in the following week. My hobby was now becoming a profession. That time FFC was in news of their production of 'Uski Roti', 'Maya Darpan' and 'Duvidha' and few others. FFC had their activities extended by opening a distribution section. Then the constitution of FFSI was needed drastic amendments to function effectively with expanded activities all over. A meeting with Satyajit Roy was held in Bombay when he was on a visit here. We could convince him of the situation which was existing. He promised that on his return to Calcutta immediate action to initiate the process of decentralization of working of FFSI will be done. In effect a committee to amend the constitution was formed on which Harish Mehta represented from Bombay.

Tarabai Hall had become overused and with little or no maintenance and projectors were giving trouble. We had to look for an alternative venue as a festival of Italian was coming up. With persuasions we could make Mr. Roy of Lala Lajpatrai College to agree to install 35 m.m. projectors in their hall. The festival was held successfully. This was followed by Swedish Film Festival at this new venue and response of societies was very good. During this period at FFSI Opendar and Narayanswami (of film forum) were the real help as I used to remain busy with my job.

In 1976 IFFI was being held in Bombay. From FFSI I went to attend Organizing Committee meeting being held at IMPPA Office. The objective to get the number of delegate cards and increase them to 50 for the benefit of member societies. Earlier year DFF had allotted only 25 at New Delhi. In the meeting bigwigs of other film associations also claiming the similar demand. Ultimately FFSI could get 50 delegate cards which were then given to President and Secretaries of member societies. During the festival I could see hardly any film as I was on duty at Taj in Film Market. Somewhere in this period at FFC, I could convince the higher ups to allow film societies to hire film for their non commercial shows. This was the beginning for film societies and got one more movie source for their regular programmes. The rent was Rs. 250/- for 35 m.m. print!

In the year 1978 Mrutyuanjay Sarkar rang me up and wanted me to meet a few of his advertising business friends who want to start a film society in suburbs of Mumbai. Result was Film suburban was formed with Kantilal Rathod as President. The others on the committee were Muzzafar Ali, Nariman Engineer, Mangla Chandran myself and few others. Mrutyuanjay Sarkar kept himself out of the committee as he was leaving for Kolkata for good.

Shows of Film suburban started at New Talkies from July 1979 on every alternate Sunday morning. The response was overwhelming as our membership rose to 480 at one time; Siddarth Kak joined the committee in December 1979. He brought the proposal to publish a film journal "Cinema Vision". This publication of Film Suburban became a rage among film buffs as the content and the fineness of it was appealing. P K Nair of NFAI being our old friend we could start one more film show a month. The film was coming from NFAI Library. Film Suburban had regular shows till 1988. Membership started dwindling as Sunday morning TV Serials forced people to observe something like a curfew in town! We could not find alternate arrangements and time for screening films in the vicinity. In 1989 General Body was called and film suburban locked its doors.

FFC merged with IMPEC and became NFDC in 1980. In export section I had the job to convince the overseas buyers to acquire films produced by NFDC. Tough work! My understanding of the medium and subtitle nuances of cinema were made to work. Chances of quietly enjoying a good cinema were becoming rare due to load of work at NFDC. At FFSI Amrit Gangar and V K Dharamsey were taking care of the activities. The indispensable Raju Bane was always there to help. It was not fair for me to continue when one can not give time or perform. My self with Sudhir Nandgaonkar of Prabhat Chitra Mandal kept us out of the election to the Regional Council in 1984. Since then every year at IFFI wherever it was held, in spite of being on official duty at Film Market my efforts were to not to miss a known director's work or a celebrated film.

Basu Bhattacharaya the Vice President of FFSI and myself staying in the same Hotel in Udaipur. The occasion was Children Film Society's International Film Festival 1993. I had taken an assignment in the management of the Festival. Basuda kept me pasturing to rejoin FFSI. By 1994 I was co opted in the Regional Council of FFSI. One again! Times are different now. Abundance of films on DVD is there. FFSI strives to bring changes in its functioning to create young motivated audiences. Now mostly at shows of preview committee or of selection committee cinematic excellence and images vivid and eloquent does move me.





# My Association with the Film Society Movement.

■ H.N.Narahari Rao

**M**y entry to Film Society activity took place sometime in 1969 when I accompanied my friend Mr. S. Raghavendra Rao, as his guest to a Film Society screening, organized by one of the leading film societies of Karnataka, Mayura film society Bangalore. It was a French film, in 16 mm, with English Subtitles. I could not follow it since it was for the first time that I saw a non-Hollywood foreign film with English subtitles. It was a tough exercise for me. However I was quite curious to know what is this all about.

By profession I am an Engineer, and we hardly had any time to spare. But somehow we were able to squeeze a couple of hours in the evenings to spare for these activities. I used to engage myself in theatre activity and had won recognition as a stage actor during my college days. An important event took place in Bangalore in 1970; it was a film festival of Satyajit Ray films. Ray attended the Festival and introduced his film *Apur Sansar* to the audience. I had the opportunity to participate in it as it was open for public. It was a great experience for me and I decided to become a member of Mayura Film Society. But I was disappointed when my name was put on the waiting list and asked to wait for one year to take my chance. Then we approached Mr. M.V.Krishnaswamy, the noted filmmaker, and a pioneer in the Film Society movement to help me in getting membership in Mayura Film society. As a visionary, he had a different solution for my problem. He suggested that we should form another film society so that it would help the other aspirants also to join it. We were little hesitant to take up this venture. But he was very em-

phatic, he felt that Bangalore needed more societies and we should spread this movement further. He even offered his guidance also to start a new film society. This is how the seed of an idea was planted in our mind and we started working on it.

It was on the 28<sup>th</sup> August, 1971 that Suchitra Film Society was inaugurated with the screening of Dr.Kotnis Ki Amar Kahani, in 16 mm, in National College lecture hall, Bangalore and I became the founder secretary. This is how I got myself actively involved in this activity. We never had the faintest idea, on that day that this institution would grow to what it is today. It was a very modest beginning and the learning process had started.

As a professional engineer I had many opportunities to visit Bombay, Calcutta and other places. I utilized this opportunity to establish contact with FFSI and other major film societies like Film forum, Cine Central and others. We struggled hard to maintain our activities. Conducting film screenings was a herculean task. Procuring films, then printing invitations, hiring of halls, organizing projection facility, all these were done by the committee members. We had very meager resources and we had spent all the money for the inauguration and we had to manage with the remaining fund which was hardly enough. We were not sure of about our future. When one of our well wishers offered to become

## H. N. Narahari Rao

is senior most Film Society activist. He founded Suchitra Film Society in Bangalore and built first film society art theatre. He is Vice President of FFSI-South.



a life member (Rs 250/-) at that time, we did not accept, fearing that we may not survive the test of time. The turning point for the Society came in 1973 when we organized Ingmar Bergman Film Festival in association with National Film Archive of India. This became a huge success and in the process we got the much needed funds also to maintain our activities. There after it was a big success story. Many things followed, such as Nostalgia film festival (1977), All India Film Societies conference (1979), opening a film workshop with infrastructure for making 16 mm short films, Chitra Bharati, construction of the Art Theatre and many others.

The most significant achievement of Suchitra Film Society, Bangalore was its Art Theatre which started functioning since 1986. It was the first of its kind in the country by any film society and later on many others, like Berhampur, Karimnagar, and Midnapur have achieved this distinction.

### **Suchitra Art Theatre Project**

And it was in 1977, after Suchitra's successful completion of a historic film festival, NOSTALGIA in which nearly one hundred films of the past were screened in six theatres, that in an informal gathering, as the then secretary I suggested that Suchitra, should think of putting up an art theatre to solve the problem of searching a place for its regular monthly film screenings. It was just an informal suggestion that emerged as a loud thinking. Chiranjeevi Singh, an enlightened senior Government officer and the then Director of Information and Publicity, who was present at the meeting took it seriously and welcomed this idea. But others felt that it was only a wishful thinking since it was unthinkable to get a piece of land for putting up such a building. But Mr. V.N.Subba Rao, a noted journalist, immediately intervened and assured that he would be able to get the required land in Bangalore city. That is how it started and V.N.Subba Rao with his good offices was able to make it possible to get the possession of a land allotted by the State Government, in 1979, in a prime place in Bangalore. Suchitra Film Society promoted a Trust and the land was registered in its name and the construction work on the site had to commence. During one of my visit to Calcutta I sought the help of FFSI Secretary, A.K.Dey to invite FFSI President Satyajit Ray to participate in a function, in Bangalore at the allotted land to inaugurate the Suchitra Cinema Academy Trust and the construction of the Auditorium complex. Suchitra had its proudest moment on January, 8th, 1980, when Ray inaugurated the Academy and blessed the project.

In his inaugural address he made a brief speech for about ten minutes and this is what he said: *We need Art Theatres*

*to find outlet for good films. This is happening here in Bangalore for the first time. I feel happy to formally inaugurate here this evening the construction of Art Theatre complex of the Suchitra Cinema Academy.*

The task now was cut out, the funds had to be mobilized to implement the project. It is then that the team work of Suchitra played its role and the members rose to occasion and contributed their might. Suchitra printed Brick Coupons of Rs 2/- with donate a brick slogan and target was fixed to sell these coupons through members and other film societies. This was a great success and the office building was ready by 1981. The then Chief Minister of Karnataka R. Gundu Rao, inaugurated the first Phase of the project with a floor space of 1000 Sq Ft for Office and Library and lecture hall was occupied for use in September, 1981.

The second phase of the project of completing the auditorium was the main task that involved a huge budget. To marshal resources for this became a gigantic task for the executive committee. It was only in 1983, when the Karnataka Government allotted funds that the project made its further progress. Finally, Suchitra Art Theatre had its formal inauguration on August, 31, 1986. Many Film Societies participated in the function. Almost every Film Society in India sent their messages congratulating and wishing Suchitra on their achievement, which was first of its kind in the history of the Film Society Movement in India.

Mrs. Vijaya Mulay, who was closely following the progress of Suchitra from the beginning, sent her message which is reproduced here.

**Dear Sri Narahari Rao,**

*When your October 1986, issue of appreciation (monthly bulletin) came I was abroad and came to know about the inauguration of your mini auditorium much later on my return. I have been thinking of writing to you and congratulate Suchitra on the exemplary work which it is doing. All this is due to the selfless work which you your team are doing. It was so good to read that at least one film society has achieved something very tangible. For old Film Society workers like me, it is like manna from heavens. Please continue this good work. Kindly communicate my wishes to all your workers both inside and outside Suchitra-Yours sincerely, Vijaya Mulay, Vice President, FFSI, Delhi.*

Satyajit Ray, who inaugurated the construction work on the Art Theatre, was also very curious to know what was happening on the project. He showed inquisitiveness in enquiring with Mr. A.K.Dey and others to know the progress. When in late 1980s during K.S.Govindaraj's (from FFSI Madras) visit to him he conveyed his admiration to him on

completion of the Art Theatre. He later requested Mr. A.K.Dey to convey his compliments to Suchitra. The work on equipping the auditorium also was a major task and this of course was a gradual process, making progress over the years in a phased manner. By 2000, the auditorium was full equipped with 16 mm twin projectors, 35 mm dual projectors, and also LCD projection system for DVD screenings, with a seating capacity of 150.

### ***My association with FFSI***

Earlier to 1970, the affairs of the film societies in south came under the purview of the South-West Zone, with its headquarters at Bombay. In 1970 a separate zone was formed and the first committee consisted of Mrs. Ammu Swaminathan as Vice-President, S.Krishnaswamy as Jt.Secretary, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, as Liaison Secretary, and S.V.Venkataraman as treasurer. This was the first committee that was nominated by the Central Office. The formation of a new zone for south was necessitated because of the rapid growth in activities and also because of the increase in the number of societies that came up.

This development was sudden, and the formation of a new Zone, instead of easing the situation created a big vacuum. The Bombay office felt relieved of its responsibility on the excuse that a separate zone was formed for South. Unfortunately, the nominated committee never took initiative to meet for lack of much needed coordination and funds. The two Secretaries lived geographically far away from each other. The office was expected to function from Joint Secretary's office, but all letters addressed to his office remained unanswered. The entire activity came to a standstill. There was no circulation films, no affiliations, and nothing happened for more than six months. Many new film societies formed in the south waited for FFSI affiliations. Suchitra Film Society, Bangalore founded in 1971, was one of the many who were waiting for affiliation and guidance from FFSI.

It was at this point of time that I as the founder secretary of Suchitra Film Society took the initiative to visit Madras, meet the Vice-President and request her for immediate action. It was found that the Joint. Secretary was at that time extremely busy with his profession as filmmaker and he could not spare time for this activity. Frequent visits by me to Madras ultimately yielded results when A.K.Dey, Secretary, FFSI central office, took the action to appoint Mrs. Rajammal Anantharaman as the Asst Secretary of the FFSI South and the office was established in her residence. In spite of her age and fragile health, Rajammal Anantharaman took the responsibility to establish the FFSI office in South. I also took initiative to suggest holding of a conference of all the Film Societies in South. Mrs.

Anantharaman took immediate step to hold the conference in Madras in 1974 and this was a historical meeting that established a firm footing for the FFSI in South.

It was at this conference that the most committed film society activists such as H.N.Narahari Rao, A.V.Rajagopal, K.S.Govindaraj, S.V.Venkataraman, ISK. Devarayalu, M.Philip and many others from different parts of South India formed a nucleus which laid the foundation for the growth of the movement in South India. It must be recorded here that the credit for this healthy development should go to Mrs. Anantharaman. Mention should be made here of the role played by the Madras Film Society, in offering the services of D.Srinivasan to assist Mrs. Anantharaman in her FFSI Work. The federation really started working in the south and flow of films started reaching the societies. Subsequently the FFSI hired its own premises and started functioning actively. I continued to serve the FFSI as its R.C.Member till 1992 and then retired in favour of youngsters.

However it was again in 2000 when the FFSI south faced a crisis, I was again invited to associate with the FFSI and since then I have served as its Vice President till now (2010). During the last forty years of my association with this activity, I have served as founder secretary of Suchitra Film Society for 25 years and then as its president till 2000, and 24 years in FFSI as RC member and as the Vice President.

I gained lot of experience in the movement and I have enjoyed seeing the great films of the world and I have discharged all my responsibilities entrusted to me including publication of books such as: *My Days with Film Society Movement, Glimpses of Kannada cinema, The Most Memorable films of the World from the Diaries of the Film Societies, and the latest one: The Film Society Movement in India.*

Presently I am engaged in writing a World film directory giving details of 1000 films recommended for films societies and also in establishing a library of over 1000 DVDs for study purpose for film society activists.

It is here, at this crucial point of time that we, particularly FFSI should review its strategy to meet the fast changing scenario. If we become complacent and do not rise to the occasion then we may suffer a serious debacle. Here are my humble suggestions.

1. The FFSI should make a comprehensive list of films, (at least 1000) of the world that are worth screening by the film societies. We should be able to give some details of these films. It is a welcome proposal to put it on the website. For the benefit of those who do not have access of Internet we can get it printed also.

(Conti..on pg 52 )



# Once Upon A Time

■ Gautam Kaul

**M**y first Hindi film was *Raputani.*, made in 1946. I however saw it in 1947. I was aged six years and had no cinema sense. With my father, who had great cinema sense, I went to the Central Talkies in Kanpur and saw what was supposed to be my first introduction to cinema. I was left unmoved. I do not remember how my father reacted to this costume drama. Decades later I went back to trace the origin of this film and discovered it was a 'historical drama, the story of Rani Padmini. Then I realized that father had felt my first film should be a cinematic narrative in Indian history.

It was sometime before I had my first introduction to non-Indian cinema. It was in the Mayfair Theatre in 1954 that I saw Walt Disney's *Bambi*, the story of a baby deer. Now I could identify some aspects of cinema. It had motion, and sound and action and crying and mother's love and a happy ending! Truly classic. I loved it all and told my father to take me to the movies regularly.

I could bribe father to the movies. No matter how tired he was, he was ready for seeing a film. Years later, I too could be bribed to see a film, even six films a day. And that is how I came to love films.

In school, this passion for films saw me wriggle into the science laboratory to be explained how a film projector worked. Having mastered the 'art' I offered myself as an assistant to the teacher whose duty was to hold the weekly film show in school for the hostellers. My knowledge on how the projector worked got me the job. After working as an assistant for nearly eight months, one day I found myself organizing the students film show all by myself because the teacher was suddenly taken ill. I think that was the day when a film society enthusiast in me was born. The year was 1955 and I

do not remember the month. But film societies had already sprouted in India with the Calcutta Film Society starting in 1947 and in New Delhi in 1956 the Delhi Film Society commencing its work.

My association with school screenings ended in 1958 when I was told I had to go slow in my seeing films and concentrate on my studies. Now I had to escape my parents vigilance on my movement to the movie halls. I did cut my film viewing but then one day I saw a film by Marilyn Monroe and won a film contest which was a free ticket and then saw an adult film, *The Deep Blue Sea* ! It was my first adult film viewing too.

One day in 1962, our family paid host to a British lady, Marie Seton. She had arrived in town and was directed to meet my father. Our family was informed that she will be our guest until she decided to leave for her next destination. I was dislodged from my room to make space for her stay.

Marie was quite a hurricane. Dressed in saree, long elbowed blouse and leather kolhapuri, a chain smoker and armed with a brassy voice, she preoccupied all our family conversation on the dining table. Then she threw the bomb at me.

She suggested to my father that I should be part of her scheme to start a new film society in Lucknow. She had already found another young man, Anil Srivastava who was very committed to the idea and I could work as a team with him. My father offered the government auditorium for the screenings and the PRO of his office, B.R.Juneja. And we made a team.

## Gautam Kaul

Veteran in Film Society movement was Vice President of Northern Region. Before that he was active in Delhi Film Society of which he is the President now. He worked as high level police officer. He is National Awardee for film journalism and has written book titled 'Cinema and Indian Freedom Struggle'.

Marie helped us with the first package of films which was a French collection she carried along. And so was launched the Lucknow Film Society in 1962. Marie left us to hop over to Calcutta where she was already anchored in the house of Satyajit Ray.

I had not heard of him then. Marie left word for us how to collect reading material for future film shows. By the time I moved to the National Academy of Administration in Mussourie, I had made myself a veteran of the film society movement in North India. When I landed in 1965 in Mussourie I discovered a dead film society and a brand new 35 mm projector available. In two weeks I revived this unit and gave it a longer life to survive and entertain.

Elsewhere, Anil Srivastava left Lucknow for Bombay where he founded the Suruchi Film Society which was one of the many film units already working. *Anandam* Film Society with Gopal Dutia was the biggest such film society in Bombay. Another big Society was *Film Forum*. All of them had seen Marie Seton within their ranks one time or the other.

From Mussourie I came down to New Delhi and immediately joined the Delhi Film Society as a member in 1967. This was a growing organization led ably by John Joshua as its Secretary. I joined the executive committee as a lay member and then worked myself up as Treasurer, Vice President, Hony Secretary and finally as its President.

During my tenure as the Hony Secretary, I had the opportunity to welcome a new film maker. One day the Times of India correspondent Mohd. Shamim who was a member of Delhi Film Society came to me and said a new film director was keen to show his first film before an audience of film critics and since we had practically all the film critics of the town with us on the rolls, could we show this film. Shamim was also a film critic and I agreed. Came the big day, we announced the film as a mystery film preview and most of our society members turned up. We unspooled the film—*Sara Akash*—and presented the new film director Basu Chatterjee to the audience. The following Sunday, the film received very warm appreciation from all the local film critics, and armed with the reviews, Basu trudged to the film distributors to sell his film.

Rajshri Pictures finally agreed to pick up the film on fixed hire and one of our own members who operated the Regal Theatre, agreed to start screening. The rest is history.

## (H.N.Narahari Rao Conti..from pg 50)

2. The next important step is to help film societies get these films. It may not be possible to get them only through the foreign missions as we were doing so far. I suggest we should develop a library of DVDs at the FFSI offices. It is not a difficult process. It is quite possible if we make up our mind. The cost involved is not much. We can afford it. We can also take censorship exemption for these films that we procure.

I am now working on this idea very seriously in the FFSI south. We are likely to put a list of 1000 films, with details on the website before Sept, 2010.

The FFSI south is also working on a plan to establish a library of DVDs for the benefit of film societies.

3. Selection of films for screening is another important issue that we have to carefully plan. Gone are the days when you pick up some films and screen them, and get away with it. We must be doubly sure of what we intent to screen. It should be made known to the members well in advance and they should feel anxious to see it. We should get convinced ourselves about the purpose why we intent to screen a particular film, like whether it is an award winner, a highly acclaimed film or of a great Director, etc

4. In the present situation we cannot expect members to come from far off places. So we have to encourage small societies in different areas to cater to the needs of a particular locality, or an apartment with flats, or a university campus, or a colony etc,. The Film Societies should not get much bogged down about sending invitations by post, instead they can put it on notice boards, or send it through emails, or SMS or schedule it on a particular day of a month. An ideal film society should have a maximum of about 50 to 100 members and with occupancy of 50 % it will be around 25 to 50 attendance. They can have a small hall, free of cost, and they can screen it thorough an LCD projector. This is what we are now planning for Karnataka through the State Chalanachitra Academy.

5. We should also simplify rules for giving affiliation to new film societies. Organizing film societies should not become a cumbersome process or a headache for the activists. Instead it should be an enjoyable process. After all we are joining together to see some artistic films as a community activity and the atmosphere should be conducive for such a gathering. There are methods for doing this and we can collectively work out a procedure.





# Film Society Movement and Me

■ George Mathew

**D**oes the title apply to me, Yes, I had been in the thick of film society activity for more than three decades.

And in the Movement as well for a couple of years... to be precise from 1985 till 1992 or so. I was a member of the regional and central council of the FFSI. And of course, I represented the Southern region in the first-ever State level office, of Kerala State level office.

To do justice to myself, I change the caption to *MYSELF and FILM SOCIETY MOVEMENT*.

Born in the heart of city of Trivandrum I had many options to pursue whatever little extraordinary interests I was vested with. It was early fifties I entered the University Stadium which was brimming with all sorts of sports and games activities. It was just 8 minutes walk from home. And there were football tournaments which brought so many giants like Chunni Gowsami, P K Bannerjee, Mewalal, Thankaraj, Narayanan (all known as Olympians) etc etc. But upto semifinals myself and a handful of others used the close by Public Library Terrace from where half of the court was visible to watch any tournaments. So I entered the best Library in Kerala in my teens itself. From the terrace the interest shifted to inside the reading room which embraced me with such weeklies like Sport & Pastime (The Hindu publication with two third pages for sports and one third for cinema). Then there were Filmfare and Screen and a Calcuttan publication (is it Cineastes ?)... all lead to minute details of Indian film industry. There were Raju Bharathan writing on cricket with one hand and minutely about Hindi music with the other... so profound he was. Iqbal Massood,

B K Karanjia etc were stalwarts. Sylvia (Noris?) brought latest from Hollywood. I S Johar was amazing in his question answer session. Chedda Hopper/ Hedda Chopper was another very interesting column in Filmfare. So life moved away from Mewalals, Goswamis, Tolstoys Balzaaks, Pottekaads and moved closer to Guru Dutt, Bimal Roy, Raj Kapoor, Bheem Singh etc. My Liking has shifted too closer to cinema when I crossed my teens.

One looked with awe at Gregory Peck and Antony Quinn.... Rock Hudson and Steeve McQueen were unbelievably handsome human beings.... Elvis Pricely, Dean Martin, Jerry Luis, oh my God !! And there were Marlyn Manroe in Hollywood and Madhubala in Mumbai. Liz and Sophia were "dream" materials. One could not escape falling in Love with cinema.

I was away from Trivandrum for four years.... giving a small break to my non-stop cinema viewing. Yet Madras offered me such great movies like Cleopatra, African Safari, Thomas Becket, Sangam etc. Yet it was not ten films a month during those four years.

Luckily for me I was back in the city when I turned 24 years. Back to my favourite theatres Pattom Saleem at Northern end and Sree Kumar at the South...means both Hindi in Saleem and English in Sree Kumar. It was 1967. There was plenty of news about

Born in 1943, Trivandrum  
Entered the Defence (civilian)  
service in 1964 later joined  
ISRO, Trivandrum in 1967.  
Sicne 1967 a member of  
Chitralkha Film Society  
Formed Chalachithra FS in 1976  
Writing of cinema since 1973  
Executive Editor, CLOSE LOOK  
since 1981  
Regional/National Council  
Member, FFSI from 1985 to 1994  
State Film Awards jury in 1986  
All India Panel member for the  
Indian Panorama in 1986 & 2006  
Organised the first-ever Open  
Forum in IFFI in 1988  
Regional Censor Board Member  
1991-1994.  
State TV Awards jury in 1996,  
1999 and 2005  
Director, Trivandrum Interna-  
tional Film Festival from 1996.

Chitralkha Film Co-operative and its by-product Chitralkha Film Society. Almost every month they had a festival of five to seven films mostly from East European countries. Chitralkha FS was trying to inculcate/mould a new awareness and sensibility on cinema. Cinema is no longer a sheer commercial extravaganza, they proclaimed. I could not resist the temptation. First I joined the newly formed Kerala Film Club... still I remember seeing Suchitra Sen in *Saat Pake Bandh* (which was later made in Hindi as *Kora Kaagaz*). Perhaps the finest actress ever Indian cinema has seen. (Yet, I would say Savithri was the Complete actress this country has ever produced.)

It was in August 1967 I joined Kerala Film Club (which had infant mortality in December itself) and Chitralkha in October. The University Students Centre and YMCA Auditorium were the venues which could hold hardly 150 viewers. The age old 16mm projector was operated by two enthusiastic youngsters who later won of ever so many national awards, viz. P. Devadas or Adoor Gopalakrishnan. The literatures were so educating. One was getting used to read sub-titling and viewing cinema... slowly one was moving towards a Passion.

In 1972, Chitralkha released *Swayamvaram* which was in many ways a turning point in Malayalam cinema as well in the life of Chitralkha. Attention was more now on production, and baton of the film society was handed to a new batch of people. In 1977 came *Kodiyettom* which made Chitralkha a full-fledged production house with own studio etc. Focus was lost to the Film Society and the screenings became erratic in the Seventies. Members like me were disillusioned. Cinema was already like opium and one cannot survive without it. Thus the murmuring turned into shaping up of a new film society, chalachithra.

I should say my actual involvement with film society movement was through chalachithra. I was one of the four think-tanks of *chalachithra* in the early 1976. On 11<sup>th</sup> June, 1976 the then Chief Minister of Kerala Shri C Achuthamenon inaugurated *chalachitra* with a seven-day long film festival in my favourite Saleem Theatre which was then renovated and renamed as Kalpana. *CHOMANA DUDI* (Kannada) was that year's Golden Lotus winner which happened to be the inaugural film. Other films were, *Devi*, *Goopi Gaayan Bagha Baayan*, *Sara Akash*, *27 Down*, *Uttarayanam* and *Aashad Ka Ek Din* (three shows each film). I was the convenor of Films for this festival (and goes on even after 34 years).

*chalachitra* inherited the vision and mission of Chitralkha. We even bettered the quality of the brochures through *CLOSE LOOK*. Gave more thrust to Indian films, and for several years held a programme called : Every month a

Festival. Membership soared to 1500 and had to close for a while in 1978. Many great filmmakers came to the stage of *chalachithra* with their films starting with Mrinal Sen. *chalachithra* was soon the very best film society in the South. (When the *John Abraham* award was instituted by the FFSI (South) consecutively for five years *chalachithra* was winner of this award and made a request not to consider any longer as to offer the chance to other efficient societies.) So *chalachithra* was getting discussed and referred to for the right reasons.

Came the 25<sup>th</sup> year of FFSI. The wisdom of FFSI (S) wanted to celebrate the Silver Jubilee in Trivandrum and wanted myself to be opted as RC. I joined with the permission of *chalachithra* and held a week-long festival of Czechoslovakian Films as part of the Silver Jubilee. But as soon I joined the FFSI there were discussions going on on allowing Kerala to have a State Level Office as there were more than 40 active film societies in Kerala then, and the bye-laws already envisaged such a position. I took up the issue (along with my colleagues Prof. P N Narayanan and P M Muraleedharan) to hasten the Kerala State Level Office which became a reality in December, 1985. Now the KSLO enjoys the status of a Sub-region. I must thank my colleague Mr C.R. Rajasekharan Pillai who was the first Secretary of the KSLO and toiled for four years.

In 1988 the first ever International Film Festival (*Filmotsav '88*) came to Trivandrum. KSLO was summoned to do many things for the success of the *Filmotsav '88*. One novel idea given by the nodal agency (KSFDC) was the now popular OPEN FORUM. I was entrusted with the responsibility of organizing the OPEN FORUM which then we named as SANGAMAM. Sangamam was an excitement during the *Filmotsav '88*. So many renowned filmmakers were there under the shamiyana at the Residency Guest House campus to share their experiences, aspirations, agonies .... The huge success made this event a permanent part of the Festival thereafter. Perhaps FFSI is playing only this role of hosting the OPEN FORUM as far as IFFI is concerned, there after.

I have gained so many friends from the Film Society movement. Anywhere in India I could confidently go and get the help, if I need, from my FSM friends. Such was the rapport those days. I must thank this Movement for such a vibrant rapport despite all bickering in the meetings. Everybody was crazy for films and FFSI could hardly do justice to cater to all the demands. So bickering were natural, though. I acknowledge my deep indebtedness to that master craftsman of the Film Society Movement, Mr A K Dey who was kind enough to recommend my name for the juryship of Indian Panorama in the All India panel (head by the great M F Hussain). (Conti..on pg 59 )



# Film Society Movement -A Perspective

■ DR. M. Palani

**T**n the fifty years of the Federation of Film Societies of India it is relevant to enquire the various issues connected with Film Societies' Movement. Such an analysis will pave the way for correcting deficiencies in the movement and give a thrust to growth.

As a senior member connected with the movement, I feel it is important to comprehend the interrelationships and interdependence of various factors connected with the movement that which restrains or accelerates the movement. The enquiry starts as to what a film society's movement is? If and when the film societies have the spirit to compel the members to commit to the cause of good and free cinema, one can speak of film societies' movement.

With this in view, 50 years back the Federation of Film Societies of India was formed organizing itself with a constitution giving a structure and function to the movement. The organizational and functional character which was accorded 50 years back, has it brought the desired impact on the society? It is Yes and No!

Comparing to the enormous strides made by the commercial oriented cinema, achievements of parallel movement like Film Societies Movement are not satisfactory. No doubt this movement was able to create an awareness of good cinema at least among a section of cine goers, but it was and is unable to make a dent into the roads of commercial oriented cinema.

There are many inherent causes and they are varied at macro and micro level. A single cause cannot alone be singled out for the success or failure of this movement but in-

terplay of many factors is to be understood. Hence a system's comprehension can give the interdependence; inter relationships and interactions of the various factors on Film societies Movement (FSM) at macro and micro level.

### At macro level:

At macro level there is an interaction between the Film Society Movement and Commercial Oriented Cinema and it happens through society. It can also be understood that the Commercial Oriented Cinema has a hold over on all the departments of film industry viz. production, exhibition and distribution, whereas the Film Society Movement does not have any hold over on any of these departments. It may also be noted that the Commercial Oriented Cinema with its persuasive influence makes an impact on larger part of the society; on the other hand Film Society Movement has only a negligible impact on society. The reasons are that the FSM's interaction with Commercial Oriented Cinema is minimal; it has no hold over the departments of film Industry and the society's unwillingness to give larger berth and reception. A larger impact on society by Film Society Movement is possible, only if it takes hold or influence over the reins of film industry and prepares the society to nurture Film Societies Movement.

### At micro level:

a) **ORGANISER:**-She/he is the

### **Palani Muthuganapathy**

Worked and retired as Faculty Member in the department of Psychiatry, JIPMER, Pondicherry, served for more than 35 years. Interested in Voluntary Social Service Activities, Started the Film Society Movement in Pondicherry in 1981 and continue still.

prime motivating force. A film society organizer differs from the other cultural associations. The Film Society Movement is a country wide movement like that of a consumer's movement against a system. Other organizers of cultural associations are not fighting against any established system.

A film society organizer does not stop with dissemination of visual culture but fights against a pattern already existing in society. So his naturalness as a dedicated individual, with certain aspirations, commitment to the Film Society Movement can alone build the movement at micro level.

#### **b) COMPOSITION OF MEMBERS OF A FILM SOCIETY:**

An effective thrust of the movement is possible only when a film society is composed of members who have understood the objectives of FSM. But in practical experience it can be noted that there is a vicarious notion prevailing about film societies. May be majority of members join a film society to see different countries' films with an idea that censorship restrictions for these films are not existent. If more than two third members of film society members are with this view, that society will find unsuccessful to conduct other activities like academic activities, symposiums, seminars and discussions. The seriousness of the FSM is lost at this step. It is sighted that financial viability of a film society will be at jeopardy if and when restrictions are based on the enrollment of large number of members who join the film societies for purposes other than Film Society Movement. The question of financial viability of a film society also becomes meaningless in the situations of DVDs wooing these types of members. Hence it is not only that the organizer of any film society need to be a 'committed individual' but also the members must be committed to the Film Society Movement however small their numbers may be. The strength of a society is morally and physically weakened without dedicated members committed to serious cinema.

#### **c) CIRCULARION OF FILMS:**

Members' interest to serious cinema is dependent upon the circulation of films to a film society.

Primary source of circulation of films to a film society is the Federation, situated in its headquarters of the Region. The financial cost of running a society depends upon the quantity and quality of films circulated by the Federation. The quantity and quality of films circulated in any region at present seems to be far from satisfactory.

Many times the members of a society get dissatisfied with their organization due to lack of proper films at proper time. The reasons sighted are the erratic supply of films from embassies and exercise of no choice by the

Federation in choosing films.

#### **d) LOCATION OF A SOCIETY:**

The location of a society nearer or far from the Federation Headquarters is considered as one of the important factors in deciding a supply of films to a society. Rather the quantum and quality of films circulated are decided by the proximity of a society nearer to the Federation headquarters. The facts of metropolitan, urban, semi urban and rural are unduly emphasized when considering supply of films, even though film societies situated in a metropolis or rural area are committed for the same cause.

**e) HUMAN FACTOR:** It could have been noted that whether at macro level or at micro level the operations of the various factors are carried out by the inherent factor called the human factor. The human factor is but the human beings involved in the operation of various cells of the organization. It is to be understood individuals with various attitudes and ideas in life assemble to conduct the functions. The various attitudes, views and ideas are not prejudice for the operation but optimal suppression of individual egos and views are essential to succeed. But in practice it is found the human factors with all their ugliness are at loggerheads affecting the FSM.

Having gone through the macro and micro levels of Film Society Movement let us speak the measures to obviate the negative influence and improve the functioning for a major thrust.

#### **MEASURES TO IMPROVE THE FUNCTIONING OF FSM AT MACRO LEVEL:**

- 1) Government should come forward in the distribution and exhibition outlets; at least to minimum extent, thereby the channel is thrown open to the good cinema and FSM.
- 2) National Film development corporation should dedicate more to good cinema. This duality of confusing the issue with the commercial oriented cinema does not serve to the purpose of good cinema.
- 3) Time to time the organizational and functional structure of Federation of Film Societies to be reviewed.
- 4) Any dispute between the Federation and Film Societies need to be solved by arbitration.

#### **AT MICRO LEVEL**

- 1) A training course to the film society's organizers on a regular basis is to be conducted by the Federation of each Region.
- 2) A minimum qualification of having attended a Film Appreciation Course is to be emphasized for an organizer, when according affiliation with FFSI.
- 3) Each society should organize every year a Film appreciation course to its members. The Federation of

(Conti...on pg 59)





# Down Memory Lane

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■ M. C. Chattopadhyaya

## M.C. Chattopadhyaya

Prof & Head

Department of Chemistry, University of Allahabad, Born 1946 (Calcutta) Schooling at Allahabad and Varanasi. M.Sc. Chemistry (Gorakhpur University), Ph.D. (IIT Bombay). Since 1970 actively engaged in Film Society Movement. Founder Member of IIT Bombay Film Club and University Film Society Allahabad. The sustained efforts of Prof. Chattopadhyaya towards Film Society Movement resulted in establishment of UGC sponsored Film Center at Allahabad. Later on Allahabad University established an Audio Visual Research Unit and finally an Institute of Theater and Film. Prof. Chattopadhyaya has written articles not only in Chemistry but also on different aspects of cinema. He has also organized several film appreciation courses.

**T**he Film Society Movement was started in Europe in the mid 1920's by enthusiasts like George Bernard Shaw and others. Rabindranath Tagore also realized that tremendous potentiality of this medium which is reflected in his letter written to Soumendranath Tagore on 26th November 1929. Later on in 1940's Satyajit Ray, Chidannanda Das Gupta and others established the Calcutta Film Society. This was the beginning of the Film Society Movement in the country which resulted in the formation of the Federation of the Film Societies of India with four zonal offices in different parts of the country and a central office in Calcutta.

In her editorial comments in the Satyajit Ray Memorial issue of *Image*, Smt. Sumita Bhattacharya observed:

“The objective behind the starting the Film Society Movement was to study the art of Cinema through discussion and actual film making. It was a medium of expression with enormous social significance. Now there is a growing realization that in the absence of a proper appreciation of the aesthetics of the cinema medium, the people are not able to receive it in the right perspective. There is a wide gulf between viewing films and appreciating them, the need to bridge this gap has become more acute because of proliferation of television, cable television and video libraries all around, through which films have become an inseparable part of the day to day life of every one. The significance of this development for our society is far reaching. Film Societies have always been concerned with the social significance of the cinema medium. Of-course film societies are not there to in-

doctrinate people on a particular line of thinking. They have no political affiliation but we believe that the use or misuse of a medium indirectly related to the appreciation or nonappreciation of the medium. If people start understanding the idioms of cinema medium, they would automatically get disposed favorably towards it.”

In the 1960's Amrit Rai and others wanted to start a Film Society at Allahabad. It began with the occasional screening of films in the Education Expansion Office. Around the same a film society was established in the University. However its activities remained confined to the screening of some Hindi Films in the local Laxmi Talkies.

When Ram Sahai became Vice-Chancellor of the University of Allahabad in the 1970's, he realized the need of the establishment of a central body to encourage various cultural activities including film activities. He formed the Central Cultural Committee with V.D.N. Sahi as Vice-Chairman and Prabhat Kumar Mandal as Secretary. A number of teachers were inducted in the committee to co-ordinate different cultural activities. The author of this writeup (a founder member of IIT Bombay Film Club) was entrusted with job of co-ordinating the film activities on the campus.

The first major activity was organized on the campus by holding a 10 day long film appreciation course con-

ducted by Satish Bahadur, the then Professor of Film Appreciation, Film and Television Institute of India, Pune. This generated a tremendous enthusiasm among staff and students to see films artistic value. Ultimately a film club was established. The first film which was shown to the member of the film club was Danube bends its Way.

Thus began the Film Society Movement at Allahabad. It gives us pleasure to remember the student who became the first member of the society, Pramod Pandey now Director of Jawahar Planetorium.

The Film Society is the only wing of the Central Cultural Committee which is continuously functioning for the past three decades. In 2003 it completed 30 years of its existence. The Silver Jubilee celebration began in November 2002 with organizing an orientation workshop on the basics of film and television. The celebration concluded in February 2004 again with the organization of another workshop. A lot of water has flown down the Ganges in these years. One saw the growth of film club into a film study centre with facilities to study cinema and trying hands on concepts to turn them into a film.

A large number of students have contributed towards of the society and the centre. The number is so large that may not be possible to mention their names here. However, I take the opportunity to acknowledge their contribution. It is gratifying to note that some of them have not only opted for the film as their career but are also doing well in the industry. Some have made their mark in the electronic media too. It was very satisfying to watch the film Hasil with its director Tigmanshu Dhulia in recently concluded film festival at Allahabad. Besides Tigmanshu a number of students like Anup Chatterji opted for film as career after joining the Film Society.

This is the time to remember all those faculty members who not only encouraged me in the Film Society Movement but also extended their co-operation in various ways. Some of them are no more but their contributions will be remembered. I cherish the memory of watching films in the company of late Durganand Sinha, Vipin Agrawal, Ramswarup Chaturvedi, Prabhat Kumar Mandal and V.D.N. Sahi. Retired teacher like professors T. Pati, Sibesh Bhattacharya, R.C. Tripathi, G.K. Srivastava and Manas Mukul Das were a source of inspiration for me. Here I would also like to mention the names of Prof. Alok Rai, Dr. Ashis Banerjee, Dr. Tapas Bhattacharyaya, Dr. Pankaj Saran, Dr. M.S. Sriram who left the university to join other institutions. All through their stay in this University they were actively associated with the affairs of the society.

I am indebted to my fellow colleagues and members of the

Executive Committee of the A. U. Film Study Centre, Dr. (Mrs.) Archana Chahal, Prof. d.P. Chaudhary, Prof. Lalit Joshi, Prof. F. Kazmi, Prof. Pradeep Kumar, Prof. Ashim Mukrjee, Prof. Vinay Chandra Pande, Shri Yoganand Sinha, Dr. R.R. Tiwari, Prof. Sachindra Tiwari and Mr. Sunil Umrao for their active co-operation.

There are a number of people who were not directly connected with the University yet helped the society in many ways. In this respect, I would like to recall the close cooperation received from the late H.N. Srivastava, the then director of North Central Cultural Zone Cultural Centre, P. K. Bandyopadhyay and Vikram Chandra, the then Deputy Accountant Generals and two ladies, Mrs. Kiran Chandra and Mrs. Sumita Bhattacharya in planning and organizing the first ever thematic film festival, Women in Indian Cinema, it pleasant to meet the P.R.O. of N.T.P.C. Ms. Snigdha Goswami. It was largely through her effort that Chaplin films were sponsored by N.T.P.C. in 1989. She also edited the brochure brought out during the script writing workshop in 1990. In order to provide a forum to students to express themselves in domain of cinema, the Film Society started a magazine, IMAGE, in 1991. The first issue was edited by Dr. Tapas Bhattacharya. The second issue was dedicated to Satyajit Ray in which in addition to students, eminent personalities like Mrinal Sen, Tapan Sinha, shruba gupta and Sibesh Bhattacharya contributed their articles on the works of Styajit Ray and this issue was edited by Sumita Bhattacharya. The other uissue were edited by Vijendra Shukla. The last issue of the IMAGE was edited by Ms. Navodita Pandey, Devanshu Gour and Mrs. Mamta Joshi.

Prof. Narvane was fond of watching movies made in the 1940's and the 1950's. It was through him that we discovered one man film archive, Sri Abdul Ali. Sri Ali helped the society in organizing the screening of Hindi classics made by New Theatre and its contemporary production houses. We discovered that at Allahabad there are many lovers of old films including V.S. Dutta former editor of N. I. Patrika. It is sad that Prof. Narvane is no more. The society indebted to him for his help and co-opration in organizing the screening of classical films. Unfortunately Sri Abdul Ali breathed his last on 10 September 2004 after a brief illness. Sri Abdul Ali was also a moving encyclopedia. During his three visits we learnt a lot about technical developments in Indian Cinema. He told us that although the playback system was introduced by Kamal Bose, K.L. Sehgal insisted that he would sing the song "Babul Mora Naihara Chhuto Jai" while it was being shot. It was he who who informed me that on the invitation of Sohrab Modi, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose visited his studio. Besides Netaji, several other leaders involved in the freedom movement

of the country realized the importance of cinema. Here I would like to mention the contribution of some of them. The first Prime Minister of the country, Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru saw to it that Indian films were shown in international film festivals. It was through his efforts that a film institute was established in the country.

U.P. first Chief Minister Govind Ballabh Pant and his successor Sampurnanand realized the importance of the audio-visual media in education. It was by their efforts that the education expansion office at Allahabad built a Chalchitra Kendra with full facilities for 35 mm film production, and a film archive/library. It is sad that the Chalchitra Kendra is on the verge of closure for reasons best known to authorities. The facilities available in Chalchitra Kendra could have been utilized for developing the Kendra as a film institute. As a Matter of fact several persons made efforts in this direction but all efforts went

### (Film Society Movement Conti...from Pg 54)

In 1992 I said good-bye to FFSI as *chalachithra* was taking up new responsibilities like *Aravindan Puraskaram* (in the national level for the best debutant filmmaker each year). It was rather *INDULGENCE* as one never knew the consequences. G. Aravindan's sudden demise shattered all of us in *chalachithra*. It was a quick emotional decision. Never did we know how will we find the debut films, and, funding for the competition and later for the award. If something good is to happen there needs the indulgences as well. In 19 years, *chalachithra* must have spent 35 lakhs at the least. Great ones like Pts. Bhimsen Joshi, Hariprasad Chauraisa, Amjad Ali Khan, Dr L Subramaniam, Dr Remani, Kumaresh Ganesh... the list is so long who graced the *Aravindan Puraskaram* homage evening. Right from A.R. Bir to Anirudha Roy Choudhury (winner of 2008 Golden Lotus for *Antaheen*)..... the list of winners of this prestigious Puraskaram is quite long. The indulgence did not end there. To celebrate the twentieth year *chalachithra* planned a one-time international film festival viz. *Trivandrum International Film Festival*. Being the Film convener, I was assigned the directorship of *TIFF* which is now in its 15<sup>th</sup> edition. If the 1996 *TIFF* was mainly consisted of 21 films of NFAI/NFDC, present *TIFFs* consist of 45 plus films, almost all from current or one or two years old, supported by a brochure of international standards.

But these are all activities of *chalachithra*, one may say. No. *chalachithra* was a role model for and inspiration to other film societies. When *Close Look* our Journal was well received and read, came a much serious and costly magazine called *Deep Focus* and so many little-magazines by fellow-societies. *Aravindan Puraskaram* was followed

in vain. The virtual closure of the Chalchitra Kendra is a sad development for the cinema movement in general and cine lovers in particular at Allahabad. The University Film Society did organize several important events in association with the Chalchitra Kendra. The visit of Bimal Dutta, Gayatri Chatterji, Samik Bandopadhyaya, Dhruva Gupta to Chalchitra Kendra are still flashing in my mind. A large number of film personalities like Adoor Gopalkrishnan, Shyam Banegal, K.G. George, Mami Kaul, Basu Chatterjee, Prem Vaidya, Sabeena Kidwai, Ompuri, Jallal Agga, Alok nanda Datta, Vijaya Mule and many others addressed the members of the Film Society which I always cherish and feel gratified in forward march towards the Film society movement at Allahabad. Finally our efforts of last three decades have succeeded in the establishment of an Institute for Film and Theatre at University of Allahabad.



by Golappudi and now Lankesh awards. *TIFF* was followed by a dozen international film festivals in various parts of Kerala as well inspired the ICA Forum (Chennai), Hyderabad Film Club, Suchitra (Bangalore), Jodhpur film societies and I am sure, many more to follow. These are all indirect involvements giving oxygen and life to the Movement which is dwindling otherwise. Yet, when looking back after contributing directly and indirectly, one has a lost feeling that this Movement has never acknowledged anyones' life long efforts.



### (DR. M.PALANI, Conti...from Pg 56)

- respective Regions should be able to provide resources and personnel for a society for the same.
- 4) Restriction of supply of film (if any) in respect of the location of film society should be lifted. If the embassies which supply film restrict the supply to a time period, Federation should organize its own source to supply films. It should be ensured at least a minimum of two films in a month to a film society, preferably one of the films being in an Indian language.
  - 5) The strength of membership of a society need to be limited and should not cross 300 at a time.
  - 6) Last but not least that broader emphasize is to be laid on the human factor that they are existing for a common cause and not for the satisfaction of individual egos, prejudices and preoccupations.

The interdependence and interrelationships of various factors operate either for the momentum or impediment of Film Societies Movement. These are my views based on my experience they are not exhaustive. One cant add more, but my idea is to stimulate discussion on the problems faced by the movement. If we thousomy discussed the issues in right direction solution will come out.





# Passion for Cinema

■ U. Radhakrishnan

**T**he beginning of the Film Society screenings were so fantastic. All films screened were to the full capacity of the auditorium, Maharashtra Rangayan. DMFS was the first film society to use the Maharashtra Rangayan where the screening was excellent with wide screen and good sound system. As per the agreement we were getting the hall at nominal rental. We could screen films of Aravindan, Adoor, K.G. George, P. Bhaskaran, Ramu Kariat, Bharathan Padmarajan and such well known film makers. Seeing our popularity the officials of Federation of Film Societies, Mr. John Joshoua & Vinod Mehra asked us to be a member of FFSI. For this we agreed and changed the pattern of our working. Not only Malayalam films, but films from other Indian languages mostly award winning films, we started screening. Many non Malayalees also took membership in DMFS. With affiliation to FFSI we were also part of FFSI's joint screenings. FFSI were screening their films till then in a small theatre near ITO. As that venue was not able to accommodate all film societies FFSI also shifted their screenings to Maharashtra Rangayan. In late seventies and eighties FFSI had to screen a film twice to accommodate all film societies. Mr. Vinod Mehra who was the Secretary of FFSI at that time told that during the combined screenings, a representative of the participating film societies have to be present in order to check own members. As I volunteered I was present as a representative of DMFS and when the screening started I will go inside and watch the film. This was the beginning of my involvement with FFSI film screening.

I was regular on all FFSI screenings and other functions. The then Secretary Mr. Vinod Mehra asked my help on many occasions, especially during the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of FFSI in 1983-84. Some office bearers asked me to contest in the Regional Council in 1984. I told them that I am not interested in FFSI as

I am already busy and have no time. However I told them I will extend all helps to FFSI. Mr. Mehra used to call me for many works. Distribution of IFFI tickets, editing the IFFI book and such activities I was involved. DMFS had been felicitating the National Film Award winners every year. Seeing the popularity of this function Mr. Vinod Mehra wanted that this function should be done by FFSI involving all Film Societies. We agreed to it. From 1985 FFSI had been doing this function where he wanted participation of all film societies. To his surprise in 1986 he pointed to me that some RC members coming to the function when it was ending. He wanted more perfection in everything, but many of the colleagues in FFSI took lightly and he was not tolerating them. In 1986 he asked me to come to the Regional Council of FFSI and I agreed. When nominations were filed I came to know about another group against Mehra. As I was a neutral man I was elected to the RC. Unfortunately Mr. Mehra was defeated and Mr. Pankaj Butalia became the Secretary. Nobody was there to take the position of Regional Secretary as that involves lot of work and attending the office. Finally I was chosen to take the responsibility which I agreed reluctantly. It was a surprise to many FFSI officials in other regions how a completely new face has come to the stage. This is the beginning of my FFSI administration. As cinema was my passion, I took the work of the Federation also in an interesting and passionate way. My official work had given me enough experience in correspondence, filing etc. I have made it a practice to come to the office everyday around 5 p.m. and work till 7

## U. Radhakrishnan

A Post-graduate in Biochemistry, started career as Scientist with DRDO in Madras and later was transferred to Delhi. As cinema was a passion from school days, voluntary work with cultural organisations landed him with film society work as a Regional Secretary/Secretary of FFSI-Northern Region. Worked from 1986 to 2008. In IFFI he had been doing Seminars, Open Forum and selection of films. Associated with other International film festivals as Programmer and selection committee member. Noted among them are Kolkata Film Festival, IFFK, Osians, Third Eye-Asian Film Festival, Film Festivals of Chennai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Pune, Thrissur, Cochin and Ahmedabad. The last 5 years Radhakrishnan is conducting Habitat Film Festival as its Director in New Delhi.

p.m. All letters from Film Societies, other regions and from various film enthusiasts were replied on the same day. Before I reach the Office the Secretary, Mr.Pankaj Butalia come and clear a lot of correspondance with Central Office, Embassies and foreign missions.Thus the work was divided. All correspondance we consult and do. At that time all letters were to be typed and sent by post. If the office Assistant took leave or any of us could not come, by next day number of letters used to be in a good number. Many times we tell the typist what has to be typed on the previousday and next day by the time we reach the office letters are ready for signature and despatch. As our Treasurer, Mr.Rajesh Mehrotra, took care of maintaining the accounts I have no problem on money matters.As the office was on debt of about Rs.25000/-, I had to work to raise some funds. Only Mr Butalia and myself worked to raise funds and within one year we brought the office to a positive balance.

As I was new to FFSI, some Film Society officials had a doubt whether I can fulfil their demads. Initially Mrs.P.Singh, the IIC Film Club Secretary was very harsh with me , but as I had given her films at the appointed time on two occasions, she changed her attitude and told me you are the most dependable. Till she retired, I had a very good relationship with her and also IIC Film Club which still continuing.Similarly I had to gain the confidence of the Embassies.When I contacted the French Cultural Centre, Mr.Bhatia was in charge of films and he raised many questions. He agreed to give a package under the condition that the films had to be returned in good condition by the fixed date. I made it a point to return the films one day earlier and after receiving he checked the films and found all were in tact. Since then I had no problem for films from France. The same thing happened with other Embassies Within an year I could get the goodwill of all the Embassies and there was no dearth of films.At that time my counterpart from Calcutta. The International Film Festival of India(IFFI) was held in Delhi 1987 January. FFSI had to organise DOCUMEDIA in the Festival.

The scetion was completely handled by the Secretary, Mr.Pankaj Butalia and took my help in organising the event. No other person was there from FFSI to extend a helping hand. The opening film in the section was from Australia by Dennis O Rourke titled HALF LIFE. It was in a packed Siri Fort 1 ,main auditorium. The entire section had very good films from different countries and I was attracted to Short and Documentary films after seeing films in Documedia section.The complete selection and management was done by Mr.Butalia.This section continued for

another 3 years and Mr.Butalia did it well with a little help extended by me.

There were some good films in IFFI . After seeing such good films I wanted to explore the possibilities of getting films from some more countries whose films FFSI had not obtained. Zhang Yimou's Chinese film RED SORGHUM made me to go to the Chinese Embassy Cultural office and explore in getting more Chinese films. The Second Secretary Mr.Shu Shan Fu was positive and arranged to get six films from China and we could organise the first Chinese Film Festival in Delhi. The success of the festival forced the Chinese Cultural Office to get more and more films and provide to all regions.They constructed a good cinema hall with Projection facilities in the Cultural Office and started film screening in the hall.By the time I also had sufficient courage and experience to contact other Embassies and we had the privilege of organising festivals of almost all countries. While South was choosy in films, West was not very keen, but East took all films screened by North.The years till late nineties FFSI screening was a talk of the city and all Embassies were happily giving films.

A new function in the IFFI started in 1989- OPEN FORUM. FFSI has been assaigned the responsibility of organising this event . We had to collect funds for the event as IFFI had no funds. We could get a sponsor for Open Forum and could manage the entire affair in the specially erected hall in the SIRI FORT LAWNS.Mr.Pankaj Butalia managed to get Times of India as Sponsor. Hence the event was well reported in the daily bulletin and also in the Newspapers.Within no time Open Forum has become an attractive item. As IFFI was a roaming festival the responsibility of Open Forum has been assaigned to the region where IFFI took place. As we were able to get Times of India as sponsor for continuously for three termes it has been on top of Publicity.Seeing the popularity Open Forum has been an event in every Film festival throughout the country. In fact I suggested that Open Forum should be registered withy copy right act as a function of FFSI only. As I did not get any support to go ahead it was not taken up. Two terms were over and I have to take the position of Secretary.

As the Open Forum was a good event I told the DFF to give us a chance to do a Seminar in the IFFI. As I could present a very reasonable budget, they entrusted Seminar also to us and made me the Convener. Our President Prof. Vijaya Mulay agreed to chair the Seminar.Wherever the festival goes I was the Convener of Seminar. Thus the festivals in Trivandrum, Hyderabad we did the Seminar.Mrs.Mulay used to chair at all places. In Delhi in

1997 Ford Foundation gave about 12 Lakhs of Rupees for two seminars one by FFSI and another jointly with IFDA. As the funds had to be with one agency FFSI has been the custodian of funds. After accepting the proposal I found so many formalities. We had to have a FCRA account and clearance from Home Ministry. I had to run to many Govt. departments and get all clearance within a fortnight as the time was short. Of course I got full support from the then Director of DFF Mrs. Malti Sahay who spoke to people wherever there was a hindrance. The seminars were a great success as we could invite many well known film makers to speak providing air fare and hospitality. The entire proceedings were published as a book. Still we were left with about 4 lakhs of Rupees which I returned to Ford Foundation gracefully as per the agreement and submitted the audited accounts of the grant to various agencies such as Ministry of I & B, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Home, FCRA Section etc. and came out of it with a clean chit. Still I have no idea how all these happened. Generally FCRA clearance take minimum three months. The saying is true, If there is a will there is a way.

With the responsibility of organising the Open Forum and Seminars, there was no time to see films in IFFI. In 2003 IFFI DFF asked me to have the Seminar in a different way. The topic was LITERATURE & CINEMA. I could arrange a package of films from Norway based on literature. I contacted the well known film personality Live Ulman to inaugurate the seminar. As she agreed to come DFF decided to give her the LIFE TIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD. DFF asked me to arrange the seminar in a five star hotel. As we have to raise funds for this mega event, I had to run pillar to post to get sponsor. I asked the officials from FFSI to accompany me to meet people for sponsors. But nobody came even for this. I also took it as a challenge. Finally I managed to get sponsor from Norwegian Embassy who agreed to pay for the Seminar hall and dinner. As I was asked to limit the number for dinner I told Regional Council members can attend, but not their friends who do not come for cinema or seminar, but only for dinner. One of my colleague in FFSI was only interested in inviting his friends for the dinner to show them that he is doing everything and get a boost to his business. As I did not agree to this he did not attend the Seminar. He then started working against me and created a lobby in the RC against me. But the seminar went on well and it became a landmark in the history of FFSI. That was the last IFFI in Delhi and I also thought it is better to get out as per the saying-stop the music when the sound is good. The attitude of the people in the Delhi FFSI made me to think why to waste time for the thankless job. But I continue to reign the office in spite

of all the bad climate. Slowly I made detachment from the work and asked other office bearers to do their jobs. When I refused to write the minutes, the Regional Secretary has to ask the Vice President to write the minutes. Of late I have observed that the minutes are not as per the decisions in the RCM, but as per the the likeing of Vice President and some office bearers as they had some axe to grind. The worst part is that no film screenings by FFSI and they wanted to show the active societies work as of FFSI which I objected. As the director of Habitat Film Festival I sent invitations to all RC members for the film screening and also for the opening dinner. Some of the office bearers came for the dinner, not for films. This is the culture in North. The same way the some office bearers go only for Embassy parties, but not for the film screenings. Seeing this many Embassies stopped inviting them.

FFSI was getting a grant of Rs.25000/- in 1986. I went to the I & B Ministry and met the concerned officials starting from the Desk Officer to the Secretary. The Joint Secretary recommended a double increase considering our work. As I have been pestering them for increase of grant after two or three years they increased from Rs.50000/- to one lakh, two lakhs, four lakhs. The Secretary told me that this grant is a very minimal, but our output was not satisfactory they are not in a position to increase more. It is quite true that our annual report is the same type with minor changes for the last 25 years. The Ministry sent a questionnaire and some feed backs to the Central Office in Kolkata 5 years back for increasing the grant. They did not send the required information and slept over the file. Finally they asked me some feedback, and sent the recommendation to the Planning Commission. The Commission refused to sanction the 4 lakhs and deleted the grant to FFSI. On the intervention of our President, Mr. Shyam Bengal, the Minister of I & B sanctioned the grant of Rs.6 lakhs diverting some other funds. Now also FFSI is getting the grant from the diverted funds which can be stopped at any time.

Ever since the grant started Northern Region have been running to the Ministry for the sanction. Earlier Mr. John Joshoua, then Mr. Vinod Mehra and myself has been on the job of getting the grant sanctioned. Even the last two years on the request I had to go to the Ministry and DFF for the grant amount as per the request of the General Secretary, Mr. Sudhir Nandgoankar since the Secretary of the NR did not do anything or even try to locate the file.

One of our Council members, Mr. Pritiman Sarkar has contributed for the movement to great extend. Being a buerocrat he had his limitations. He, though busy will come to watch films, edited our Journal IFSON took keen interest in pub-



*Liv Ullman releasing the Seminar Booklet during IFFI*

lications and film reviewing and discussions and seminars. He has been conferred with the National Award for film criticism. His untimely death created a vacuum in the FFSI. To keep his memory, I constituted an award for the Best Film Society in NR. The award is Rs.1000/= and a certificate and used to distribute it in the Open Forum at the IFFIs. Most of our RC members contributed some amount and a substantial contribution was made by his wife also to this fund. It was a self sufficient fund. Initially we were very strict with the eligibility and the award had been given to the best performing film society. Of late some vested interest crept in and wanted to grab the awards. No award has been given for the last four years though announced every year the ARGM.

My interest is only cinema. Many Film Societies from other Regions ask my help to get films and I always extend a helping hand to such societies. This angered some of the Officials of FFSI in East and South. I did not like the big brother attitude of the FFSI people. Many of them are not helping the societies, instead quote rules and regulations and try to snub them. This type of work really hurt me. As many Societies started Film Festivals, there was a need to get Censorship Exemption. As per the rules FFSI was only eligible to apply for Censorship exemption or the organisers of Film Festivals. But if the society is affiliated they cannot even apply. Seeing this plight the then Secretary and Joint Secretary of I & B, constituted a committee with well known film makers like Shyam Benegal, Jabbar Patel and they asked my view also. I suggested the hindrance of FFSI should not be allowed and the committee recommended that any cultural organisation, film society or film festival organising institution can apply for the Exemption provided the films are previewed by a committee of experts who are

film makers, film critics, film society activists, film technicians and so on.

When I started detaching from FFSI work, I decided to involve more with film societies who do good work especially Film Festivals. I openly started supporting International Film Festivals organised by film societies. I have been associated with Prabhat Chitra Mandal, Mumbai in Asian Film Festival, Cine Central-Calcutta in International Film Festival and Children Film Festival, ICA Forum -Chennai, Suchitra-Bangalore, Hyderabad Film Club-Hyderabad, and film Societies in Trivandrum, Cochin, Thrissur and so on. I have been getting films for them, getting Censorship Exemption, and many other activities connected with the festivals. As I have been involved very much with IFFI, other independent Festival like Kolkata Film Festival, Pune International Film Festival, Ahmedabad Film Festival and Osian's -Delhi asked my help in getting films for them and also to preview films for selection. The India Habitat Centre wanted to have a Film Festival of their own and I suggested them to have the HABITAT FILM FESTIVAL in the month of May every year with the Award Winning and well acclaimed Indian films. They agreed to the proposal and we started the festival from 2006 and the fifth edition was over just in May 2010. I have been the Director of the festival from the beginning and we have been screening the best films made in the country during the ten days festival. When I started associating with FFSI, I had a very high opinion about the movement. Of late I have noticed that it is a ground for self styled functioning and leg pulling. Many of the people in the Federation will not do any work and will not allow others also to work. This attitude pained me much. It made me to think why to waste time as well as money for FFSI for the thankless job. Last term I decided not to take any position, but I wanted to show the people that I am not getting recognition due to position in Federation. Now I wanted to show to these people I have my position in the field of cinema and film society movement without becoming a Regional Council member of the FFSI. I have already made myself out of the committee from this year silently. I will cherish the memories of working with well known film personalities like Satyjit Ray, Mrinal Sen, Vijaya Mulay, Shyam Benegal, Kiran Shantaram, Gautam Kaul and persons like Sudhir Nandgoankar, Subhash Desai, Narahari Rao, A.V. Rajagopal, Thangaraj, Alok Chandra Chandra, Vinod Mehra, Pankaj Butalia, Pritiman Sarkar and many others. The sweet days are always sweet and not like to make it bitter any more. I want to be a free bird and like to help film societies who still contribute to the film society movement. ●●●



# My involvement as a Film Society Activist

■ S. S. Prakash Reddy

**I**t was in 1974, when I completed my education and started working in a private company in Guntur near Vijayawada, that I came in contact with this activity. I enrolled myself as a member in Vijayawada Film Society and had the opportunity of seeing the Kannada film *Chomanadudi* in a public theatre in the early morning hours. From then on my interest grew and I started regularly attending the film screenings of this pioneer film society of Andhra Pradesh. I also had the privilege of developing friendship with the veteran of this movement in Andhra Pradesh late I.S.K.Devarayalu who was one of the founders of this film Society.

In 1975 I had to move to Hyderabad on my new professional assignment, but my interest still persisted. I could not keep myself away from this activity for long.

Within a few months I was able to get a membership in Hyderabad Film Club, a pioneer Film Society of Hyderabad run by its dynamic secretary Mr. Philip. Soon my involvement became more intense when I got entry to the executive committee as a member.

In 1984, the then secretary A.Gopalakrishna had to resign because of medical reason and I had to shoulder the responsibility of running Hyderabad Film Club.

In 1980's when we had to face the crisis, it was a hectic time for us to keep the movement alive against the onslaught of colour TV. We had to use all our resources and energy to keep the activities go on. With the help of my friends I was able to run the shows without a break. I am happy to record here that

we were able to organize many innovative programmes. Our Golden Jubilee celebration of cinema by conducting 30 day festival of selected foreign and Indian films in a theatre of 1400 seating capacity auditorium running to packed houses every day is still remembered as a land mark event of Hyderabad. We had many other events like festival of films of Bimal Roy, Raj Kapoor, Shantaram, Satyajit Ray, six version of Devdas, followed by many foreign film festivals. Today Hyderabad Film Club is a name to reckon with in the country. We were able reach a greater height when we had two International film festivals for which I worked as the festival Director. Running the Hyfic monthly bulletin is also my responsibility as its editor. Ultimately running a film society is like riding a tiger. It is very difficult for us to detach.

In addition to the onerous task of running my film club, I am associated with the FFSI for nearly 25 years now. For various reasons, when the FFSI office was shifted to Hyderabad I had to shoulder additional responsibility since 2002. I am able to discharge all the works that are entrusted to me because of the help and co operation that I am receiving from all my colleagues in the movement. I enjoy working for it, and I am sure in the near future youngsters will come to take over our job. I am patiently waiting for that occasion.

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**S. S. Prakash Reddy** is in the FSM for more than 25 years as a Secretary of Hyderabad Film Club. He is running the Film Society successfully. He is also the office bearer in South Region since office shifted from Chennai to Hyderabad.



## Section - III



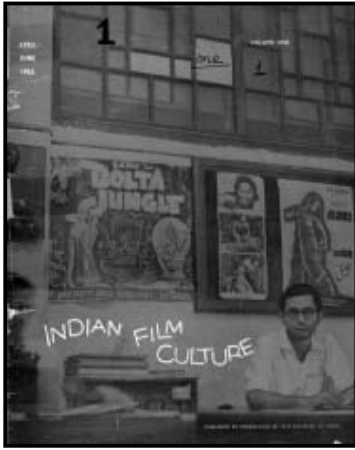
## Reflections

*Indian Film Culture*, the FFSI's quarterly journal, was first published in June 1962 by the FFSI headquarters at Kolkata when only 18 film societies existed all over India. Though the first film society started functioning as far back as 1947, the concept of film society and its objectives remained known to few intellectual film lovers. However, after the formation of the FFSI in 1959, the leaders of the Film Society Movement conceptualized the journal to supplement film screenings and disseminate film culture. It is pertinent to note that film reviews, and cinema appreciation was yet to gain roots in the print media when the journal was initiated.

A total of 14 issues of *Indian Film Culture* have been published since 1962. We are reproducing some of the articles from the past issues, which reflects the mood of Film Society Movement and issues from time to time.

# The Front Cover

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**The front cover** is the editorial of the first issue of *Indian Film Culture* (1962). It rightly describes the Film Society Movement, which was in its infancy. Hence the editorial emphasizes that Indian Film Culture, however, is not intended to be a house-magazine for members of the Federation. As its contents will show, it aims at being a journal of Indian Cinema or, more precisely, a journal of film appreciation, written from the Indian point of view.

**A**DD 'Culture' to 'Indian Film' and you have the Film Society Movement in India. It sounds facetious, but it is true. Hence the photograph on our front cover, which illustrates the headquarters of the Federation of Film Societies of India at Calcutta. It comes to life every evening after the kind film distributor who allows this after-hours occupancy has finished his labours over films like *Bolta Jungle* ('The Jungle Speaks'). The two young men sitting against this background are among those who assemble here after they have earned a living for the day, full of awareness of the faintly ridiculous aspects of their proselytizing in aid of film appreciation.

It is from here that INDIAN FILM CULTURE, journal of the Federation of the Film Societies, is published. The present issue, which is its first, builds on the foundations laid by INDIAN FILM QUARTERLY (later called INDIAN FILM REVIEW since it could be published every quarter) which used to be the organ of Calcutta Film Society. The Calcutta Film Society now publishes a Bengali quarterly, and the task of bringing out all-India journal has been appropriately taken up by the Federation, which is composed of 18 member societies spread all over India.

Indian Film Culture, however, is not intended to be a house-magazine for members of the Federation. As its contents will show, it aims at being a journal of Indian Cinema or, more precisely, a journal of film appreciation, written from the Indian point of view.

It is in the sense of film appreciation that we have added the word 'Culture' to 'Indian Film'. For culture there certainly exists among those who deal in films directly or indirectly - not only among those who judge

them but even among many who make them. There are noted writers, musicians and others among those who make films, and distinguished men of culture among those who judge them.

*But culture and film culture, we submit, are not the same things, although the illusion persists that they are.* It is no more unusual to find a political pundit being completely insensitive to classic cinema than to come across the literary giant who is totally blind to non-representational painting. If we view the film as a new and distinct art form the futility of viewing it from literary standpoints becomes obvious. Unfortunately most people, however learned in other matters, tend to regard the film as a translation of the novel or an extension of literature. Literature created in language of words, which is used for the widest variety of communication, naturally dominates the sense of culture. Thus it is that an otherwise cultured and perfectly reliable person will argue in committee in favor of an award for a poor film because it shows a faithful wife or is well-timed for a centenary. More often he will argue against a cinematically satisfying film because it deviates from the text of a hallowed literary work. All the sensitive cinematic elements, he is inclined to dismiss as 'technique'. Thus it is too that government officials full of academic education and good intentions will organize an International Film Festival which leaves out Kurosawa, Bergman, Visconti, Fellini, Antonioni and the

*Nouvelle Vague*, imports a near-pornographic Greek film by unknown director instead of the work of Cacoyanis or Kunduros, a piece of filmed theater from Argentina in place of anything by Leopoldo Torre Nilsson, permit the showing of non-descript Russian films a few months before the commercial release in India of *Ballad of a Soldier* and *The Letter That Was Not Sent*, or almost equally unimportant Polish films just before the extensive film society showings of *Kanal* and *Ashes and Diamonds*, and will wax eloquent over the long drawn sentimentality of *Happiness of Us Alone* (which admittedly had some good points and even perfect moments) – a film which is so brimming with human kindness that it seems more fun to be deaf and/or mute than to be in full possession of one's senses. The Festival was obviously organized by people who had no idea of the international standards of film judgment, or of the importance of the work of particular directors, whose work is especially sought by the important festivals. It was as if someone was given sole authority to select jet air-craft for IAC because he was an expert of mediaeval Chinese history.

Censorship is built on a dewy-eyed vision of 'traditional' Indian morality which never existed in history and is actually nothing but the Indian version of the smug self-deceit of mid-Victorian England. The nude body or the mention of sex in public sends a chill down the spines of the descendants of those who built Konarak. Anyone with the least familiarity with Indian art traditions will admit that there has been more eroticism in Indian art than the art traditions of rest of the world put together.

In England, and in many other countries, there is special provision for film societies to see uncensored films, not in India.

The Film Institute of India founded by Government and theoretically a laudable venture invites lecturers from abroad but cannot supply them with excerpts for illustration and will not employ 'foreigners' except as visiting lecturers – in spite the fact that there is no one *available* in India who can supply this Institute with leadership and vision. Individuals apart, Government as a whole will similarly not recognize that film societies need films in order to promote film appreciation, the Censorship Fees Customs Duty and Amusement Tax should not be levied on film society showings and are not in many countries.

The Films Division of the Government churns out probably the largest number of documentaries and newsreels of any country in the world. Although it has many capable men in its fold, the general level of the mass-produced material is poor, secretariat-ridden,

unimaginative and therefore ineffective. The 'golden age' of the British documentary the days of Grierson, Wright, Watt, Jennings which produced a number of classic documentaries was built on intelligent Government sponsorship. But the way the set-up has been solidly bound by red tape in India; only rarely can a flutter of talent escape through its stifling fold.

This in awards, festivals, documentaries, Film Institutes, India goes on adopting the forms developed in other countries, while the content plays into the hands *Status Quo* and vested interest and ignorance, bad taste, primitive film-making and film thinking. To this *Status Quo* the very urge to know what others are doing is suspect. It gets exemption from Amusement Tax for making films whose very colour-scheme is the epitome of vulgarity (*Jhanak Jhanak Payal Baje* with its rainbow-colored floors and walls), and mythological which proclaim the art of pavement calendar. Yet the henchmen of this film industry continue to be hailed as great film-makers whose word is law, as for the really low elements, they have turned film-making into something which could not be further removed from the sensible conduct of an organized 'industry' not to speak of art. Why? Because despite good intentions, it is not realized that good judgment is born of a sense of standard from the study of the work of outstanding film-makers all over the world. A sort of 'Khadi in celluloid' mentality has grown up which glorifies the Indian product merely because it is Indian in origin. It is idle to blame individuals in Government for this situation, because the fault lies in the basic outlook of Government as a whole.

Yet one must hasten to add that this journal is being published with some financial help from the Ministry of Scientific Research & Cultural Affairs, without which it could not have seen the light of day. It is on the advice of the Film Advisory Board of the Government of India that the Film Division purchased Calcutta Film Society's unconventional two reeler, *Portrait of a City*. The Ministries of Information & Broadcasting and Finance have agreed to the import of eight films a year by the Federation of Film Societies (although the machinery for working this arrangement is far from being ready). It is entirely due to the goodwill of individuals that these small mercies emerge, keeping at least some enterprise from going entirely to hell.

But why this constant harping on Government in a field which has been developed by private institution everywhere else in the world? Because such development in India is almost solely dependent on Government's willingness to remove the

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# Moyen Metrage

■ Kobita Sarkar



Rita Ray, a film critic who was associated with the FFSI since its inception, uses a pseudonym, Kobita Sarkar. Here she analyses the 'Important part of French Cinema.' The French title '*Moyen Metrage*' means short films with zest for cinematic experiments. The article was first published in the second issue of IFC in June, 63. Ray has two books on cinema to her credit.

Typical of the experimental strain in the French cinema are the *moyen metrage* films- which by now, of course, are an established part of it. They can rightly be described either as short-long or long-short films and they occupy in the cinema lengthwise and form wise, much the same position as the novelette (with its less feeble connotations) does, in literature. It is an intriguing length that imposes its own formal restrictions and yet at the same time has been found to be ideal for certain types of films, often in an experimental vein, and for certain themes like the famous one on the elements of bullfighting. It is also by its very nature and place in the distribution system of the French cinema, conducive to experiment, and there are already a quota of what will eventually be classics in this genre. The French are equally conscious of the necessity for the feature films. What is more, many of the more now-famous artistic names in the French Cinema served their apprenticeship in this sphere and showed a remarkably disciplined and inventive genius. Furthermore, these films are not always documentaries. In fact, it is in the realm of the shorter film which only incidentally or not at all borders on the documentary, that vast potentialities have been discovered. The axiom that economy of expression does not hamper the logical development of a film has not been proved in a number of very interesting personal essays, which in a few cases have been treated as commercial short features, with surprising results. One of the outstanding films in this in between category is *The Picasso Mystery*, whose length by commercial standards, makes it unsuitable for showing with a feature film, except where double features are the rule. It is one of the most extraordinary films ever made and the word "Mystery" in the title is very

apposite, for the pace of a thriller and some of its reactions are certainly maintained. It shows the actual progress of a work of art and some of the artist's thought-processes. Henri Georges Clouzot, more famous internationally for his brilliantly unpleasant thrillers like *Les Diaboliques* and *The Wages of Fear* seems on the surface the least likely choice for a director of such a theme and yet now, it seems impossible to think of anyone else who might have made a greater success of such an experiment.

He shows (through a specially constructed glass screen), the actual stroke by stroke progress of a number of Picasso paintings. As if to remind one that the movies have progressed from the mere pedestrian recovering of facts, the technique used to convey this varies from one painting to the next. On one you might see the first few lines as Picasso's hand draws something, peeping over his shoulder, so to say. It is fantastic to watch a drawing of a fish change into rooster and end up as a cat, with swift touches of color added to give it just the right element of felinity!

In another case, the process is speeded up and whole sections appear, and then disappear because the painter is not satisfied with them, and they are finally modified to suit the ultimate pattern. There is a reclining nude in color, reading a book. The face changes at least a dozen times, until the last one seems to have no connection with the first, and yet it has- for throughout the transformation from face to face,

there is a visible connection. To suit the picture, even the size of the screen is changed from the ordinary dimensions of Cinemascope! To prevent monotony and to enhance the general interest, the “human element” is introduced, through this, one fears, appears a trifle contrived. At one stage Clouzot points out that he is running out of film and the result is some spontaneous banter. In the course of film too, Picasso makes personal comments- his preferences for colour, for instance (“It is more exciting!”) and his fear that people, because of Clouzot’s picture, might come to the conclusion that he is a facile painter without any desire for perfection. This is in face of the fact that one of the larger canvasses takes about ten minutes of screening time, through in reality it took ten days to finish). Even assuming that much of this sophisticated artifice, the interest never flags, for it is like an excursion into the fourth dimension and is probably the first attempt to explain one art in terms of another. It is in many ways much more than “documentary” and has left the *moyen metrage* film considerably richer while widening its conventional bounds.

A sphere in which the long “short” comes in for ideal exploitation is fantasy – especially with Albert Lamorisse, who has propounded through it, a very personal philosophy. It was fortunate that *Crin Blanc (Wild Stallion)* was shown with the Everest film. *Crin Blanc* combines legend, in a sense, with cold documentary in a purely personal way. Set in the Camargue region of the South of France, it tells of a wild stallion and a young boy – both burning with a desire for freedom- their own personal ideal of freedom. When they eventually achieve it, the film assumes a note of allegory, infused with a universal ideal, until it exceeds the periphery of the factual documentary. Lamorisse had already made a picture with similar undertones, *Le Ballon Rouge (The Red Balloon)*, which is wonderful synthesis of visual beauty, casual factuality and poetic interpretation- and certainly one of the most excellent example of genuine fantasy with an allegorical base. Visually even more attractive than *Crin Blanc*, it does not equal its deep emotional appeal. Still fascinated with the idea of the balloon, and the perspective it gives of the world around one, Lamorisse’s most recent venture- *Voyage Dans un Ballon (Stowaway in the Sky)* gives a Bird’s eye- and unique-panorama of France. More factual and documentary, less fantastic, the end has a reminder of the old Lamorisse belief of sadness through frustration, but it is less moving than the others. Somewhat similar in its impact to the Lamorisse films is *The Goldfish*. Some of Cousteau underwater films have, because of the rarefied and unfamiliar regions they

explore, the quality of mystery that is largely visual and that comes from seeing the unfamiliar. They are thematically however, closer to the factual film.

*The Crimson Curtain* was the first venture into commercial film-making of Alexander Astruc, one of the most promising talents of the French Cinema. By conventional standards, it was experimental. A costume drama, with overtones of fantasy, it centers around a young guardsman’s love for the girl of the house where he is billeted, and her mysterious death. Featured in it, are the well-known stars, Anouk Aimee and Jean-Claude Pascal. There is no speech, only a commentary, presumably spoken by the guardsman recounting the story. As the girl is virtually inarticulate and he does not know what motivates her strange behavior at any stage, she remains an enigma till the very end of the film-and even after. The treatment, ideally suited to the theme, progressively heightens the atmosphere and the economy of expressions makes the film a classic of terse dramatic narration. The sense of mystery is further emphasized by the suggestive undertones what are always equivocal.

The Truffaut *moyen metrage* venture- *Les Mistons*- again, explores that most difficult of emotional regions- the bitter-sweetness of adolescence. Growing up seems equally hard on the young couple as on the bunch of peeping toms whose main motivation is the natural insecurity of the moment. Truffaut etches it briefly, sympathetically- and, in sense, tragically. Unlike Lamorisse’s films it is not tinged with fantasy. Nor is it sordidly realistic. It has compassion that none of Truffaut’s subsequent feature film displays.

There are again, a number of films which give a purely individual interpretation of reality. Ruttman’s *Berlin* was the progenitor of an abstract school of documentary “city symphonies” as they were called, which produced some eminently beautiful and occasionally esoteric films. Here, they have been used, but with a lyrical quality. *La Seine a Rencontre Paris* falls somewhere between the “Berlin” and the more lyrical categories. Some of the most haunting and familiar images are strung together with apparent irreverence to illustrate a poem by Jacques Prevert (and narrated by Serge Reggiani). It wavers between the Parisian’s abiding affection for the city and a constant nostalgia for it. Carlos Vilardebo edited *Vivre* from newsreels. Without dialogue or commentary, the shots linked together make up the sum total of human experience today as seen through a purely personal assessment. The commentary lies in the bias provided by the editing. If, from the

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# Acting and the Star System

■ B. K. Karanjia



B K Karanjia was the Editor of 'Filmfare' and later of 'Screen', the two leading cinema periodicals published from Bombay. As the Chairman of Film Finance Corporation, he initiated the New Wave in Indian Cinema. This article was published in the sixth issue of IFC in March, 1966.

**A** POPULAR Hollywood star expressed surprise during her recent visit to India that our stars work in as many as 20 to 30 films at a time. This, she felt, called for special talent. She went on to add that she thought it funny that the stars here, like in Hollywood, dictate to producers. A case of the tail wagging to dog, she laughingly opined. But that exactly is our problem, compared to Hollywood. We have more 'dogs' than 'tails' to fit them. When Carl Laemmle snatched Mary Pickford from Biograph, offering her a contract at 185 dollars, he not only produced the first and exemplary star; he initiated a movement that was to make the star-system the center of our film industry in Hollywood and elsewhere. Little Mary, the world's sweetheart, found her Swadeshi counterpart in the telephone operator who became Sulochana; in our film's salad days swashbuckling Master Vithal was publicized as the Indian Douglas Fairbanks.

Did Charles Boyer change the scenario of Orage or Jean Gabin impose a film theme in P  p   le Moko? Well, our stars have been known to do likewise. No Indian star may have saved a film company as spectacularly as Deanna Durbin saved Universal Pictures in 1938-39. But our films are sold mainly on star names. Understandably therefore stars (with music directors who rank next to popularity) account for almost 65 per cent of a film's budget. Stars, in short, define the economy and determine the very existence of the industry.

Since in ratio to quantum of production our stars are fewer than in other major film industries, the repercussions of the star-system are more severely felt. A famed star

of New Theaters who played opposite Prince Barua in many a film recalls in her memoirs how the star-system grew in the abnormally strained atmosphere of the war and how in the consequent deluge the producer, the director, the writer and others were "all washed away". This is distressing – that in a director's medium the director's role, except in Bengal and to a small entrant in Maharashtra, has dechnest dangerously. So has that of the writer. The late ebullient Mehboob Khan, whose flair for the film medium few can question, used to pride himself on not needing writers. The story goes that he tried writers once - seven of them simultaneously in fact- but fired them because they sat around with such solemn looks that they unnerved him. The situation became so critical that if one did not bow down to the star-system, one had to close shop. A producer who founded the Sagar Movietone lamented that after the war stars asked such fabulous prices and on top of it did not agree to work exclusively. "So," to quote him, "no other course left to use but close down, and so we did." In fairness to the stars, however, it has to be admitted that they were the first to deplore the unhealthy aspects of this system which, hard as it is to believe, taxes them as much as their producers. The immensely popular South Indian star Shivaji Ganesan whose merest nod can secure financial backing, and much else

besides, was asked whether the post-war dominance of the star in good for the film industry. Unhesitatingly he replied that it is not, that things were better in the old days.

Such is the star's contribution to film business. What is the contribution of acting to a film? A different and more difficult question. Since the cinema it is that has in our country completely displaced all competing entertainment such as the theater, musical gatherings, poetry symposia and the open air stage which flourished even three decades ago, and since several of our stars are recruited from the stage, the contribution of acting to a film can be more easily determined perhaps if screen acting is compared to stage acting. Screen acting suffers from two obvious handicaps which were brilliantly analysed by Pudovkin. One is dispersed and fragmentary nature of performance when, according to the mechanics of film-making, a person may die before he is born. The other is the absence of a living link, the give and take between actor and audience. Under ideal circumstances the first handicap might be surmounted by the director working through the script with the actors. As for the second, the director and his crew constitute an intelligent, interested, if limited audience. Pudovkin recalls how his star Baranovskaya in *Mother* couldn't act if she didn't see Pudovkin in his usual place besides the camera. The cameraman's chalk marks, the sound recordist's raucous "okays" can also, to one used to the stage, act as inhibiting factors.

But when in a flash of genius Edwin Porter broke up a sequence in *The Great Train Robbery* into scenes of varying duration set in different locales-and when D.W. Griffith filmed a big close-up of a wife in Enoch Arden - and, more daring still, inserted a shot immediately after of the husband she was waiting for—they trapped the amazing new possibilities of the film medium. And when in *Jazz Singer* Al Johnson said: "You aint heard nothing yet, folks!", it was the understatement of the sound decade. The increasingly sensitive microphone permits of a range and volume of voice impossible on the stage, a conversational tone, the merest whisper.

On the set, much more than on the stage, the actor is part of a vast and complicated mechanism. His performance is not his alone, it is the co-operative effort of the director, cameraman, recordist, lightening experts and editor. If the truth be told, in his final performance, he plays no part at all. It is a performance given in the cutting room. Timing, so vital to good acting, is principally controlled by the man with the scissors.

We are familiar with Kuleshov's famous experiment conducted to demonstrate a basic tenet of the cinema - that it can by sheer juxtaposition convey whatever emotions are intended to be conveyed. Kuleshov juxtaposed the same bank, expressionless face of an actor with first, a bowl of

soup, then a baby play coffin- and the spectators swore that the actors was portraying in turn hunger, joy and grief! All this had some commentators to the other extreme. They would appear to contend that on the screen everything acts for the actor except the actor himself. Hitchcock carried Kuleshov's argument to its logical conclusion when he said: "I would almost say that the best screen actor is the man who can do nothing extremely well." The cinema can dismember an actor, making his hands act as well as his eyes. It can make the actor sing or speak in voice that is not his, in a language he doesn't even know. On the screen even animals can act. The lifeless-Trnkas' marionettes, Walt Disney's characters—can be given given life. Amorous gods and goddesses in the caves of Khajuraho are made to come alive. Small wonder Leslie Howard deplored: "Actors can be eliminated and replaced by anything at all."

This appears to me, however, to pose an unnecessary conflict between the screen actor and his medium. Hamlet, and to lesser extent Richard III—suffered precisely because they did not adapt themselves to the film medium. True, moving the camera around soliloquizing player confirmed the Oliver was a great actor and in Richard III at least one almost accepted the soliloquy as a valid cinematic device. But there are critics who argue with reason that none of the three was the exciting adventure in Shakespeare that a more filmic inspiration made Joseph L. Mankiewicz's version of Julius Caesar or Orson Welles's of Macbeth.

The fact remains that for the purpose of his remarkable experiment, Kuleshov chose the skilled actor Mosjoukin. No comment is necessary. Were not the contribution of acting the significant one it is, directors would not spend the time and energy they do on casting. On the fundamentals of wholesome and profound acting-intonation, expression and gesticulation, the cumulative effort of which is characterization- the screen makes as exacting demands as the stage. To determine the contribution of acting to a film one need not go back to Douglas Fairbanks or Valentino who could convey no more than the ordinary emotions or to Mary Pickford and her impossibly innocent roles. I am not thinking of the stars who play themselves in their films. Gary Cooper, according to Frank Capra, played himself as Mr. Deeds. This assumed a rather comic aspect when his fans returned the compliment by identifying Mr. Deeds with Gary Cooper. In 1936, for his election to the Presidency of the United States, arguing that he had clearly demonstrated political aptitudes in *Mr. Deeds Goes To Town*. I am not aware that if the Indian screen's matinee idol Dilip Kumar was similarly offered any high office after he played leader in the film of that name. Seriously, though, most stars do play themselves over and over again. An actor's features, the way he walks and the way he talks, his gestures and

mannerism, dress and hair style make up his personality. He brings them into play in his role in a film, which becomes very successful and in the process makes a star of him. So he sticks to his mannerism, gesture, style of talking and acting, but refines upon them as he goes from one film to another. They are the cause of his success and of stardom, his stock-in-trade. So he is content to lean upon them more heavily as time passes, which makes him disinclined to experiment with himself.

I am thinking of those not-too-rare screen portrayals that abide in our memory. Tatiyana Samilova's in *The Cranes Are Flying*, Anna Magnani's in *The Miracle*, Paul Muni's in *The Last Angry Man*, Walter Pidgeon's in *How Green Was My Valley*, Marlon Brando's portrayal of the dumb hero awakening to conscience and commonsense in *On The Waterfront*, "The real people who played father and son with a restraint that rents the hearts in *Bicycle Thief*..... The list can never be complete. Our films too have been studded with such gems of portrayals- from Chandramohan and Naseem as the Emperor Jehangir and his consort in Pukar to Chabbi Biswas as the decadent zamindar of *Jalsaghar* -in which the actor has impregnated the role with his own being, which of course is distinct from the star playing himself. But I would like to refer to two cases that vividly illustrate the contrasting aspects of screen acting. The first is of the same role, the doomed hero *Devdas*, interpreted successively by Prince Barua in the original Bengali, by Kundanlal Saigal in the first Hindi version and by Dilip Kumar in the later remake. The other case is of the same actor Soumitra Chatterjee interpreting a whole series of sharply contrasting roles from the tough taxi-driver of *Abhijan* to the scholarly, shy, eligible and utterly endearing bachelor of *Teen Kanya* - lending his extraordinarily plastic personality to be moulded to the director's desire. Going back in time one performance that will be memorable for all time because of its marvelous fusion of films technique and historical skill is that of Falconetti's in Carl Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc*. Who can forget how camera travels over her face as over a beautiful but mysterious landscape and how it pauses in awe at the strong soul that shines through her eyes, and how coming face to face with a human soul fills us with awe too, knowing as we do that, in the poet's phrase, the arms it bears are brittle? How right Charles Dullin was when he said, "The cinema asks for a soul behind the face." What more can any director ask for-or an actor give?

The contribution of acting to a film can be properly appreciated when one bears it in mind that the objective nature of the medium makes it primarily visual. The actor in conjunction with the director has to evolve a pattern of behavior that is psychologically appropriate to what he thinks and feels so that it conveys to the audience his

thoughts and feelings. His task in a sense is more difficult than the stage actor's: He has to act quietly, naturally, always in a low key. He has to be more plastic, submit himself to the director and all the mechanics of film making, which are often more subtle, more expressive methods of communicating to the audience the concept of the creative artist.

This then is or could be the contribution of acting in its ideal form of a film. Needless to add when a star acts in 3, 4, 10, 20, 30 films at a time he diminishes his contribution almost in direct proportion to the number of roles. The star system that elevates the star also destroys him. It types and stultifies, it kills the star with glory. The Soviet cinema attempted to denigrate the star, almost eliminate him. So did the cinema of truth in its documentary or neo-realist developments, from Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* to Renoir's *Toni* and Visconti's *La Terra Trema*. In the Bengali film today directors as well, if not better known than stars. But public adulation of the star feeds upon itself. We may not go to length of Hollywood which carries this adulation beyond the grave, as in the case of James Dean. Nor at the other extreme do we find in India a star travelling by bus or bicycle, as David Robinson observed stars doing in Japan. A Motion Picture Impact Study recently conducted by "Filmfare" among a representative section of cinegoers (including married and unmarried respondents, students and the armed forces) elicited some intriguing facts about the star-system in India. Most intriguing was the revelation of extent of star association. While as small a proportion as 16 per cent have their favorite heroes and heroines with whom they actually identify themselves in everyday life, a larger number, 31 per cent, are also eager to do so. More often than not the identification is with an individual rather than a plurality of stars, and the star association exists both with the same and the opposite sex. 52 per cent of the respondents (more among women and the unmarried, more among students and members of the armed forces) expressed their eagerness to meet stars individually. The question as to what would be their reaction on meeting the star of their choice brought in various answers, from getting an autograph to stealing a kiss. 50 per cent confessed to dreaming about their favorite star or stars. The attachments went deeper than admiration and expressed itself in genuine sympathy and consideration for movie favorites.

In India as elsewhere, stars are the stuff audiences' dreams are made of. Stars are the 'golden gossamer of movie magic'. In the words of Edger Morin: "*Behind the star system there is not only the stupidity of fanatics, the lack of invention of screen writers, the commercial chicanery of producers. There is the world's heart and there is love, another kind of nonsense, another profound humanity.....*" ●●●



# The Three Waves of New Indian Cinema

■ Chidanand Dasgupta



Chidananda Dasgupta summed up the revolution in Indian Cinema calling it the three waves of New Indian Cinema published in sixth issue of IFC in winter 1979.

Indian cinema was, as it were, waiting for the country's independence to free itself from the shackles of a self-imposed tradition. The concept of the cinema as second-class literature had never been questioned deeply enough in half-century of filmmaking to make a difference to its form. Rabindranath Tagore had tried his hand at a screenplay and was to direct the film of it himself. From his pronouncement at the time, unlike those of film-makers who were his contemporaries, it is clear that he had understood the autonomy of the film as an art and, particularly, its need for independence from the tyranny of words. But the time was perhaps not ripe, and nothing came of Tagore's project.

It was an inheritor of his blend of East and West who was to bring Tagore's acute understanding of the needs of the film medium to fruition. In the year of independence, Satyajit Ray co-founded the Calcutta Film Society, and within five years, started the filming of *Pather Panchali*. And with that began the first wave of new Indian cinema.

In the fifties and the sixties, the main arena of this cinema was undoubtedly in Bengal. Besides Ra's own towering achievement, which soared far above national definitions, there was the memorable talent of Ritwik Ghatak whose great potential was never fully realized. Mrinal Sen too, made his mark in this period, although his individuality was to flower only in late sixties, after *Bhuvan Shome*. Ray was by no means alone in expressing the culture of pre-Independence India dominated by Tagore; all three stalwarts of Bengali cinema did, in their different ways. Any sober reappraisal of Ghatak shows the innate Tagorean classism which enveloped his revolutionary aspect. Sen until *Bhuvan*

*Shome* sluggishly inhabited the same world, perhaps for no other reason than that he had not yet discovered other.

More importantly, as far as a 'wave' is concerned, there were individual films by a number of filmmakers which had sufficient originality to contribute towards a sense of awakening of the Bengali cinema in general. But most of the promise of the period was betrayed within the decade, and film-makers whose work had borne it, lapsed either into routine film making or into silence. The names that sprang to mind most readily in this context are those of Rajen Tarafdar, Partha Pratim Chowdhury and Barin Saha. By the late sixties, the hopes of a continued growth of good cinema in Bengal had already petered out.

It was in Bombay, the Mecca of the commercial cinema in India, that, as Bengali wave receded, a fresh one gathered force. The Film Finance Corporation's policy of funding the off-beat film-maker, unsecured loan for Bhuvan Shome, became the main sense of a new cinema for India. Perhaps because Bombay is the home of commercial film-making, a perverse emphasis developed on way-out experimentation, mainly inspired by Western examples and totally unreal within the framework of the Indian film market. The two whose films proved impossible to release were Mani Kaul and Kumar Sahani, both brilliant products of the Film Institute of India. Did they represent the effect of Bombay's first consistent exposure to the western art film and

West-oriented training, and did this result in a negative image of the commercial cinema? However that may be, having asked its blue-eyed boys to make the most off-beat films, the Corporation then proceeded to applaud them in public and ask them in private to return its money. Naturally, the strategy did not work.

However, one film succeeded in eluding all these hazards, M.S. Sathyu's *Garm Hawa*- a film of fiery sincerity effectively communicated. The other film of this period which launched a film-maker on his career of continued distinction was Shyam Benegal's *Ankur*. Although not funded by the FFC, it must yet be counted a part of the wave of enthusiasm generated by its liberal sponsorship of film-makers with the new ideas if not with Sathyu's inspiration or Benegal's craftsmanship. Again the 'wave' was sustained by the contribution of many of those lesser film-makers who eagerly sought self-expression but achieved it only fitfully in parts or aspects of their films. Basu Chatterjee's *Sara Akash* appeared to fall within this definition, and few had foreseen the emergence, and success, of his brand humour in the observation of everyday life, the deft lightness of his touch. Not unnaturally, the two who survived the inevitable recession of the FFC wave were the ones who made it in Bombay's Box-Office, even if they did not occupy the center of stage. Over the years, Basu Chatterjee and Shyam Benegal have both built up their own audiences, and close enough to, the main box-office of the all-India Hindi cinema. By the mid-seventies, the scene shifted, rather dramatically to south. Kerala had made its mark early in day, with the late Ramu Karit's *Chemmeen*, Adoor Gopalkrishnan's *Sayamvaram* and M.T. Vasudevan Nair's *Nirmalyam*. It is worth noting that the first came from within the commercial cinema, the second from film institute: the third was a successful journalist and a well known writer turning his hand to the film medium for the first time. Karnataka, where Pattabhi RamaReddy's *Samskara* had been a lone surprise packet for some time, began to throb with a new excitement for the medium. B. V Karanth's stark *Chomana Dudi* was almost a rebuke to Mrinal Sen's dalliance with the film form in delivering a revolutionary message. The latest fruitful exercise in regional realism came in the young Girish Kasaravalli's *Ghatashraddha*. Its character development and relationships are somewhat stiff in the joints, but the dramatic structure is tight, and the tension well maintained through strong visuals and a fine rhythm.

Andhra threw up little of its own despite a long established subsidy, but attracted Mrinal Sen to make *Oka Oorie Katha* which absorbed more than Vasudeva Rao from *Chomana Dudi* to make Sen's most powerful social-realist film to

date. The film is enriched by a humour and complexity of characterization which had been lacking in his other works with a similar social-political purpose. Benegal made sense of structure and locale. The leading actress, Vanishree, turns in a fine performance and makes Smita Patil look far too urban by comparison, a fault Ananth Nag escapes by his intense concentration. Arvindan's *Thampu*, brings fresh glory to the lead with a greater commitment on the part of more film-makers of talent than anywhere else in the country.

To attribute the flowering of all this excellence to liberal state subsidy alone would be to underestimate the force of the talent coming to light. Girish Karnad, for instance, has brought to Karnataka a blend of East and West reminiscent in some ways of what Ray brought to Bengal. His earlier films *Vanshviksha* and *Kaadu* had indicated a greater sense of drama than of cinema; but with *Ondanondu Kalladalli*, India's great 'jidai-geki' (samurai) film, Karnad has dispelled such notions. The film may be out the overdrawn distinction between the art film and the commercial cinema in India.

If this promises-both in Bombay and in Karnataka-come anywhere near fulfillment, not only the art film but regional cinema too may find a deliverance few have foreseen for either. For the regional cinema in particular, the problem of survival is otherwise an acute one. Once pent up regional sentiments of pride and the urge for a fresh identification have been expressed in a few prize-winning works, the wind seems to drop out of the regional cinema's sails. A spiritual vacuum tends to ensue; the audience aches to get off the high horse of patriotic art and return to the comforts of commercial cinema. To the blandishments of lifting music and ample hips swaying in ORWO-colour, no state subsidies have a continuingly viable alternation. So unless the third wave in the south, like the second in Bombay, leaves a rich deposit on the shores of commercial cinema, it may go the way of the first, in West Bengal, which failed so completely in that respect. ●●●

Among recent films, *Bhuvan Shome* is cited widely as an off-beat film which has succeeded with minority audience. My own opinion is that whatever success it has had has not been because of, but in spite of its new aspects. It worked because it used some of the most popular conventions of cinema which helped soften the edges of its occasional spiky syntax. These conventions are : a delectable heroine an ear-filling background score, and a simple, whole some wish-fulfilling screen story (Summary in seven words : Big Bad Bureaucrat Reformed by Rustic Belle) - **Satyajit Ray** 'from our films their films'

# The Indian New Wave

■ K. A. Abbas



A film journalist turned film maker, Khwaja Ahmed Abbas worked as the Vice President of FFSL, Western Region for several years. He was one of the founders of 'Film Forum', the biggest film society in Bombay in the 1970's. This article was published in the 8th issue of IFC Autumn 1974.

Indian cinema which is a blanket term covering such disparate personalities & their productions as the socially & ideologically committed Mrinal Sen's *Interview*, *Calcutta 1971*, & *Padatik*, & the standard-bearers of self-expression & a personal cinema like Mani Kaul, Kumar Shahani & Prem Kapoor & their *Uski Roti*, *Maya Darpan* & *Badnaam Basti* respectively with Basu Chattarji's *Sara Akash* occupying a mid-way position between them. & *Samskara*, the bold & brilliant Kannada film that flashed on the film horizon of India like bolt of lightning, when it deservedly won the President's Gold Medal, also belongs to this New Wave, though some may be reluctant to admit director Pattabhirama Reddy to the charmed circle.

Now, I am all for variety in the fare provided to our cinemagoers – all the way from *Pather Panchali* to *Haathi Mere Sathi*. I personally believe in films of different genres—mythological, historical, musical, comedies, satires, as also realistic films of social content & comment. All sorts are needed to cater to different sections of audience, in their varying moods. So long as a film is made with good taste & worthwhile social, psychological or emotional theme, it is to be welcomed.

The unfortunate situation, however, is that about eighty per cent of the films, & ninety nine per cent of playing time in cinemas are devoted to inconsequential themes of indifferent aesthetic & artistic quality motivated solely by commercial & profit-making considerations & keyed to lower common denominator or "popular" taste. With a limited number of cinemas, & those, too, being monopolized by the producers of commercial glossies, there is an exhibition bottleneck which makes it virtually

impossible for any off-beat, no-star, and low-budget picture to get any playing time.

This is called "free trade", according to the law of supply & demand that governs the market in cement, steel—or cinema entertainment! The public comes to accept & demand what is fed on, & no wonder the commercial interest have decided that there is no demand for anything but their star-studded block-busters.

But response to at least some of the low-budget "New Wave" films indicates that the tide of public opinion (which had kept the commercial movies afloat) is now running out. There is a new wave among cinegoers, too, if Hindi films like *Bhuvan Shome*, *Sara Akash*, *Chetana*, *Dastak* & *Garam Hawa* are drawing capacity houses at least for some weeks. There is a perceptible qualitative change in the tastes of at least a section of the audience which was not manifest 25 years ago—at the time of my *Dharti ke Lal* Chetan Ananda's *Neecha Nagar* & Uday Shankar's *Kalpana* or some year later of Mahesh Kaul's *Gopinath* & Kamal Amrohi's *Daera*.

Probably those pictures (& a few more like them) were produced ahead of their times. But none of us thought that we belonged to a 'New Wave', actually we thought that we were fighting against then current "New Wave" of musical melodrama & inane comedies like *Khazanchi* & *Khidki* & *Shinshinaki Booblaboo*, & going

back to tradition of purposeful & dynamic films of social commitment live *Devdas* (1935), *Admi* (1939), *Padosi* (1941), *Roti* (1942).

What characterize the “New Wave” films is a concerned & conscious (& sometimes also self-conscious) revolt against the current formulas & an urge to break new & experimental ground both with regard to the content & the cinematic styles of expression. And, because some of the new, younger directors (through the film institute or through the screening arranged by film societies, or at the international film festivals held in India) are inspired & influenced by the continental cinema of directors like Fellini & Goddard, Truffaut, Alais Resnais & Bresson, their low-budget films have come to be collectively labeled “New Wave”.

What would have passed in an earlier time as isolated, spasmodic attempts to swim against tide of poor taste & a “suicidal” urge to break their heads at the box-office has assumed the character of a movement, mainly because of two institutions—The Film Institute of India (though all the New Wave are not from FII trained) & The Film Finance Corporation (though all New Wave films are not FCC financed).

Through the accident of a deplorable gap in the curriculum for the direction course in the Film Institute, the graduate who passes out know more about the French “New Wave” films & less about the classics of a dynamic, purposeful & socially-inspired cinema that came out of Hollywood in the Thirties & Forties & even less about the outstanding movies of significant Indian directors like Devaki Bose, Barua, Nitin Bose, Shantaram, Vinayak, Mehboob, Mahesh Kaul, Chetan Anand & other who came before (& even after) the world became aware of the eminence of Satyajit Ray.

It is more than a generation gap. It is unfortunate intellectual alienation (through snobbery born of ignorance) from the significant mainstream of world cinema in general & of Indian cinema, in particular. These bright, young & undoubtedly talented directors would not only feel less alienated & frustrated but also be far more effective in communicating with their audience if only they faced the fact that (cinematically speaking) they were not born in a culture & artistic vacuum.

While, the Film Finance Corporation (in its new incarnation) has done a magnificent job in providing financial support to eager & enthusiastic & (some more some less) talented young directors, the fact of its limited resources has allowed backing of only the small-scale experimental film, mostly in black & white. & there is no doubt that, by their imaginative resourcefulness & inventive

improvisation, they have done wonder within a limited schedule & even more limited budgets. It is incredible that films like *Bhuvan Shome*, *Chetna*, *Sara Akash*, *Badnaam*, *Basti* and *Garam Hawa* (which being in colour, must have cost more) could be made on budgets of about two to three or four lakhs each and within 30-35 shooting days. It is a challenge to the commercial producers with their vast resources, which is making the ‘Big Guns’ of the so-called “film industry” sit up and take notice of the young and impecunious “upstarts”!

But there is tendency to make virtue out of necessity and to think that there is something sacrosanct about making films with limited resources. People have started speaking even of a “Philosophy of the Low-Budget Film”! On the other hand, it must be admitted that there are genre’s of films (e.g. historical and epics like *War and Peace* or *Mughal-e-Azam*) which simply cannot be made on a shoestring-budget. Those genres are also useful and desirable, and must be brought within the range of talented young directors without the necessity of their pandering to the demands of the commercial interests. Why should they be content to make only “little” films for “little” art theaters? Why should they not make an impact on a larger audience?

The fact that without paying the usual backbreaking “filmic” interest, they can get enough money from the Film Finance Corporation to make their low-budget films frees the young producers and directors from the financial worries and tensions that haunt and cripple the creativity of other sensitive director caught within the commercial trap. It gives them a sense of artistic freedom to experiment with forms and techniques which would have been impossible in a commercial set-up.

But, unfortunately, this same freedom releases them from an obligation to communicate with their audience, and sometimes leads to arty-arty experiment with form which make their films incomprehensible and, therefore, unacceptable even to a sizeable minority audience. The artist’s freedom of self-expression would have to be balanced by the need for communication with people, and not restricted to a coterie of connoisseurs and snobs.

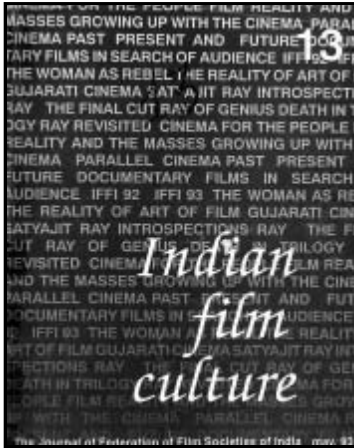
What, then, is my summing-up of the New Wave films? I like them. I like their stylishness, their experiments with techniques of narration. I like even their gimmickry. I like their youthful arrogance (even defiance of accepted norms, even when they go too far, or far out. I like them even when I don’t understand *Uski Roti*, or *Maya Darpan*, what exactly each of the directors wanted to say. And yet I can feel that Kaul and Shahani are both exceptionally talented

(Conti..on pg 80)

# SATYAJIT RAY

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## REVISITED



Film-maker Basu Bhattacharya edited the 13th issue of IFC in May, 1993, shortly after Satyajit Ray, who was honoured with a life time Oscar while he was ailing, passed away. This was also the first time that IFC was published from Mumbai, and not Calcutta.

Sangeeta Dutta was a lecturer in a Mumbai college. Later, she shifted to London and took up cinema writing. She has directed her maiden film *Another Way*, and currently penning the script for her next venture.

It has been an unceasing goal for film societies to bring good cinema to the people. Battling with the glitz and glamour of commercial cinema, the film societies mediate and modulate the cinegoer's appreciation and inclination for good cinema. With television, cable networks and the final onslaught of Star and Zee TV, people prefer watching the variegated audio-visual fare in their drawing rooms. Over the last decade, an increasing reluctance to frequent theaters has been evident. Unfortunately, the present generation is gradually getting desensitized to the 'big-screen' experience. This has been a problem across the globe; but viewers are now getting drawn back to cinema halls. One expects this healthy trend to be manifest in our country as cinema as an aesthetic art form is best appreciated on the large screen.

In November 92, when the much belated Oscar for lifetime achievement was announced for Satyajit Ray, Prabhat decided to launch on its twenty-fifth year with a festival of 25 Ray films- Gaurav Gatha - A fitting tribute which would correspond with the Oscar presentation. It was also an effort to rejuvinate film society movement in the city.

The opportunity to see Ray film in the city has been rare. Moreover, the present generation of film-goers are familiar with Ray's name but not with his genius. So positive was the response to the festival that Prabhat enrolled 400 new members. A consecutive viewing of 25 films would not have been practically possible. So four sessions were planned from end - March to July - with roughly six films per session. Members welcomed the idea of staggered session. Y. B. Chavan Centre which had just been inaugurated was fixed as venue. A very well laid out auditorium ensured good viewing. A serious attempt was made to group the films in the different sessions thematically. The festival began on 3<sup>rd</sup>

March with three short films: PIKOO's DIARY (feature) and two documentaries. After that the films were arranged more or less chronologically. Veteran artiste, Anil Chatterjee was invited to inaugurate the festival. Amol Palekar delivered the welcome speech. Though there were many old members in the age group of 50-65 the new members certainly belonged to a younger age group, many uninitiated to Ray – but very enthusiastic. The opportunity to watch Ray's films from the first trilogy to AGANTUK concretized for the viewer the evolution of the auteur through four decades. It also helped to place his work in perspective and to comprehend the larger frame of reference within which the individual films operate.

PATHER PANCHALI, APARAJITO and APUR SANSAR were screened in this session. Enthusiasm for the Apu-trilogy was at a high point as it was this first series of films which established Ray as a filmmaker of international standings. The trilogy effectively captures the transition from rural to urban Indian life. It translates effectively on celluloid the socio-economic history of post independent India. It is also a touching bildungsroman of a young Indian who leaves his roots behind. The dreams and disillusionments of Apu began to be symbolic of the average Indian in mid-decades of this century. For the young Bombay based filmgoer completely disassociated from the rural ambiance of the country- PATHER PANCHALI is a lyrical initiation into the rhythm of village life, the tensions

and strength of communal life, and the bitter sweet moments of poverty-stricken Brahmin household. The child's point of view, the implications of childhood discoveries, the train sequence, the children's encounter with death and guilt - are constructed in delightful visual sequences. The meticulous planning of the script, the evocative music, the delightful human touches, and these moments of pure cinema-the oncoming of the monsoon in *PATHER PANCHALI* and Apu throwing away his manuscript down the valley in *APUR SANSAR* -stirs up deep regard for the sensitive mind working behind the films.

*JALSAGHAR* fitted in thematically in this session. It captures poignantly the decadence of the Indian aristocracy in industrial Indian and the shift of wealth to the merchant class. The tragedy of Bishwamvar, the ruined Zamindar, who parts with his last gold coins to perpetuate the illusion of a lost life style, is dramatic. Chabi Biswas' mesmeric presence and the superb filming of two musical soirees draws the audiences sympathy to this ruined but proud patron of the arts. The stylized structure of the film brings to the viewer a new appreciation of formation. *JALSAGHAR*, which has won accolades in France is one masterpiece that has clearly been underrated in India.

Since January, 1992 Ray had been seriously ill and was clearly fighting losing battle with life. The preparation of the Oscar was made by representatives of the Academy Awards in Calcutta where Ray lay in a hospital's intensive care unit. By the time we got together for the second session at the end of April, Ray was no more. The man behind these films was gone; the colossus who straddled the cinema's landscape had his legacy on celluloid for new generation to respond to.

The films in the second session had a thematic interest - they centered around female protagonists, - *DEVI*, *TEEN KANYA*, *MAHANAGAR* and *CHARULATA*. What remained a sense of ceaseless wonder (after watching *DEVI* and *CHARULATA*) is Ray's sharp sense of historicity. Amidst the burgeoning Renaissance, the film *DEVI* drives home that the woman's question was central to the entire gamut of religious and social reforms in the nineteenth century Bengal, watching, *DEVI* for the first time, your mind recoils in horror of the entrapment of deified Doyamoyee who meets a tragic end. The patriarchal hegemony, within which Doya and Charu are posited, is explored by the filmmaker with great sensitivity towards woman and her inner world. Charu emerging as a self-conscious entity, awakening to her potential for creativity- shows the way for Arati's economic independence in *MAHANAGAR*. Arati forced by economic restraints to take up a job as saleswoman-gradually grows self-confident. By this time Ray is tracing the

socio-economic changes affecting middle class family life in Bengal. Film critics have often suggested that Ray is patriarchal. I would strongly claim that he is unusually sensitive to female subjugation and cultural confinement. From the perspective of a woman of the 90s' one could actually state that Ray is feminist. Films like *POSTMASTER* and *SAMAPTI* deal with the girl child and her socialization progress. Ratan in *POSTMASTER* is a young girl forced into domestic labour with unfulfilled emotional expectations. *SAMAPTI* traces an unusually rebelling girl's rejection of a premature marriage and her changing feelings when adolescence sets in.

*KAPURUSH* - a film seldom circulated, is ridden with bitter irony as the woman locked in a loveless marriage shuns the advances of an ineffective romantic ex-lover. The competent presence of Madhavi Mukherjee playing most of Ray's important woman - is also a reminder of Ray's perfecting casting and the standard of performance an exacting filmmaker can obtain from his cast.

During the intervals, members talked over coffee, discussing various angles of a film or admiring the all encompassing control of the auteur over his medium. In fact, Ray's oeuvre is a chronicle of our times. Creative ability to transform documentary facts by a way of seeing. Ray's creative process involved the merging of the manifest and a deep sense of feeling. He establishes a world of images to construct his own specific reality. There were many like me, who were re-viewing the films and quickly exchanged notes of new observations. Ray demands a continuous response from his audience, he uses the themes, concerns, cinematic devices to link his films - thus setting off subterranean references in the viewer's memory. It is delightful experience making these connections oneself. The blind religious belief in *DEVI*, is again explored in *GANASHATRU* where controversy rags over holy water, Charanamrit, in the goddesses temple.

For many young members who were watching these films for first time- there was much to talk about. The thematic variety for instance. In between the making of his trilogy-Ray worked on a comedy - a social satire - *PARASH PATHAR* which today is being considered the first science fiction film in India! Or *KANCHANJANGHA* a Chekovian set of characters revealing themselves through physical and verbal encounter with the magnificent Himalayan peak in the background.

The third session in the first week of June started with *ABHIJAN* a lesser known Ray film. In Ray's career graph the period after *CHARULATA* is marked by uncertainty and a new search. Though *ABHIJAN* and *NAYAK* are not considered master works, they are important to understand Ray's

growth as a film-maker. NAYAK happens to be my personal favorite. I remember having seen the film when I was too young to seriously understand its concerns. Watching it again was a revelation clearly this was a film which demands close study. The light structure of a 24 hour long train journey, the linear sequences shifting within three compartments, provide a realistic framework to surrealist dream sequences, frequent flashbacks. It is delightful experiment with the concept of time. Individual sequences, like jigsaw pieces have to be put together to construct the character of the lonely film star. Uttam Kumar, playing himself, is strongly charismatic, even while exposing the splits within his psyche.

Followed the films which begin to grapple with the reality of Bengal in the 70's. The pressures of real life issues, the unemployment problem, the Naxalite Movement, the corporate rat race, changing values and moral conflicts are Ray's concern now. Deliberated in earlier films like *ARANYER DIN RATRI*, such concern reaches a high point in the Calcutta trilogy *PRATIDWANDI*, *SEEMABADDHA* and *JANA ARANYA*. The trust of the last film is strongest. Ray is almost Dickensian as he scripts *JANA ARANYA*. The actual pulse of the city is captured in the commercial centre of Burrabazar. Its din and noise, its familiar ware and its stereo typical characters. The maze of corruption into which the protagonist falls display clearly the philistine world drawing in the middle class Bengali intellectual. It is a tragedy more complex and more immediately recognizable to the audience than the Apu trilogy. The tone of the romantic film maker has grown stern, his gaze now relentless unforgiving. The three protagonists –show the transition from the Apu inheritance. It is major shift from the attitudes of the Bengali middle class inspired by Tagorean values. Having drawn on several Bengali classics for his films Ray has confidently asserted the film maker's right to appropriate and design literary material for cinematic purpose. After using Bibhuhi Bhusan, Rabindranath and Tarashankar as literary sources- one of the best things Ray did was to turn his grandfather Upendra Kishore Roy Chowdhury. His immensely popular characters *GOOPY GAYEN* *BAGHA BYEN* were the brought to life by Ray in musical fantasy. It was the best thing that could have happened to children's films in the country!

One of the delights of the festival were the children's films *HIRAK RAJAR DESHE* (a sequel to *GOOPY GAYEN*) and *SONAR KELLA*. It came as a surprise to many viewers- that a grim realist like Ray can offer a delightful satire like *HIRAK RAJAR DESHE*. Constructed as a fairy tale starring Goopi and Bagha (the singer and drummer) the film was a hard hitting satire, targeted at the Emergency.

The witticism in the dialogue was not totally lost on the cosmopolitan audience because, for once the English subtitles were surprisingly accurate! *SONAR KELLA* is a detective film with the popular sleuth, Feluda (Ray's own literary version of Sherlock Holmes). The film reveals Ray's mastery over a very different genre with the right elements of suspense, fear and humour. Having enjoyed the film in my younger days, it was great experience watching it this time with my seven year old son and finding him react with as much delight. Ray's remarkable handling of child artistes impresses one greatly.

By the time we reached the last session in early July, we were moving towards the end of Ray landscape. As the film maker aged and saw the collapse of olden values around him, his disillusionment grew. The duplicity of the middle class Bengali and the breakdown of family were leading to growing estrangement. The cut-throat competitiveness of the co-operate world (as in *SEEMABADDHA*) was one angle. Now the corruption in the outside world and the tensions within family members, between two generations, is explored in the last trilogy *GANASHATRU*, *SHAKHA PROSHAKHA* and *AGANTUK* (1991). By this time a distinct change in cinematic technique is evident as Ray was forced to work largely indoors due to ill health. Indoor sequences, intensive close-up frames, continuous dialogue exchange, create their own terrain. An adaption of Ibsen's *Enemy of the people*, *GANASHATRU* reminds the individual of the imperatives of private responsibility to public life. The grim tone set in this film is further developed in *SHAKHA POSHAKHA*. The old father, Anandmohan, representative of the idealistic entrepreneur is shocked when he hears of 'black money' being hoarded by his sons. The situation holds by the gap between olden ideals and present values juxtaposing several different



Inauguration of Ray Festival by Prabhat Chitra Mandal.  
Amol Palekar, Sudhir Nandgaonkar & Anil Chatterjee.

points of view. The mentally deranged Proshonto is the only son who is incorruptible, his father realizes. Just as one is reacting with mixed emotions to these films, AGANTUK hits you hard and makes you sit up. If Ray had commented implicitly in the earlier films, here he lambasts the upholders of 'Modern civilisation' – using Manomohan as spokesman. Manomohan, has spent thirty five years with the tribal communities in America. He is guest for a week with his niece and her family in Calcutta and faces suspicion and hostility. He expresses peron for civilization as the middle-class Bengali understands it and argues for the dignity and ingenuity of the tribal forces he has spent his life with. In disgust, he leaves for Bolpur, where we find him with the Santhals. Strangely, it is Anita, his niece, who empathises with Manomohan and shares the sense of liberation outside the hollow sham of social norms. The film is a harsh critique of life today but it has its moments of lyricism- particularly the penultimate sequence when Anita breaks into dance with the Santhal girls – a piece of pure cinema. AGANTUK finely plays on the nuances of trust/distrust, kinship/estrangement, loyalty/betrayal between the uncle and niece, husband and wife, child and granduncle – to name a few familial relations. In an uncanny way this film assumes universal dimensions, which the preceding two films cannot attain. AGANTUK drove straight into my heart the concern of the humanitarian Ray cloistered in an increasingly materialistic world. The screening of AGANTUK marked the closure of the four month long festival. ●●●

### **(The Front Cover From pg..67)**

obstructions to film society activity. To enable its members to see a film like say, Carl Dreyer's *Day of Wrath* (1929), an institution must obtain foreign exchange (probably about Rs. 400, nevertheless very hard to get), pay Customs Duty (about Rs. 4,000), Censorship Fee (about Rs. 400 for deleting some portions of a classic), probably pay Amusement Tax, in many States, for each (private and non-commercial) showing, the total cost of this piece of education in films coming to about Rs. 7,000. The juggernaut of Government patronage advances upon the field of art with fearsomeness of a tank in pursuit of fleeing children. State patronage, distributed by people who have no concept of what they dealing with, becomes an instrument of real danger. It perpetuates ignorance, vested interest, otherwise totally extraneous considerations into the judgment of art and stands solidly against all progress with a rotund cheerfulness. While no art is free from this menace altogether, the cinema being powerful enough to generate public opinion is its most sought-after victim. No culture is more lacking in Government's concern for the film industry, than film culture. ●●●

### **(The Indian New Wave From pg..76)**

directors with an uncanny sense of composition and an eye for effective visuals, who, one day, will learn that self-expression, or a personal cinema, is not enough, unless an artist, by his self-expression, intellectually, aesthetically, or emotionally communicates with audience. But I don't subscribe to the view expressed by some that every worthwhile film must necessarily be successful, and must make money. Having made the largest number of flops without losing my self-respect, I cannot repudiate a significant film just because a sufficient mass audience is not yet ready to accept it. I like youth even in its destructive moods. There has to be destruction before construction. The 'New Wave' is valid because it is iconoclastic. It is helping to break the images that many of us have worshipped so long-the great golden calf of the box-office, the shadow gods and goddesses of the Star system, the oracles of "Give the public what it wants"! But after toppling the false gods, what shall we put in their place? Our own ego, the enemy false doctrine of "Art for Art's Sake" which parades today under the guise of "Subjective Self-Expression" and "A Personal Cinema"? Art, to my mind, is a social activity-and the cinema is the most social of all the arts. I say this not to uphold the formulas of box-office but to urge the new film-makers to realize the power and the social significance of the great art medium. Great cinema, like all great art, must serve the spiritual needs of the people, express their unexpressed thoughts and emotions, their joys and sorrows, their urges and aspirations. It must make the people laugh and cry, it must occasionally make them think, it must stimulate their imagination, make from indignant social injustices, must help them to understand life and its complexities, it must help them to understand themselves. In many different ways and styles of expression, this can be done, has been done and will be done. New Wave, Old Wave, all Waves emerge from the ocean, and waves return to the Ocean. The People are that Ocean! ●●●

### **(Moyen Metrage From pg..69)**

personal point of view, certain aspects are neglected, it makes the documents even more authentic, for the selectivity of the human mind, and its understanding and appreciation of the truth around it, is what raises it from the merely reproductive quality of newsreels. This is at best an arbitrary selection from a number of films which are well-established genre in the French cinema. For they have not neglected the short film while obviously, for commercial reasons concentrating on the feature. The moyen metrage film has done much to widen the scope of the film maker, for it is conducive to more experimental theme and treatment and at the same time exacts a discipline which the larger film does not demand. ●●●