CHAPTER 2
HINDI CINEMA:
COMMERCIAL AND PARALLEL CINEMA

Films are a source of entertainment for all the age groups in our country. Cinema is appreciated by generations now and the pleasure of watching films on the ‘big screen’ cannot be compared by the (comparatively) small TV sets. Films are often referred to by the other media as they are shown on TV, satellite, and video. The various developments in computer technology and multimedia also affects movies directly or indirectly.

Films are the central part of the Indian culture and Indian film industry is one of the most prolific film industries in the world. Though the form and structure of the Indian films are totally different from that of the other film industries of the world, especially that of Hollywood cinema, the plots and storyline may intersect with each other. Even in Indian cinema, Hindi films are the most popular films that are recognised all over the world. The song and dance sequences and the extravagant visuals are not only expected but also appreciated by the audiences.

Hindi film industry commonly known as Bollywood – a tongue-in-cheek term coined by the English language press in India by combining ‘Hollywood’ and ‘Bombay’ – has many genres under it. The main genre being commercial, parallel, crossover, and off-beat films, Bollywood also has many sub genres in them. This study will concentrate only on the two main genres, i.e., commercial and parallel Hindi cinema. It will focus on the films produced during 1970s to 2010s.

Although the term Bollywood has become popular due to the press and media still there are people within and outside the film industry who are justifiably upset with the term. The term dates back to the 1970s but it gained popularity during the 1990s. It even officially entered the English lexicon when in 2001 the Oxford English Dictionary included the term. Undoubtedly Bollywood is a controversial term and several film scholars expressed their displeasure by the use of this term by media and a few scholars as well.
Many people within the film industry feel that the term is cheaply derived from ‘Hollywood’. By using this term people will compare the two film industries which is why many people dislike the term. However, if Hollywood is an icon who is looked upon by filmmakers around the world then by comparing the Hindi film industry should signify that it is capable of being on the same level. Perhaps this is why ‘-ollywood’ is a productive morpheme referring to other film industries as well, for instance Tollywood, Tamil film industry, and Nollywood, Nigerian film industry.

Indian film industry is considered to be the largest film industry in the world. However, the contribution of the Hindi film industry is much smaller in it, which is approximately 20 percent of that total.

If we look at the trajectory Hindi cinema has taken, we can clearly see how every era had a distinct impact of characters and stories. The films in the post-independence era of Nehruvian socialism had young unemployed Indians struggle for livelihood but cling to the idealism and hope characteristic of a nascent nation. Raj Kapoor’s Awara, Shri 420, captured the sentiment and struggle but were unequivocal in their advocacy of ideals and righteousness. This idealism paved the way for a rebellious streak of the 70s, which gave birth to the iconic angry young man. In uncountable films, Amitabh Bachchan played to perfection, the rebellious young India who was fed up with idealism, frustrated with the system and hungry for success, by whatever means it came. The 90s had films unabashedly displaying the impact of liberalisation that spawned a new generation of well-to-do, brand conscious, westernised urban middle class.

Indian history of colonialism plays a major role in constructing the role of a vamp (female villain) as an Anglo-Indian or a western woman. During the 1960s and early 1970s this was the act of defiance and an assertion of the Indian cultural superiority by the filmmakers. It showed how western women were immoral in contrast to the traditional Indian women. Hence, the projection of the Anglo-Indian women were always morally and spiritually inferior to the Indian women. The Indian woman was always the repository of chastity and the Indian man was the repository of masculinity and high Indian values who could easily tame the feminine West.

Manoj Kumar’s movie Purab aur Paschim (1970) is based on this concept of contrast between the East and West. The movie put a contrast between Preeti, an
Anglo-Indian girl brought up in UK, and Gopi, a traditional Indian girl. Both are competing for the love of Bharat (literally meaning India), an Indian man who is a son of an Indian freedom fighter and had a heart full of Indian morals and ethics.

Bharat met Preeti when he went to London and saw that though Preeti’s father is an Indian she was ignorant of anything about India. Bharat told her many things about the ‘real India’ in a melodramatic song. Subsequently Preeti fell in love with Bharat and asked to marry her but Bharat put one condition that he would go back to India with Preeti. Reluctantly Preeti agreed and went to India as an ideal wife. She gave up her ‘evil westernised’ habits of drinking and smoking and shed her mini-skirts for a sari.

Superficially we can only observe the film as taming of the Anglo-Indian woman by a traditional Indian man. Preeti was seen ready to be turned into a traditional Indian woman only to win the heart of her love. She even described her love for the country as:

*I had heard that India is a land of snake charmers. There are snakes here, but people worship them. I had heard that India was full of poverty, but there are some problems in all cultures. The best thing here is the love that people have for each other, the love between parents and children. I have never stayed with my parents as a daughter should…¹*

These were some highly sentimental dialogues of the movie showing an emotional picture of India. It asserted Bharat’s vision of India as spiritual and backward only in the things that do not really matter. Whereas, Preeti’s change of heart showed the superiority of Indian culture and tradition.

Later on the family dramas of the 80s showed the values and modesty of the middle-class Indians in contrast to the vulgarity and lack of values of the rich and upper class Indians. The female protagonists often embodied femininity and an ideal nurturing woman. Films like Sooraj R.Barjatya’s *Maine Pyar Kiya* (1989) showed how a middle class girl, Suman, easily adjusted to the upper class Prem’s household and how she even impressed Prem’s mother with her charm and her Indian values so much so that Prem’s mother agreed to accept Suman as her daughter-in-law. Here in

¹ Geetanjali Gangoli, p. 152, Bollyworld
contrast to Suman was Seema, a woman belonging to the upper class, rich parents. Her westernised attire and looks were in contrast to the traditional Indian looking Suman.

Here again Seema was seen as the Westernised vamp who wanted to take control of the male protagonist but Prem was in love with Suman who was morally upright and chaste. In one of the scenes Prem was talking about the girl who wears jeans and have bob cut hair:

“Aisi ladki ghar ka kam kaj thodi karegi, arey matar thodi cheelegi. Bado ki izzat, hum umro se apnapan, aur chhoto se pyaar, ye sab thodi karegi.”

(Such a girl will not do household chores or peel peas. She will neither respect elders, nor care for other people, nor love young kids.)

It showed how traditional women in India are seen. They are seen as humble, home makers, who does all the household chores, cooks food, and take care of everyone in the house.

Hence, in this movie the winner was Suman who was not only innocently charming with her Indian beauty but was also full of Indian values and morals who quietly obeyed her father in all of his decisions.

Then in 1998, there was Karan Johar’s *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* (1998) where Tina was seen an Indian girl who studied at Oxford as a Westernised girl in contrast to Anjali who was a tomboy, also kind of a Westernised version of an Indian girl.

But as soon as Tina fell in love with Rahul, an Indian boy, she disposes off her western attire for the Indian *salwar-kameez* to look a girl with Indian values and morals. She proves to the audience time and again that she is a typical Indian woman who sacrifices her life to give a child to her husband and who even after her death proves to be an ideal wife by asking her daughters through her letters to get Rahul married off to his ex-best friend.

Anjali, on the other hand, is also seen to put on Indian attire to look beautiful in an Indian way. Post interval of the movie has seen Anjali only in sarees and *salwar-kameez* as if western outlook does not make her beautiful. Just because she was a
tomboy Rahul never notices her but once she becomes feminine by wearing Indian dresses, Rahul not only notices her but also falls in love with her.

Though Rahul often says in the movie that we live once, we die once, and we love once. But in his case, he loves twice and get married twice as well. Perhaps, the femininity of Anjali was too strong for him to not love her. It can easily be seen that love transforms and Indianises both Tina and Anjali for good. But all in all the movie shows the supremacy of the Indian morals and ethics over the western culture.

However, this film was criticised by many feminists saying that Anjali need not be a feminine to make someone fall for her. Her identity was her tomboyish look. Only to make someone love her she took a u-turn in life and transformed her completely and becomes someone that is completely different from her identity.

This challenges the way an ordinary Indian girl thinks. It shows how a normal girl has a low opinion about her if she does not seem to be feminine enough to the males. And in order to find love she has to change her identity. This does not show females in a good light at all.

It is a well-known fact that India is the most prolific film industry of the world. It produces more than 900 films in a year and these films are viewed all over the world especially in South Asia, Africa, South America, Eastern Europe, and Russia. The content and narrative of the Indian movies are different from that of the Hollywood movies. A combination of musical and melodramatic themes are common in the Indian films. It actually offers the audience an alternative to the Hollywood movies.

India has 22 official languages included in the eighth schedule in the Indian constitution according to the Census of Indian (2001). Apart from these there are almost 100 more languages in India which are not included in the eighth schedule of the constitution. Out of all these languages, films are made in around 20 of them. Ganti (2004) says, “Feature films are produced in approximately 20 languages in India” (p. 3). Therefore, we can say that Indian cinema consists of all the movies made in these 20 languages which includes several regional languages. When we look at the percentage of films that are generated, “the four South Indian film industries (Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada), that account for almost 60% of the films made since 1971 together represent the largest section of the Indian film
industry\textsuperscript{2}, followed by the Hindi cinema which produces “about 150 to 200 films of a total of 800-1000 films a year, 20% of the total number of films made in India\textsuperscript{3}.

The narrative structure of a Hindi film is different from Hollywood movies where the narrative structure do not follow the classic codes of Hollywood. Rather a loose structure is made with a lot of sub-plots in the movie with a lot of song and dance sequences. All of these are strung together with the main storyline. Hindi movies are longer in duration than the Hollywood movies and are mainly produced for mere entertainment. The audiences tries to forget their problems and delve into the fantasy world of movies where they could escape from their anxieties.

The most common theme in Hindi movies is that of romance. There are several adaptations of Shakespearean ‘Romeo and Juliet’ and various movies revolve around this same theme. Some of such Hindi films are Raj Kapoor’s \textit{Bobby} (1973), K. Balachander’s \textit{Ek Duuje Ke Liye} (1981), Mansoor Khan’s \textit{Qayamat se Qayamat tak} (1988), and the latest, Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s \textit{Goliyon ki Rasleela Ram Leela} (2013).

During the late 60s and 70s, the relationship themes were more of a lost-and-found saga where two brothers (or sometimes more) gets separated due to some natural disaster or accident and then met each other at the end of the movie. Many times the brothers grow up to be the opposite of one another and then recognise each other with the help of a family pendant, a birthmark, a sepia-coloured photograph, or a family song they sung in their childhood years. Some of these films are Yash Chopra’s \textit{Waqt} (1965), Nasir Hussain’s \textit{Yaadon Ki Baraat} (1973), Manmohan Desai’s \textit{Amar Akbar Anthony} (1977) and \textit{Suhaag} (1979).

Another theme that is common in Hindi films is that of family relationships. Mainly it is focussed on the relationship of a joint family where brother(s) or a mother-in-law or a daughter-in-law is the cause of problems in the family and the protagonist makes them realise the error of their ways. Some of such films are Vijay Sadanah’s \textit{Sau Din Saas Ke} (1980), J. K. Bihari’s \textit{Biwi Ho To Aisi} (1988), David Dhawan’s \textit{Swarog} (1990), and Kalpataru’s \textit{Ghar Ho To Aisa} (1990).

\textsuperscript{2} Kindem, 2000, p. 37  
\textsuperscript{3} Ganti, 2004, p. 3
There was also a new concept in Hindi cinema of anti-hero. An anti-hero is different from a villain in a way that a villain is seen as a negative character throughout the movie whereas an anti-hero is a main character of the film but lacks conventional qualities of a hero like idealism, courage, and morality. In Hindi cinema, Sunil Dutt was the first anti-hero who played the character of Birju in Mehboob Khan’s *Mother India* (1957). The character received appreciations from the audiences as they saw a character who is close to humanity on many levels. The fantasy world of Hindi cinema shows people in the light of either ‘black’ or ‘white’. However, in real life no one person is totally bad or good. Hence, the emergence of anti-hero in the Hindi films was readily accepted by the viewers.

There are many more such movies that have anti-heroes in them, some of them are Yash Chopra’s *Deewaar* (1975) and *Trishul* (1978), Abbas-Mastan’s *Baazigar* (1993), Mahesh Manjrekar’s *Vaastav* (1999), and Vishal Bhardwaj’s *Kaminey* (2009).

Family relationships are vital in the Hindi movies and a person’s responsibilities and attitude towards his/her family decides whether the character is a hero or a villain. Hence, in the lost and found tales the one who takes care of the family (especially the mother) and expresses his emotions at various intervals of the movie is considered to be the good guy in the film. In contrast to the other who does not think of anyone’s emotions and is rude to people is often regarded as irredeemable.

The romantic and family-oriented plots in the Hindi films are all too well familiar with the audiences and Ashis Nandy⁴, a famous political psychologist, had said, “The Bombay film-story does not generally have an unexpected conclusion, it only has a predictable climax. It bases its appeal not on the linear development of a story line but on the special configuration which the film presents of many known elements or themes derived from other movies, or, as Sudhir Kakar⁵ suggests, from familiar traditional tales.”

Episodes from famous Indian epics are also taken in many of the films as the main plot. Due to the familiarity of the themes the audience gets interested in ‘how things

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⁵ A famous Indian psychoanalyst
will go about’ rather than in ‘what will happen now’. Visual performances of such actions are more important to the audience in such cases.

The plots may change in every film but the central conflict in Hindi films will always revolve around the concept of ‘good’ and ‘evil’ relating to the Hindu concept of ‘dharma’ or duty. A fine fictional world is prepared in the world of cinema which is unrelated to the reality as such. However, it does not mean that its depiction is totally different from the real world or bizarre but simply that its aesthetic content and musical attempts segregates it from the real world where we live in. it creates its own logic and realism especially to give rise to emotions within the audience which is vital for the success of the film.

In the cinema, it is very important to affect the audience in any way. Unless the movie will be ‘touching’ to the audience or do not ‘move’ them, it will not be considered as a good film. The emotions that is played in the Indian cinema held its origin during the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD in the \textit{Natyashastra}, a scholarly treatise on the performing arts. According to it the drama that is performed has to be for the amusement of the audience in order to portray the eight basic emotions or \textit{bhava} – love, humour, energy, anger, fear, grief, disgust, and astonishment. These emotions are shown to the audience with their causes and effects so the audience can experience the aesthetic essence of the eight corresponding sentiments or \textit{rasa} – erotic, comic, heroic, furious, apprehensive, compassionate, horrific, and marvellous\textsuperscript{6}. Although the classical theatre have been lost for the past several decades now but its dramatic codes were inherited by the folk theatres around the country. The Parsi theatre was one of such theatres originated in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century that incorporated those dramatic codes and gradually all the other theatres also incorporated them.

The history of Indian theatre goes parallel with the history of Indian cinema. The theatre had its own folk forms in the early period as \textit{nautanki}, \textit{tamasha}, and \textit{lavani}. These forms left their impressions on the Indian cinema and its musical sequences also influenced the cinema.

The initiative was taken by the Parsi community, which was an entrepreneurial group having close ties with the colonial empire. It was often referred to as the Parsi

\textsuperscript{6} Warder 1975: 172
theatre. The Parsis were considered to be the iconic figures of modernisation in the western part of India. The play they initiated were part of the pre-modern narratives. The Persian *Shahnama* by Firdausi was a model taken by them with Gujarati being the language chosen for expression.

The tradition of Persian *daastaan* recitation also influenced the theatre which was the oral rendition of a story but it was reinvented during its movement from Persia to Lucknow. Persian romance narrative, also called *masnavi*, was also taken into theatre along with musical conventions derived from the North Indian culture.

Gradually Parsi started to translate their plays into Urdu language making it popular all over the Northern part of the country. The emergence of Urdu playwriting and staging reached places and the language became a trend for the theatre.

The urban theatre had their own attractions that included mixing the dialogue with the music and adding song or dance in between a performance. The technologies they had at the urban theatre were spectacular when they change the backdrops or showed any kind of physical situations like the storm at the sea or escaping from the fire on stage.

The troupe of the Parsi theatre were highly mobile who travel all over the country to showcase their talent. Later on they even crossed borders and went to perform at Burma, Singapore, Malaysia, and even England.

Later on during the emergence of cinema in India, several playwrights from the Parsi theatre went into the field of cinema and wrote films related to the stories depicted by the theatre in the past. The Persian and Arabic folklore had influenced the theatre but when the writers went into writing film scripts they took stories from *Laila-Majnu*, and *Shireen-Farhad* into the newly emerged genre. The musical culture of the folklore was also taken into the cinema.

The Shakespearean plays were also adapted into the movies and can be seen in the movies from 1930s to 40s in the work of Sohrab Modi, who was a popular artist at that time. Parsi entrepreneurs were among the first to set up distribution networks and also to set up studios for filmmaking.

When the movies came into being, the theatre artists started to perform in them and, hence, automatically those codes were incorporated into the world of Indian movies.
Though these codes are now in a refined form than the original ones but their presence is always there. In this way the Indian cinema has somewhat maintained an unbroken link with its historical past.

Many a time all these eight emotions or most of them are present in the Indian movies. Such movies are called ‘masala movie’ in India. As it shows all the spices in one dish. Therefore, many of the Indian movies are overloaded with emotions.

Apart from the emotions, one of the important things in an Indian film is its songs. An Indian popular film has five to six songs in it. Though in the past there were movies that had more than ten songs. The movie *Indrasabha* (1932) holds the world record of the most number of songs in a musical film by having seventy one songs in it.\(^7\)

Songs are a very important part of the Indian cinema. Many times the complexities of a film plot is resolved by a song. The director does not include any extra narrative texts to make the audience understand the situation rather he uses the songs of the film to fill those voids. The screenplay of the movie is written as such to include songs at regular intervals in the movie. Classical theatre always have the concept of song or *sangeeta* – a combination of instrumental music, vocal song, and dance. As the other features of the theatre entered into the cinema, song also became an intrinsic part of the Indian movies in no time.

Many directors have tried to omit the song and dance sequences from their movies but the result was always a disaster. In popular or commercial Indian movies, song is a requirement of the movie. The promotion of a movie starts with its songs. The music directors and lyricists are always given a special place in the credits of the movie. On any poster or a billboard of a movie, their names are written alongside the director and producer of the film.

The first talkie of Indian cinema, *Alam Ara* (1931) was a musical film with many songs in it. Though it was a production of the Irani theatre where all the features of a theatre were included. Hence, it became a trend to include songs in a movie afterwards. According to film historians Barnouw and Krishnaswamy, “The Indian sound film, unlike the sound film of any other land, had from its first moment seized

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\(^7\) Kabir 1991: 1
exclusively on music-drama forms. In doing so, the film had tapped a powerful current, one that went back some two thousand years.\(^8\)

The song and dance sequences have also gone through a great deal of development since its inception from the silent era to the contemporary movies. Back then when the silent films were played, the screening of the film was accompanied by a live orchestra. Imported films had western musical accompaniment while Indian movies had Indian musical accompaniment. In rural areas, narrators explained the intricacies of the plot of the movies. They even provided their own sound effects for the film like the galloping of the horses, or the crash of the thunder.

Many early songs borrowed its melodies from the folk music. The actors in the films were mostly singers who used to sing their own songs. The filmmakers at that time preferred singers who could not act well rather than actors who could not sing. In the 30s the sound technology was in its primitive stage and it was very difficult to shoot a scene or a song without noise disturbances. The microphones used for the live recording of the song were stationary, hence, restricting the movement of the actors as well. The musicians used to hide behind the bushes and trees in that scene. Later on those trees became a routine in the song sequences although they have outlived their usefulness in that manner.

In 1935, R.C. Boral, a music director, discovered that a pre-recorded song can also be used in the film where the actors could lip-synchronise the song while shooting. It became to be known as ‘playback singing’. It helped the actors to move around in a song and liberated their movements. Playback singers became celebrities in their own way. The songs used to be of three and a half minute which later on became of almost five minutes.

Movie songs have their own charm and importance in our country. The patriotic songs are played on national festivals, the funky songs are played on religious festivals, and devotional songs are played while prayers. Songs are also played on shops and restaurants, beggars sing songs on train and on the streets. There are several television channels that are devoted to only songs, like 9XM, B4U Music, M Tunes, VH1, and ETC Music. Songs are also played on radio stations as well.

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\(^8\) Barnouw and Krishnaswamy 1980: 69
Music album is an entirely new genre developed only a few years ago in India. It is also known as a Pop Album. A music album includes a set of songs. These song recordings are produced as a single collection. These music albums may or may not picturise the songs from the album. The picturised form of the music album is known as a video album. Mostly this video shows a short story in one song itself. The 90s were said to be a very rich period for these video albums in India.

The term ‘Pop album’ comes from the word ‘popular’. It came around late 1920s to describe a piece of music that has ‘popular appeal’. It developed in UK and USA with the help of the Beatles, ABBA, and the Rolling Stones, etc. and came into India with Madonna and Michael Jackson. Though it started in the Southern part of Asia during the 1960s but in India it got its fame through the Pakistani artist Nazia Hassan and Zohaib. Gradually Indian artists started making their pop albums with the initiative taken by singers like Alisha Chinai, Baba Sehgal, and Bally Sagoo.

These video albums were a treat to the eyes with their lavish set ups and often beautiful outdoor locations. They were basically intended to capture the youth market. Most of the times one song has one story in itself but sometimes one video album picturised more than one song with a continuity amongst them. Watching a whole video album sometimes feel as if watching a whole musical film. One of the examples for such a video album is Milind Ingle’s Yeh Hai Prem (1998) where a set of songs were picturised in continuity.

Many singers made their mark in these pop songs and then afterwards try their hands in Hindi film songs as well. Some of those singers are Shaan, Lucky Ali, Sonu Nigam, KK, Babul Supriyo, Daler Mehendi, Sunidhi Chauhan, Falguni Pathak, Mohit Chauhan, Anushka Manchanda, and Shubha Mudgal. These pop albums became immensely popular in India that many of the established playback singers released their albums to make a name in this market. Some of such singers were Lata Mangeshkar, Asha Bhonsle, Alka Yagnik, Abhijeet and Kumar Sanu.

Traditional form of song and dance required heavy make-up or masks with decorative dresses and ornaments. When the Indian film industry incorporated this trend of the traditional song and dance sequences into the movies, it also automatically adopted its different aspects used in those sequences with only a few changes. Grand palaces or landscapes used to be the backdrop of a song. The actors,
especially the females in the song, used to wear glittery dresses which have little or no significance from the story of the film.

Later on choreographers were hired to teach the actors dance steps that would look attractive to the audiences. Although the whole film was shot in the country, the song(s) had to be shot in a beautiful exotic foreign country just to appeal the audience before even the movie is released through its grand posters and promos. Sometimes heavy amount was spent during the shoot of a single song.

Love songs are vital in Hindi movies and many times dream sequences are shot with larger than life decorations. Later on visual effects were also added specifically for songs. The songs are mainly used in a film to lighten the emotional baggage carried by the audience while watching a movie. During a complicated plot and sub plots of the movie, a song is used as a relaxation exercise.

Music directors have a lot of pressure to create new a different music for six to eight songs in a single film. This have resulted in rampant borrowing (or according to the Indian audience, stealing) from several sources of music by the music composers including western pop music and music from other countries. Rock ‘n’ roll, samba, and other kinds of western symphonies were adopted in Indian films. Many a time these symphonies were Indianised and replayed which were loved by the audiences. Hence, the latest musical trends were easily accessible to the Indian audience through this hybridisation by the Indian music directors.

Apart from the songs of the film, ‘stars’ are also important feature of the Hindi movies. That actors that rose to the heights of popularity in the country are referred to as the movie stars. Mostly male stars are paid more than the female stars. The number of male stars are also larger than the female ones.

These stars or sometimes ‘superstars’ need not be identified by names on the posters of the movies or the hand painted billboards of films mounted at almost every city in the country. These stars are popular enough to be identified by the native people only by face. A star studded movie is often more successful at the box office than a film with actors having less popularity.

Among the first movie stars that Indian audience have ever known were Chetan Anand, S.S. Vasan, and Devki Bose during the 1930s. After that Rajesh Khanna is
said to be the first superstar in the 60s. The 70s was ruled by many stars including the superstar Amitabh Bhachchan, Dharmendra, Hema Malini, Vinod Khanna, Shatrughan Sinha, and others. Though in the 80s there were no new stars as such, only popular actors and the stars of the 70s, but in the 90s we saw the emergence of some new stars including Shahrukh Khan, Salman Khan, Amir Khan, Madhuri Dixit, Juhi Chawla, Sridevi, and others.

Though in the new millennium the superstars of the past decades are still ruling in terms of the distribution of the movies but there are again some budding stars as well like Deepika Padukone, Priyanka Chopra, Ranbir Kapoor, and others.

The movies in Hollywood are distributed depending upon their genres so that specific audience could attract for that movie. In India there is no such thing. Most of the times Indian movies are filled with different genres in order to gain more audience and in return more box office revenue. The main reason for this is that movie watching is a family activity where everyone watches a film together. Hence, different parts of the movie have different moods. Emotional and sentimental part is meant for the ladies, slapstick comedy is meant for children, romantic scenes are included for the youth, and erotic display of women is targeted at the males.

In this way, Indian movies do not divide its audience or revenue like Hollywood movies, but it gives a complete package for the families to enjoy with one another. It contains, romance, comedy, tragedy, action, and the most essential song and dance sequences. It is mainly a commercial reason rather than an aesthetic one. This genre containing everything in a single movie is often known as the ‘omnibus’ genre.

The film maybe having a single theme which is romantic or comedy but still it will have all the other genres intact in it. Hence, making it a movie of the omnibus genre. Devotional films have also been famous in every community. Depicting pictures of pilgrimage and shrine shown on the celluloid is considered by many as a blessing.

Mythology is also a famous theme which was started from the earliest period of Indian cinema with Phalke’s Raja Harishchandra (1913) and Baburao Painter’s Seeta Swayamwara (1916). Many times episodes of Ramayana and Mahabharata are taken in the films and adopted in a different screenplay for the audience.
Historical films are based on Indian or world history showing legends on screen. K. Asif’s *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960) and Kamal Amrohi’s *Razia Sultan* (1983) have been immensely popular among the Indian audience. The history shown in the theatre with grand set ups and bright costumes not only attract the audience but also mesmerise them for three hours.

Then there is a generic category of the ‘social’ which was first used as early as in the 1940s. V. Shantaram’s *Padosi* (1941) and Mehboob’s *Mother India* (1957) came under this genre where the social evils are shown and discussed through the different characters of the movie. At several intervals of time these social films keep on showing its various facets through one or the other film. Every decade has seen the production of a couple of social films.

There is another genre of the Muslim social movies. These kind of movies do not always want to reform the social norms like the social movies do. They are mostly romantic movies with a backdrop of a Muslim family. H.S. Rawail’s *Mere Mehboob* (1963) and Sawan Kumar Tak’s *Sanam Bewafa* (1992) are some such movies. A fading genre in the contemporary Hindi movies, this genre was at its peak in the 1960s.

There are a couple of horror movies in the Hindi cinema which deals with the black magic and other tantric rituals. Hindi horror movies were often gory in nature and people seldom get attracted to them. Though recently some of such movies were made in 3 dimension which quite attracted the audience like Vikram Bhatt’s *Haunted* (2011) and Bhushan Patel’s *Alone* (2015).

Hindi movies that belong to the omnibus genre and give preaching to be a dutiful citizen and a caring person are said to be a ‘formula’ film. Such movies are mostly made with different stars and some spectacular song and dance sequences. Most of the formula films are similar in theme and plot but the filmmakers try to give them a different screenplay to appeal to the audience.

The success of the film depends totally on the audience. The Indian audience mercilessly rejects a film they do not like or approve resulting in huge financial loss for the distributers and the producers of the film. On the other hand if the audience appreciate a movie it reap plenty of rewards in the monetary form. It can also give rise to some new stars, giving actors new stardom and the rates of the actors can
immediately shoot up. Hence, the Indian audience is the key to the success of the movies at the box office.

The interiors play an important role in the perception of the movie. The way the background of a scene is displayed effects the apprehension of the audience. There are specifically employed set designers who work on the sets or the interiors of the movie.

In the 1990s, Sooraj R. Barjatya’s *Hum Aapke Hain Koun!* (1994) was the first of the family drama movies. Many critics have described the movie as a “giant marriage video” which elaborately showcases all the rituals of the high class North Indian families. The sets are grand with lavish panoramic interiors.

The wealthy interiors have their own aesthetic style which was shown in the movies like *Ram aur Shyam* (1967), *Kal Aj aur Kal* (1971) and *Bobby* (1973). The ornate furniture, huge staircases, and spatial expanses were hallmark of a wealthy house. Similar to such interiors, Barjatya also depicted the interiors in his film to portray a wealthy house with grand bedrooms and huge lawns in front of the house.

Different songs are shot in different locations inside the house. Some are shot in the large bedroom with huge paintings and photographs on the walls, while some are shot outside the house in the lawn or in the backyard beside the swimming pool.

The movie have a number of characters that includes the elder and younger generation, family, friends, foes, servants, and dogs. Hindi-Muslim integration is also depicted by showing a Muslim friends enjoying with the Hindu family in every family function. The movie is a carnival in a utopian set up with everyone being good at heart even if some are ill mouthed.

The architecture of the movie with grand archways and glittery chandeliers were a sign of the interior of a wealthy household. And the fusion of the temple inside the house with a pool table at one side of the drawing room shows the traditional and modernity alongside. The aesthetic interior very clearly matches the theme of the film.

Then there was Yash Chopra’s *Dil To Pagal Hai* (1997) where the interior was quite modern and blends well with the theme of love and music of the film. The story tells about a theatre troupe and most of the movie is shot indoors where the troupe
Chopra wanted to show a place for creative people, hence, the art director here made a colourful arrangement of furniture and wall art.

There is a big hall where different levels of spaces are made without a wall between them. At one corner they have their set up of musical instruments and at another they have a set of cushions with a hammock for casual recital of lines from their play. Then there is another wall where graffiti can be seen that mimic the New York style art and at one corner a red car is standing against a brick wall.

The colourful arrangements of properties and materials gives us a lively show while watching the movie. In contrast to the set designs, the characters also wear refreshing coloured clothes that goes perfect with the surroundings. The interior has a modern outlook with cool colours and mood lighting.

Some songs are shot outside in the green fields and under the blue sky with pastel coloured clothes worn by the protagonists. Other songs are shot indoors by using the whole set with different colours and all along the songs the costumes of the characters change according to the background.

The flashy and fashionable look of the movie suits the theme of the film. The aesthetics matches the mood of the creative zing that shows in the movie. The modernity represented here is quite different from what was shown in *Hum Apke Hain Koun!* There a traditional look was obvious in every corner of the set but here only the vitality and energy of the characters are seen from every perspective.

In 1998, Karan Johar made *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* which set a new trend of filling the colours on the screen without any particular reason. The film was like a fantasy land with comic book characters filling up the first half of the movie.

The first half of the movie deals with the college life of the three main characters of the film including some supporting characters as well. The bright coloured clothes of every student in the college was like watching a colourful saga from Disneyland. The hallways of the college had clean tiles on the floor with a Pepsi machine and a bright yellow pay phone in the corner. The characters are seen wearing branded clothes like GAP and DKNY t-shirts. This was probably one of the earliest movies where brands are projected inside the movie in such a trendy and loud manner.
The dormitory of girls is seen having a lavish hall with bright wall paintings and shelves with decorative items. The pillars of the room add depth to it with huge windows on the side. However, the houses of the characters are also shown to be spacious with large beds and silk drapes on the walls.

Although when asked Karan Johar about the unconventional look of the college with striking colourful images and characters that were similar to the teen television shows of the United States he replied, “I used to love Archie comics. If you see Kuch Kuch Hota Hai, it’s really that. It’s Riverdale High with all the colours for no reason. When in used to see Beverly Hills 90210, I liked those corridors and those lockers. None of that exists in Indian colleges. I was 25-26 and I was influenced by things I saw and things I read about and basically I was a huge Archie fan. If you see Kuch Kuch Hota Hai, Shahrukh plays Archie, Rani Mukherjee plays Veronica and Kajol plays Betty. It was exactly that. And the principal looked like Weatherbee and Ms. Grundy was Archana Puran Singh.”

When the classroom of the college is shown the sleek furniture and teen fashion can be seen through the characters. The walls of the classroom have a huge painting of Shakespeare in the back (as it was a class for English subject) and a detailed Renaissance painting on the side. The architectural look of the movie all along was quite a comic book style. The last two decades have seen a growth of cable television that shows American series and MTV songs which have added to the proliferation of international symbols all over the country.

Though there are a lot of Hindi movies dealing with college lives of the protagonists but this movie was more like a Hollywood teen flick. It started a trend of showing fashionable dresses on the campus in the movie with colourful indoors and outdoors including the display of brand names in the movie itself.

Though the second half of the movie is dealing with the life of the characters in a matured age but still the vibrant colours and flashy clothes can be seen worn by the children of the summer camp. This movie was perhaps the first one to also start a trend of summer camps in the country.

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Another spectacularly designed movie was Karan Johar’s *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham* (2001) where the set designer made a grand set recreating Chandni Chowk of Delhi. It was full of shops of all sizes sprouting lanes and by-lanes in between.

Then there was a large villa of the richest man of the city which had a lavish lawn in front of the house. Inside the house there were stairs, as depicted by many other sets of wealthy people in Hindi cinema, grand bedrooms and ornate furniture with chandeliers and decorative vases and paintings.

The movie was a family drama where the director emphatically gave focus on the family relations and values. The house is often seen decorated with huge family photographs of the parents and the children of the house. This aesthetics of the family portraits clearly shows what the main theme of the movie is.

The songs of the movie are shot lavishly whether indoor or outdoor. Dancers who are behind the main characters are wearing colourful clothes highlighting them with their contrasting dresses. The panoramic view is seen many times when the aerial shot is used during the songs of the movie.

Huge halls with pastel drapes, large windows with beautiful sky in the background, portraits in golden frames, all of which was symbolic of a majestic household was given importance in the movie.

The religious side of the house is also shown in a song where *Diwali* is celebrated. A whole lot of *diyas* and candles are seen lightening at every corner of the house. A big statue of the Hindu idols are seen wearing glittery ornaments. Lamps of different colours and glass chandeliers are lighting. The set is illuminating with the lighting provided to show the celebration and happiness of the moment.

On the other hand, when the sadness and gloominess revolves in the lives of the protagonists, the lighting became dim and the colours of the clothes worn by the characters became a shade darker than before. The sadness could be seen through the aesthetics of the settings.

Another movie where aesthetics pled a vital role in the interpretation of the movie setting is Farhan Akhtar’s directorial debut *Dil Chahta Hai* (2001). The movie tells a story of three best friends and how they deal with their post-college lives with different kinds of ups and downs.
Each friend is different in nature. Akash (Amir Khan) is a carefree, indifferent boy who likes traveling, loves himself and wants to have fun with his friends. He is a cool guy belonging to the upper class of the society. Siddharth (Akshaye Khanna) is a painter who loves to draw anything beautiful that he sees. He is a romantic by nature and is the most mature among the three friends. Sameer (Saif Ali Khan) is a middle-class boy who easily falls in love with any girl. He is seen as a confused person who cannot easily take decisions on his own.

The houses and rooms of each actor can be seen matching their character. Akash has a huge house with classy furniture and coloured walls. A glass centre table and a big television shows that he belongs to a wealthy family. Akash is a cold and self-centred character and his room has a cool blue colour to its walls.

Siddharth is seen to have paint brushes and colours in his bedroom. He has a separate room for his paintings and wooden furniture rule the place. The walls of his room is dark in colour while paintings are scattered. Unlike Akash’s place, his place has a more ethnic feel to it with artefacts, paintings, and earthy colours all around. This shows his artistic life.

Sameer have a colourful room with bean bags in his rooms depicting his easy going and lazy character. His room is never shown in a wide angle and only fragments of his room is shown in scenes. His room is not a spacious one but a one where comfort and privacy is well maintained.

The interior of the movie enhances the characters of the actors. Their personal choices can be vividly seen through the colours and settings of their rooms and houses. The movie, however, deals with a tale of friendship and all that comes along but the landscaping and the interior including the paintings, colours, and artefacts works to enhance the cultural codes and becomes the marker of taste and class.

Hence, in this way the interior and the set designing play an important role in depicting the overall view of the movie and specially to establish the characters of the movie.

Hiralal Sen was a Bengali filmmaker who saw a film presentation in 1898 and was influenced to make his own share of films. In 1899 he purchased Urban Bioscope from the Warwick Trading Company in London with his brother Motilal Sen and
formed the Royal Bioscope Company. He made several films based on classic stories like *Alibaba and the Forty Thieves* (1903). He also made several advertising films but as other film ventures entered the market, the fortune of Royal Bioscope declined and finally it had to stop in 1913. In October 1917, Hiralal heard the tragic news that his brother’s warehouse had caught fire that contained the entire stock of the Royal Bioscope Company. With the fire, Sen’s career as a filmmaker also went up in flames. The fire not only destroyed Sen’s movies but also the proof of India’s earliest cinema history.

As the centenary celebrations of the Indian film industry suggest that Indian film production began in 1913, it is not close to the truth. However, it is estimated that 99% of Indian silent movies are lost. Films came into India on 7th July 1896 at Bombay’s (now Mumbai) Watson Hotel and was only meant for the elite British audience. Though Hiralel Sen was not there and he saw these moving images two years later in Calcutta (now Kolkata). But a local photographer was at one of those Bombay shows. He was Harishchandra Sakharam Bhatavdekar, popularly known as Save Dada. He was influenced with those films and shortly thereafter he ordered a camera of his own from the UK.

Bhatavdekar’s first movie was shot in 1899 and it was the first movie by an Indian filmmaker. It was a wrestling match in Bombay’s Hanging Gardens. It was the beginning of his filmmaking career and also of the Indian film production. He sent the reel for processing to the UK and by the time it came back for screening in Bombay, he had already bought a projector and was screening foreign films.

However, the first Indian news footage was also captured by Bhatavdekar when he shot the returning of RP Paranjpe, a maths scholar, to India from Cambridge. He continued filmmaking until mid 1900s and also bought the Gaiety Theatre in Bombay, which he ran successfully until his death.

During these initial age of the emergence of cinema in India, not just foreign films came to India but also many foreign filmmakers used to come for shooting their films, mostly documentaries, in India. These documentaries were then shown internationally. A British film director Charles Urban used to make such documentaries in India. His equipment was used by Indian filmmakers and he had also sent cameramen to different regions of the country throughout the early film
To celebrate King George V’s coronation the King and the Queen visited the Delhi Durbar in 1911. He had recorded the royal visit and it became an international box office hit.

The foreign films shown in India during this period was a source of encouragement for many native Indians. It was during one such screening that the photographer Dadasaheb Phalke felt the need to make films himself. He was watching a film based on an event in the Bible and he later wrote, “While the life of Christ was rolling before my eyes I was mentally visualising the gods Shri Krishna, Shri Ramachandra, their Gokul and Ayodhya. Could we, the sons of India, ever be able to see Indian images on the screen?”

The father of Indian cinema dedicated himself in filmmaking and the result came out with his first film in 1913, *Raja Harishchandra*. Indians celebrate this film to be the first Indian film and had marked the centenary celebrations accordingly. But the production of this film was not an easy task for Phalke, if he really wanted to compete with those foreign films being played in India. He had to travel to London to learn more about film production and had to buy equipment for the shooting of the film.

He returned to India, set up a studio and assembled the cast and crew for his film. The movie was less than an epic at that time but it was a useful experiment for the budding directors and filmmakers of the time. *Raja Harishchandra* was premiered on 9th May 1913 and was considered to be the first film of Indian manufacture. Though it was not a breakthrough product as it is claimed to be today but it is almost impossible to trace back the real breakthrough movies from the very initial age of the Indian cinema.

The Anglo press of the colonial India was not bothered about the Indian filmmakers and the vernacular press was preoccupied with the political news more. It was not easy to trace Hiralal Sen’s works but he had shot the Durbars in 1903 and 1911 and these events were also covered by the western filmmakers, hence, Sen’s works came to the fore.

In 1917, Rustomji Dhotiwala made a remake of Phalke’s *Raja Harishchandra* for Madan’s Elphinstone Bioscope Company. Many film critiques and historians believe that it is this version and not the original Phalke’s version of the movie that survives.
till date. Therefore, the first Indian movie is just as hard to find as the films made by Hiralal Sen. However, when Phalke died in 1944, he was a forgotten man. But several decades later his contribution was recognised and only then he was given the title of ‘Father of Indian cinema’.

Although Dadasaheb Phalke is inaccurately considered to be the pioneer of Indian cinema because there were many other men who made efforts to start the film production in India even before Phalke. Save Dada (Harishchandra Saktharam Bhatavdekar) and Hiralal Sen were the first Indians to make two short films in 1897 and 1899 respectively. However, these short films were only attempts to capture live theatrical performances on film but was nonetheless the starting of the film production in India. Bombay based F.B. Thanawala also made a few short films including *The Splendid View of Bombay* and *The Taboot Procession* (1900). These films were actually the documentation of live events which if still preserved would have given the real historical view of the India of that time.

The history of India as a country is very rich and vibrant and so is the history of Indian cinema. There were several ordinary people who did some extraordinary work that seemed insignificant in those times but later on became to be called milestones of Indian cinema and gave it a new identity and put the Indian cinema on the map.

It was on 28th December 1895 that Louis and Auguste Lumiere showed their first motion picture to a small private audience in France. The response they got overwhelmed them and they decided to showcase their new found talent overseas as well. It was more than a century ago when Lumiere Brothers brought their art of moving picture in the country. It was not only well received but also appreciated by the audiences. Some were mesmerised some were thrilled while some were greatly influenced by this art. Those who were influenced were mostly people who later on tried their hands on it and made a huge contribution to change the face of Indian cinema in a global sense.

Before the showcase of films, the only means of entertainment for the Indian audience were the traditional traveling theatre troupes also known as *nautanki*, puppet theatre also known as *kathputli natak*, and the occasional dance and music shows for those who could afford them. The first and the earliest was the silent era of
the Indian films where only music was accompanied by the moving pictures on the screen. Without spoken dialogues, the movie was told by the expressions and behaviour of the actors. Several films were made in this era, most of which have no existence today. In 1914 *Mohini Bhasmasur* was a significant movie in that time because it was this movie that introduced a woman to act before the cameras. She was Kamalabai Gokhle. Before that, males used to play the roles of the females, much similar to the Shakespearean era where the plays were enacted by males only.

Gradually Indian audiences started to prefer local made movies than the foreign made ones. India was producing more than 27 films a year by 1920 which was a significant number at that time. *Raja Harishchandra* gained a phenomenal success and with it came the trend of mythological films which did not change for quite some time. It was only with the advent of the talkies in the 1930s that the subject of the movies started to change with a number of topics and themes.

The age of sound in the Indian cinema came from A. Irani’s *Alam Ara* (1931). It is said to be India’s first talkie. It was made in Bombay in Hindi language, which was the official language of the country. Since then, the film industry was set up in Bombay and the language used was that of Hindi. Which, of course, later on spread across the country and gave rise to several other regional film industries having other languages.

With the advent of sound in the movies came the necessity of sound studios and indoor shooting. Many such studios were built in Lahore (now in Pakistan), Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras. And by the 1930s India had almost hundred studios all around the country for film production. But there were three such studios that were very important for the development of Indian cinema in later years – New Theatres, Prabhat Studio, and Bombay Talkies.

B.N Sircar was an engineer who had built a grand theatre but in 1931 he decided to build a film theatre for himself in Calcutta. He built ‘New Theatres’ with a lavish studio and gathered some talented Bengalis for the creative film making. Debaki Bose is one such director that rose to fame shortly after the theatre came into existence. His famous movie *Chandidas* (1932) was based on the life of the poet-saint in the 16th century. He blended the songs and music in the religious theme which was appreciated by the viewers. He made several other movies for the New
Theatres which were based on religion or mythology like *Puran Bhagat* (1933) and *Seeta* (1934). *Seeta* is an important movie in the history of Indian cinema because it is the first ever Indian film to be screened at an international festival and won an honorary diploma in the 2\textsuperscript{nd} Venice International Film Festival.

But after a year came another great sensation from the New Theatres, P.C. Barua. He was an Assamese prince who made *Devdas* (1935) that was based on the novel by the famous Bengali writer Sarat Chandra Chatterjee. The movie was made in Bengali and Hindi languages. It received overwhelming responses from the audience. The movie was a tragedy where a man drowned his sorrows by being an alcoholic when his lover is married off to another person. The soulful songs and the superb direction touched the heart of the audience. P.C. Barua directed both the versions but played the role of Devdas in the Bengali version of the film. Ironically he also died of drinking at the age of 48, but not melancholy.

Most of the later works of this studio was influenced or adopted by literary sources. The audience started to associate the work of this studio as sophisticated and intellectual for the same reason.

Prabhat Studios was established in Kolhapur in Maharashtra in 1929 but later on it shifted to Pune in 1933. Similar to the New Theatres, Prabhat Studios also started to produce mythological and religious films in the beginning. One of the famous filmmakers this studio had given us is V. Shantaram. He made his first film in Marathi language in 1932, *Ayodhyache Raja*. It was the story of the same King Harishchandra which had made Phalke famous a few years ago. Later on in 1936, S. Fatehlal and V.G. Damle, who were V. Shantaram’s associates, made a devotional film about the seventeenth century poet-saint Tukaram, *Sant Tukaram*. It is still considered to be one of India’s finest films and it was the first film to win an international award in the Venice Film Festival.

Soon enough V. Shantaram moved on from mythological movies to social movies. He started making films that deals with the social issues of the country and became famous for bringing out justice to the subjects he was dealing with in his films. One of his most famous films was *Duniya Na Mane* (1937) that dealt with the abuses of an arranged marriage. There was another movie, *Padosi* (1941), which was based on Hindu-Muslim animosity.
Prabhat Studios became to be known for its movies dealing with social issues and innovative themes. Though the movies were ideologically ahead of the age but the camera works and direction was unique and attractive. The directors made good use of the music and songs in the films and were appreciated by the audiences. Prabhat Studio also gave opportunities to those people who started their career by being apprentices at the studio.

One of the other major studios in the 1930s was Bombay Talkies. Himanshu Rai was working in Germany and Britain but later on came to India and set up the studio. Devika Rani was working as a textile engineer when she met Rai who persuaded her to join his production team. The two got married later and Rai launched her as the heroine of his films. When Rai established the Studio, Devika used to play the lead roles in the movies, mostly opposite Ashok Kumar, and the pair became famous all over the country. She is often said to be the first lady of Indian cinema.

Rai employed some German technicians while setting up Bombay Talkies and started to make three films in a year. Sometimes, though, the films showed a social message and only occasionally the feeling of patriotism was projected through the movies produced. One of the movies depicting a social message was Franz Osten’s *Achhut Kannya* (1936). The movie deals with the relationship of a high caste Brahmin male with a low caste ‘untouchable’ woman. The movie was among the few hits of the early period and is still considered to be an epic.

Rai ran his studio with a set of policies where university graduates were recruited and given fixed monthly salary. Each member of the studio, whether a technician or an actor, were treated equally and they were provided with a canteen, healthcare facilities, and free education for their children. Film historians Barnouw and Krishnaswamy wrote, “It was known that at Bombay Talkies all company members, of whatever caste, at together at the company canteen. It was even said that top actors, on occasion, helped clean floors… All this was part of the legend and role of Bombay Talkies.”

These three major film studios produced many film directors and actors who later on found fame and fortune.

Apart from these three film studios, there were several other smaller studios including Minerva Movietone, the Laurence Olivier of India, and Wadia Movietone.
Sohrab Modi, the famous Indian Parsi theatre artiste and film actor/director was associated with the Minerva Movietone. The Laurence Olivier of India produced mainly movies with historical subjects. And Wadia Movietone gave birth to the stunt woman Nadira who amazed the audience with her dramatic antics including rescues from a moving train, runaway cars, or wild horses.

Like all the good things in life after a few years of studios in the film industry, they also started to decline. The actors who were getting monthly salaries came to know that they could demand more money for only one film. Soon enough many studios, including the above mentioned, were rented for film production to other filmmakers and later on completely shut down.

Gradually the need to acquire more and add something else in the film industry was constantly going on in some of the filmmakers’ minds. Hence, it was not difficult for them to add colours to the motion picture. The first ever colour Indian film was made by Ardeshir Irani that was named Kisan Kanya (1937). The colour format did not become popular until the 1950s but this movie was a huge commercial hit. In 1952, it was Mehboob’s Aan that was made in colour but still the colour processing equipment was not imported to India before the 60s.

The colour in movies gave a better scope for the landscapes and sceneries to be shown in the movies. The majestic beauty of Himalayas, the serenity of Kashmir, and the magnificent charm of the sea was explored in the colour era of the movies.

Movies like Subodh Mukherjee’s Junglee (1961), Shakti Samanta’s Kashmir Ki Kali (1964), Suraj Prakash’s Jab Jab Phool Khile (1965), and Pramod Chakravorty’s Love in Tokyo (1966) were aesthetically more appreciated by the audience because of its soothing cinematography that was set up in hill stations which was a treat to the eyes. It was a decade of romance with beauty signifying love and glamour intertwined.

During the colonial period of the country, movies soon became the medium to communicate to the audience. Filmmakers started making films on social issues and about freedom struggle. The theme of mythology and religion of the 30s changed into the theme of patriotism and frustration of being a colony.
This was the time when a source of entertainment was changed into a medium expressing its rage and angst towards its suppressors. Even the songs of the films expressed clear messages to the audience about the independence movement rather than just added for the glamour in the movies. It was this period when K.L. Saigal became the first super star in the field of singing and is still considered to be a jewel in the Indian film industry.

Many gifted directors spread social concerns around the country with their movies and influenced the citizens of India to struggle for their freedom. V. Shantaram’s *Admi* (1939) and Amrit Manthan’s *Dharmatma* (1935) were some of such films. Another famous personality whom the Hindi film industry could not forget till now would also come during this same period. He was none other than Raj Kapoor, son of the famous silent era actor Prithviraj Kapoor. He started his career at the age of 11 years and later on ruled the industry with not only his acting but also with his direction.

The pre-independence and the post-independence era showed the protagonist coloured in patriotism with a nationalistic fervour. The hero was always a *Hindustani* at heart no matter how he dressed or imitate the western people. There was always a hidden preaching for the audience that asserts the importance of being a cultured Indian and it also showed how Indians are much better in every way from the rest of the western world.

The villains during this era was always shown clad in western dresses and with an immoral ‘western’ behaviour. Villains usually sported their attitude in a westernised manner with whiskey bottles and scantily dressed women by their side.

1950s is considered to be the Golden Era of the Indian film industry. India got its independence in 1947 and the struggle was finally over after 200 years of being in shackles. The air of freedom and revolution was all around the country and it could well be sensed through the Indian cinema as well. The partition of a great country with a huge number of bloodshed on both the sides was sure to change things forever.

There were a number of renowned directors that came in the 1950s including Raj Kapoor, Mehboob, Guru Dutt, Bimal Roy, and Satyajit Ray (from Bengali film industry). They changed the face of the Indian cinema especially with their Hindi
films. They had seen the freedom struggle and its repercussions with their own eyes. Hence, they made movies which relate to the condition of the country and its citizens.

In 1952, the first International Film Festival of India (IFFI) was held in Bombay and provided a much needed platform for the movies of the Indian film industry. The 50s was a period of a struggling India after the independence with youth desperately in need of jobs and having dreams of their own as to how to make India a proud country of its free citizens. The movies during this period was mostly socio political melodramas depicting the current condition of the country that desperately wanted to stand on its own feet.

Major movies during this period was Raj Kapoor’s Awara (1951), Shree 420 (1955), Bimal Roy’s Do Bigha Zameen (1953), Devdas (1955), Mehboob Khan’s Mother India (1957), Guru Dutt’s Pyaasa (1957), Kaagaz Ke Phool (1959), and K. Asif’s Mughal-e-Azam (1960). These movies and many more of them during this era glorified Indian cinema on national and international levels.

One of the notable films during this period was Satyajit Ray’s Bengali movie Pather Panchali (1955). It was the first Indian movie to open the Cannes International Film Festival and once again gave Indian cinema fame on an international platform.

While the movies were doing well on a commercial level, there were some filmmakers who chose a different path and produced a bunch of movies that later on came to be known as a distinct genre of cinema – Parallel cinema. Directors like Shyam Benegal, Mani Kaul, Ketan Mehta, Govind Nihlani, and Vijaya Mehta were among those who made movies to depict the core and harsh realities of the world rather than mere entertainers.

One of the earliest parallel films in Hindi cinema was Chetan Anand’s Neecha Nagar (1946) that had won the Grand Prize at the Cannes International Film Festival and paved the way for those directors who wanted to show their talents through parallel movies. Movies made in the 50s can be found under the lists of the best films of the world created by the American Film Institute (AFI), British Film Institute (BFI), and even under the prestigious lists by The Time Magazine plus Sight and Sound where Pyaasa and Kaagaz Ke Phool were tied at number 160.
Although the first colour film was produced in 1937, it was only during the 60s when it started to begin as a trend. The popular *Mughal-e-Azam* and its supremely famous song, which was shot in colour while the rest of film was in black and white, influenced other filmmakers to try their hands in making colour films.

Shifting in this new decade gave rise not only to new filmmakers but also to a new audience comprising of a generation that was born in the independent India and knows nothing about the trauma and struggle of the revolution a few years back. Hence, the socio political films made in the previous era was not appealing anymore to the audience. They need entertaining movies that could took them to a fantasy land of utopia. Therefore, a whole lot of mediocre movies with no morals, lessons, or preaching in them were released in this era. They were made specifically because of the demand of the distributors and the viewers.

The hero during this age was bolder and smarter than the past era. As it had been a few years now post-independence, the audience was confident with their place in the world. The hero was not to be shown as a patriot to remind the audience of their existence. Lively westernised hero like Shammi Kapoor became famous with his jolly antics and an unabashed imitation of Elvis Presley. Donning a guitar in his hand, Kapoor was the heartthrob of the nation.


Where there were such romantic and light movies being produced in Hindi cinema, a new movement was being started by the Bengali filmmakers as the New Wave Cinema. They made films that were socialistic and realistic in nature. They were more humane and relates to the common problems of the common people of the country. The commercial cinema was mainly playing the role of a fantasy world
whereas the movies from the New Wave Cinema became to be known as parallel movies where actual world was seen through celluloid. As the word suggests, parallel cinema was working right beside the commercial movies but they were not popular enough amongst the audience who became used to the fantasies they watch as films.

Though the movement was started in Bengal soon there were filmmakers in Hindi cinema that went to the same path and made a number of parallel movies towards the end of the 60s and the beginning of the 70s. When in Bengal filmmakers like Ritwik Ghatak, Mrinal Sen, Tapan Majumdar, and Tapan Sinha were making art movies, in Bombay there were Basu Chatterjee, Rajinder Singh Bedi, Mani Kaul, Basu Bhattachrya, Shyam Benegal, and Kumar Shahani who were trying the same genre in Hindi cinema. This movement was not limited to the Bengali and Hindi movies only, several regional movies were also made during this movement. In the south India, filmmakers like Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Girish Kasaravalli, and G. Aravindan were making such realistic movies as a part of parallel cinema.

Though parallel cinema gained its popularity mostly in elite classes, it was no way near the commercial cinema in terms of monetary profits, public acceptance, or recognition. Still it continued to become a strong movement throughout the 70s and 80s in a full-fledged manner. Along with the commercially popular films of India, parallel movies were being constantly produced and appreciated all over the world. Though in India there were only a few takers for such artistic movies but there were still many directors and filmmakers who were ready to create realistic cinema instead of popular movies.

However, in the commercial front of the Hindi cinema, the romantic air of the movies subsided during the 70s and the need for action and dramatic movies came to the front. Though the main plot could involve a love story but the treatment of the movie was not totally mushy. Some of the popular movies of this decade were M.A. Thirumugham’s *Haathi Mere Saathi* (1971), Kamal Amrohi’s *Pakeezah* (1972), Raj Kapoor’s *Bobby* (1973), Prakash Mehra’s *Zanjeer* (1973) and *Muqaddar Ka Sikandar* (1978), Nasir Hussain’s *Yaadon Ki Baarat* (1973) and *Hum Kisise Kum Nahin* (1977), Ramesh Sippy’s *Sholay* (1975), Yash Chopra’s *Deewar* (1975) and
Kabhi Kabhi (1976), and Manmohan Desai’s Dharam Veer (1977) and Amar Akbar Anthony (1977).

This was the era of the arrival of a new hero in the Hindi cinema – the angry young man. Infuriated with the system, the youth did not need nationalist ideology anymore and the romantic hero was changed into a frustrated one. The writer duo of Salim-Javed gave birth to the youth of the country by depicting the male protagonist who was hungry for success no matter what. The introverted avenger was seen fighting with the villains in an action sequences. Priority was given to the stunts in the movie rather than the song and dance sequences. However, the songs were still an integral part of the movie but it was sometimes replaced by the valorous fight sequences by the hero of the film.

The stunts became an important part of the movies and stunt men and action directors were hired to portray such sequences with a realistic way. The hero was shown as a brave, daring, and dauntless man who knows how to protect his girl from the goons. Many times the number of villains were increased just to show how a single hero could overshadow all of them with his bravery and bone-scrunching acts.

This was also a time when multi-starrer movies became popular. The 70s has seen a lot of movies having ensemble cast. One of the famous movies till date is Ramesh Sippy’s Sholay (1975). The film publicists portrayed them as the new ‘superstars’ of the Hindi cinema. They were paid more money after that and many times songs, dialogues, and scenes were written or re-written to suit the whims of these actors.

By the end of the 70s parallel cinema in India reached its highest peak. The movement was taken seriously and new artists were born out of these movies. During the early 80s there were a number of parallel movies in Hindi cinema. But later on through the end of the 80s there was a sudden decline in the parallel movies and for a couple of years there were no such movies that could be labelled as a parallel movie. it was only after the new millennium hit in that a sudden resurgence of the parallel movies came into the Hindi cinema but with another name – off beat movies.

Some of the prominent parallel movies during the 70s and 80s were Shyam Benegal Ankur (1974), Muzaffar Ali’s Gaman (1978), Biplab Roy Chowdhury’s Shodh (1979), Govind Nihalani’s Aakrosh (1980), Saeed Akhtar Mirza’s Arvind Desai Ki
Ajeeb Dastaan (1978) and Albert Pinto Ko Ghussa Kyu Aata Hai (1980), Sai Paranjpye’s Sparsh (1980), Rabindra Dharmaraj’s Chakra (1981), and Mahesh Bhatt’s Arth (1982).

Indian cinema especially the Hindi cinema was flourishing in the 80s with commercial as well as parallel films. Indian movies were being appreciated all over the world from winning Special Jury Award at Cannes by Mrinal Sen’s Kharij in 1983 to winning the Camera d’Or at the Cannes Film Festival by Mira Nair’s Salam Bombay in 1988, which was also nominated for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film.

This was the time when a lot of women filmmakers came to the front including Vijaya Mehta (Pestonjee), Kalpana Lajmi (Rudaali), Mira Nair (Salaam Bombay), and Sai Paranjpye (Sparsh).

The 80s, however, was quite a confusing time for the Hindi cinema. No set formula was working during this period. Romantic, comedy, fantasy, artistic, and other kinds of movies were accepted as per the audience’s choice. Filmmakers were making movies one after the other no matter how much confused they were. Also it was the time when television entered the country. It was a time when people had other sources of entertainment including television and serials. Watching movies and going to the cinema was not the only means of entertainment left for the people of the country.

It was now easy for people to watch films at home without going to the cinema hall. This was a period when B grade movies came to the front in huge numbers. Though, B grade movies were always there since the inception of Indian cinema but this was the time when it thrived the most.

The audience for such movies were mostly the lower classes. These films were filled with toilet jokes, irrelevant nude scenes, gory horror scenes, and crude language. Because television was giving cinema a tough competition, filmmakers and producers wanted to make easy and quick money. So they prefer to make silly movies that could just give them monetary profits rather than add to the intellect of the audiences. But these B grade movies have a lot to contribute to the Hindi cinema when we look at its history.

This was the time when Hindi cinema took notice that it had two greatest enemies now – cable television and piracy. The cable television started to telecast in India during the starting of the 90s. Privatised television channels were an excitement for the natives. India was the first country of the subcontinent to allow the telecasting of the cable network. Piracy was at its boom at this period and the film industry was unaware of its threats. It was only when the industry lost millions of dollars’ worth of money because of the pirated copies of the newly released, and sometimes even unreleased, movies that it started working strongly against this threat.

But as the history of the Indian cinema had shown that film industry never lost hope and so this issue was also casted away with focus on other matters. Romantic and family oriented movies once again became the trend in the 90s. Yash Raj Productions and Rajshree Productions gained momentum and gave rise to many superstars of today including Salman Khan, Shahrukh Khan, Kajol, Rani Mukherjee, and Akshay Kumar with blockbuster hits like *Hum Apke Hain Kaun!* (1994), *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (1995), and *Dil To Pagal Hai* (1997).

But there was another genre of the serious movies that came during the 90s. Many actors like Nana Patekar, Manoj Bajpai, and Tabu came to the fore with the rise of such serious theatre. These movies include *Krantiveer* (1994), *Maachis* (1996), *Satya* (1998), *Hu Tu Tu* (1999), and *Shool* (1999). This showed that the audience was on one hand entertaining themselves with the romantic movies and family dramas but on the other hand were also accepting the realities shown to them through this serious cinema.

These serious cinema was somehow the resurgence of the parallel cinema of the early 80s. The new millennium saw a mix of commercial and parallel movies where

The last decade saw an emergence of new generation in the film industry including Vidya Balan, Ranbir Kapoor, Abhay Deol, and Deepika Padokone, and many more.

While *Lagaan* won the Audience Award at the Locarno International Film Festival and was also nominated for the Best Foreign Language Film at the 74th Academy Awards, *Devas* and *Rang De Basanti* were nominated for the BAFTA Award of Best Foreign Language Film.

This was the time when the growth of Indian cinema, especially Hindi cinema, was seen in the international market as well. The Hindi movies were screened at foreign lands and the box office revenue was increased like never before. Many a time Hindi were screened at any international Film Festival before even releasing in India.

New technologies were used for the production of the movies. Special effects, lighting, camera works, cinematography, and digital sound was improved way ahead from the past few decades. The movies started to be made taking the foreign audience in mind along with the Indian audience.

The storyline, plots, and themes of the movies were different from the movies of the past decades. The landscapes and set ups of the shooting were made keeping in mind the world audience rather than only the domestic audience.

Many foreign production companies either set up their offices in India or collaborated with the already existing production companies in India. These foreign companies include Paramount Pictures, 20th Century Fox, Disney, Time Warner, and
Searchlight. The Indian Film industry have overshadowed the other film industries of the world, including Hollywood. It is the most prolific film industry in the world.

If the pioneers of Indian cinema like Phalke, Hiralal Sen, and Save Dada would have seen this development in the industry that they had started, they would have been more than proud of the later generations who had served the industry in the best possible manner.

**Commercial Movies**

Cinema came to India in a commercial manner. Its sole purpose was not only to entertain the viewers but also to financially benefit from it. Since its inception Hindi cinema was not only entertaining the audiences but also gaining profit from them as well. Movies were always theme based with various plots and sub plots within a single movie. The early movies were based on mythology or historical events. Later on the themes changed to romantic and family based subjects. Soon enough thriller, comedy, mystery, tragedy, and horror also became the basic themes of the Hindi movies.

The Hindi movies have been growing commercially and creatively by producing the most number of movies annually from the rest of the world. Hindi movies are now watched all over the world and is mostly screened at several international Film Festivals around the globe.

There have been many influences and inspirations for the commercial Hindi cinema. One of the major influences were the ancient Indian epics of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. The movies were either completely based on one of its stories or the movie’s sub plots, back story, or side story dealt with it. An example of such a movie can be seen in Subhash Ghai’s *Khalnayak* (1993) and Priyadarshan’s *Gardish* (1993).

Then there were ancient Sanskrit dramas, often known as *natya*, where a combination of music, dance, and gestures involved to make a vibrant artistic and dramatic portrayal of the story. This form has been adopted by the Indian cinema particularly in the song and dance sequences.
With the decline of the Sankrit theatre there was the emergence of the traditional folk theatre of India. These theatres belong to many regions of India including the *Yatra* of Bengal, the *Ramlila* of Uttar Pradesh, and the *Terukkuttu* of Tamil Nadu.

One of the major influences the Hindi cinema have was from the Parsi theatre. We can even say that the concept of the earlier Indian films were taken from this theatre. There were several Parsi filmmakers who were among the first to experiment their theatre work into the movies. Parsi theatre was a blend of realism and fantasy, with a tinge of music and dance, and a pint of narrative and spectacle as well. The dialogues and stage presentation helped it to show a dramatic effect of the story giving it a feel of melodrama. It contained crude humour, melodious music, dazzling song presentation, and glamourous stagecraft.

We cannot deny the fact that Hollywood has played a major role in influencing the Hindi commercial cinema. From the 1920s to 1950s, musicals were a popular feature in Hollywood. Later on they completely shunned the idea of including dance sequences from their movies but the Hindi commercial cinema still have the tradition intact.

Also the western musical television have a great influence on the Hindi movies since the 1990s. The camera angels, the lightings, the pace of the songs were similar to those of the western music albums. The channel MTV, i.e. Music Television, played a huge role in influencing Hindi cinema’s dance sequences post 90s. An early example can be seen in Mani Ratnam’s *Bombay* (1995).

As we see that Hindi cinema was influenced by so many factors, so is the fact that Hindi cinema was an influence for many others as well. The first and foremost, Hindi cinema have a huge influence on the audience of India. Through movies, the cinema had shown its viewers the struggle for freedom, the position of youth in the pre-independence era, the way to live in difficult times, the traditional values of our nation, and the emergence of our country as a global presence.

Hindi cinema was becoming popular gradually since its inception but the recognition it got in the new millennium was much greater than it have had in the past.

It was not long after that Hindi cinema started to influence Hollywood musicals in the 2000s. Baz Luhrmann’s musical film *Moulin Rouge* (2001) was directly inspired
by the Hindi musical movies. He himself stated that he wanted to make a Hollywood musical in a Hindi movie style. He had included a song from the Hindi movie *China Gate* (1998) in his movie and incorporated the Indian themed play.


In 2002, the Indian music composer A.R. Rahman was asked by Andrew Lloyd Webber to compose music for his musical *Bombay Dreams*. But this trend is not just limited to the contemporary era of Indian cinema. Bimal Roy’s *Madhumati* (1958) was the inspiration for the Hollywood film *The Reincarnation of Peter Proud* (1975) by J. Lee Thompson. It surely in turn inspired Subhash Ghai’s *Karz* (1980) which again in turn inspired the Hollywood film *Chances Are* (1989) by Emile Ardolino.

Then there was Basu Chatterjee’s *Chhoti si Baat* (1975) which is believed to have inspired Andy Tennant’s *Hitch* (2005) which inspired the Hindi film *Partner* (2007) by David Dhawan in return.

Apart from the Hindi films, the Hindi film music has been inspiring the world over the ages. The Hindi cinema music is fit for all moods and can related to everyone in the world. An American rock band Devo had a hit song in 1988 “Disco Dancer” which was inspired from the title song of the 1982 Hindi movie *Disco Dancer*. The song “Addictive” which was sung by Truth Hurts in 2002 was lifted by the song sung by Lata Mangeshkar in 1981 from the film *Jyoti* “Thoda Resham Lagta Hai”. The Grammy Award winning 2005 song “Don’t Punk with my Heart” by The Black Eyed Peas was also inspired by two famous Hindi film songs of the 70s “Ye mera dil pyar ka deewana” from the movie *Don* (1978) and “Ae Naujawan hai sab” from the movie *Apradh* (1972).

In 2005, Kronos Quartlet’s album ‘You’ve Stolen My Heart: Songs from R.D. Burman’s Bollywood’ had several re-recorded songs of R.D. Burman compositions that was sung by Asha Bhosle. The album was nominated for the Best Contemporary World Music Album at the 2006 Grammy Awards.
All in all it can be easily said that commercial Hindi cinema is well-known in almost all the parts of the world. It has been appreciated and awarded by many international film festivals which in return have encouraged the Indian filmmakers to produce more movies that could in turn influence Hollywood and become famous all over the globe.

But commercial Hindi films are being criticised for several reasons time and again. One of such criticisms have been the portrayal of women in the movies. When it comes to represent a hero of the film it is always a brave man with morals and who can fight the villain with valour to save the powerless heroine. Only a few commercial movies have been made with the situation vice versa and those movies can be easily counted on our fingers.

In commercial Hindi cinema, women are always seen as good or bad, the character will be in the shade of black or white there will not be any greys in it. The good woman has to be the heroine of the film while the bad woman has to be the vamp in the film. The heroine would be full of virtues and good values and could never do anything wrong. She is the one who takes care of her family, is good to her parents (and in-laws in many cases), loves her family, and is obedient to her husband no matter what. On the other hand the vamp is evil mouthed and does not care about anyone but herself. Even the dressing sense of the two females would be different from one another.

The women in the Hindi films will have a passive role. The patriarchal order of the society has to play a major role in the production of such movies. The man is always tend to be stronger than the woman in the film. Even in many of the films where issues regarding the females are dealt, including V. Shantaram’s Dahej (1950), A. Bhimsingh’s Gauri (1968), Madhusudan Rao. V’s Devi (1970), J.K. Bihari’s Biwi Ho To Aisi (1988), and Madan Joshi’s Pati Parmeshwar (1990), the main focus was not totally on a woman. The women in such movies were shown as submissive and helpless until the hero comes in and helps them in taking control of their lives and ending the film on a happy note.

It is questionable to ask if such women exist in the world. As these females are shown as an ideal for the audience who can commit no wrong and who is pure beyond imagination. Their feelings, desires, emotions are hardly dealt with reality in
the movies. They are often sacrificial when it comes to the happiness of their families. They are not seen ambitious and they are devoid of any ego also. For instance, in Hrishikesh Mukherjee’s Abhimaan (1973) the heroine is a better singer than the hero of the film, which is unconventional. But to satisfy the ego of the hero, the heroine decided never to sing again. Hence, she gives up her passion for singing only to adhere to the traditional values of marriage.

The females in the movie are mostly satisfied to be inside the private sphere rather than go out into the public sphere. Only a few popular movies in the 70s could be seen with females having a job including Jaya Bachchan in Zanjeer as a knife sharpener, Hema Malini in Sholay as a horse carriage driver, or in Trishul as a general manager of a company, Rakhee in Trishul as the corporate secretary, or in Kaala Patthar as a nurse, and Vidya Sinha in Chhoti si Baat as a private firm worker.

Such characters were almost gone in the 90s. The females were seen either a college going student who later on is married off or is seen working nowhere at all. It is only after the new millennium hits in that professional women came into foreground in the Hindi movies including Juhi Chawla being a television reporter in Phir Bhi Dil Hai Hindustani (2000) and an undercover agent for the secret police in One Two Ka Four (2001), Rani Mukherjee as a fashion designer in Chalte Chalte (2003), Rimi Sen as a store worker in Hungama (2003), Gracy Singh as a doctor in Munna Bhai MBBS (2003), Sushmita Sen as an assistant commissioner of police in Samay (2003) and a chemistry teacher in Main Hoon Na (2004), Shilpa Shetty as a worker in an advertising agency in Phir Milenge (2004), Konkona Sen Sharma as a newspaper reporter in Page 3 (2005) and a producer in a radio channel in Life in a... Metro (2007), Bipasha Basu as a vice president of a corporate company in Corporate (2006), Preity Zinta as a fashion magazine editor in Kabhi Alvida Naa Kehna (2006), Vidya Balan as a radio jockey in Lage Raho Munna Bhai (2006), Ayesha Takia as a voiceover artist in Sunday (2008), Priyanka Chopra and Kangana Ranaut as models in Fashion (2008), Kareena Kapoor as a doctor in 3 Idiots (2009), and Kajol as a hair dresser in My Name is Khan (2010).

There have been a change in the portrayal of females in the Hindi commercial movies as earlier females were most of the times shown to lure the audiences into the
cinema halls. Today also this can be said to be the scene in many cases. They are objectified in most of the songs of the movies which are shown before the release of the movies. The scantily dressed females are often painted on the posters of the movies as well.

The themes and the plots of the Hindi movies have always been from a male centric. The movies were always looked upon through a male point of view. The females in the movie are hardly the centre of the story. The role of the female is always chalked around the character of the male protagonist of the movie. Many a times the role of the female is insignificant to the main plot of the film and the female is used only for providing a relief to the audience through the songs and dances in the movie.

For instance in Karan Malhotra’s Agneepath (2012) the role of Priyanka Chopra is totally insignificant to the story line of the movie. Still she is forced into the scene to give the audience some relief from the continuous bouts of anger and fight sequences of the movie. Similarly many other heroines are unreasonably put in the action films where we can see Sunil Shetty, Sunny Deol, or Akshay Kumar being the protagonists.

No doubt there are some contemporary popular female oriented Hindi commercial films including Nagesh Kukunoor’s Dor (2006), Raj Kumar Gupta’s No One Killed Jessica (2011), Milan Luthria’s The Dirty Picture (2011), Gauri Shinde’s English Vinglish (2012), Sujoy Ghosh’s Kahaani (2012), and Vikas Bahl’s Queen (2013). But Hindi audience is still far away from accepting the action movies having females as protagonists. It will take some time to make a Hindi version of Charlie’s Angels or Lara Croft or SALT.

The man is always seen as the saviour for the woman in the film. It is only rarely that we find an opposed situation in the Hindi movies. Even the posters of many of the films display the same meaning, for instance, in the promotional poster of Anubhav Sinha’s Ra.One (2011) the protagonist of the movie, played by Shahrukh Khan, is seen carrying the female lead of the film, played by Kareena Kapoor. It clearly shows how the female is a woman in distress and the male is a brave and dauntless man who saves his girl from all odds.
According to the popular Indian conventions, an ideal woman represented on the celluloid has to be dutiful towards everyone, sacrificing for her family, obedient for his husband, and full of values and ethics. She was not supposed to do anything wrong and if she does, she must repent and apologize immediately. She was also supposed to wear decent clothes and must not smoke or drink at all.

However, there were no such protocols for the males portrayed in the Hindi cinema. Hence, it was not unusual to see the hero smoking, drinking, or flirting with girls. But there were a few female actors who broke the conventions and came into the Hindi movies setting a different trend of fashion and glamour. Zeenat Aman and Parveen Babi were among those actors who portrayed strong women of the 20th century who were bold and beautiful. In fact, Parveen Babi was the first Indian female actor to be featured on the cover of the TIME magazine in 1975.

The female lead of the movie was supposed to be chaste and morally upright unlike the vamp of the movie who had no ethics and were always bolder than the heroine. But the common thing between the two females of the movie was that both of them were objectified for the audiences.

Shoma Chatterji is a film scholar and an author who says, “Women in Hindi cinema have been decorative objects with rarely any sense of agency being imparted to them. Each phase of Hindi cinema had its own representation of women, but they were confined largely to the traditional, patriarchal frame-work of the Indian society. The ordinary woman has hardly been visible in Hindi cinema.”

The commercial Hindi cinema is often known by the word “Bollywood” around the world. But this term is sometimes not even accepted by many of the Hindi actors. Many have showed their displeasure of this term.

Actor Irrfan Khan once openly said in an interview, “I always object to the word Bollywood. I don’t think it’s fair to have that name. Because that industry has its own technique, its own way of making films that has nothing to do with aping Hollywood. It originates in Parsi theatre.” He did not want Indian cinema, or particularly Hindi cinema, to be known as Bollywood as it could lose its identity by merging into another.
He was happy with the fact that the Hindi movies are doing well in abroad and in the nation itself. They are bringing in money and are commercially successful all over the world making not only the Indians but also foreigners its audience. Khan was keen to set up a production company, along with his wife, to bring back the creative spirit and experimental movies that were once initiated by the parallel cinema movement.

**Parallel Movies**

The New Wave Cinema was a movement which later on came to be known as many names – Parallel cinema, Art cinema, or New Indian cinema. The vitality of themes and renewal of aesthetics came with this movement. This genre is perhaps the foremost reason why Indian cinema is known to the other countries. Before that, only Satyajit Ray was known to the other parts of the world.

There were several artists in the Indian film industry that were associated with the Indian People’s Theatre Association (IPTA), which had ties with the Communist Party of India. It had started working in the film industry from the 1940s. Some of these artists included actor Balraj Sahni, director Bimal Roy, and scriptwriter Khwaja Ahmad Abbas. The later was involved in the famous Hindi movie *Awara*, a film representative of the new drive to combine a social reform perspective with ornate spectacle.

Despite being a structured kind of ‘school’ of cinema, the ‘New Wave’ movement was more of a mainspring of a renewal of aesthetics and vitality of themes in Indian cinema. It is one of the main reasons why Indian cinema is now known to the outside world, with the exception perhaps of Satyajit Ray, who was the only symbol of Indian cinema to those outside India till the arrival of ‘New Cinema’. It was a movement that was distinct from the commercial Hindi movies and was inspired by the Italian Neorealism around the time when the French New Wave and Japanese New Wave began.

For some critics, 1950s cinema was “a transitional period between the popular culture and mixed social audience of the 1930s and 40s and the mass audience emerging from the 1960s.” The parallel cinema popularised during the 1970s was an
alternative to the commercial cinema perhaps in the pursuit of western realism. Movies of Satyajit Ray are the best examples of such genre.

During the end of romance and the rise of the violence in Hindi movies were prominent in the 1970s, a need for an alternative to these violent movies was also brewing inside many filmmakers. There was a kind of aesthetic vacuum in the movies of the 60s and 70s. It was not long before the signal to establish the New Wave Cinema movement entered into the Hindi cinema which was a relief from the ‘formula’ Hindi movies. Though this movement was already been started by Satyajit Ray during the 50s in Bengal but it took some time for the Indian cinema to fully acknowledge the fact that it was a useful and developing genre.

This alternative Hindi cinema, which was started by Satyajit Ray, was now finding its way by the Hindi filmmakers. It was further encouraged by the establishment of the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) in 1961 and the Film Archives in 1964. The institute was specifically made for the professional training of actors, directors, and technicians. Many of which went into the mainstream cinema but some of which were absorbed by the parallel cinema.

However, it was difficult in the beginning to make parallel films but later on the financing was provided by the government funded Film Finance Corporation (FFC) which was later on incorporated into the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC). It finances the low budget films and helped directors to portray their viewpoint through the film with the finances provided by the corporation. The filmmakers could easily experimented with new subjects and themes without compromising the demands of the box office.

In 1970, Mani Kaul made a film *Uski Roti* which tells about the story of a young woman who used to walk several kilometres every day to deliver the midday meal to her lorry-driven husband. But one day as she is delayed, she is afraid that her husband would leave her. The style of narration and the treatment of the movie challenged the conventional Hindi cinema. Many such experiments by several directors began the new wave in the Hindi cinema that was appreciated mainly by the elite classes.

There were filmmakers who abstain from the conventions of Hindi cinema that include, song and dance sequences, romantic dialogues, unrealistic fight sequences,
and a happy ending. The linear narrative and a realistic aesthetic was adopted by the directors of the parallel cinema. Showcasing the social issues and problems of the common man, these directors contributed to this new genre. Some of the parallel filmmakers were Gulzar, Shyam Benegal, Rajinder Singh Bedi, Mahesh Bhatt, Govind Nihlani, Saeed Akhtar Mirza, and Ritwik Ghatak.

The treatment of the theme and the dialogues were much natural than those of the commercial Hindi cinema. Shyam Benegal came into the film industry from the world of advertisement and his first Hindi film *Ankur* (1974) paved the way for many such budding filmmakers. A simple story of the way lower classes were being exploited was shown in a realistic manner. His movies were appealing to the western educated intellectuals who were finding a reason to appreciate Hindi cinema. The western critics accepted this genre with open arms and till now Benegal’s movies are screened in many of the international Film Festivals.

A new wave of filmmakers came to the forefront when it came to produce parallel movies. This new breed of directors were came to be known as the ‘auteur’ directors. They portray their own points of view while making a movie. The lighting, the camera works, the dialogues, all were synced together to show the perception of the filmmaker.

The stories were simple life stories of the common man. The protagonists were not larger-than-life but were rather the realistic people living amongst us in the country. The lavish houses, the glittery song and dance sequences, and the heroic fight sequences was missing from these movies. The clichéd characters of the commercial cinema, like the evil mother-in-law, or the suffering wife, or the brave man protecting a girl from ten goons at a time were all invisible from the scene.

Such movies were not palatable to most of the movie watchers in the country. The songs in these movies were added only if absolutely necessary. The social and political systems of the society was portrayed in a realistic manner. More often than not the movie ended tragically.

The genre brought many talented actors into the cinema including, Smita Patil, Om Puri, Naseeruddin Shah, Shabana Azmi, Anupam Kher, Pankaj Kapoor, Deepti Naval, Farooq Shaikh and many others. These actors were linked by the average movie goer as the artistic film actors. These movies were gloomy and sensitive in
treatment when compared to the commercial movies which were lively and pure entertaining.

When a commercial movie used to preach or gave a social message to the society it was usually in a fun filled way with a solution that was sometimes unrealistic. But whenever these parallel movies showed social evils they never preached anything or concluded the movie by showing a solution to the problem. It mostly only aware the people of those evils and gave a realistic picture through the characters of the movie as to how would a common man face such threats of the society. Many times they left a thoughtful message for the minds of the audience to ponder over it and decide the answer for themselves.

Hence, parallel cinema is more known for its serious content of realism and naturalism than the commercial cinema which was more like a fantasy land meant for pure entertainment.

Though, in the past decade and a half the neat genre distinctions that divided the Hindi film industry into commercial and parallel films have broken down. During the culmination of parallel movies in Hindi cinema which ranged roughly from the late 1960s to the early 1990s, social topics ranging from colonialism, feudalism, gender inequality, westernization, and tyranny of elite traditions formed the narrative whole in a cinema whose visual style was relentlessly realist and explicitly non-commercial. Several movies were made which was self-consciously part of the parallel genre of the Hindi cinema. Some of them were Shyam Benegal’s *Bhumika* (1974) and *Bhumika* (1976), Govind Nihilani’s *Aakrosh* (1980) and *Ardh Satya* (1983), Mahesh Bhatt’s *Arth* (1982), Ketan Mehta’s *Holi* (1984) and *Mirch Masala* (1987), Sudhir Mishra’s *Dharavi* (1992), and Vijay Mehta’s *Pestonji* (1998).


There are some differences in the commercial and the parallel cinema. One of the major differences is that of the theme and plot of the movie. Most of the time a tragic
real-life situation is shown in a parallel movie. It deals with a social issue that is experienced by most of the middle or lower classes of the country. The pace of the screenplay is also a bit slow as compared to the fast pace of a commercial movie. The song and dance sequences are almost none in the parallel cinema. It mainly depicts a real life situation where there is no use of a song.

One more significant difference between the commercial and the parallel Hindi cinema movies is the treatment and portrayal of women in them. The way women have been portrayed in Indian cinema over the years also speaks volumes about their position and power (or the lack of it) in Indian society. Often, Hindi cinema, especially commercial cinema has been put in the dock for objectifying women, presenting them as useless second fiddles, or worse just using them to fill the required song and dance routine.

However, despite its sexist tendencies, Hindi cinema has also succeeded in portraying numerous women characters that were powerful enough to inspire a generation. If Mother India has a profound psychological and emotional impact on its generation, later day movies like Bhumika, Arth, Prem Rog, Damini etc took a more humane and nuanced view of women.

In recent years, a whole lot of female-oriented Hindi films too have asked pertinent questions. Chandni Bar, Lajja, Fashion, No One Killed Jessica, and more recently, The Dirty Picture, Kahani, and Mardaani portray powerful women who defiantly chose their own paths and lived on their own terms.

Though in the past, where commercial cinema used women as mere secondary participants, parallel cinema has always given a fair share to the female actors since its inception. So much so that the initial famous Hindi parallel movies were female oriented and the protagonists used to be females. Some of those movies are Ankur, Arth, Mandi, Bhumika, Fire, Saaz, and more recently Bawandar, Haazar Chaurasi ki Maa, and Listen...Amaya.

Commercial movies are made mainly for the entertainment purpose and to gain profit out of the commercial success. However, parallel movies are made to ponder over the social issues prevailing in our society and to spread awareness about the various social evils around us. Many of the parallel films may have a preaching style of showing things and many may end with a very realistic and tragic ending.
Hence, commercial and parallel Hindi cinema is different in various stands including not only the treatment of the plot but also the way a theme is selected and presented on screen. The casting of actors and the way they are portrayed are also worth noticing.

The parallel cinema started to decline during the 1990s. The rising costs of the film production and that the investment returns could not be guaranteed for the movies were the main reasons for the decline of this genre. The political and economic turmoil and the underworld financing of the movies were not in favour of the parallel movies. Also the rising trend of television and video piracy were major threats to the cinema, hence, filmmakers opted to close down making parallel films with such high risk factors.

The National Film Development Corporation of India did not take the distribution and the exhibition of parallel films very seriously. The commercial film exhibition system did not take into account these movies as they were lacking in the entertainment content. Hence, only a few movies were shown in cinema halls. Mostly were distributed to the television channels or sold as CDs/DVDs. Because of the absence of any exhibition system many of the films went unnoticed even by the critics.

In the present cinematic scenario, there are people who are trying to make Indian cinema a more real one and making slightly different kinds of films that were usually seen earlier. Some of those filmmakers are Anurag Kashyap, Anand Gandhi, and Rajat Kapoor. These films are no more considered to be included in the parallel cinema but still they are not hard core commercial Hindi films as well.

These young directors considered the new millennium as the resurgence of the parallel cinema where movies like Black Friday (2007), Mithya (2008), Dasvidaniya (2008), Dev D (2009), Ship of Theseus (2013), and Ugly (2014) are not only accepted but also critically acclaimed by many.

Some Early Commercial and Parallel Hindi Movies

As it was discussed earlier that movies having important social issues and dealing with serious topics were not completely alien for the Hindi film industry but it was only after the New Wave that started in the West Bengal that such movies got a
term for it which was ‘Parallel’ cinema. Though in Hindi cinema such cinema came almost two decades later than it originally started but it made a niche for itself in the course of time.

Below there are a few commercial and parallel films and briefly they are discussed and analysed to show how the fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters will deal with the comparison and analysis of the movies. Here the characters and the roles of the females in the movies are discussed and also various directorial effects are talked upon.

ANKUR

Analysing the 70s era we can find many movies in the parallel cinema that are worth a discussion. One of such movies was Ankur (1974) directed by Shyam Benegal. The movie basically deals with some of the social evils of the country, namely poverty, adultery, cheating, women subjugation, and slavery. The theme of the movie shows the life of lower caste people in a suppressed way. Particularly the struggle of women is shown in the movie.

The plot of the film consists of a high caste landowner who sent his son to look after their land in a village. A married couple had been looking after their small house but after his arrival they shifted back to their small hut in the fields. The couple was childless and the wife, Laxmi, was yearning for a child.

Unfortunately, after her husband left her, Laxmi started living with the landowner’s son and started having a relationship with him. But when the wife of the landowner’s son came to live with him in the village, Laxmi was forced to move back to her hut alone. She found out that she was expecting a baby but knew that the father won’t accept them. She was willing to raise the child alone and did not leave the village as she had nowhere else to go. This act showed the strength and determination of a lower class village woman.

Laxmi disclosing about her pregnancy to landowner's son
Being a single mother had always been shown as one of the most difficult tasks of a woman. The examples being most of the 70s movies starring Nirupa Roy, who was considered to be the ‘queen of misery’ in Hindi films. Often in her movies she was a single mother who used to face hurdles in her life while bringing up her children.

In movies like Abhinetri (1970), Deewar (1975), and Suhaag (1979) Roy portrayed the role of a single mother who struggled all her life to bring up her children. There were dialogues to support this issue and situations that could back it up. Basically, it was to be emphasised that women when raise children on their own have to face problems and difficulties along the way because they are the weaker sex who are somewhat adhure or incomplete without a male support in their life.

But in this movie, Laxmi was a determined woman who even though knew the repercussions of the situation still wanted to give birth to a love child and stay in the same village and face her fate with bravery.

Miraculously one day her husband returned and knowing that his wife is expecting did not infuriate him rather he was determined to work and earn money for his family. But the landowner’s son thrashed him when he came closer to him thinking that he had come to vent his fury. Though the whole village knew whose child it was, no one dared to speak the truth in front of the landowner or his son only because they were powerful and belonged to a high caste.

The movie clearly shows a picture of how the politics revolves around the caste system in our society and how the position of women in all the castes remains the same. Women are always the sufferer and one time or the other they accept this reality even if it is painful for her.

If we analyse the movie in a holistic way we can see that the portrayal of woman in the film was not that of a very strong one but rather of a realistic one. The initial minutes of the movie showed the helplessness of a woman when it comes to her husband. The landowner’s wife knew that her husband was involved with another woman and that he also had a son from her, still she wanted to keep quiet to maintain the harmony in a family.

Though his son was more vocal about it and expressed his fury even in front of his father still he respected his father and feared him. He could not raise his voice
against his father’s will. He wanted to study further but unwillingly married a young
girl when his father forced him. He went to the village alone and got attracted
towards the lower caste woman who was taking care of his home.

He did not believe in caste system and unlike his father ate food cooked by a lower
caste woman, Laxmi. This attitude surprised many others in the village and many
started speaking ill about them openly.

He did something that he detested, developing a relationship with another woman
being married himself. This showed the hypocrisy around us. What one despises the
whole life is was what one ends up doing. It is easy to point out other people’s
mistakes and errors but when the same situation is with us, we are unable to find
fault in ourselves.

Similarly, in this movie, a very humane approach is made towards a simple story
where the viewers could easily connect with the characters. The patriarchal values,
the suppressed women, and the caste system is depicted in a realistic picture with no
songs or grand settings.

TRISHUL

If we look into the Yash Chopra directorial venture *Trishul* (1978) we could see a bit
of a similarity when it comes to the portrayal of women. Women in this movie is
also shown as weak and vulnerable when in the starting of the film we could see how
Shanti is seen as a vulnerable female who is abandoned by Raj. Though she decided
to give birth to her child but all through her life she is shown as a miserable woman
who was not capable enough to bring up her son alone.

Movies are often influenced by real life situations and the patriarchal society is
always emphasising on the fact that a woman alone cannot raise a child without a
father. Though this is seldom implied by movies where single fathers are shown
because in that case fathers are applauded for raising a kid alone and is never
portrayed as miserable, vulnerable, or weak.
Hence, in this movie Shanti is shown to have struggled all her life to give her son a better tomorrow and finally succumbed to her death while suffering with an age old illness.

While Raj is shown being married to another woman, Kamini, she is not seen taken more of the screen time. Chopra concentrated more on the male protagonists of the movie than give screen time to the female ones.

However, there was Sheetal who was seen as a modern woman but she is mostly seen as romancing Shekhar rather than indulging in any other useful activity. She is seen as a confident self-independent daughter of a company’s managing director but her contribution in any kind of business is not disclosed in the whole movie.

Then there was Kusum who was Raj’s young daughter. Though she was seen as a modern liberal girl who drove a car and was a jovial and carefree person still she was seen to be dependent upon the males of her family when it comes to her choice of marriage.

She was secretly seeing Ravi who was working in her father’s company and later on when the affair came on the fore, Raj and Shekhar both went against the decision of marrying them off. Though Raj himself had been in a relationship with a poor woman, Shanti, in the past but from that time also he wanted to climb the stairs of the rich and the famous hence, abandoning her and going for a richer girl instead.

Perhaps, this was the psyche behind not conforming to the wishes of his daughter when she asked them to get her married to Ravi who was economically from a low
class. Therefore, it showed how even a liberal and high class woman is dependent for a personal decision of her life, like marriage, on the male members of her family.

Although, there was one more female character who seem to play an important role in the movie about this business rivalry, which was of Geeta. She was the only female lead in the movie who was shown having a role of an empowered and strong woman. Though she was professionally shown to be on a lower position than any of the three male leads of the movie, still she was shown as a stronger character than the other female leads of the movie.

Hence, it can be clearly seen that a similar theme is treated differently in both the genres of the Hindi cinema. Where infidelity was accepted and portrayed in a bold way in the Parallel cinema, the same infidelity was made to appear as the shackles of burden and guilt for a woman in the Commercial cinema.

Moreover, one very interesting thing can be noted in the commercial films of 70s, the image of mother was always eulogised. In this movie also the maternal force had been highlighted more than once. It was simply emphasised that on whoever side was mother’s love would always succeed in life.

The bond between Shanti and her son Vijay seemed a very strong one and that was why Vijay was seen as not only avenging his mother but also getting successful in life because of her blessings. While physically the mother was not present for the most part of the film but still it was shown through the psyche of Vijay. However, most of the other characters of the movie are shown as ‘motherless’ though if not in reality, as was the case of Shekhar and Kusum where they had a mother but their bond was never shown as strong as Vijay’s was with her mother. Hence, whoever have the most love of their mother would be a winner in life.

In this way the position of a mother is exalted in the film by only depicting her through the actions and emotions of her son. Though another son was shown obeying his mother when Raj rejected Shanti and agreed to marry someone he did not love, hence, showing that not always loving your mother would bring someone peace and happiness in life. Therefore, devotion of mother was a small theme in the movie, it also depicted that one could not be happy by blindly worshipping one’s mother rather one has to have the courage to develop one’s own independent thought in order to understand the circumstances that could be favourable for a happy life.
Thus, by exalting the status of a woman as a mother in the movie the filmmaker is also trying to depict the repercussions of such a devotion. Here again women in their highest form, i.e., motherhood, is not considered to be as the most powerful or influential person.

**MANTHAN**

There are several other movies in the Parallel cinema that take serious subjects and show a real picture to the viewers. One of them is *Manthan* (1976). *Manthan* directed by Shyam Benegal was a cult movie depicting the White revolution of India. Verghese Kurien was the pioneer of the milk cooperative movement in India. The movie was jointly written by him and Vijay Tendulkar. Though the main theme of the movie dealt with the White revolution, it also portrayed various other major issues related to poor farmers and politics in villages.

Here, the females are shown oppressed by the *sarpanch*, as are all the other male members of their families, but they are also shown suppressed by their husbands and other male members of the village as well. Females are seen working and also taking care of their children, which is referring to ‘double day’. Whereas males in the village are mostly engaged in the politics and the decision making process.

Cinematographically if we compare this movie to the commercial films of 70s, *Manthan* has longer scenes with less cuts between scenes, there was less lighting and the filmmaker tried to depict a realistic picture with real locations and properties.

*Bindu shown working in her hut*
Important issues like poverty and caste system was dealt with sincerity in the movie. Life of the uneducated villagers is shown how they follow the powerful people of the village without using their own intellect, which is limited, actually. Women are shown oppressed by everyone, firstly their husbands and then the other powerful people of the village like the sarpanch. A play of power is shown in a subtle way where everyone wants to be the puppeteer so that one could always control the lives of the poor farmers who could make them rich and hence, more powerful.

It showed a realistic picture of how power plays an important role in the society where husbands are powerful over their wives, rich are powerful over poor, and high caste is powerful over low caste. The use and misuse of such power is also shown through oppression of the farmers by the sarpanch and through imbibing the idea of being independent by the men who started the corporate society.

Another important point that the movie highlight was that good and bad people existed everywhere. The group consisting of the veterinary doctor and his team that came to the village was seen as a group of saints who solely came for the betterment of the poor but was soon revealed that a member of that group was no less than the evil oppressors of the village who not only used a girl for his lust but also abandoned her afterwards.

However, an idea of hope was shown at the end of the movie where the power of unity was seen amongst the villagers. The villagers have been living in fear and oppression for too long that they forgot what exactly they could do if united. It was only Bhola, the leader of the Harijan community, who reminded them of their powers and showed them that being dependent on the powerful people would not make them happy, rather they would have to take matters in their own hands. In this case, the corporate society was their own and for their own good.

The women shown in the movie were in the most pathetic condition than the males. They were seen taking care of their family and also working outside their houses. A feisty young woman Bindu was seen taking care of her house, her son, and her cattle alone as her husband had run off on her. But once her husband came back, she became a submissive person. She was uneducated and hence, was used as a tool by her husband to earn money from the sarpanch while accusing the doctor of molesting Bindu.
Even till the end Bindu was unaware of the fact that her husband had made her put her thumb print on a paper that could damage the image of the doctor. She remained confused as to why the doctor had been avoiding her.

In the end when Bhola was convincing everyone to reopen the cooperation society and run that themselves, the women were more than willing to agree with him. Perhaps it was because they had been suffering for too long in the hands of the sarpanch and they wanted to believe Bhola when he said that “yeh sisoty apdi cheh” (this is our society) refereeing to the cooperative society made for the farmers.

If we look at this movie with reference to the theories of feminism, we can clearly say that Marxist Feminism is seen in this one. In 1859, Marx developed ‘Historical Materialism’, a theory that recognises various ways in which the economic and social structure of the society forms the base of any society. This base determines a range of systems which favours a few people who in turn are in power and oppress the other weaker sections of the society. According to Marx, these people in power try to maintain their power in order to increase the class conflict through which they could continue ruling over the low classes and remain in power.

Similarly, the movie showed how sarpanch always wanted to divide the village on the basis of the higher caste and the Harijan community. Basically he wanted to rule over the villagers for long and that was the reason he contested for the head of the cooperation society as he knew that it could bring him more monetary profit in the future.

BHUMIKA

Bhumika (1977) is another film directed by Shyam Benegal that is considered to be one of the masterpieces of the Parallel genre. The film shows how women are supressed and cheated by males. Oppression of a woman by her own husband is depicted from the forefront but it has deeper and more serious issues in its depth.

The plot revolves around a famous actress who is not free to make her own choices. She is unhappy with her marriage and she goes around in the search to find love and true meaning of her existence by leaving her husband and daughter but in the end had to return to her depressing life without any meanings found in the whole journey. Certain symbols and directorial touches can be seen even from the initial
minutes of the movie. The symbolic scene in the beginning showing the poster of a movie saying “Agnipariksha” shows how the life of a woman is no less than a test. A woman keeps on toiling for her family but still her loyalty is questioned at every step.

As a young girl, Usha is seen to be a very sensitive child. In one of the scenes from the flashback showed that she could not bear the killing of a chicken for food rather she was hiding with it so that her mother could not cook it. It shows how innocent and soft-hearted soul was she. Throughout the movie, couple of flashbacks were showed to unfold the childhood of Usha in a glimpse.

The control of a male over a female’s life is shown through various situations. She was not able to make decisions regarding her work. She could not even take control over her body or over her reproduction. She was forced to abort her child due to the male oppressor she had married. This showed how even by being famous and rich she was dependent on her husband for some of the major decisions of her personal life.

Though she was a famous and wealthy movie star, still she was helpless and unloved. She used to find the lost love in other people when she could not find it in her husband. She was not only trying to find the physical form of love, she was also searching for an emotional and spiritual connection with someone with whom she could spend the rest of her life. This quest brought her face-to-face with many males in her way but every time she had to be disappointed as no one stood firm on her standard.

A realistic picture is shown with Usha wearing less make-up or sometimes no make-up at all when she was not performing on stage. In the age where fair and beautiful girls played the lead role in movies, Smita Patil being a dark skinned one played the lead in many of the Parallel films. Hence, the Parallel cinema tried to break the
trends set by the Commercial cinema by showing realistic locations and realistic characters where not only fair girls could be the centre of an important story.

The movie is an example of how it is always the woman who is seen compromising. In the initial scenes of the movie *Usha’s* mother was seen compromising her daughter’s future because they were financially unstable. She was young and immature and could not take her own decisions. Her mother decided her fate of making her a film star though she herself was against it but *Keshav*, who was the only male they thought they could trust, skilfully moulded their decisions for his own good.

In this movie, there were many important dialogues and gestures that showed how women used to suffer in the hands of their male counterparts from ages and how they have started to accept all those oppressiveness with ease.

A powerful dialogue in the movie was, “*Mardon ke mukhote badalte hain, mard nahi. Aur kitna bathkegi tu?*” Showing that all males are alike when it comes to supressing women and showing their power on them. *Usha* changed several partners but no one was different from the other when it comes to care and love. In the end all of them liked having control over her independence, her body, and her decisions.

In the quest of love and peace *Usha* had simply destroyed her life. All she wanted was to have control over her life and her death but she was unable to even die when she wanted to. Life was not fair to her because she was unable to decipher the meaning of life. She did what she thought was the right thing to do but have always been wrong by trying to expect truth, loyalty, and love from the males around her.

*Usha came a whole circle in her life in the end*
In the end she was completely depressed and traumatised due to the long journey of her life and wanted peace and loneliness in order to ponder over where she went wrong. But the last scene showed a phone call from her previous life, the life where she was a popular film star, and all the memories came racing back to her. She knew she could never run away from her past nor could she ever be able to forget all that and so she reluctantly accepted the ugly truths of her life.

**NISHANT**

*Nishant*, a painfully dark film by Shyam Benegal with a hard hitting storyline dealing with the atrocities of the lower class people by the upper class powerful goons. A painful picture of how women are just regarded as objects of lust and are used and thrown by such people.

In the end though a very strong point was being emphasised through the eyes of *Rukmini* when the angry villagers stormed inside the *zamindar’s* house. *Rukmini* kept on watching them beat her brothers in law from her room’s balcony even though she knew that eventually the villagers would climb upstairs and her life could be in danger. But the wrath in her heart was immense and she always wished these evil people to have the worst end ever. She could not help herself but vicariously felt pleasure in watching them bleed to death in the hands of the innocent villagers.

Such an act is somewhat normal for persons who have seen and felt the sufferings for too long. She has always been helpless and was not treated as equal after *Sushila* had come along. The satisfaction in her eyes in that scene depicted the way a sufferer forgets about everything when looking at their oppressor suffering for the evils done.

And the last scene where *Sushila* was certain of her death showed that anguish and distress of a mother that she would not be able to see her child ever again. The pain and grief in her eyes was not because she was going to die by the hands of the furious crowd of villagers rather she secretly wished she could see her son for the last time as the only word uttered by her in such a stressful moment was ‘*Munna*’ showing that a mother could never forget her child even in situations as bleak as this.
Hence, a very realistic picture of the emotions and the feelings of a woman is shown through the representation of these two women, i.e., Rukmini and Sushila. Though both had different social backgrounds and belonged to different classes still their struggle to life was somewhat similar.

The filmmaker established the theme of the movie when it showed how the sons of the zamindar treated the villagers and how women were asked to show up at their house every now and then. The atrocities on villagers were caused by the higher class zamindar only because he had money and power. This power could be seen when even the police and the collector did not help the schoolmaster when he complained after the abduction of his wife.

Such a bleak situation can be seen in every society where the people with power suppress those who are weak and vulnerable. Though the movie was set up in rural area, a similar picture could be seen in every era whether in a rural or an urban setting.

**PURAB AUR PASCHIM**

Manoj Kumar’s movie *Purab aur Paschim* (1970) is based on this concept of contrast between the East and West. The movie put a contrast between Preeti, an Anglo-Indian girl brought up in UK, and Gopi, a traditional Indian girl. Both are competing for the love of Bharat (literally meaning India), an Indian man who is a son of an Indian freedom fighter and had a heart full of Indian morals and ethics.
Bharat met Preeti when he went to London and saw that though Preeti’s father is an Indian she was ignorant of anything about India. Bharat told her many things about the ‘real India’ in a melodramatic song. Subsequently Preeti fell in love with Bharat and asked to marry her but Bharat put one condition that he would go back to India with Preeti. Reluctantly Preeti agreed and went to India as an ideal wife. She gave up her ‘evil westernised’ habits of drinking and smoking and shed her mini-skirts for a sari.

Superficially we can only observe the film as taming of the Anglo-Indian woman by a traditional Indian man. Preeti was seen ready to be turned into a traditional Indian woman only to win the heart of her love. She even described her love for the country as:

I had heard that India is a land of snake charmers. There are snakes here, but people worship them. I had heard that India was full of poverty, but there are some problems in all cultures. The best thing here is the love that people have for each other, the love between parents and children. I have never stayed with my parents as a daughter should…

These were some highly sentimental dialogues of the movie showing an emotional picture of India. It asserted Bharat’s vision of India as a spiritual and a backward one only in the things that do not really matter. Whereas, Preeti’s change of heart showed the superiority of Indian culture and tradition.

**SHOLAY**

The greatest blockbuster hit of the 70s, Sholay (1975), directed by Ramesh Sippy ruled the hearts of the audience even till today. The movie was first of its kind where one can find comedy, tragedy, romance, emotions, drama, and action all packed in

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one. It was what critics would call a complete *masala* movie that contains all the flavours of a commercial cinema.

The movie set records for several things but only a few noted the way the movie portrayed its female leads. Somehow the filmmaker contradicted his own viewpoints when it came to women.

On one hand he portrayed *Basanti*, a garrulous village girl who was self-dependent as she rode a *tonga* for a living while on the other hand he depicted *Radha*, a widow who kept silent for the most part in the film only because she was totally dependent upon her family for happiness. Hence, he wanted to show the two extremes of women but ended up showing that both are dependent on men in some way or the other.

The movie was completely projecting a masculine overtone where strength and power were the vital themes. Revenge, violence, and several action sequences were a proof that it was movie meant for the male audience. The movie in no way showed women as object of lust for the most part but still the vulnerability of each women is depicted vividly through one or the other sequences.

![Basanti offering Jai and Veeru a ride to Ramgarh in her tonga](image)

A famous song of the movie ‘*Mehbooba oh mehbooba*’ became very popular among the movie goers and the song clearly depicted a scantily dressed woman dancing between a gang of men providing them phallic pleasure. The song was included in the movie to let the audience breathe in between the violence and tragedy. It did not help in building the pace of the screenplay of the film still the dancing girl gave relief and pleasure of gaze to the males while watching the film.

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Moreover, the movie showed a patriarchal view where Radha is married to a man she had never met so she hardly had a say in the matter. In a way it was shown how upper classes had restrictions on women. Whereas, Basanti was a woman but a bread winner and it did not matter to her because it was a survival tactic. She was seen fearless, independent, and impulsive. Although if we look at Radha, she was taught to be restrained and sacrificing by the society that terms such women as ‘good’ ones.

In this was Sippy had portrayed two ends of a looking glass, one bold and unrestrained and the other calm and cautious. But even the bold one became the damsel in distress by the end, which highlights that women are powerless in front of men and they would always need a man for safety and security.

Basically, the issue in the commercial movies if simply put is the way the story is written and the screenplay is developed. Most of the times it is written for the males and the female lead(s) are simply added around the male protagonists to fit in the movie. The narrative of the films are constructed by men for men and that is the main reason why females are always represented from a male point of view.

**AMAR PREM**

Shakti Samanta directed movie *Amar Prem* (1972) was about the eternal love between various relationships. Two kinds of love are shown in the movie, one is the platonic love that could be seen between Pushpa and Anand babu and the other is the motherly love that existed between Pushpa and Nandu. Though the eternal love, i.e., Amar Prem, could be seen in both these cases.

The film depicted the concept that females were supposed to live in their husbands’ home till they die. The concept of ‘doli ka jana and arthi ka uthna’ is always projected in the Hindi movies. When Pushpa was thrown out of her house by her husband and his new wife, she was not welcomed at her own home by her mother. Before even listening to the whole story her mother started blaming her that she must have done something wrong in order to get thrown out of the house. Though Pushpa told her mother that her husband had remarried but not even once did her mother cursed or said any ill about him.

It was difficult to side with a woman in a world that was ruled by men, as in one instance when a boy tried to have a deal with Pushpa for an illicit relationship, the
boy’s sister in law complained about *Pushpa* to her mother without confronting her brother in law and once again *Pushpa*’s mother blamed her without listening to her side of the story and threw her out of her house.

It shows how women are always blamed when a man is involved. Men can behave badly with a woman but it will always be the woman who will be looked down upon even by her own family.

Even when *Anand*’s wife did not like him to continue meeting *Pushpa*, her brother came to *Pushpa* instead of confronting *Anand* himself because she was the vulnerable one. There is always a relationship between the powerful and the powerless in the world. In this case also we could see *Pushpa* as a powerless woman while the males were strong and powerful in the eyes of the society.

This was a story of a powerless woman who was kicked out of her home from her husband and then from her own mother and was tricked into prostitution. Though she ended up as a courtesan who sang for her customers but Hindi cinema always had this blurring representation of a courtesan and a prostitute. Hence, in this movie people always refer to *Pushpa* as a prostitute but only a few people who were close to her knew that she was a lady with a heart of gold.

![Pushpa and Nandu bonding](image_url)

The relationship of *Anand* with his wife was seen as not of a happy one. She has been seen as someone who did not have the time for her husband and spent most of
her time outside her home in parties and with friends. It has been established that women were considered to be maids at home. Men were happy to work as a machine the whole day but wanted their wives to be available for them when they want to and work for them at home.

According to them, traditional wives must be at home all the time to entertain their husbands. They were not supposed to groom themselves in a saloon rather be at home cooking food. They have to stay inside the four walls and were not supposed to step in the public sphere where men were supposed to work and connect with people.

Moreover, this was a story of three lonely people namely Pushpa, Anand babu, and Nandu who found solace in each other’s company though they did not share any kind of blood relation. Pushpa’s motherly affection for Nandu is often compared by the goddess Durga as in the end it was being depicted when Nandu was taking her home and the idol of Durga was passing by them, depicting that the mother, as Durga is often called ‘maa’, was going home.

Such a unique bond that they shared was referred by Anand in a dialogue when he said, “Koi agar apna naa ho ke bhi bahut apna ho, to isse kya kehte hain? Bahut pyara rishta na?” (If someone is bound to you without being related to you, then what is it called? A very pure relationship, right?) And he also knew that society would never understand such a platonic relationship.

The society in which we live always needed a name of the relation. They tag people on the basis of a relationship and without a name no relation is complete. And that is why the society often behave badly and foul mouth people they think did not conform to the social views and standards of the society. A song in the film depicts such a condition in an apt way “Kuch to log kahenge, logon ka kaam hai kehna”. In this song Anand mocked the way in which society passed the moral judgement on people without looking deep into anyone’s soul.

One major observation of the film states that both men and women were not treated as equals even if they perform the same activity. While prostitutes like Pushpa were considered filthy by the society, men like Anand were not treated on the same scale. Though brothels are made because of such males in the society but it is always the
woman who has to suffer. This shows the hypocrisy and patriarchal views of the society.

These are only a few parallel Hindi movies that were produced during the initial years of the New Wave Cinema in the Hindi film industry. Along with them the commercial Hindi movies were also being produced with different themes and also a different portrayal of female characters than the parallel ones. This brief comparison throws the light on the fact how differences in the representation of female characters became distinctly prominent in these two genres of the Hindi cinema.