A leader in world cinema, Bollywood or the Hindi film industry entertains millions. Followers and admirers of Hindi cinema reside both within and outside India, cutting across boundaries and cultures. However, it was not always the same. In its initial days, Hindi cinema had a limited audience. Now, Bollywood is only compared to Hollywood, and to no other film industry of the world. To reach to this juncture, it took many years and the contribution of a slew of highly talented people. This chapter attempts to capture that riveting journey of Hindi cinema.

2.1 Early Origin: 1890--1930

It was on 28 December 1895 that cinema came into existence in Paris when Lumière brothers showed their programme. Across Europe, this created a sensation. In India, screenings were organised in Bombay in June 1896 at Watson’s Hotel. The Times of India, then owned by British, carried an advertisement of the screening, which asked people to be an eyewitness of ‘the marvel of the century, the wonder of the world’. It was referring to the first screening of moving images in India, the showings of *cinematographe, living photographic pictures in lifestyle reproductions*. Later, considering the public excitement that the shows in Watson’s generated, on 14 July 1896, screenings started at Novelty Theatre, which continued for weeks. The Theatre sought to attract women also and for that special arrangements were made. For instance, some *zenna* shows were started which were open to women only.

The screenings impressed Harischandra Sakharam Bhatvadekar so much that he purchased a motion-picture camera, which was imported from London. He also bought a projector and set up an open-air cinema centre where he used to show his own films, which included films based on wrestling and trainings of circus monkeys and the return of famous personalities like Mancherjee Bhownaggree and Raghunath Paranjpye, as well as foreign films. Bhatvadekar filmed real incidents and by doing so also pioneered documentary cinema making in the country. However, he did not continue filming for long and separated himself from film making in 1907.

While Bhatvadekar was trying his hands in film making, in the city of Calcutta, another effort in film making was being made by Hiralal Sen along with his brother Motilal Sen. Hiralal initially filmed people who came to take bath in Hoogly and the fighting of cocks. Later, he also made *Alibaba and the Forty Thieves*. His
films included a variety of subjects – most popular amongst them however remains the film made on the partition of Bengal. At the age of fifty-four, he died in 1917.

Another exhibitor, who can also be considered the greatest amongst Indian exhibitors, was Abdulally Esoofally. He introduced music in the programs he showed and hired local bands for music making. Esoofally later also built Majestic Theatre where the first Indian talkie film, *Alam Ara* (1931), was screened.

After all these sincere efforts, in 1912, the film *Shree Pundalik* was made on a story by Nanbhai Govind Chitre and Ramchandra Gopal Torney. This was the first Indian film based on a story. The story was of a Maharashtrian saint, on which a play was already performed. The film was made by recording the play in the Bombay garden and was released at the Coronation Cinematograph in Bombay. Attracting a huge number of viewers, the film proved to be an enormous success.

While all this was happening, Dadasaheb Phalke, now known as the father of Indian cinema, appeared into the Indian film scene. Inspired by the film *The Life of Christ*, Phalke made a film called *Raja Harishchandra* (1913), taking the story from *Mahabharata*. Though the film was completed in 1912, it was shown in 1913 at the Olympia Theatre. Importantly, this film contributed significantly in triggering off feature film making in India. After this film, Phalke moved to a different city, Nasik, and set up his studio there. There, he produced *Lanka Dahan* (1917). Similar to his first film, Phalke also took the story of this film from a splendid piece of literature, *Ramayana*. The film proved to be a huge success for Phalke and in initial ten days grossed “Rs 32,000, a huge sum in those days” (Bose, 2006). Phalke continued producing new films and almost all of them succeeded in attracting crowds. Unfortunately, Phalke faced a sort of disapproval from English-speaking elites who favoured Western films. Phalke always remained ignorant about this, though, since his films continuously fetched huge crowds. During the silent era, Phalke gave a number of hits, which include *Raja Harishchandra* in 1913, *Mohini Bhasmasur* in 1913, *Lanka Dahan* in 1917 and so on.

Interestingly, during the time when Phalke was making films, people had derogatory opinions about theatre and held it in low esteem. As a result, Phalke could not succeed in getting females to cast in his films. He went to sex workers and asked them about their interest of acting in films. They rejected Phalke’s proposal, too.
Eventually, a disappointed Phalke met a slender man in a restaurant. Phalke persuaded this man to play female roles in his films. Later, Phalke casted the man as both Sita and Ram in one of his films (Bose, 2006).

During the 1920s, Indian film makers were experimenting with a range of genres of films. The explorations with mythological, socially relevant and detective and suspense themes was in vogue (Gulzar et al., 2003). This was also the time when studio system entered the Indian film scene. These studios had artists, writers, directors, exhibitors, technicians, etc. on their payrolls. The emergence of studios paved the way for a hassle-free film-making, which in turn assisted these studios grow in size and importance and become significant players in Indian cinema, although not for very long. Some important studios were Imperial Films Company, Prabhat Film Company, New Theatres and Bombay Talkies. These studios were based in different cities of India, and significantly shaped the post-independence cinema since they provided training to directors and actors who later contributed immensely to Indian cinema (Ganti, 2004).

Films made during the silent era immensely contributed to Indian cinema. On the one hand, some films of the silent era concentrated on social realities; on the other hand, some films endeavoured to convey patriotic messages while the Indian independence struggle was gaining strength. The period explored a range of themes and demonstrated that realism and idealism can co-exist and even flourish together in cinema. During the silent era of Indian cinema, 1,313 movies were produced, of which most of them are lost now and the prints of only 15 films are available and even they are in bad conditions (Thoraval, 2000).

2.2 Pre-independence status

Just when silent films were flourishing in India, the country witnessed a radical shift in cinema. Sound appeared in the scene and this paved the way for talkies. In 1931, Indians experienced the first Indian talkie, named Alam Ara (Beauty of the World). The film turned out to be a huge success. Though talkie came to India four years later than its actual arrival in the United States, it considerably negated the dominance of American cinema from Indian Cinema Halls. The success of talkies allured filmmakers into making more talkies. The outcome was that in the year that talkies came to India, 28 films got released (Gulzar et al., 2003). In the next years, the
number of talkies kept increasing. This popularity of talkies amongst viewers proved disastrous for silent films. And the number of silent films released decreased year after year. Eventually, in 1934, the last silent film was produced.

Impressed by sound, Indian film makers began converting silent films into talkies with introducing music and dialogues in them. In 1935, *Devdas*, which was released as a silent film in 1928, was turned into a talkie and got released. Directed by one of the finest directors of Indian cinema, Pramathesh Chandra Barua, the film immediately grabbed the attention of people. The film set new records in terms of popularity and the remake of the film has been done a number of times since then, in several Indian regional languages.

With the advent of talkies, Hindi language started becoming more popular in Indian films. This popularity of Hindi films, however, also had the factor of the availability of a better infrastructure in Mumbai. But this popularity of Hindi films could never entirely eradicate or even seriously pose a threat to the production of films in other Indian regional languages, such as Bengali, Marathi, Tamil, Punjabi and others. Films in other languages continued coming up and thrived alongside Hindi films. The first Indian film to get international acclaim and receive an international award was not a Hindi film. *Sant Tukaram* (1936), a Marathi film made by Vishnupant Govind Damle and Sheikh Fattelal, won an award at the prestigious Venice Film Festival (Gokulsing & Dissanayake, 2004; Bose, 2006).

Soon after the arrival of sound, it was time to introduce colour in cinema. For the first time, Madan Theatres attempted to present films in colour with the film *Bilwamangal* (1932) (Gulzar et al., 2003). The attempt did not turn out to be successful. Next, Shantaram tried adopting colour through the film *Sairandhri* (1933) produced by Prabhat Films. He went to Germany to release this film in colour. However, the effort turned out to be a futile one because the final release of the film did not have proper colours due to a technical lapse. The consequence was that the film could not elicit much interest amongst the audience. Eventually, *Kisan Kanya* became the first Indian colour film production in 1937.

However, Shantaram must not be judged with the failure of a film in which he experimented with colour. He was a remarkable film maker. He brought innovations to Indian cinema – the credit of using a trolley shot in India goes to Shantaram (Bose,
2006). Besides, Shantaram, along with the likes of Damle and Fattelal, made Prabhat Films a renowned Indian studio. Successful and evocative films like *Udaykal* (1930), *Dharmatma* (1935), *Amar Jyoti* (1936), *Duniya Na Mane* (1937), *Gopal Krishna* (1938) and *Aadmi* (1939) were made by Shantaram. While *Duniya Na Mane* and *Aadmi* concentrated on the orthodoxy of the Indian society, *Udaykal* and *Dharmatma* tried evoking patriotism. No wonder, this insistence of Shantaram in *Udaykal* and *Dharmatma* on patriotism infuriated the British. As a consequence, the censors ordered several cuts in these two films (Bose, 2006).

Apart from colour, in the 1930s, Indian films also saw the adoption of playback singing. For the first time, in 1935, the technique of playback singing was introduced in a Bengali film *Bhagya Chakra* (1935) directed by Nitin Bose. With the emergence of playback singing, songs were recorded in advance. Additionally, the technique assisted the actors focus on acting and not worry about singing. Before the arrival of playback singing, the ability to sing was, to a greater extent, a prerequisite to become an actor. This development in cinema brought a new team of people, devoted entirely to singing. Slowly, playback singing developed into an accepted practice in Indian cinema, giving birth to playback singers who rendered their voice persistently and gained eminence only because of their voice.

From the very beginning, films concentrated inordinately on mythological theme. Mythology had a wider appeal amongst average Indians and filmmakers used this genre to bring people closer to cinema. However, since the early 1930s, this trend began changing. New themes started appearing and the experiment with different genres of cinema became popular. The number of historical and biographical films increased. However, these films were not truly historical and biographical in nature. These films revolved around a historically important personality, but the depiction of the subjects was almost always fictionalised, mostly to make these films popular amongst masses. An extremely successful film based on this theme was *Pukar* made in 1939 by Sohrab Modi. Other popular films on the themes produced during this period were Shantaram’s *Udaykal* (1930) and *Dharmatma* (1935) and Modi’s *Sikandar* (1941) and *Prithvi Vallabh* (1943). Sohrab Modi exuded a special proclivity towards historical drama. He later also made *Jhansi ki Rani* and *Mirza Ghalib* in 1953 and 1954, respectively.
During the 1930s, P. C. Barua converted the stories written by Saratchandra Chattopadhyay into films. The first adoption of a novel in a film was Devdas which was made in 1935. A year later, Barua made Manzil. Both these films received accolades from the audience. Apart from Barua, Modi also tried adopting William Shakespeare’s Hamlet in his film Khoon ka Khoon in 1935. Prithvi Vallabh, a 1943 film of Modi, was also an adaptation of the novel with the same name by K. M. Munshi.

In the middle of the 1930s, Mehboob Khan, considered one of the best directors in the history of Indian cinema, made his directorial debut with the film Al Hilal (1935; Judgement of Allah) (Ahmed, 2008). After his first film that came in 1935, one film of Khan appeared almost every year till 1962 when he directed his last film Son of India (1962). With the film Ek Hi Raasta (The Only Way) in 1939, Khan conceived the picture of World War II (Gulzar et al., 2003). In 1942, Khan directed Aurat (Woman) which was remade by him in 1957 with the name Mother India.

Unlike the docile and submissive portrayal of women, Mary Evans Wadia, with the screen name Fearless Nadia, personified physically strong woman taking on men fearlessly on the screen. Her films Hunterwali (1935), Miss Frontier Mail (1936) and others set the momentary trend of woman performing stunts on the screen and also launched the genre of stunt films (Chatterji, 1998). This was contrary to the image of the Anglo-Indian Ruby Meyers, popular with her stage name Sulochana, as the “first sex symbol of the Indian screen” (Bose, 2006).

After acting in Achhut Kanya (1936), which is considered one of the most celebrated social dramas produced in the pre-independence era, Ashok Kumar achieved recognition in Indian cinema (Joshi, 2015). Interestingly, the pair of Kumar and Devika Rani in the film overwhelmed people. After Achhut Kanya, Kumar and Rani went on to work in several other successful movies, such as Janmabhoomi (1936), Izzat (1937), Savitri (1937), Nirmala (1938), Vachan (1938) and Anjaan (1941). With her impressive performances, Rani “overshadowed” Ashok Kumar in these films and emerged as a bigger star than him (Joshi, 2015). Additionally, the pairing of Kumar and Rani set the precedent of an “established on-screen couple” in Indian cinema. Both Ashok Kumar and Devika Rani succeeded in making a mark in Indian cinema. While Rani was designated the “First Lady of Indian Cinema,” Kumar
was labelled the “ever green hero” of Indian cinema (Rishi, 2012). Importantly, Rani was the first woman coming from an erudite family to work in Bollywood which broke the stereotype that only females having courtesan background act in films.

The starting of 1940s for the Indian film industry was not a regular one. The combination of second world war and the amplification of the freedom struggle severely affected Indian filmmaking (Gulzar et al., 2003; Ganti, 2004). The British tightening the censorship rules further worsened things for Indian filmmakers (Ganti, 2004). References of political leaders active in the freedom struggle were censored, which prevented filmmakers from contributing in the freedom struggle, and actually made way for films excessively filled with dance and music. However, these factors did take a toll on the number of films Indian filmmakers were producing each year. In 1945, only 73 films could be produced, as compared to the figure of 154 in 1935 (Gulzar et al., 2003).

The period after World War II was the period in which the intrusion of war profiteers and money launderers happened first in Indian cinema. This abundance of money invested in cinema precipitated the dismantling of studio system and made way for independent filmmakers. Some actors and directors who later achieved greater popularity and served Indian cinema for a long time to come debuted in this period. Dilip Kumar, the Tragedy King, debuted with the film Jwar Bhata in 1944. With Hamrahi (1945), Bimal Roy made his directorial debut. Dev Anand started his career as an actor with Hum Ek Hain in 1946, a year before India emerged as an independent nation. Incidentally, Hum Ek Hain (1946) was also the film with which Guru Dutt embarked upon a tremendous acting career.

The seeds of parallel cinema were also sown before independence. The duo of Chetan Anand, the director of the film, and Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, the writer of the film who would later pen down a string of neo-realistic scripts, made an extraordinary attempt with Neecha Nagar (Lowly City) in 1946. In the very first film as a director, Anand demonstrated the courage to take up a socially relevant issue. The experiment with social realism won him the esteemed Grand Prix du Festival International du Film (highest prize) award at the 1946 Cannes Film Festival. Moreover, the remarkable musician Pandit (Master) Ravi Shankar debuted with Neecha Nagar (1946) as the music director.
2.3 Post-independence evolutions

With India getting independence, Bombay emerged as the hub of cinema making in India. Talented people from different corners of India began making Bombay their home. In the migration precipitated by the great partition, the likes of Om Prakash, B.R. Chopra, Wali Mohammad Wali and Kamini Kaushal moved to Bombay (Bose, 2006). To the advantage of Hindi cinema, this inundated the Hindi Film Industry with fresh, sophisticated talents. The outcome was the commencement of a whole new period in Hindi cinema, in which Hindi cinema expanded itself to become an all-India phenomenon, and which would later be acknowledged as the “golden age” of Hindi cinema, the decades of 1950s and 1960s.

Surprisingly, soon after India becoming an independent country, when films were produced, they were subjected to a heavy-handed censorship. Revolving around the partition of Bengal, Hemen Gupta’s *Bhuli Nai* made in 1948 was not permitted for release (Bose, 2006). The logic given was that the film contained too much violence and consequently was not fit for common viewing. Another endeavour of Gupta at showing the events happening during the British rule was precluded when in 1949 *Forty Two* was banned, which was based on a real incident of violence during the Quit India Movement in Midnapore of West Bengal, because the censors adjudged it not suitable for public viewing (Bose, 2006). The censors also objected to kissing. This compelled the directors to display intimate scenes by mere suggestions and through erotic songs (Bose, 2006).

The freedom struggle could have become a worthy subject for filmmakers immediately after independence and a bloody partition, the memory of which was fresh in the minds of people. However, an honest attempt to portray the trauma and violence of partition on the screen took several years. In 1974, Nemia Ghosh made *Garm Hava* that endeavoured to capture the savageries of partition.

Post-independence, the studio system was soon gone. This was replaced by “star system” in Hindi cinema. Part of the reason of the emergence of star system was also the accumulation of talents in Bombay. To a greater extent, however, the star system was beneficial for Hindi cinema. Talents like Dilip Kumar, Guru Dutt, Raj Kapoor, Mehboob Khan and so on produced some of the best films ever made in the history of Hindi cinema. Dilip Kumar worked in films like *Devdas* (1955) and
Mughal-e-Azam (1960). Guru Dutt both directed and acted in Pyaasa (1957) and Kaagaz Ke Phool (1959). Later, Pyaasa was included in the 100 best films of all time, a list prepared by Time magazine (Corliss, 2005). And the greatest ever showman of Indian cinema, Raj Kapoor, made films like Awaara (1951) and Boot Polish (1954). Such imposing and noteworthy was Kapoor’s performance in Awaara that it was recognised as one of the top ten greatest performances of all time by Time magazine (Corliss, 2005).

A career that spanned across more than four decades, Raj Kapoor contributed immensely to Bollywood. He was a complete package – the first and the last showman of Bollywood (Bose, 2006). Kapoor’s films did not complicate things. He believed more in presentation, and concentrated heavily on music. His films composed of songs that left everlasting imprint – they are still heard and cherished. Some of the best musicians and singers in the industry worked on the songs of his films. These included the music composer duo of Shankar and Jaikishan, iconic Bollywood singers Lata Mangeshkar and Mukesh and the lyricist Shailendra.

Raj Kapoor’s pairing with Nargis was a hit one and, together, they worked in as much as 16 films, of which most of them succeeded in leaving a reasonably decent impression on viewers. In all these films, as an actor, the contribution of Nargis was as much as Kapoor. She was around before Kapoor made his debut, and was a “star actress” before she commenced working with Kapoor. Interestingly, Nargis was paid twice more than Raj Kapoor (Bose, 2006).

With Baazi, the outstanding Guru Dutt debuted in 1951 as a director. He was amongst one of the many actors and directors who spent their early days in Bollywood at Prabhat Film Company and later earned a name for themselves. In the beginning, Dutt directed films considering the business point of view. This ensured financial security for him. Eventually, in 1957, Pyaasa was made, revolving around the love story of a novice poet and a sex worker. The film earned both commercial success and critical acclaim. Two years later, Dutt directed another masterpiece – Kaagaz Ke Phool, based on his own life, in 1959. Ironically, the film that is now treated as an all-time-great Bollywood classic and described as the magnum opus of Dutt was a disaster at the time of its release. So unsuccessful was the film that it compelled Dutt leave film direction.
While this period in Hindi cinema was focussing on commercial cinema, social issues were also being taken into consideration. Furthermore, realistic and socialistic cinemas in India were also making waves. Fostering this type of filmmaking was Bimal Roy. He made the spectacular Do Bigha Zameen in 1951 in which the noted actor Balraj Sahni made an everlasting impact. Do Bigha Zameen showed the struggle of a poor farmer with a cunning landlord and the unmindfulness of the system. Not only Do Bigha Zameen brought accolade to Roy, it also became a trendsetter in Hindi cinema.

Moreover, women actors who worked during this golden period of Hindi cinema, and continued working even after the end of it, are considered legends and the greatest ever to have worked in Bollywood (Gulzar et al., 2003). Prominent were Nargis, Meena Kumari, Madhubala, Nirupa Roy and Helen. The acting range of these actresses normally varied from each other. A distinctive style oozed out from each of them. Particularly, the trio of Madhubala, Nargis and Meena Kumari performed in a wide range of roles. Nargis possessed a flair for acting. Meena Kumari was the tragedy queen (Gulzar et al., 2003). Madhubala, David Cort (1952) wrote, was the biggest star of that time in the world, having the “greatest following, in numbers and devotion”. Nirupa Roy was projected in roles that symbolised the traditional, suffering Indian women. On the contrary, however, Helen used her sex appeal and danced in a number of popular item numbers. These were also the heroines who made their charismatic presence felt in the films they worked. Besides, Nutan, Waheeda Rehman and Vyjayanthimala also acted in several successful films.

Interestingly, this was also an era in Hindi cinema that witnessed the playback singers achieving greater popularity. This popularity was giving them the status of stars in Hindi cinema. Amongst the male singers, most famous were Manna Dey, Kishore Kumar, Mukesh and Mohammed Rafi. In the women’s category, the two sisters, Lata Mangeshkar and Asha Bhosle, sang innumerable numbers and inspired aspiring singers. These women singers transgressed the boundaries of languages and sang in several Indian regional languages as well.

The fifties were an intriguing decade. During this time, Hindi films endeavoured to present its women in new roles, challenging the prevalent notions about them. In Hum Log (1951), a woman (played by Nutan as Paro) is shown as a
fighter, not losing confidence amidst despair. Kamal Amrohi presents in *Daera* (1953) the imposition of traditional marriage on women. The same theme is explored in the film *Jogan* (1950). Here, *Surabhi* (as Nargis) moves out of an undesirous marriage to live as a single woman, though in a socially accepted role of a *sadhvi*.

Close to the end of 1950s, Mehboob Khan made his magnum opus *Mother India* (1957). An epic drama, the movie is remembered for its robust portrayal of the woman in the role of a mother, played by Nargis, in Hindi cinema. Directed by K. Asif, *Mughal-e-Azam* came out in 1960, which was another Hindi epic drama, though a historical one. The film broke all the previous records at the box office. Besides becoming the highest-grossing Hindi movie, *Mughal-e-Azam* also received extolment from critics, and is counted amongst the greatest Bollywood classics. The film was converted in 2004 to colour to return at the box office and proved to be a commercial success.

The 1960s turned out to be the last decade for the black-and-white films. Colour films replaced black-and-white cinema in the country. Also, a complete transition in the themes of the films was initiated. The abandonment of the social realist themes of the 1950s in which the concentration was on the plight of the disadvantaged commenced. Strangely, the focus shifted on the upper-class. For the first time in the history of Hindi cinema, sumptuousness was routinely depicted, through the insertion of stylish buildings, lavish cars, embellishments, alcohol and so on. Musical romantic or the entertainers seized the centre stage and serious social films were pushed towards the backseat.

To a greater extent, the period of 1960s was dominated by Shammi Kapoor, Rajendra Kumar and Rajesh Khanna. The wild Shammi Kapoor was an established actor when Rajesh Khanna made his debut. With his very first film, *Aakhiri Khat* in 1966, under the direction of Chetan Anand, Rajesh Khanna ascended to prominence and never looked back. Romantic musicals set in exotic locations, with a comedian having a playful love affair, was the formula for success in Hindi cinema in the 60s. The plots of a rich boy/poor girl and vice versa love stories were repeated. Love triangle (*Hariyali Aur Rasta*, 1962; *Sangam*, 1964; *Patthar Ke Sanam*, 1967; etc.) and lost-and-found stories (*Waqt*, 1965; *Pyar Ka Sapna* 1969; etc.) were also very much
in vogue. Overall, love affairs were at the heart of films in this decade, with Shammi Kapoor and Rajesh Khanna changing their female partners in it.

The dominance of romantic musicals during the 1960s opened the gate for the explicit portrayals of the female body. Films like Kashmir Ki Kali (1964), Sangam (1964), Ek Phool Do Mali (1969) and others had explicit overtures made towards the female protagonist. Along with the upsurge in rape scenes, this era also witnessed the increasing popularity of skimpy-dressed coquettes dancing in clubs. All they indicated was the penetration of voyeurism in Hindi cinema.

Away from the romantic entertainers, it was during this time that the first ever Indian war film was made. India fought a war with China and faced humiliation and drubbing in 1962. Two years after the war was over, in the glorification of soldiers, Chetan Anand directed Haqeeqat (1964), with a tinge of patriotism. The movie offered the country the everlasting patriotic song, “Kar Chale, Hum Fidaa, Jaan-O-Tan Saathiyaoon”, written by the iconic lyricist Kaifi Azmi and sung by the remarkable Mohammad Rafi. With Manoj Kumar-starrer Shaheed (1965), on the life of the martyr Bhagat Singh, patriotism-entwined cinema attained further consolidation. Later, Kumar worked in films that had nationalism oozing out from them, like Upkar (1967) and Purab Aur Paschim (1970).

The 1960s witnessed the culmination of the excellent Bimal Roy. As his last directorial endeavour, Bandini (1963) fetched him both critical acclaim and box office success. Assisted by the career-best performance of Nutan, one of the exceptional actors of Hindi cinema, the film powerfully portrayed the point of view of a woman prisoner convicted for murder during the pre-independence India. The film also marked the debut of Gulzar as a lyricist.

Amitabh Bachchan, who later emerged as the biggest star of Bollywood and was named the Super-Star of the Millennium (Bolton & Wright, 2016), also made his entry in cinema in the late 1960s, with Saat Hindustani (1969), directed by Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, in the role of a “nationalist” trying to liberate Goa from the Portuguese, with six more partners.

**2.4 The Good, Bad and the Ugly (1970--1999)**

The trends prevalent in sixties, romantic musicals and lost and found stories, intensified in the decade of 1970s. Manmohan Desai continued with his enthralment
of lost-found stories and Raj Kapoor persisted with love stories. With new entertainers, Rajesh Khanna kept rising in stardom. Soon, however, he had a contender in the industry. With his performances in Anand (1971), Namak Haram (1973) and Zanjeer (1973), Amitabh Bachchan received a great deal of attention. His “angry young man” characters taking on the “malevolent” system attained further boost with Deewar (1975) and Trishul (1978). A series of successful films like the cult film Sholay (1975), Amar Akbar Anthony (1977) and Muqaddar Ka Sikandar (1978) assisted him dethrone Rajesh Khanna and emerge as the biggest star of Bollywood.

Films of seventies endeavoured to capture the angst amongst the youth of the country. In his directorial debut, Gulzar attempted giving a shot at this youth unrest with Mere Apne (1971), with a shade of humanism. He persisted with the same approach to make Koshish (1972), Parichay (1972), Khushboo (1975) and Aandhi (1975), achieving him both critical approval and commercial reward. Interestingly, written by Gulzar and sung by Mukesh, the song Haal Chaal Theek Thak Hai of the movie Mere Apne kicked off in Hindi cinema the trend of critiquing the government while highlighting the problems of the people through sardonic songs. Through bitter lyrics “Salam Kijiye, Aali Janab Aaye Hain” in Aandhi (1975), Gulzar once again derided the leaders. Further, “Pani Re Pani Tera Rang Kaisa … Bhookhe Ki Bhookh Aur Pyaas Jaisa” and “Mehangai Maar Gayi” of Shor and Roti Kapda aur Makan, respectively, attempted to put the spotlight on the problems of common individuals through songs (Somaaya, Kothari, and Madangarli, 2012).

Like Gulzar, another director who mastered the art of depicting the disregard of human relations and making the trifling into heroic was Hrishikesh Mukherjee (Gulzar et al., 2003). He demonstrated this in films like Anand (1971), Guddi (1971), Abhimaan (1973) and so on with commendable finesse. However, amongst the immensely noticeable and successful movie of the decade was Pakeezah (1972). With brilliant dialogues and lavish sets, Kamal Amrohi, the director of the film, narrates the despairing tale of a courtesan, played by Meena Kumari. Ghulam Mohammed and Naushad composed the exquisite music for the movie that played an enormous part in the film achieving spectacular success and attaining cult status for itself.
Importantly, during the 1970s and 1980s, away from making films for general entertainment and earning money, a new pool of directors also emerged to take the movement of art cinema or alternative cinema in India forward. Spearheading this movement were the likes of Shyam Benegal, Mrinal Sen, M. S. Sathyu, Basu Chaterjee, Avtar Kaul and Saeed Akhtar Mirza. With *Ankur* (1974), Benegal launched an attack on the Indian feudal system. This highly successful film launched the filmy career of Shabana Azmi. Benegal persisted with making realistic cinema and made *Nishant* (1975), *Manthan* (1976) and *Bhumika* (1977). These films won awards and rank amongst the best-ever Indian films (Gulzar et al., 2003). *Garm Hawa* (1974) of Sathyu was set in the immediate days of partition, describing the dilemma of a Muslim family, whether to stay in India or migrate to Pakistan. Inspired by social realities, Mirza produced gems like *Arvind Desai Ki Ajeeb Daastan* (1978) *Albert Pinto Ko Gussa Kyoon Aata Hai* (1980), *Mohan Joshi Hazir Ho!* (1984) and *Salim Langde Pe Mat Ro* (1989).

Particularly in 1980s, when mediocrity creeped in big time in Hindi cinema, parallel cinema and the middle-of-the-road cinema offered some hope. Perhaps, the eighties were the best period for the parallel cinema. While commercial cinema had become all about love, songs and sex, and consequently lost the plot, parallel cinema flourished and reflected saneness. *Kalyug* (1981), *Mandi* (1983) and *Trikaal* (1985) of Shyam Benegal received admiration. More splendid films included the following, although were not limited to these: Gulzar’s *Namkeen* (1982), Govind Nihlani’s *Ardh Satya* (1983), Girish Karnad’s *Utsav* (1984), Mukesh Bhatt’s *Saaransh* (1984), Basu Chaterjee’s *Ek Ruka Hua Faisla* (1986), Mira Nair’s *Salam Bombay!* (1988) and Tapan Sinha’s *Ek Doctor Ki Maut* (1990). Interestingly, parallel cinema brought opportunities for a number of hugely talented persons in Indian cinema, several of whom enjoyed a successful career in commercial cinema as well. Careers of Shabana Azmi, Naseeruddin Shah, Farooq Sheikh, Smita Patil and Om Puri are some prominent examples of this.

Leaving exceptions, throughout the eighties, commercial Hindi cinema was in the crisis of content. Same plots and stories were repeated. Senseless fighting and violence were injected in films apart from deliberately imposed songs and dance. Instead of focussing on stories, the attention was on spectacle and emotion. In addition, the domination of males ensured that there was little space for female actors.
Family dramas were popular and they reduced women characters to regressive roles. Overall, the principal intention behind making films revolved around pulling in more and more money. For this, films were tailored and presented as absolute entertainers.

In the late eighties, the audience started expressing their disapproval for commercial Hindi cinema (Joshi, 2002). The bombardment of formula films starring actors like Amitabh Bachchan, Jackie Shroff, Anil Kapoor, Mithun Chakraborty and others stopped getting anticipated responses. Also, the career of Amitabh, who had established himself as the superstar of Hindi cinema, started witnessing a dip. In Amir Khan and Salman Khan, late eighties saw the emergence of new stars of Hindi cinema. With *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* (1988) and *Raakh* (1989), Amir was on the cusp of becoming a star. Similarly, with the highly successful teenage love story *Maine Pyar Kiya* (1989), Salman Khan also made his presence felt.

Hindi cinema did not consider it appropriate to sequester itself from offering unnecessary violence and fighting sequences in the nineties, too. Retributive justice was promoted during this decade. After going through victimisation, an aggrieved hero resorting to violence and taking revenge with astounding fighting skills was the new norm. Films like *Tejaa* (1990), *Ghayal* (1990), *Narasimha* (1991), *Adharm* (1992), *Vishwatma* (1992), *Antim Nyay* (1993), *Gardish* (1993), *Karan Arjun* (1995) and numerous others attempted to attract the audience by showing the heroes beating the villains. Majority of these films, however, failed in this effort, but several succeeded as well, such as *Agneepath* (1990), *Mohra* (1994) and *Karan Arjun* (1995).

Come the mid-nineties and Hindi cinema had discovered a new genre to concentrate upon. With the brilliant success of Sooraj Barjatya’s *Hum Aapke Hain Koun..!* (1994), which remained the highest grosser of the Hindi cinema history till 2000, the middle class “family ensemble” blended with romance and songs surfaced as the theme that offered something to every sort of audience (Somaaya et al., 2012). The outcome was a series of films revolving around this theme, like *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (1995), *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam* (1997) and *Hum Saath Saath Hain* (1999).

One big change in the nineties was the emergence of three actors as stars together. Amitabh Bachchan kept struggling throughout the decade. There was a vacuum left to be filled. Three Khans, Amir, Shahrukh and Salman, were in
competition for replacing Amitabh as the biggest star of Bollywood. They acted in a number of successful movies. These performances assisted them in becoming the star, but Amitabh seemed to be irreplaceable. This he proved in 2000s when he returned into the limelight once again.

For the females, 1990s was the decade of a new generation of talented actresses ascending to great eminence. The likes of Madhuri Dixit, Juhi Chawala and Kajol carved out valued positions for themselves with their abilities in a cinema industry largely dominated by males. Madhuri Dixit was “on the top of the pyramid,” someone who could “pull in crowds” on her own (Somaaya et al., 2012). Chawala was a 1984 Miss India. She was in a close competition with Madhuri Dixit and appeared in successful films like Raju Ban Gaya Gentleman (1992), Yes Boss (1997), Ishq (1997) and several others. Kajol did hugely popular films like Karan Arjun, Aditya Chopra’s Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge and Kuch Kuch Hota Hai. Additionally, her portrayal of the serial killer in Gupt (1997) was commended by critics.

By and large, Hindi movies of nineties were dominated by action films, family sagas and tacky comedies. Unfortunately, these films cut down their women characters to housewives, entertainers, and objects. In action films, specifically, rapes were often the plot drivers. Family sagas portrayed their heroines as intelligent and educated, albeit in stereotypical roles of devoted lovers and housewives and the sweet sister. Worst, comedies had women characters at the centre of joke-making. Especially, combinations of David Dhawan--Govinda and David Dhawan--Anil Kapoor outdid others with their picturisation of comedy and bawdiness in songs. Films carried stereotypical titles, like Pati Parmeshwar (1990), Gharwali Baharwali (1998) and Biwi No. 1 (1999). Far ahead everything, with vulgar lyrics and lewd gestures, songs like Choli Ke Peeche Kya Hai and Tu Cheez Badi Hai Mast Mast had vulgarity transuding and women presented as objects.

Away from the preponderant mediocrity, vulgarity and stereotyping in the commercial cinema of Bollywood, the offbeat cinema produced Rudaali (1993), Naseem (1995), Fire (1996), Daayra (1997), Satya (1998), Earth (1998) and several others during this period. Amongst these films, Deepa Mehta’s Fire created a great deal of controversy because the film depicted a subject that was considered
“distasteful” in India. With Shabana Azmi and Nandita Das in the characters of lesbians, this was the first Bollywood film that dealt with a homosexual relationship.

2.5 Bollywood in the new millennium

In the new century, Hindi cinema broke new grounds. First, the industry made space for “outsiders”, who did not belong to the families of Bollywood stars. A welcome change, this enriched the content of Hindi films. Probably, therefore, Bollywood suddenly concentrated on issue-based cinema. Of course, there were love stories and action films, but the 2000s, according to Somaaya et al. (2012), “witnessed maximum number of political, issue-based films, dealing with contemporary issues of terror, communalism, corruption and AIDS.” In effecting this change, “outsider” writers and directors like Anurag Kashyap, Vishal Bhardwaj, Tigmanshu Dhulia, Dibakar Banerjee and Onir played significant roles.

The new century, however, started with the stunning sports-drama *Lagaan* (2001), directed by Ashutosh Gowariker and starring Amir Khan and Gracy Singh. A huge success, both commercially and critically, the film was set in the pre-independence India, revolving around the story of some Indian villagers taking up the challenge of playing a cricket match with the British officers to evade taxes. The film obtained a nomination for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. The same year, Anil Sharma directed, *Gadar: Ek Prem Katha* (2001) was also released. Starring Sunny Deol, Amrish Puri and Amisha Patel, the film narrates the love story between a Sikh man and Muslim woman in the turbulent times of Indian partition. To the astonishment of film critics, the film became one of the biggest blockbusters of Bollywood.

Bhulaiyaa (2007), Houseful series and Golmaal series attempted pretty hard, easily perceptible to the audience, to create comic scenes on the screen.

On the contrary, light-hearted comedy dramas, like Munna Bhai M.B.B.S (2003) and Lage Raho Munna Bhai (2006), Khosla ka Ghosla (2006), Welcome to Sajjanpur (2008), 3 Idiots (2009), Tanu Weds Manu film series and Queen (2014), not only dominated the box office in terms of business, but also delivered iconic onscreen characters – Sanjay Dutt as Munna Bhai, Amir Khan as Rancho, and Kangana Ranaut as Rani Mehra, who flies alone on her honeymoon after being dumped by her boyfriend just before one day of the scheduled marriage.

However, amongst the crucial developments in the new millennium was touching the subjects hitherto considered taboo, for example, same-sex relationship, AIDS and surrogacy. Bollywood tried to render space to homosexual relationship in movies like Kal Ho Na Ho (2003), Dostana (2008), Fashion (2008) and others. With Phir Milenge (2004) and My Brother Nikhil (2005), a narrative around AIDS was built on the celluloid. Broaching surrogacy into mainstream cinema was films like Chori Chori Chupke Chupke (2001), Filhaal (2002), and I Am Afia (2010). Another taboo subject explored was an intimate relationship between an old man and a young woman. Interestingly, these films casted Amitabh Bachchan as the old man in both Cheeni Kum (2007) and Nishabd (2007).

A welcome change in the twenty-first century was also women directors defying the predominant norms in Bollywood and demonstrating their deftness in film-making. Women directors like Zoya Akhtar, Gauri Shinde, Nandita Das, Pooja Bhatt, Meghna Gulzar, Tanuja Chandra, Mira Nair, Deepa Mehta brought new angles to film-making and handled complex subjects artfully.

Another new occurrence was the popularity method actors attained. Actors like Irfan Khan, Naseeruddin Shah, Manoj Bajpayee, Nawazuddin Siddiqui, Kay Kay Menon and several other created a niche for themselves and carried the film on their performances. Unlike older times, these actors were offered more films and significant roles as well. In their success, key role was played by enormously talented directors and actors who believed in transformation and experimentation, such as Tigmanshu Dhulia, Anurag Kashyap, Sudhir Mishra. Together, they attempted to
bring value to cinema that was largely confined to the objective of “entertainment” only.

Still, trumping the preponderance of masala films seemed impossible. With the restless population growing and gaining access to multiplexes, which has increased the viewership, the easy success mantra of cashing in money in Bollywood still revolves around masala films and tacky comedies, such as *Dhoom-3* (2013), *Chennai Express* (2013), *Kick* (2014), *Dilwale* (2015), *Sultan* (2016) and so on. Casting the Khans of Bollywood ensures success for a movie, even with a feeble script and story line. Also, objectifying women through “item numbers”, entirely different form the demands of a script, became a fashion, on the pretext of spicing things up which attracts more audience.

Nevertheless, glimmer of hope still exists, particularly with conceptions of good cinema continuously changing and nonconformist directors making their mark in the industry.