3.1 Evolution of Film Industry in the Western Countries:

Decline of feudal society that accompanied the Industrial Revolution had created a vacuum in the social and cultural life of man in the Western society. However, the parallel revolution in the field of communications could fill this vacuum by introducing the mass media like films. Unlike the telephone, telegraph or even wireless, the invention of film cannot be attributed to any single inventor. It depended upon a whole series of small inventions by different inventors. In the U.S.A, Thomas Edison invented what he called 'Kinetoscope'. In England, William Kennedy Laurie Dickson was the chief experimenter who demonstrated a crude system of projection as early as in 1889. The Kinetoscope inspired a number of European and American inventors to apply their talents to further improve the technique of making and projecting a film.

The solution to the important problem of projecting a film for a large audience was not sought by Edison. To him, his Kinetoscope was a Peep-Show box for individual viewing. However, Lumiere Brothers in France introduced their cinematographic machine and arranged the first public show of a film on a cold
December night in 1895. This show held at the Grand Cafe in Paris was followed by similar shows all over the world including India. Economically, the Cinematographe of Lumiere which could make projection possible for large audience had far reaching implications. Instead of having a medium of entertainment for private home viewing, it set in motion a new system of public entertainment based on production, distribution and exhibition of films.

In subsequent years, inventors and businessmen joined hands to exploit the huge potential of this new scientific toy. This history of the film industry in the West highlights the distinction between invention and innovation. The scientific inventors like Edison could never realise the business opportunities offered by their inventions. However, the businessmen like Melies in France could sense the potential power of cinema and entered into the business in a full-blooded manner. Charles Pathe of France was perhaps the first monopolist in the film industry who had vertical integration right from the manufacture of equipments to the production of films to their distribution and exhibition. As a result of his business acumen, the French films dominated the world market during the early period. In 1914, on the eve of the first World War, Pathe distributed twice as many films in the U.S. market as did the whole American film industry.

Alongwith the film production, the growth of film theatres was inevitable. In 1902, the first full-fledged cinema theatre
made its appearance in Los Angeles in the U.S.A. By 1908, there were as many as 5000 Nickelodeons across the country. The term comprises of Nickel because nickel or five cents was the admission rate and 'odeon' which in Latin meant a small building used for cultural programmes. Soon their number doubled and the film captured the fancy of millions of American viewers.

With growing popularity of cinema in the first decade of the 20th century, there was a rat-race to get patents for various inventions with protracted legal battles. It led to the foundation in 1909 of the Motion Picture Patents Company, a monopoly consortium of the nine major producers in the industry. In U.S.A., it indulged in restrictive trade practices with refusal to supply their films to the distributors who handled films of other producers. This was soon followed by distributors forming their own monopoly trust, The General Film Company. These monopoly arrangements provoked much discontent among independent producers and distributors. Yet by 1912, the monopoly consortia of the producers and distributors controlled more than a half of the 10,000 Nickelodeons in the country. The Anti-Trust suits in the American film industry exposed the ruthless business rivalries and ultimately, the Motion Picture Patents Company was ruled illegal and had to be wound up.

This period witnessed the birth of feature film and the pioneering efforts of film makers like D.W. Griffith brought out the prospects of making huge profits in the film production. His feature film 'Birth of a Nation' produced in 1915, had the
production cost of 1,10,000 $. But its box-office returns were more than 20 Million $. It set the pattern for the 'blocl-busters', the film projects in which huge sums of money were invested in epic productions with the hope of much higher returns.

The First World War was responsible for the decline of film industry in France and Italy which allowed American Companies to dominate the world market and consolidate their position by series of mergers. The period during and after the first World War witnessed the rise of Movie Moguls with the emergence of the Studio system, controlled by big companies like Paramount, Universal and M.G.M. These companies controlled a major section of the market and each was vertically integrated in production, distribution and exhibition. With the advent of talkie, the American Companies further captured the English speaking market at home and abroad. The stranglehold of these companies on the distribution channels made it virtually impossible for an independent producer to find exhibition outlets. No doubt, there were many small production companies known as 'Poverty Row Companies', but they failed to make any significant impact on the film market. The only exception was Columbia Pictures which could move to the ranks of major companies in the late forties.

When American film industry was busy in capturing the world market, the film industry in Europe, specially in the Great Britain faced the threat of extinction caused by the competition
of the American films. As the films produced in the U.S.A. could cover most of their production cost in the home market, they could be sold in the overseas market at a price ridiculously lower than the production cost of British films. Only with Government intervention which prescribed compulsory quota of screening British films in the British theatres, the film production in Britain could survive. Moreover, British Government offered financial assistance to the film producers which could prevent a sharp decline in the number of British films.

The American domination in the world market was also due to the industrial aspect of the American system of production. In European countries like France there was more emphasis on the artistic aspects of film making. In the U.S.A. right from the early times, production companies considered their studios to be factories involved in the production of a commodity, rather than the creation of an art. The migration of American film makers to the Western coast around 1910, led to the emergence of Hollywood as the film capital of the world. This isolation of American film makers from prevailing artistic influences on the East Coast was further instrumental to highlight the business aspect of the film-making. The men who established major production companies had minimal experience of established literary culture. They were for the most part, first or second generation immigrants from Germany, Poland and Russia who had started out as merchants, had moved into film exhibition and
from there to film distribution. They became film producers in order to provide products for their theatres. With their cold-blooded commercial approach, the American films flowed out to other countries and the film artistes flowed in. The exodus of talent from Europe to Hollywood slowly led to the emergence of star system under which the big stars became the most salable commodity. However, the Movie Moguls of the production companies had full control over the system prior to the second World War. Artistes, script writers and technicians were callously treated as intermediate goods required only for the output of feature films.

The period after the second World War witnessed the impending threat of television and its effects in the early fifties were devastating. The T.V. grew out of radio rather than film and naturally employed radio people. Instead of realising that they could just produce film products for T.V. as for theatrical release, studios tried to fight. For years, they exhibited unbusinesslike short sightedness and often destroyed their old films rather than allow their telecast. The process of adapting to the new conditions was unnecessarily slow and painful. It was only after 15 years or more, that the big studio companies began to understand how best to operate in the new situation. Aging owners had rigidly clung to the old methods of mass production in studio complexes with enormous overhead cost which made film production economically unviable. Their assets shrank, the original founders died or retired and it was
increasingly impossible to run big studio complexes. As a result, they were merged into the developing inter-industrial conglomerates of fifties and sixties. Desilu bought the R.I.O. studios, the United Artists took over Warner Brothers, the Decca Record Organisation acquired the Universal Studio. The Music Corporation of America acquired the old movies of the Paramount Company and the Paramount Company itself was absorbed into Gulf Western Industries in 1966. Thereafter, the United Artists' was taken over by Trans-American Corporation which had multiple business activities like car renting, computer services, financing, life insurance, airlines, microfilm service and real estate tax service. Thus, the film production is now controlled by a new generation of business executives who run multinational, multiproduct business in which film making is only a small part. These companies have mostly dismantled their studios and now they engage independent producers and assign production projects to them with elaborate financial planning and market research. Their business is thus really confined to financing and distributing the films made by such independent producers.

Internationally, the death of old studio system in the U.S.A. had positive effects mainly because it allowed more healthy and fair competition among the countries producing the films for the world market. In many countries, including Britain, France, Italy and Sweden, their Governments made conscious efforts to promote their own film industry, which
could somewhat reduce the American domination in the world market.

This historical review of the Western film industry confirms the phenomenon of business aspect overshadowing technical and artistic aspects in the film industry all over the world, for which India is no exception.

3.2 Film Industry in Socialist Countries:

In capitalist countries, the film industry has grown within the laissez-faire system, but the development of cinema in socialist countries is a product of conscious government planning, which regards the cinema industry not only as a means of recreation but as a medium of mass education.

In Russia, the first feature film, 'Freedom in the Lower Volga' was released in 1908, ten years before the revolution. After the revolution, on August 27, 1919, the Soviet Government nationalised the Cinema industry and since then, production, distribution and exhibition of feature films are all undertaken in the public sector. As a result the profit motive has never been a driving force behind film production. The Soviet Union, like India, has rich literary tradition and even the Western film industry has drawn from the Russian literature and has produced masterpieces like 'War and Peace' and 'Dr. Zivago'. Therefore, the Soviet film industry has usually the stories from the literary works of their great authors.

The experience of film makers during the pre-revolution period allowed post-revolution film industry to blossom during

Th 6965

Th 6965
the twenties. The sound technique was mastered during the early thirties, whereas the forties bore the imprint of a country at war, showing the heroic deeds of the Soviet armed forces. The early fifties stood out for the emphasis on history and there was a monumental whirl of interest in eminent personalities. Like in other spheres of life, the Soviet Cinema also became mature in sixties and started dealing with delicate themes based on personal relationships. The seventies consolidated this advance and produced films for younger audience with more freedom to creative film makers. At present, the Soviet film industry has annual output of 170 feature films and another 200 telefilms.

It has largest network of 1,51,400 cinema theatres and average yearly attendance of cinema is as large as 4200 million viewers. The Soviet Union has the distinction of highest per capita visits to cinema-14 per year. The commercial T.V. which made inroads in the cinema industry in the West, has no such impact on the Soviet Film Industry. This is probably because of low entertainment value of the State T.V. programmes, with accent on propaganda and education.

The Soviet Union has been a major market for the Indian films with the films of Raj Kapoor enormously popular among the Soviet masses. Because of rigid state control on the medium of film, the Soviet films have not been able to compete with Western films in the world market. However, in the recent past, there are systematic efforts to promote Soviet films with the
help of their dubbing in English and other languages and to capture a segment of market mainly in the third world countries.

China, the most populous country in the world, also has a long history of film making. The first feature film in China was produced in the same year-1913 when the first Indian feature film appeared on the screen. The film titled 'The Suffering Couple' was an instant success. However, in the subsequent years, the Chinese film industry could not prosper as did the film industry in India. Most of the films in Chinese language were produced in Hong Kong, away from the mainland China. Since the socialist revolution, the film industry in China is also run in the public sector. The Film Bureau, under the Ministry of Culture is the final authority to develop the film industry. It includes China Film Distribution and Exhibition Corporation, China Film Export and Import Corporation and some other organizations like 18 Studios, a dubbing theatre and 40 film processing laboratories. Though the production of documentary films abounds in China, only 100 feature films are annually produced. The China Film Distribution and Exhibition Corporation has about 4 lakh employees, with 1 lakh 50 thousand projection units, of which 3,000 are urban cinema theatres. Realising the significance of cinema in the sphere of mass entertainment, the Chinese Government has kept very low admission rates-about 0.068 U.S.$ per viewer. In the last few years, the feature films produced by Chinese film makers have demonstrated their artistic potential and some of them have won awards in the
International Film Festivals.

3.3 The Historical Background of the Indian Film Industry:

The 7th July 1896 was a historical day for the film industry in India because it was on this day, the first motion picture was screened at the Watson’s Hotel, Bombay, by the agents of Lumiere Brothers. The Lumiere Brothers along with scientists like Edison are regarded as pioneers in developing the technology of motion picture. It is important to note that the Indian audiences had their introduction to a projected motion picture in the same year as British, Russian and American audiences. In fact it was in less than three months after the first showing of a motion picture on April 23, 1896 in New York, a privileged few from Bombay had opportunity to have viewing of similar picture.

Of course from 1896 to 1912, the films screened in India were mostly imported and had relatively short length of about 100 to 200 feet and it gradually increased upto 1000 feet. In 1899, a Marathi speaking photo goods dealer, Harishchandra Sakharam Bhatawadekar (Known as Savedada) had the distinction of being the first exhibitor and film maker in India. It was he, who shot the first Indian short film "Return of Wrangler Paranjape" depicting the welcome accorded to Wrangler Paranjape after his triumphant educational career at Cambridge. In the first decade of the 20th Century, J.F. Madan emerged as the main exhibitor and in fact his chain of theatres which had 126 theatres under the control became a topic of discussion in those
In 1913, the first Indian feature film "Raja Harishchandra" was produced by another Maharashtrian, Dadasaheb Phalke, who is hailed as "the Father of the Indian Film Industry". This film had a length of 3700 feet and it was truly a pioneering attempt because Dadasaheb Phalke was a one man film company. He wrote the script, designed the sets, prepared the costumes, perforated the imported negative, directed the actors (mostly family members), cranked the camera, processed and printed the exposed film and edited the positive print. Besides producing the film, he marketed it himself taking the print from place to place in a bullock cart with his own projection machine. Since then, Film Industry in India progressed in leaps and bouts, with 1279 silent films produced from 1913 to 1934. During this era of silent films, the film makers like Baburao Painter and V. Shantaram stole the limelight. Of course, in spite of the growth of film production in India, this era was still dominated by the imported films which represented almost 85% of the total number of films screened in India. In those times, the ticket rates ranged between one anna and four annas and even in those days, this new medium of entertainment captured the fancy of the Indian masses. During the period after first World War, the Indian feature films were produced at a cost of about Rs.20,000 whereas the prints of the foreign films were available only for Rs.2,000. It is in fact a tribute to the enterprise of early film makers in India that in an era of silent films when the
language barriers were totally absent, the Indian film industry could not only survive but prosper against the colonial setting with no protection from the competition of the foreign films. In fact, the Indian film industry is the only industry which could develop and overtake the major film producing countries like Britain without a semblance of government protection to the industry.

Though government did precious little to nourish the industry, its controls on the industry started from 1918 when the Indian Cinematograph Act was passed to provide for the censorship of films and licensing of cinema theatres. The amendments to the Act in 1919 and 1920 made the control of cinemas and censorship a provincial subject. Subsequently, the censorship was again taken over by the Central Government, but the other controls remained within the jurisdiction of the State Government. In 1922, the entertainment tax was first introduced in Bengal soon followed by the Bombay State. The ever-increasing incidence of this tax was and is the only certainty in the film industry in its highly speculative business. During the twenties, the film industry in India grew so much in importance that to study its problems, the Government had to appoint the Indian Cinematograph Committee which presented its report in 1928. This Committee headed by T. Rangachariar had shown great insight into the problems of the industry and many of its observations are valid even today. According to Late shri B.V. Dharap, a renowned film historian, the report of the committee
is like a Bible of the Indian Film Industry. Of course, the report was totally neglected by the British rulers because many of its recommendations were inconvenient from the viewpoint of the British Film interests.

The year 1931 ushered in the era of the talkie films when Ardeshir Irani of the Imperial Film Company from Bombay produced the first talking feature, 'Alam Ara' in Hindi language, which was screened at the Majestic theatre in Bombay. It had such an astonishing impact on the Indian audience that a 4 anna ticket was sold for Rs. 4 in the black market.²¹.

In the same year, 22 other Hindi films, 3 Bengali films, one Tamil and one Telugu film appeared in their respective language areas. All these sound films made money because they could get a natural language protection which was absent in the silent era. Alam ara included about a dozen songs. Another early Hindi film is said to have had about 40 songs.²² So all the sound films produced in India in these early years had a profusion of songs and dances. These films were described as 'all-talking, all-singing, all dancing features'. Thus, the Indian sound film of 1931 was not only the heir of the silent film but it also inherited the river of music and theatrical art right from the golden period of Kalidasa.

In the first decade of sound films, the New Theatres, Prabhat and Bombay Talkies of Himanshu Rai were the pace setters and moulders of public taste. These and similar other big companies of 1930's were an extension of joint family system.
Each company had a wide range of personnel and it hardly had to turn to outsiders for any services. Each had its own laboratory, studio and preview theatre. The Prabhat Film Company had in fact its own zoo as well as swimming pool. No doubt, some artistes with histrionic talent were stars in the sense that they were widely known and received lot of media attention. But the star system as such was yet to develop. Even the popular stars used to be employees of the film company and they were never the pivots of planning and they could not control the film production. Producers and directors were dominant and respected figures. The difference in salaries between top actors and other artistes was not as wide as it is found in the present conditions. Rs. 3,000 remained the ceiling for monthly salary of any star and established actors of lesser reputation could get at the most Rs. 600 a month. A new comer had to remain content with a monthly salary of Rs. 60 only. Thus, the period of thirties was the period dominated by studio system. The studio was, in fact, the star and all others had to fall in line with the studio moguls. The film companies with heavy overheads could survive only because, low salaries were considered acceptable by the artistes.

During the thirties, the Indian Film Industry also started becoming more organised. The Motion Picture Society of India was formed in 1935, followed by the Bengal Motion Picture Association in 1936, Indian Motion Picture Producers’ Association in 1937. A year later, the South Indian Film Chamber
of Commerce made its appearance. This rise of regional bodies was due to the fact that the talkie era allowed film production in different regional languages and also allowed the growth of production centres in coastal areas like Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. The advent of talkie sounded the death knell of the silent films and their production declined from 246 in 1931 to 7 in 1934 and zero in 1936.24.

As compared to Marathi and Bangali literature, Hindi language had a meagre literary background. Yet, the troublesome structure of the Indian language map demanded concentration on Hindi. If many observers have found in the Indian films an increasing rootlessness, and increasing divorce from reality, one reason may be that many of its finest talents have had to exert themselves in a language not of their own, spoken by people from whom they were both physically and culturally removed. This became and will remain one of the agonies of the Indian film industry.25

During 1930's, the production cost increased from Rs. 20,000 to Rs.1.25 lakhs per film, and the box-office collections went up from meagre Rs. 2 lakhs in 1913 to Rs. 1 crore in 1931. But the film production showed a constant increase. The number of cinema houses and studios also increased rapidly and the industry got firmly established by the end of the thirties.

The early forties was the period of the Second World War. The inflationary tendencies increased the cost of production of feature films by four times and collections increased by three
times. The prosperity enjoyed by the film industry was thus wiped out to a large extent by increasing costs and taxation. To meet the acute shortage of raw films, the Government restricted the length of feature films to 11000 feet (3350 meters) and the allotment of raw film by 48%. The exhibitors found it difficult to stay in the business due to heavy taxation and as a result, the number of cinemas was reduced from 1265 in 1930 to 1136 in 1941. The World War II ended in September 1945 and soon after, the control on distribution of raw films was lifted.

The period of Second World War also witnessed the beginning of the practice of compulsory screening of Government News Reels and Documentaries for war-time propaganda. This evil legacy of the war is still continued only with a short break from 1946 to 1948. This imposed the burden on the film industry to spare time and also to pay rentals for such films which apparently nobody wanted to screen.

In the post-war period, due to inflationary boom, the production activity was accelerated. It attracted new entrepreneurs and new capital in the film world. There was influx of new producers who had no studios, no laboratories, no acting staffs. But they started getting the laboratory and studio facilities on rental basis and the stars also made themselves available on per picture basis. Stars began to leave the big companies as they could earn more in a one-picture contract than what they used to earn in a year of employment. Thus, the institution of free-lancing emerged and grew rapidly.
Under these circumstances, the big old companies could not afford to maintain a large full time staff. The war-time shortage of raw film and its allocation in favour of established producers temporarily controlled the emergence of new film producers; but after 1944-45, the fragmentation of big studio system began again.

As the industry became more and more fragmented into small production units, which more often than not dissolved after production of one film to be replaced by others, the film industry offered an increasingly attractive investment opportunity for black marketeers and profiteers. As the star fees shot up from Rs. 20,000 to Rs. 2,00,000 per film, the production budgets of the films produced in Bombay jumped from average of Rs. 90,000 in the pre war period to Rs 4 or 5 lakhs in the post-war period. It was not unusual for stars to receive half the budget.

While the stars started squeezing the industry, there was no relent on the taxation front. Before the War, the entertainment tax was about only 12.5% in most of the provinces. During the War, the tax rates were increased supposedly on the temporary basis. But on the heels of freedom came a fresh wave of further increases and by 1949, the tax rates ranged from 25% to 75% with an average of 33.5%. This led to first country-wide strike of all cinema houses on June 30, 1949 as a protest against the tax policy. This attracted the attention of Government towards woes of the industry and in the same year.
the Film Enquiry Committee was appointed under the Chairmanship of Shri S.I. Patil.

This Committee submitted its report in 1951 and recommended institutional arrangements for training in film crafts and techniques, for financing films, for marketing them abroad and for state recognition of the achievements in arts and sciences of film production. These recommendations led to slow but definite action on the part of the Union Government. National Film Awards were instituted in 1954. The Film Finance Corporation was set up in 1960, similarly, during the 1960's. Film and Television Institute of India, National Film Archives of India (both in Pune) and Children's Film Society of India were established. Thus, the Union Government responded to the recommendations of the Committee while the State Governments chose to ignore the Committee Report, especially in relation to the suggestion of sizable relief in the entertainment tax. During the period of 1950's, the Indian film industry continued its onward march with many landmarks to the credit of the industry. In 1951, the Central Board of Film Censors was formed. In the same year, the Film Federation of India was launched as a representative body of all sectors of the film industry. In 1952, India organized first International Film Festival and in 1954, Bimal Roy's 'Do Bigha Jannah' and Raj Kapoor's 'Boot Polish' won international acclaim.

Satyajit Ray made his appearance on the international film scene with the award for his 'Pather Panchali' at the 1956
Cannes Film Festival. His triology of Pathar Panchali, Aparajito and Apur Sansar firmly imprinted India’s name on the International film map. On the front of commercial cinema, the year 1952 witnessed the production of India’s first technicolour film ‘Jhansi Ki Rani’ by Sohrab Modi of Minerva Movitone, Bombay. V. Shantaram followed with his colour extravaganza, ‘Jhanak Jhanak Payal Baje’ in 1955. Three years later his ‘Do Anihen Bara Hath’ won both National and International awards. ‘Mother India’, an outstanding film of Mehboob, was produced in the same year (1955) and it was nominated for the Oscar Award. Thus, during the 1950’s, the Indian film industry had taken roots both quantitatively and qualitatively. In the late 1950’s, it ranked second in respect to capital investment, fourth in respect of the amount of wages paid and fifth in respect to the number of people employed among the entire industrial sector of India.

The 1960’s brought the colour era in the Indian film industry. In 1963, only 12 colour films out of total number of 297 films were produced in India. The same number rose to 75 out of 396 in 1970 and 178 out of 411 in 1972. The advent of colour films was no doubt a great technological leap. But the production cost went on increasing and the star system further consolidated its hold on the industry. The tax rates continued to increase and the problem of as many as 30% of the total number of films remaining incomplete exposed the unhappy state of film industry. Though, many Indian films won laurels in
foreign film festivals, the shortage of theatres along with over-production of films plagued the industry. In 1968, the crisis in Bombay film industry led to 90 days closure of cinema theatres in the Bombay city. During these years, the regional language films in the South started making their presence felt and Madras became a leading film centre making a serious bid to overtake Bombay in film production.

The 1970's made film production in India a highly extravagant proposition with the rise of multi-starrers in Hindi films. The big budget Hindi films held the audience glued to the theatre seats and it was this decade which created a super-star system rising from star-system. Rajesh Khanna and then Amitabh Bachchan became almost one man industry with millions of rupees invested only in their star value. 'Sholay' proved to be a trend setter with glorified violence depicted in the Indian films. This period also highlighted the importance of screen play and dialogue in the success of a film. Perhaps, first time in the history Salim and Javed became stars in their own right and the trade circles confirmed that their price became almost as high as the price of big star actors. In the South, the Malayalam Film Industry opened a new chapter of sex movies and other South Indian language films followed the Malayalam example. This period saw the emergence of India as the largest film producing country in the world and the period also exposed the dualistic character of the Indian film making. The cleavage between off-beat artistic films with bold themes and formula films with
heavy dose of sex and violence widened further and the commercial cinema and art cinema refused to meet each other at the midway.

3.4 Historical Review of Marathi Films:

The first Marathi Talkie "Ayodhyecha Raja" was produced by Prabhat Film Company of Kolhapur in 1932. This company was a partnership firm and the partners were V. Shantaram, V.G. Damle, H.R. Dabir, S. Fattelal and S.B. Kulkarni. In 1933, it moved to Pune and released a number of sound films in Marathi language, some of which were also made in Hindi. Most of these films were based on mythological or devotional stories.

The talkie era of 30s was born in Maharashtra. Maharashtra is thus a cradle of the Indian Film Industry and the citadel of the Hindustani Cinema. In this congenial atmosphere, Marathi film industry made its impact during the early years of the talkie era. It was a Marathi film of 1936, 'Sant Tukaram' produced by Prabhat Film Company and directed by V. Damale and Fattelal which became the first Indian film to win an international award at the Venice Film Festival. During this period, V. Shantaram, Master Vinayak, Vishram Bedekar, Acharva Atre and Maharshi baburao Painter showed their artistry and craftsmanship to produce master pieces like Kunku, Sant Dnyaneshwar, Manus, Shejari, Brahmacari, Brandichi Batali, Dharmatma and Savakari Pash. The period from 1936 to 1942 was the golden age of Marathi cinema. The variety of themes, the understanding of the film medium and the outstanding
performances of Marathi artistes marked the Marathi film production during this period.

At that time, there was a common practice among producers of Marathi films to produce Hindi versions at the same time. The Prabhat films like Kunku, Manus and Shejari were bilingual. Bombay was obviously in the midst of 21 million Marathi speaking population. But there was no development of a film producing centre in Hindi speaking belt of the central and the northern areas. Therefore, Bombay automatically emerged as the main centre of Hindi films. As a result the Marathi film producers were also gazed by the magnetic appeal of the Hindi films which could cater to potential market of 140 million Hindi speaking population. The gifted film makers like V. Shantaram could not resist the temptation of producing Hindi films. It is true that, it made them more renowned in the Indian film industry, but at the same time, they failed to maintain the identity of Marathi films and also slowly withdrew their interest from the production of Marathi films.

The production of Marathi films received tremendous set-back during the war period. The introduction of licensing system for film production and the raw stock shortage reduced the number of Marathi films from 13 in 1942 to 8 in 1943, 5 in 1944 and zero in 1945. When V. Shantaram left Prabhat Film Company in 1941, there was further chaos in the industry and the period from 1943 to 1946 was dark period in the history of Marathi film industry. Yet during this period, two outstanding
Marathi films were produced. They were Ram Shastri (by Prabhat) and Ram Rajya (by Prakash Pictures of Vijay Bhatt).

The post-war period proved to be epoch-making for Marathi film industry. In 1954, 'Shyam Chi Aai' produced by Acharya Atre won the President's Gold Medal in the very first year of the institution of the Award. During this period, Marathi 'Lawani & Tamasha' made its successful appearance on the screen with 'Ram Joshi' of Rajlalmal, and 'Jay Malhar' by Baburao Pendharilal. These films also led to the discovery of G.D. Madgulal as the lyricist of high quality. This period also launched Raja Paranjpe, Datta Dharmadhikari, Anant Mane, Shantaram Athawale, P.L. Deshpande and Raja Thakur as outstanding film personalities. The artistes like Raja Gosavi, Usha Kiran, Hansa Wadkar, Jayashree Gadkar and Ramesh Dev took the film world by storm through their memorable performances in Marathi films. 'Pudhache Paul', 'Amar Bhupali', 'Wahinichya Bangdya', 'Bala Jo Jo Re', 'Shilaleli BayaIo', 'Manini' and 'Oon Paus' are the films produced in this period still remembered by the connoisseurs of Marathi films. 'Sangtye Aaia' created history with the record run of 138 weeks.

The decade of sixties did not augur well for Marathi film industry. No doubt, the linguistic Maharashtra State was born in 1960. It was hoped that the creation of Maharashtra State would give boost to Marathi film industry. But, actually Government made only Marathi dramas tax-free and so, Marathi film industry was exposed to competition from both the sides-Hindi films and Marathi stage. The success of 'Sangtye Aaia', 'Hela Ishara Jata
Jata’ and ‘El Gav Rara Bhangadi’ of Anant Mane created an impression that only the films meant for rural masses with rural themes can succeed at the box-office. The new tide of Tamasha films actually resulted into virtual loss of urban middle class audience for Marathi film industry. The number of Marathi films annually produced which was 17 in 1960, 22 in 1962 declined to 16 in 1969 and was only 11 in 1974. It was only due to ingenuity of film makers like Anant Mane that Marathi film industry was saved from the total collapse in 1960’s. The stagnancy in the production of Marathi films became more heart-burning in the context of rapid increase in the production of films in other regional languages.

In Marathi film industry, the seventies was undoubtedly a decade of Dada Londhe. No doubt, it was ‘Pinjra’ of V. Shantaram (1972) which registered phenomenal success and proved that a good Marathi film can draw capacity audience both in rural and urban areas. However, ‘Songadya’ of Dada Londhe in 1971 paved the path for typical Dada Londhe movies which were to be a part of the world film history. In a decade, Dada Londhe found a place in the Guinness Book of World Records, being the only producer in the world to have 8 consecutive films celebrating silver-jubilee at the box-office. It was truly a decade of total domination by Dada Londhe with his films some times capturing 30 to 50% share of the total box-office receipts of Marathi films. Though Dada Londhe created a new image of village simpleton, popular among
the masses, the critics saw a steady erosion of the quality of his films over the period. During this decade, heroine-oriented films of Sushama Shiromani, family melodramas of Annasaheb Deulgaonkar, Vishwas Sarpotdar and Ramalal Torne achieved some success at the box-office. An off-beat film 'Shantata Court Chalu Ahe' based on a play by Vijay Tendulkar and produced by non-Marathi pair of Satyadev Dubey and Govind Nihalani was a box-office disaster. Same was the fate of 'Akriti' (1981) by Amol Palekar and 'Zaahol' (1980) by Dr. Shriram Lagoo. However, Sinhasan (1979) and Umbartha (1981) produced by Dr. Jabbar Patel, Samna by Ramdas Phutane and Shapit (1982) by Vinay Newatkar were well received by both audience and critics.

The Marathi film industry received a fresh lease of life in the form of the refund of entertainment tax to the producers as financial assistance for their next production venture. The credit for this scheme goes partly to the efforts made by Marathi Chitrapal Mahamandal, which was formed in 1967 under the Chairmanship of V. Shantaram. V. Shantaram, Bhalji Pendharkar, Sudhir Phadke, Raja Paranjape, initiated dialogue with the Maharashtra State Government and Shri Madhukar Rao Chaudhari who was then the State Finance Minister was persuaded to give relief to the problem-ridden Marathi film industry. These efforts yielded positive results and since 1975 the tax-refund scheme was introduced. Since then the Marathi film producers have received more than Rs. 3.60 crores financial assistance from the Government. The scheme was instrumental to have some increase in
the total number of Marathi films produced each year and at the same time, it encouraged the production of colour films in Marathi. In 1972, only one film was made in colour. By 1982 almost all the Marathi films were produced in colour. The scheme could attract a young crop of film producers like Mahesh Pothisre, Satish Fuliarni, Bipin Warty, Arvind Samant, Girish Ghanei and Vinay Newallar. However, the scheme could not make a durable impact to improve the quality of films nor did it register any appreciable increase in the number of Marathi films. Inspite of tax-refund, colour Marathi films continued to be produced in a budget of less than Rs.8 lakhs which is among the lowest in all regional language films produced in India. During this period only two Marathi films, '22 Jurie 1897' produced in 1979 by Jayu and Nachleet Patwardhan from Pune and Atyachar' produced in 1981 by Bhaskar Chandawargar) could get the finance of the National Film Development Corporation. Otherwise, film production in Marathi depended on State Government, some commercial banks and private sources of finance.

The foregoing historical review of the Indian film industry and the Marathi film industry leads to some important observations about the evolution of the industry:

(1) The development of the Indian film industry has occurred within the framework of laissez-faire system with no central direction.

(2) The indigenous entrepreneurship has been instrumental
to develop the industry without foreign capital and despite foreign competition.

(3) The development of the industry could be achieved without any protection by the British Government. This was mainly possible because of the distinct identity of Indian culture and variety of Indian languages along with the ignorance of masses about the English language.

References

22. Film Federation of India: op.cit. P. 83.