CHAPTER 2

JUNIOR ARTISTES AND FILM STARS: UNPACKING THE INVISIBLE SCREEN WORKER

“Everyone can mess up but background can’t afford to be messed up.”

“Screen workers are divided into three categories. The first category includes - Hero, Heroine, Villain; the second category comprises of Supporting Actors, and the third category includes - Fighters, Dancers and Junior Artistes. However in the film frame irrespective of the category, we are all screen actors, belonging to the family of screen workers. Some are made prominently visible, and the rest prominently invisible. It is amazing, how the camera works, all the three categories are very much on the screen, but only the first two categories are made noticeable. Nevertheless, it is we the Junior Artistes who give expression, authenticity and meaning to the scene – by standing in the background, occasionally Junior Artistes also get to deliver a dialogue, in order to create the mood for the scene. On the screen, in any frame, but for the main actors, the rest are all Junior Artistes. Hence, even if one is investing crores of rupees, they can’t make a film without Junior Artistes. We are inevitably present in almost all scenes and frames. Junior Artistes are integral to film making. If you do not decorate the showroom, none would want to even look at it. Film Directors decorate their films using Junior Artistes, thus on a film set, do not be surprised if you hear instructions running on a mike, ‘two of you stand here’, ‘you go behind’, ‘you come in the front’.

- Amir Sadruddin Lakdawala, (Junior Artiste, Mumbai, 2013)

Introduction

The Junior Artistes have been an important part of film narration right from the first Indian film, though they were not called so back then. In the eleven minutes and nineteen seconds of what is available of the first full length Indian film Raja Harishchandra (1913), a popular story recounted in both the epics Mahabharata and Ramayana we see several people being deployed in the background. The film’s treatment is episodic; most of the camera set-ups are static, with plenty of movement within the frame. The prominent role played by those whom we now know as Junior
Artistes in making a realistic film is emphatically established right from this pioneer film of Indian cinema. In this particular film whether it is by playing the role of the crowd, or in their costume or character roles, or just with their mere presence, Junior Artistes help set the scene in the film, enabling the director and the lead actors to create the make-believe world, which is essential to transfer the audience to another plane. This is evident in some of the critical scenes in the film, such as the opening scene, where the royal family is shown greeting the public, to the scene where the king is banished, and a huge crowd outside the palace bids him a tearful farewell, to the scene where the king goes out on a hunting expedition with his entourage – if these scenes look and feel real, grand and evocative, despite the technical limitations, then the credit is due to the Junior Artistes.

Casting of Junior Artistes has been and still is a significant part of film narrative but their labour is rarely acknowledged by the film industry. As noted by Film historian Richard De Cordova, the growth of film as an industry “was to some degree contingent upon the concealment of knowledge concerning the involvement of human labour in film production” (deCordova 24) Therefore Junior Artistes whether casted in vital background scenes or as a body double, they are invisiblized both on the screen and real life. This invisibilization is generally attributed to the phenomenon of stardom, where the ‘stars’ have overshadowed all other aspects of film making. Though ‘star system’, which has today become the dominant characteristic of Indian film industry, is a major cause, this marginalization of Junior Artistes cannot be solely attributed to it, because such a narrow analysis will lead to overlooking other important factors contributing to this work culture.

There is a huge body of information on the major technical developments in the art of film making, such as the transition between silent and sound films, the use of color, the consequences of lightweight equipment and computer-generated imagery etc., Hence it is no surprise that history of Indian film seems inextricably intertwined with the history of film technology. But it is shocking to know that there is a huge information gap, regarding various other aspects of film making, particularly with various categories of screen artists, who define the composition of film images. Is this concealment of information or negligence to document such vital information, accidental or purposive? Not that screen artists have not been studied, but whenever
screen artists have been studied, it (has been) is mostly with the focus on stars, to the exclusion of other screen artists; the existing immense scholarship on stardom is proof of this claim. Even the research on star often focussed on issues regarding individualism, authenticity, cultural representation, ideology, personality, fame, and charisma, illustrating possible ways to understand star power in different dimensions. For instance, in both his works *Stars* (1979) and *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (1986) Dyer suggests that a star’s image is derived from a variety of sources including, promotional materials, filmic presentation of the star, criticism and commentaries ranging from audience to academic scholarship. The book *Star Text* (1991) edited by Jeremy G Butler has been an important source for understanding stardom. According to Butler, the acting/performance text is one among many that constructs the star image. He says that the stars’, image must be in general circulation in the culture. Performances in film narratives are the spectator’s principal way of knowing the star, but stars are also presented to us through magazine articles and interviews, press release, news items, television talk shows and so forth – in short, a multitude of media texts. The polysemic construct fabricated by all these texts is what we call a ‘star image’ (Butler 12).

The performance text composed of signifiers, such as bodily gestures and facial expressions – raw material of acting – are patterned into structures that have meaning for the spectator and give him or her pleasure when placed in the larger context of sign system of an entire film. Since the mid-1970’s, small inroads have been made in the interpretation of performance texts and these have been largely concerned with the image of film actor as ‘star’ and its ideological significance.

According to Stanislavskian concept the role is seen as “a re-expression of the actor’s own living individuality” that is, the performance is seen as an organic blend of the actor’s personality and the scripted character’s attributes. In contradiction to Stanislavski, mechanical acting is extolled. The body is viewed as a machine that can be manipulated in specific ways to create performances. Lev Kuleshov, in his essay ‘The training of the actor’ refers to his actors as ‘models’ highly skilled automations, with no need of emotional memories (Kuleshov 52).

V. I. Pudovkin, elaborates on the question, whether an actor needs to know other aspects of cinema for growth within the industry. In his essay on Film Acting,
he says: “The growth of a film actor cannot be separated from practical work on his film, and accordingly he must be closely linked with it, beginning with the final polishing of the scenario in the course of rehearsals and not being discarded from it during the period of cutting.” (Pudovkin 40).

Bertolt Brecht urges the actor to think of him or herself first as a social being, one who is part of a complex social structure. Barry King approaches stardom in mainstream cinema through what he considers as a “cultural materialist” way and for him acting in mainstream films functions as performance strategy that is shaped by economic practices and ideological discourses. King argues that stardom has a strategy of performance that is an adaptive response to the limits and pressures exerted upon acting as a discursive practice in the mainstream cinema. With the limits and pleasure including the pro-filmic meanings that an actor’s physiognomy and carriage possess within the host culture, the signifying system of the cinematic apparatus partly enhances and partly deskills the actor’s performance and the day to day economics of actor’s unemployment (King126). According to Barry King, stardom develops as a response to the interaction of three areas of discursive practice: the cultural economy of the human body as a sign; the economy of signification in film; economy of labour market for actors. Further elaborating on the economics of labour market, he believed that it’s the mediation of the labour market for actors that sets the limits of variation in the other fields of practice – and hence the hegemonic form of acting, viz. stardom – these latter practices present recurrent possibilities and contradictions on the within and at the boundaries of the hegemonic practice.

Commenting on the predominant tendency at the level of casting, in favour of the strategy of selection based on personification, he notes how actor becomes a most rudimentary form of symbol. Such a form of typecasting is to be found in its most pronounced and literal form in the film industry and, to a lesser degree, in the theatre. Thus, the ideal young leading man should be aged between 19-25 years, at least 5 feet10 inches tall but not over 6ft 2 inches, well proportioned physically, handsome, rugged or interesting looking, have all his own teeth and hair. The ideal ingénue should be aged between18-22 years, be of minimum 5 ft 3 inches tall, and possess a well proportioned body and an exceptionally beautiful and interesting face. Obviously
enough, few if any actors meet all these requirements, but this does not remove their pertinence as the criteria for selection (King143).

Robert Brady refers to the above trend as ‘construction of personal monopoly’ in film; the construction of a personal monopoly rests on shifting the emphasis in performance towards personification, but such a shift takes the radical form of carrying the implications of actors’ persona into everyday life. Thus actors seeking to obtain stardom will begin to conduct themselves in public as though there is an unmediated existential connection between their person and their image (King147).

With respect to labor market on actors seeking continuous and stable employment, the broad feature of the labour market for actors in film and television are well known and have remained unchanged for decades. Wherever and whenever we look there is a large oversupply of actors, as measured by membership in the appropriate union. Again of those actors who find work, there is marked disparity between the earnings of the most of the actors in a film and the stars, who are able to negotiate personal contracts, while the majority of actors earn at or slightly above the basic rate set by collective agreements; the magnitude of difference being in excess of fifty times, sometimes a hundred (King146). The filmic texts, stars and everything else that constitutes this industrial-aesthetic form is crucial for comprehending the construct of an actor.

With the interest in film constellating around ‘stars’, the presence of stars has become essential for cinema’s visual pleasure and economic structure. Though today, the production process centers around the star, but still the star’s performances depends on the narrative, sidekicks, friends, and other lesser personages that are played out in the background. Ensemble acting is based on an equitable distribution of the work and the glory (King 70). But there has been no significant study on the role of background artistes in the ‘construction of the star’; through this chapter, an attempt is being to fill this void. With an argument that the presence of background artistes is essential to constitute stardom, this study adopts a more holistic view to study the Junior Artistes’ role in the construction of star.

While composing a film scene, several factors are taken into consideration - camera angle, movement, object and placement of the character within the frame for
visual and dramatic experience. And, composition is achieved by positioning characters and objects in the foreground, mid ground, and background areas of the screen frame giving a sense of depth to the screen imagery. The 'presence' of Junior Artistes in the film scene carry both realistic and expressive values - suggesting time and place; conveying atmosphere, underscoring theme, and revealing abstract ideas.

In theatre, if everybody on stage is an actor, why is it that, everybody visible on the screen in cinema is not an actor? The film industry unlike theatre is structured hierarchically. The location of each screen artist in the frame is also an indication of their position in the hierarchy of film industry. Hence it is critical to understand the intersectionality between acting and identity. Though it is essential to understand this in the context of every category of actors, but in this research, I zoom in on the most marginalized set of on-screen artistes, i.e., the unheralded background Artistes, who are relegated to a lower position right from the name which they are identified in the industry i.e. Junior Artiste. One of the Junior Artistes described her work in the course of our conversation as ‘being there and yet not being there’, an artiste without an individual identity on the reel, which unfortunately follows them onto their real life. Unlike other artistes, their roles do not have a name or a face; they are just like any other prop on the set, at the mercy of the film crew. Grammar is used to obscure their agency, even in the scripts they are identified in passives, the way Junior Artiste are addressed on the set is a demonstration of linguistic diminishing of one’s agency; they play essential roles but roles with negligent screen space and time, and having limited scope within the narrative; though an integral part of the screen they remain anonymous entities. Junior Artistes have no privilege of individual identity; they exist as a group for the industry, their 'individual' acting or persona has no significance, most often attributing their role to mere bodily presence on the screen. But the casting of Junior Artistes for a film scene is of great aesthetic significance as well as to create an impression of realism.

This attempt to unpack the screen workers is to understand the role of aesthetics in the positioning of the ‘star’ and the Junior Artiste in the frame. To explore this dimension, I am taking the unconventional route of viewing the frame through the prism of the background. This prism is essential to discern the social world of film making, and to delve into the world of Junior Artistes, and understand the
construction of ‘star persona’ from the vantage point of artistes, who are blurred both on and off the screen. One of the key objectives of this research is to make sense of this process of invisibilization and its impact on the film industry.

The aim of the chapter is twofold - First to examine the onscreen representation of the Junior Artistes, by analyzing the screen roles generally played by the Junior Artistes. Secondly to inquire into the role played by Junior Artistes in the construction of ‘Star’.

This chapter is divided into four broad sections; section one, details the key screen roles played by Junior Artistes; the second section examines the film credits and Junior Artistes interpretation of their screen roles; the third section discusses the relationship between star and Junior Artistes; and the fourth section engages with films made on Junior Artistes, it explores the dynamics of a star representing the Junior Artistes on the Screen. In order to unpack these themes, dynamics and aftereffects encompassing star, Junior Artistes and their on screen representation, I am using oral narratives of Junior Artistes, where they share their interpretation of their role and stardom, along with using films as text, in order to unpack the category of screen artistes.

2.1. Screen roles and Junior Artistes

How to interpret the role of screen artists who are usually cast in background and treated as props and fillers? How do we read the acting profile of Junior Artistes, where the roles they are cast in are simple, similar and not evolving? Their profession of Junior Artistes, come with a biased tag of not requiring any special skill, and people performing those roles are seen as lacking talent; that these are roles that anyone can perform. What could be worse than to have one’s work dismissed as insignificant? Especially for any actor, their art being dismissed as mundane is an unbearable agony. In addition both the critic and the audience, fail to register the presence of Junior Artistes both on and off screen. It is said that while making of the film Raja Harishchandra (1913) Dada Saheb Phalke had put out advertisements seeking handsome actors for the lead role which had brought many amateur and inadequate talents, forcing him to add a line "Ugly faces need not apply" (NDTV May 3, 2013). The century old film industry’s obsession with stereotypical physical
appearance continues till date and it is no different while casting Junior Artistes in the background. The film industry system of casting artistes for the screen upholds the prevalent class, caste and racist attitude of the society. Though the Junior Artistes are cast in roles that go eternally unnoticed, yet they are ascertained and categorized as per the set norms of beauty. In the Indian film industry, a formal hierarchy has been created based on this logic of beauty among the Junior Artistes; in order to meet the requirements of the industry, the Junior Artistes are divided into the following categories: Super class: they are chosen to play the role of models, for malls and pub scenes, friends and sidekicks of the lead actors etc.; they get to have better screen space and payment, compared to the other categories. ‘A’ category artistes: they are cast as urban elite crowd in party or marriage scenes; and also to play costume roles like politicians, lawyers etc.; whereas ‘B’ category artistes are cast in passing or crowd scenes, e.g.: in market, road, village fair, bus stop, railway station scenes etc.

This hierarchy is recognized only among the Junior Artistes, but for the outsiders, irrespective of category, they are all treated as Junior Artistes. But in reality, Junior Artistes play multitude of screen roles, without which the film narration would not progress, so here in this section an attempt is made to unpack some key roles, in which they are usually cast in the film and its significance for the film’s narrative and to its lead actors.

2.2. Junior artiste as Crowd

It is a crowd scene, which marks the beginning of movies as a medium of communication and entertainment. Employees Leaving the Lumière Factory (also known as Exiting the Factory) a 1895, French short black and white silent documentary film directed and produced by Louis Lumiere, is often referred to as the first real motion picture; it consists of just a single scene of 46-seconds, in which workers are shown leaving the Lumière factory.

Gustave Le Bon, a social psychologist, has classified crowd into: Heterogeneous crowd comprising of - the anonymous of street crowds, the not-anonymous or parliamentary assemblies and Homogeneous crowd – consisting of sects (political and religious), castes (military) and classes (landowning or working classes) (Quoted in, Ahmad 16). Both these type of crowds gets represented in films
depending on the narratives, but what signifies the reel crowd from real crowd is that the reel crowd can be controlled and regulated. Junior Artistes play both the type of crowds going by Gusatave Le Bon’s classification.

Crowd form a very important part of Indian film scenes. In fact crowd playing costumed roles, is as important as the back ground properties and set, as it adds to the aesthetic of composition to the scene. The crowd in the film is based on the script requirement, is usually a mobilized film crowd, played by the category of screen artistes called the Junior Artistes. However occasionally real crowd also becomes an intrinsic part of the film narration. The characteristics of a real crowd are that it is accidental and is entirely unorganized. It is a mere collection of human beings with no 'interaction' of individual minds (quoted in, Ahmad 13). A real crowd is never deliberate and its purpose is never defined, though it might have a temporary object of attention. Whereas, the film crowd is organized and formed with a definite purpose, it is not spontaneous and is formed deliberately. Junior Artistes congregate at a particular time and place, in a particular dress and only selected people are cast for the scene and not all can be part of the crowd. Here the purpose is well defined and not accidental. Also, the crowd in film is distinct because of its virtual nature, the ‘magic’ of the cinema technology can multiply a small group of hundred people, and present them on screen as an infinite crowd. Today the digital crowd is replacing the real crowd.

However both real as well as the reel crowd is treated as momentary – it comes into existence because of chance, curiosity, leisure or for a purpose. Nonetheless the paradox is, ‘casualness’ – the key characteristic of real crowd, which is imitated in the films, marks the identity of the Junior Artistes playing the role of the film crowd. These are screen workers, who are relegated to be the anonymous casual workforce of the industry, resembling the crowd they enact on the screen. The way the film industry treats the Junior Artistes, one is reminded of Alfred Hitchcock’s quote – “actors are cattle” (quoted in, Knight 364). If one witnesses the casting of Junior Artistes for crowd scene in Indian films, it is similar to the way cattle are carried to the slaughter house. Based on requirement, Junior Artistes are brought in densely packed vehicles, and are made to sit away from the shooting place, and security personnel are deputed to monitor and control the crowd; their mobility is
restricted, and they are expected to maintain silence till the completion of the day’s shooting. They are usually not briefed about the scene and are given directions on the spot. The use of linguistic signs to mitigate their agency is evident in the kind of instructions given - 'sit, stand, walk, smile, clap, raise hand'. Since most common casting of Junior Artistes is in the crowd scene, they are also popularly called as 'crowd', and even agent or suppliers are acknowledged in film credits as 'crowd suppliers'.

Based on scene requirement it will be crowd of specific age or gender group - for instance if it is a college scene, the crowd needs to consist of youngsters of both genders and if it is a war sequence, it will be only a young male crowd. Casting of Junior Artistes for specific roles within the crowd scene is also assigned most often on the sets while shooting; it is a random process, where on the discretion of the supplier as per the description given by the film crew (usually Assistant Director), some artistes are asked to come in front and some are instructed to go back. Sometimes the costume of the artistes becomes important for a scene, and at times a word or line dialogue will be assigned to the chosen few in the crowd. The crowd seen in the film is not always the crowd hired through the Junior Artistes Agent; rarely fans gathered to watch the film shooting are also captured in the scene and the real crowd also becomes part of screen when film is shot on real locations like a Railway Station. Another important casting of Junior Artistes is as screen audience which has become important especially in Television for example - in reality shows and talk shows.

When the number of Junior Artistes required is in multiples of hundreds, then individual casting is not done but rather it is a mass recruitment of artistes for the day’s shooting. In the Hindi film Lagaan (2007) ten thousand villagers were cast for the climax scene to play the role of audience watching the cricket match. In the book, The Spirit of Lagaan: On the making of the film Lagaan, by Satyajit Bhatkal (Bhatkal 2002), the chapter titled 'Ten thousand actors' is intriguing. The chapter describes the process of mobilizing ten thousand people, from nearby villages for the film shooting, who debuted as actors, and were cast in the background scene for the day’s shooting. Their role in the film was that of playing audience to a cricket match. They were given the costumes of a villager - dhoti and kurta, and as per the filmmaker’s direction, the ten thousand people were positioned around the ground and
on the hill top. They were asked to raise hands on direction, and the enthusiastic crowd reaction on seeing the star actor Amir Khan was captured and used as audience cheering the cricket players. At the end of the day’s shooting they were paid for the role they played in the film.


Satyajit Bhatkal, who was also part of production team of the film, Lagaan, writes,

Ten thousand people are required for the first day of shooting of the cricket match. The plan is to take dozens of wide-angle shots with the use of five cameras that will cover the entire cricket ground. It is only by seeing the ground and even the surrounding hills full of people of Champaner province, that the audience will appreciate just how high the stakes in the cricket match are. Having shot with ten thousand spectators on one day, for the rest of the cricket shoot, the camera will see only specific sectors, not the entire ground. The shoot with the full crowd will enable Ashutosh to estimate just how many people he will need to populate each sector. (Bhatkal, 142)
Therefore, in the film the role of audience was crucial for the climax scene. The mobilised crowd were not just representing the audience for the cricket match but also had to act as the anxious villagers whose fate was dependent on the match, as winning the cricket match would mean non payment of tax and if they lose they would end up paying double tax. And, when Bhuvan's team wins the match the crowd barges into ground to celebrate the victory - in this shot the coming together of lead artistes, character artistes and crowd legitimates them as screen actors blurring the existing hierarchy among them within and outside the frame. This scene of star becoming part of the crowd has high emotional impact on the audience something unimaginable for them in real life and such portrayal of the star amidst the crowd makes him closer to the public, popularly called as 'mass' actor, an important characteristic of star - one who attracts the masses. Here the crowd carries with it the emotions generated from vast social upheavals conveyed to the audience as an experience of merging with others, losing bodily boundaries, losing control, feeling a movement so powerful that it seems to carry with it huge crowds of people. Of course there are powerful, deep characters, and all sorts of psychoanalytic issues at the centre of each of these films; nonetheless, much of their popularity and emotional impact is due to scenes in which the star becomes part of the crowd.

The conventions of mainstream Indian film scale, space and stories are all anthropomorphic and crowd scenes are important in all genres of film, but they are a prominent feature in – mythological or period films, like \textit{Jodha Akbar} (Hindi) or \textit{Baahubali} (Telugu), where narratives demand vast crowd casting for war sequences etc. Gathering of crowd at a slightest scuffle is common on Indian streets, and scenes involving street fights will always have a public. But this cinematic public becomes significant as the expression on their faces authenticate the performance of the hero as real. The invariable element of scene construction is in action films where the fight scenes are witnessed by the audience on the screen, while in reality the scenes would have been shot using a body double or duplicate and film crowd gives mass responses to the scene, legitimating the presence of the actor. For example - in the film \textit{Baahubali} the war sequence form the most important part of the film and for which two thousand Junior Artistes were cast as warriors. During the audio launch of the film the lead actor Prabhas spoke about his stunt double Kiran Raj's significant
role in fight sequences. For the audience it is the hero who is fighting the villain and cheering of Junior Artistes cast in hundreds legitimates the scene as authentic.

**Photograph 12:** Director S Rajmouli interacting with the real crowd gathered on the location of the shooting of the film Bahubali at Kurnool. (Source: Internet 6 June.2015).  

**2.3. Junior Artiste as Body double or Dupe**

A body double or dupe is a general term in film-making for a person who substitutes in a scene for a lead or main actor, such that the dupe’s face is not shown. A body substitute replaces the credited actor or a character in the shot where the character's body is shown but the face is either not visible or shown indistinctly, or in shots where the image of the credited actor's face is juxtaposed to the image of the body of the person playing the role of dupe.

**Photograph 13:** Junior Artistes N K Swami acting as body double to Telugu actor Krishna. *(Shared by Junior Artiste late N K Swami from his personal collection when interviewed in 2011, Chennai, Tamil Nadu).*
One of the most significant roles played by the Junior Artistes is of playing body double to the actors; this includes not just the lead actor, but also popular comedians and villains too. To play a body double one needs to have a physique or body structure that resembles the actor being duplicated on screen. A Junior Artiste whom I interviewed was more precise; according to her the back of the Junior Artist needs to look like the actor whom s/he will be replacing for the scene:

My bottom is similar to Srividya’s\textsuperscript{xvi}, and when I would dress up in a sari, I would look exactly like her from behind. I have worked as her dupe in several Malayalam and Tamil movies, in various roles, especially in chase or rape scenes. Usually, we do the acting part which is captured in long shot and is juxtaposed with close up shots of the face of the lead actors. For instance, if the heroine is chased by the villain or goons, we Junior Artistes do the running, and the scene is shot with our back and is paired with the heroine’s face in the close up.

(Sakuntala, Junior Artiste, Chennai, 2014)\textsuperscript{xvii}

Casting body doubles is vital for the economics of film production as they save the film production cost and time. With stars becoming important and expensive commodities, they have to be protected from the public and producers cannot risk injury, as that would add to their overhead costs. So whenever a hazardous scene has to be filmed, a body double is called on to substitute for the star, and these body doubles generally are the Junior Artistes or stuntmen based on the requirement of the scene and similarity with the body of the star. These sequences are directed by using long shots to conceal the identity of the body double. Some of the big production houses have insurance cover for their principal actors. Also, it is necessary to use body double as precaution because if the principal actors are injured, then the film shooting has to be cancelled or postponed. But if it is Junior Artiste performing as dupe and if the dupe is injured in the course of the shooting, s/he can be replaced. Dupes are also used as stand-in for the actor and they are the ones who replace the actor for non-filming purposes such as scene arrangement and lighting adjustments. A body double is also used for scenes where special skills are needed as per the script – like horse riding, swimming etc.,
Among the several roles Junior Artistes are cast in the film, it is in the role of body double that they get more screen space and time but still they are deprived of visibility on screen as their 'presence' is of a double of the hero and the scene is constructed such that the audience believe that the role is performed by the hero himself.

According to Junior Artiste, Rahul xviii:

There is a scene in Dhoom 2, where the lead actor Hrithik Roshan's body is completely covered with paint and for this scene I acted as the body double. For three days, I had to sit with paint all over my body and was only on liquid food because otherwise the silver paint on the body would have cracks. Of course I was taken care by the assistant directors and the agents. They treat you with respect when you're playing a body double because you are important for the scene.

Also, if only a part of the body is shown, probably the most common is a hand double, where only the hand or arm is in the shot; it is the Junior Artistes who is used to shoot inserts and in Hollywood it is known as "spare part modeling". These inserts are often shot by the second unit with a double at a later point in production primarily because it allows the main unit to use the lead actors' time more efficiently. Also, when the lead actors disagree to do certain scenes such as intimate bedroom or rape scene, or action scenes involving risk or sometimes due to inherent fear that the actors have of water, fire and height etc, on such occasions body doubles are used with their consent. Here the consent of the actor becomes important because those scenes are shown or constructed in the larger narrative as acted by them. Several controversies on using body double in films without the consent of the actors keep recurring in the film circuit and the allegations are against the director or the producer and not against the body double, whose contribution is rarely acknowledged in the film credits, and most often even the body doubles are clueless as to whom they are acting for in the film. For example the film Ek Chotis Si Love Story (2012), remake of the English film Summer of 1942, is about an adolescent boy’s infatuation with an elderly woman, and the film had several intimate scenes. The nude scenes in the film were shot using the body double. The actress of the film Manish Koirala demanded that the nude scenes be deleted as she found them to be vulgar; she accused the director of shooting those scenes with a body double, without her consent. It is only during
such controversies that the film industry acknowledges the existence of a body double. (*The Hindu*, 22/12/2002)

Usually, the double's face is kept from being seen on camera. This way the lead actor can work in fewer scenes and can apparently be filming in two scenes at once and especially where the actor is playing a double role. If both characters played by the same actor appear in the frame in the same scene, the credited actor plays the character whose face is seen and the double plays the other character, usually seen only from the back. And in this way, a well-cast double can help speed up the day's production and is necessary and valuable for a film, both in terms of money and time.

Sometimes the double of the lead actor will be seen on camera captured in long or wide establishing shots, or in quick insert close-up shots involving the actor's body parts. The double must say the dialogue lines in the same lead actor’s timing and also reproduce the exact physical actions in co-ordination with the other principal actors in that scene to make this scene suitable for the final cut. This has become less common with the digital editing currently available allowing the credited actor to play multiple versions of actors onscreen. In such a case, the actor simply performs each action or dialogue separately in separate takes which are superimposed either through digital or conventional process.

The distinctive characteristics of Junior Artistes is that they cannot be separated from the narrative whereas with other screen actors like the stuntmen, they have the anti narrative potential, and can function as self-contained narrative independent of the larger plot. Stunt sequences or dance choreography are constructed by entirely distinct and independent cast and crew and are inserted into the main narrative or the film plot.

Junior Artistes performing as body doubles are treated better than their usual day at work: they are given costume; make up is done by the chief make-up artistes; the director himself/herself explains the scene; they are given time to rehearse the scene and are also trained by experts when the scene demands action or stunts; they also have privilege of repeat takes; and, if it is a continuity shot then the Junior Artistes will be getting regular work for the next few days and the payment is double
and more, depending upon the risk involved; some production houses on rare occasion mention the Junior Artiste’s name in the film credits.

Some of the duplicates who have similar looks of the popular actors appear as themselves, such as ‘Junior’ Amitabh Bachchan or Dev Anand. For example in the film *Om Shanthi Om*, duplicates of yester year actors were used to establish the period of the 1960’s in Hindi film industry. These look-alikes are popular and are invited in local functions where organizers cannot afford to invite the real stars. These artistes who have also established their market by imitating the actor’s style, mannerism and dressing are cast in low budget films and video songs, delivering popular dialogues from the films of these super stars and they are also popular in mimicry shows. Most often they prefer to work as character actors or as the duplicate of the actor whom they resemble.

### 2.4. Junior Artistes - in Passing, Costume and Dialogue scenes

Who are those characters passing rapidly before the eyes of the spectator? On the field when the artistes would say that they have been cast in a ‘passing scene’, initially I wondered why they call it ‘passing scene’, which meant that they are cast in a passing shot where their image is shown travelling quickly across the screen, either by asking them to move past a stationary camera or by panning the camera past a stationary subject. Such passing scenes exhibit the spatio-temporal nexus which the Junior Artistes have to negotiate on an everyday basis.

A single figure separated from a crowd will usually stand out as significant. Similarly, a moving actor will draw attention away from static figures. Passing scene is also about them being merged with the background like the non-existing entities on the film set, that they ‘pass’ without being noticed by the viewer and even if they are noticed they are not retained in memory.

Similarly, in our everyday lives, on the street many people pass by, most of them go unnoticed and those few we look at are also not retained in our memory, and in the crowd we have a tendency to look for the known faces and when our eyes trace those known faces the rest fall into background or as passersby. The everyday strangers we encounter in public places become known to our memory as familiar faces and still remain unknown with absolutely no interaction with these faces. In
film, especially for a cover shot which is taken for the purpose of establishing the location and all the characters within the scene, in such shots Junior Artistes are cast in passing scene. For example: in railway station scenes they are cast as moving passengers or in a market scene they are cast as sellers or buyers in the background of lead characters.

Apart from the lead actors everyone else becomes a background artiste; while other characters or supporting actors have dialogue, Junior Artistes are usually cast in non-speaking role and it is evident in films that not many Junior Artistes are given dialogues. Therefore, when they are given dialogues to deliver on the screen, though it is usually restricted to a word or two, it holds high significance for the Junior Artistes, because when Junior Artistes get dialogue to say in a film they get more screen time, and for aspiring artistes it is a chance to get visibility and opportunity to showcase their talent.

Junior Artistes and costumes are in league with each other, because their everyday work depends on them having appropriate costumes for that day’s shooting. Junior Artistes are most often asked to carry their own costumes to the set and not surprisingly, they are removed from scene if their costume does not fit the scene. Also, their costume decides on them being in the foreground, within the frame or in background, for example, police constable in police station, lawyer in court, doctor in hospital and soldiers in war etc. Also foregrounding or back grounding depends on whether they are cast in speaking or non-speaking roles. Most often Junior Artistes are dismissed off as superfluous props, but in some cases they become subtle partners in the creative process.

During my field work across the film industry the unionized Junior Artistes would distinguish themselves from non-union members by claiming to be professional artistes, who bring in both experience and knowledge of camera angle and shooting requirements, do their own make-up, dress according to the scene requirement and maintain the required etiquette at the shooting place, apart from having patience to wait for long hours without complaining. This listing is important as well as interesting to me, as it captures the nature of work of Junior Artistes, which emphasizes on self-learning. Junior Artistes are rarely briefed about their work, but their years of experience has made them attuned to the nature of their work; they
usually know it is one among the following roles - crowd, costume, body double or for a passing scene; this makes them come prepared for film shooting. Agents on field also acknowledged that most often directors preferred Junior Artistes from the Association, because most of the members in the union are experienced artistes, and casting them saves the directors their precious production time, as they need not have to spend time explaining the scene, since they are acquainted with work expected from them by the film industry; moreover the Junior Artistes also understand the film production language and the importance of timing and vocabulary on the film set like 'cut', 'action' and 'pack-up' etc., hence making Junior Artistes from the union the preferred choice of the directors and production houses. This helps the film makers to coordinate well with experienced Junior Artistes.

Since Junior Artistes work in a number of different roles, in high rotation, with virtually no rehearsal, apart from volunteering to wear their own costumes, it is natural for one to assume that Junior Artistes themselves identify and seek to perform a fixed set of roles. But the reality is in contrast to what is seen. Junior Artistes are pained at being reduced to wage laborers; majority of them come to industry due to their passion for acting and they yearn to show their talent, and hence seek diversity in the kinds of roles offered to them. However being cast in roles that require limited acting skills, they are deprived of the opportunity to showcase their versatility, thus hindering their growth in the hierarchical film industry. Having a fixed pool of experienced human resource, willing to follow any instructions, is an advantage to the producer; in addition if these people are reduced to the status of daily wage laborers – it is a double benefit for the system. Hence it is not surprising, if the category of Junior Artistes seems a conscious and practical arrangement of the film industry, to cater to the material circumstances of film production.

2.5. Junior Artistes and credit lines: inclusion and exclusion

How does one trace the filmography of Junior Artistes, who have never been acknowledged in the film credits and whose status continues to remain that of an 'outsider' in the film industry. This was one of the main reasons that I had to recourse to studying their off-screen lives because there is no record in the film to identify those faces in the background. And, similar to a factory worker who has lost count of
number of products made by him; Junior Artistes don’t have count on number of films they have acted in.

Film credit is the list of production personnel, including actors, who have made contributions to film. Credits for the major artistes and technicians involved in the creation of the film usually appear at the beginning of the picture with a complete credit list shown in the ending. As the film narration evolved the film credits list has grown too. Earlier the credit of a film was shared with few of the crew members - director, producer, prominent actors, cinematographer and musician; gradually, the list has grown to be more inclusive in acknowledging the team that contributes in making the film especially those behind the scenes - the light men, production assistants, make-up artists, hair dressers and spot boys.

Today presentation and conception of the film credits has become an important segment in the film - for instance, in the film Magadheera (2009) a separate song was composed and dance choreographed with the entire team of film workers including those behind the camera shown at the end of the film; in the film Om Shanthi Om, a special film credit sequence of film workers from various departments involved in filmmaking were shown walking on the red carpet. And, it has become common to show in the ending of the film the clippings of ‘making of film’ with credits running parallel to the scenes.

The film credits for long had ignored Junior Artistes’ category and when they did acknowledge them in the credits, once again linguistic obscurity of agency was employed, which is evident in them being given identified as collective entity, i.e. Junior Artistes or crowd, rather than individuals. Since the Junior Artistes are usually cast in hundreds and thousands, so this very nature of their work is used as a pretext to deny them individual representation in the film credit; it is claimed to be practically difficult to credit all the Junior Artistes. So the film credits only acknowledge the Junior Artistes supplier or agents, because mobilizing crowd for film at short notice is a challenging task. And, it is not just the Junior Artistes in the crowd scenes who are excluded, even the group dancers, stunt extras are not credited either, and they too are treated as a group. Field interviews with Junior Artistes, along with my analysis of film credits over the years, show that Junior Artistes were not acknowledged in film credit list for long; it was after unionization of Junior Artistes that their presence has
been visible in the film credits, and here to, it was symbolic acknowledgement; the film credits acknowledged only the supplier or agents name, signifying the authority and dominance of the supplier within the Junior Artiste craft. However, the designations have changed over the years, to be more dignified: for instance background artistes suppliers who were earlier called the 'Extras Suppliers' are addressed as 'Junior Artiste suppliers', 'Junior Artiste Agent and Company', 'Model Suppliers' and 'Crowd Suppliers' etc. It is interesting to notice the method in which the film credits are designed, and the contribution of all the film crew are acknowledged. The prominent styles currently in trend, is - 'In the order of appearance' or 'Also starring', and it is not surprising to find the agents or Junior Artiste suppliers being acknowledged at the very fag end of the film credits clearly distinguishing them from rest of screen artists and this reinforces the hierarchical nature of the film industry.

2.6. Star and Junior Artiste

Junior Artiste, backed by the set design, can turn a studio into a battleground, a market, a railway platform, an office, a procession etc., depending on the script, thus facilitating the stars and other main actors to emote, deliver dialogues, dance, fight, romance, etc. Film making is undoubtedly a team work; every person involved plays a crucial role, but only few get fame, money and acknowledgement.

In an interview of acclaimed actor Kamal Hassan, on the popular TV show ‘Rendezvous with Simi Garewal’ responding to the show anchor’s question – “I find your acting in Nayagan (1987) one of the finest performances in Indian cinema, particularly the scene where you find out that your son has died, how did you go about doing that scene?”, Kamal Hassan, spontaneously credits it to the presence of other screen artists, particularly the Junior Artiste, acknowledging the significant role played by Junior Artistes, even for a method actor like him. His observation highlights the professional relationship between Junior Artiste and lead actors, which is rarely accepted:

Yes, it is a very important scene in the film, I sought the help of my Junior Artiste friends in delivering the scene realistically, and they are all excellent actors, bemoaning so naturally the death of my son. In grief when they utter the line 'Young
lion has gone what will you do saab’, it automatically created a funereal atmosphere. Indians have the tendency to cry for others more readily than I see in western countries. They were all crying and suddenly I was there and it did not matter whose funeral it was, amidst wailing sobs, one of the Junior Artistes says painfully, ‘don’t see his face, its burnt…….’

Junior Artistes form a very important part of Indian films; they are significant both for the screen as well as to co-actors to create ambience to emote whether its tragedy scene or war sequence or a party atmosphere. The emergence of the star system, created the need for professional artistes as background performers.


The originality of the textual form (which draws on borrowed sources like the western) derives primarily from the mobilization effect which accompanies the narration. The scenes of nomination, in which the hero is elected to lead workers and minorities, function to extend the relationship of leader and the led to the audience as well. The figure who commands the audience in this way is the star. The star's function is mobilization, the rallying of forces behind a narrative exposition. This elevation compensates for the loss of the hero's traditional authority, and enacts a transition from feudal to populist power. Through the production of a supplemental charisma, the industry overcomes the problems posed by a shift of narrative focus to the realm of the ordinary (Prasad, 158).

The presence of diegetic audiences, as passive witness of the protagonist's heroism, is one of the signs of film aesthetic at work. Laura Mulvey in the article, “Visual Pleasure and narrative cinema” (1975) mentions about - scopophilia - a circumstance in which looking itself is a source of pleasure and there is pleasure in being looked at - a fascination with the human form. This is evident where on some occasions Junior Artistes are intentionally cast to ‘excess’, to project the star persona through showcasing on the screen his huge fan following and this is obvious, as the scenes seem to be a stand-alone in the larger narrative. There are two crucial mass scenes in Indian film - the star 'intro' scene which is usually with punch dialogue or action sequences, and the climax scene in which the hero's victory is celebrated as he
greets the 'waiting crowd'; here the 'crowd-in-the text' are visible and the scene concludes with close-up shots of the actor waving or thanking with folded hand to the real audience watching the film. Occasionally real crowd or fans that have gathered to watch the film shooting are captured and integrated into the narrative and there are moments when the spectator's gaze is projected back to them. In popular actor Rajnikanth's films there are typical scenes of the actor greeting his fans and these clippings are usually inserted in song sequences in films like *Padaiyappa* (1999), *Arunachalam* (1997). Emphasis on the star persona and its psychological impact on their fans and audience are taken into consideration during the scene composition. The 'public out there’ that the film renders visible on screen is a collective of Junior Artistes, audience and fans. In Indian mass film most often the line blurs between Junior Artistes, fans and audience. Junior Artistes sharing the screen space with the star, is also a fan; in support of this, I am quoting an excerpt from an interview with Junior Artiste Sakuntala, who started female fans association dedicated to actor Rajnikanth.

> When we started ‘All Women Rajnikanth Fans Association’, I was always called for all his film shooting and I also have dialogue scenes in several of his films. Also from fans association we would get free tickets for watching Rajnikanth films. What the scene is of a least concern to us, what really mattered was sharing screen space with our idol Rajnikanth. (Sakuntalamma, Junior Artistes, Chennai, 2013)

The relationship between the star, fan and the film, and the embedded politics is intriguing and needs to be studied in order to comprehend Junior Artistes comprehensively, because star's image as mobilizer goes beyond the film into the real world, especially in South Indian film industries where star image also has a political dimension that parallels with the star’s film career.
2.7. Junior Artistes’ perspective about their screen roles

Unlike in a theatre, in movies, it is seldom that the actors are familiar with their role and its relation to their co-actors roles. Rarely are scenes rehearsed before it goes on the floor. If this is the situation of main actors, the status of Junior Artistes can easily be gauged. It was not surprising when I found that most of the Junior Artistes are clueless about the films they have acted in; the film work culture dictates that the Junior Artistes need not be briefed in advance about the role or the scene they will be cast in. Junior Artistes are not informed but instructed; hence they are ignorant of the film, its actors, directors, including the significance of the scene or the role they were made to enact.


In the film, Lunch Box (2013), one of the highlighted scenes, which is even part of the trailer is the scene where the protagonist Irfan Khan, is standing in a crowded passenger train; he suddenly feels someone touching him and finds standing beside him an old lady who is staring at him, and he mistakes her for touching him and is embarrassed. But soon he realizes it was a file carried by another co-passenger that had touched him in the moving train and not the old lady and he regrets and smiles back to her.

During my field work in Mumbai, I had an opportunity to interact with Tarabai, the senior Junior Artiste, who appeared in this scene with Irfan Khan. I met Tara Bai Vital Mandre\textsuperscript{xix}, at Mahila Kalakar Sangh (Women’s wing of Junior Artistes Association). Her comment, when asked about the scene holds a mirror to the situation of the Junior Artistes in the film industry:
“I haven’t watched the film but have heard it from my neighbor’s son, that I am seen in the film. Actually they had already selected a much older lady for the scene but since she was very old and was unable to act in the scene, the director spotted me in the crowd and asked me to do the scene. For the scene I was made to stand next to hero in a crowded passenger train and the instruction given to me was that when they call for the shot I had to look at the hero and smile. I have no idea what the scene was all about and I don’t even know the name of the film. It was like any other day standing in the crowd scene but the only difference here is that I am visible and audiences have noticed me in the crowd.” (Tara Bai Vital Mandre, Junior Artiste, 2011)

From the above example, one can understand the relationship Junior Artistes have with their roles, their co-author, and the film-the final product and the kind of engagement they have with the production.

The cinematic space is intimately woven with the unique temporal possibilities where a character’s movement, for example, can be made to appear unusually prolonged through the addition or repetition of visual space. For example, the opening scene of popular Indian actor Rajnikanth in most of his films is with his characteristic style sequence of tossing the cigar into his mouth from a fair distance; the introduction scene is extended by intercutting numerous close-ups of the actor. For ensuring more footage to the lead character, during editing of the film, time is expanded or contracted with the elimination or addition of scene and usually, scenes involving Junior Artistes are edited and occasionally exclusive shots of crowd are inserted. Therefore, one of the common complaints that Junior Artistes, have is of their scenes being edited, especially when they have a dialogue scene in the film or when Junior Artistes are cast in the same frame as their favorite actor, and those scenes are removed from the film. Such instances make one wonder what their presence signifies in the frame when it can be removed or edited without having any impact on the final product. However, in the film frame, all screen artists are competitors for the screen space, time and attention.
I was well dressed for a party scene and was looking better than the lead actor so the director asked me to stand behind. Usually heroes don’t like good looking Junior Artistes around them, as they feel insecure, about us sharing the screen space with them. The backgrounders of course, can never be allowed to outshine the stars.

(Amir Sadruddin Lakdawala, Junior Artistes, Interviewed at Mumbai, 2013.)

In the Junior Artistes’ narrative of their screen 'presence', audience do not recognize, or miss through inattention, or negate as unimportant in favor of what audience 'perceive' as being more important. Junior Artistes who are cast aside as unclaimed and unappreciated, yet, the unnoticed, the unheard, the not read, are actually the essential ground of the scene. The significance of Junior Artistes 'presence' on screen is well described in their narrative of memorable roles they are cast in - a few seconds of screen fame.

In the Rajnikanth’s film *Aela muru Kailashi*, in a fight scene with Seema, I lead the fight like a rowdy and in the film *Sivaji* in the train and in another film, I have dialogue scene with Arjun in the bus. In a film with Prabhu as a lead, I play his friend’s mother’s character and have a dialogue, ‘don’t keeping roaming with friends, come home’. I have dialogue with Bharathiraj in the film *Kaniraj*; with Vijayakanth in one of his film, I play the flower seller role and when Vijayakanth the hero comes to buy flowers I narrate to him my love story and tell him to give the flower to his lover. Later Viji, the actress, comes to buy flowers and I refuse to take money saying that mama [Vijayakanth] has already paid the money for the flowers. Looking at Vijayakanth, she asks ‘is that him you are referring to?’ And I reply, ‘Yes’.

(Sakuntala, Junior Artiste, Chennai, 2014).

Some Junior Artistes have been working in the film industry for over thirty years as screen artists and do not have visible screen presence nor have they got a dialogue to say and are still cast in passing or crowd scene. Interaction with Junior Artistes on field also gave an impression that because of the nature of work, they have also become complacent and have concluded that their job is not challenging to be respected unlike the actor who has to learn long dialogues and has to maintain their looks. This was evident in conversation with a Junior Artiste Amit Kumar at the
shooting location of the Hindi film, *Happy New Year*, at Kamlistan Studio, Mumbai: “It is no back breaking work, we just have to stand for the camera and we get paid for this easy task. Unlike the actors we don’t have to learn dialogues, go for rehearsals and constantly bother about our fitness and looks. However we may appear, we manage to get work at least in a crowd scene”.

With the film narratives being mostly hero-centric, there is limited screen space for the female lead. The situation is no better for background female Junior Artistes. In fact in some of the action oriented films there is absolutely no work for female Junior Artistes. Comparatively, women get less work as the script demands mostly male artistes in the background. In big budget family dramas, which have scenes like festive occasions which include parties, wedding etc., female Junior Artistes along with their male co-artistes get work in these scenes.

Artistes are subject to their artistic age as much as they are to their biological age. Unlike other screen artists the Junior Artistes don’t get pushed out of the frame, rather they are pushed further to the margin. Junior Artistes get pushed further into background and need lesser and lesser make-up. The tension between the ‘tenure clock’ and ‘biological clock’ as a source of anxiety – is more so for women than men, which is also a fact even for the Junior Artistes. The male dominated narrative also limits opportunity for women to be cast in background. Usually cast in the background of the heroine, but since the heroine herself has a limited screen space, these marginal female artistes hence cannot demand for more work.

### 2.8: Films on Junior Artistes

There are several films across different Indian languages, made on the film industry and some of the films also have Junior Artistes as a character in the film, such as the Malayalam film *Udayananu Tharam* (2005), where the lead actor plays the role of a film assistant director and his friend is a Junior Artiste, who gets his break as a character actor only with the hero becoming the director of a film. The role of a Junior Artiste was also represented briefly in the Hindi film *Guddi* (1971). It was a sub-plot that shows how a village boy with dreams of making it as hero in Hindi films, runs away with his widowed mother’s money and jewellery, only to land up as an Junior Artiste in films. Generally, films about film industry are inspired from
actors’ lives and references to Junior Artistes are made, in the context of the lead actors struggling days, when s/he takes this route in their path to success; the profession of Junior Artistes is depicted as an entry point to the unknown world of cinema. *Dirty Picture* (2011), is one such Hindi movie, which is inspired by the life of Indian actress Silk Smitha, who predominantly acted in South Indian language films; Smitha had started her film career as a Junior Artiste. *Dirty Picture* which is set in the 1980s gives us a glimpse of the casting of Junior Artistes then in the film industry. Inside the film studios women stand in the line to be selected for the day’s shooting as Junior Artistes and the casting director based on looks and scene requirement selects a few of them asking the rest to go home. Junior Artistes’ role in most of these films is brief and is usually depicted as those aspiring for stardom in the film industry.

As an exception there are few films which have the ‘star’ playing the role of a Junior Artistes: two Indian film *Om Shanthi Om* (2007) in Hindi and *Shukno Lanka* (2010) in Bengali have the lead actors playing the role of ‘Junior Artiste’ as the central character in the film. In both the films, the main plot revolves around the life of Junior Artistes from two different perspectives. *Om Shanthi Om* is about a Junior Artiste Om, an aspiring actor who wants to become a star, and then reincarnates as the son of a super star. One of the popular actors of Hindi film industry, Shahrukh Khan plays the central role of Junior Artistes of the 1970s and as himself the Super Star of the millennium. He is also the producer of the film. *Shukno Lanka*, is a film with a Junior Artiste as the central character. The protagonist Chinu Nandy, a Junior Artiste working for years is suddenly elevated to the status of a hero in a feature film directed by an internationally renowned filmmaker. Mithun Chakraborty, popular Indian actor plays the central role. In fact, before working as lead actor Mithun Chakraborty himself had worked as a Junior Artiste in a crowd scene in the film *Do Anjaane* (1976).

In an interview talking about the film name *Shukno Lanka*, meaning ‘Dry red chilli’, Mithun had explained, “Junior Artistes are like the dry red chilli that is mandatory in any Indian spicy dish but no one can identify once the dish is cooked and presented on the table. Yet, it is an essential ingredient for any Indian dish. No films can be made only with the hero, the heroine, the comedian and other character actors if there are no Junior Artistes” (TOI July 2, 2010). Though the film *Om*
Shanthi Om is in Hindi and Shukno Lanka is made in Bengali, they are both universal in appeal because the life story of Junior Artistes who have presence across the Indian film industry, have similar narratives.

In both films, the star actors play the role of Junior Artistes indicating that these artistes are even denied the agency to represent themselves; besides, what is interesting from the point of view of this study is that these narratives of Junior Artistes are presented from the perspective of those in the upper echelon of the film industry - the star, director and producer. In both the film Om Shanthi Om and Shukno Lanka there is constant comparison between Junior Artistes and Star. The opening scene of the film Om Shanthi Om, introduces the central character Om, a Junior Artiste standing amidst the cheering film crowd for a song sequence being shot, dreaming of himself playing the hero. It is a poignant scene in the narrative as it introduces the character Om, a Junior Artiste, an aspiring star and the rest of the narrative revolves around this aspiration of stardom and the star. The film illustrates the existing hierarchy within the film industry and influence of star system on division of film labor. The status of Junior Artistes within the social world of film is highlighted by contrasting with the star position which is portrayed as unattainable. In a scene he tries to sneak out of the film studio with the jacket of the hero, and he is caught by the dress man who insults him by saying, "By wearing hero’s jacket you will not become a hero and to become a hero you need to have a good looking face" (4:23 min).

In another scene, Om's friend Pappu suggests that to become a star he needs to change his surname from 'Makhija' to 'Kapoor or Khan'; the reference to 'surname' associated with family or one’s lineage ridicules the Indian film industry that has been functioning as family owned enterprises, dominated by heroes having the lineage of stardom. Later in the narrative, Om becomes a star but that is in his next birth as son of star Rajesh Kapoor and with his name Om Kapoor. At the same instance, the film industry mocks at the stagnant work position of those at the lower strata of film industry which is evident in the scene, where Om upset with his mother’s stubbornness against changing his name, says, “Mother the truth is, you’re a Junior Artiste, father is a Junior Artiste and I will also end up being only a Junior Artiste” (8.46 min).
The conversation of Om, with the picture of actress Shanthi Priya as a 'Dream Girl' on the hoarding indicates the distance or the gap between a star and Junior Artiste, who is no different from a common man; even though he is associated with the film industry, he is remote to the power to attain or reach her, for which he needs to be a star. The film also, reflects on the gender position within the male dominated film industry where woman is seen as an object to be possessed. Here, Junior Artiste Om’s position within the industry does not prevent from desiring to own actress Shanthi Priya. His relation with the hero is of a fan and competitor but the actress is an object of desire. The film plot is centered on this 'desire' of owning her. “I want to be hero only for you, so that I can stand with you as an equal and say I love you. Nobody in this world would love you the way I do, and instead of Shanthi Priya superstar if you were Shanthi Priya Junior Artiste also I would have loved you in the same way. One day we will definitely meet” (10:58 min).

Some sequences draw our attention to the treatment meted out to Junior Artistes on the film shooting site. In a scene, Om and his friend Pappu are dressed up as Dakkus (Dacoits), but they are not happy with the roles and are upset with the makeup done by the make-up man. Junior Artistes usually have non-speaking roles, so the make-up artistes are not bothered about the artistes, rather the presentation is what matters, treating them as ‘props’ and this also shows the attitude of coworkers towards the Junior Artistes. Om, fears being stereotyped as Junior Artiste and is happy that in costume role he will not be identified, so that when he becomes a hero people will not recognize him as a Junior Artiste. On persistent enquiry with the assistant director for dialogue, he reluctantly responds to Om and Pappu vaguely, ‘there is a fire in the field and your dialogue is “bhago”’. Om and Pappu follow the Assistant Director requesting for better dialogue and they are humiliated by his response that the dialogue is only for the hero. The scene shows that it is the Assistant director who interacts with Junior Artistes and not the director himself, maintaining the hierarchy within the film industry work culture.

Another scene in the film that shows Junior Artistes’ status as anonymous and uncared entity in the social world of film is the scene where there is a sudden fire on the film set and Om risk's his life to save actress Shanthi Priya in the process injuring himself; but the film crew is more concerned attending to the actresses then to the
Junior Artiste. This fact is reinforced with his friend Pappu, saying that there were many to save the heroine but if a Junior Artiste is injured none would be there for him. And, when Shanthi Priya thanks him by saying that "though you’re a stranger to me still you risked your life", Om, tells himself, “I may be unknown to you but you are known to me” (36.24 min). Here, the anonymous status of Junior Artistes as marginal artistes is highlighted because though they have been working in the film industry for years along with the other screen artistes; their presence both on the screen and off screen is rarely acknowledged. They have been working together and are in the same frame, there is no interaction among the screen artists shows the hierarchy among them. She has seen him before but does not know him. This shows the attitude of film work place, where though they claim to work as team, it functions as assembly line in a factory.

In the film *Shukno Lanka* (2010), the plot is about Junior Artiste Chinnu Nandi, who after working for decades in a bit role is suddenly cast as a lead actor by world renowned art film maker Joy Sundar Sengupta. The film story juxtaposes the lives of art film maker of international repute and a Junior Artiste working in the studios of Kolkata.

Along with aesthetics, economics plays an important role in film making and therefore casting of less known actors is a well known fact in the genre. Stars want to work with director Joy for winning award but are apprehensive about their payment and viewership. Therefore casting of the Junior Artiste Chinnu Nandi for the lead role can be interpreted as an economical casting in a low budget film. In the scene to Chinnu Nandi’s anxious question whether he would be accepted by the audience, director Joy, looking down at him, laughs and replies, ‘No! they will accept me’ asserting authorial position against stardom (1:18:12 min).

The professional and personal life of both Junior Artistes and Director are narrated in parallel, highlighting star difference that exists between the two crafts. For the Junior Artistes, it is an everyday struggle as a daily wage earner to get work regularly, and after working for years in the film industry having realized the stark reality of the profession, Chinnu Nandi leads a happy life with his wife, with his personal life taking precedence over his career. And, though his status within the film industry is of an ‘outsider’, he is the local hero for the boys in the neighborhood for
whom he imitates and delivers dialogues of popular actor, Uttam Kumar. Whereas, the director is shown as a person who is completely immersed in his creative world where there is no place for a personal life; he needs a space away from home, a hotel room to work on his film and needs a creative person from the film field to interact and share his professional dreams.

Unlike in *Om Shanthi Om*, where Om's role in the film is portrayed as mere prop on the film set, in *Shukno Lanka* Nandi is shown rehearsing his dialogue with the lead actors. It is interesting to note that the film shows Junior Artistes in good relation with the stars. Nandi gives cue to the stars to say their dialogue. The hierarchy between screen artists and star prevails where he can randomly ask the director to replace or remove the Junior Artistes in the midst of film shooting. At times stars can also recommend extra wages for them and also, feel envious towards them when they get better role in the film.

In both the films we see two facets of Junior Artistes - Om, a young Junior Artiste aspiring to be an actor and Chinnu Nandi a senior Junior Artiste who has been in the profession for decades and is now dependent on it for his livelihood; his relationship with the star is not of a competitor, but as a dependent on them, for work. The significance of Star for the economics of film industry is highlighted in the scene where the star expresses concern over Nandi's health. Nandi answers, "You are a star, you need to think of your body. We are the red chilies, the curry gets its flavor only when we dry up". When the hero talks about quitting acting, he says, "If you give up acting, what’ll happen to us? If there are no stars the supporting actor will perish.” (4.46 min)

The film *Shukno Lanka* depicts the insecurities of the daily wage earning Junior Artistes who have been working in irregular work conditions for decades. In the film though Chinnu Nandi starts shooting for the film as the protagonist he is still insecure of being replaced by someone else that he does not tell his wife about working as lead in Joy Sen's film. Also, the sudden unexpected upward mobility in his screen career makes him anxious, and having not got an opportunity to play a big role before, he also doubts his own ability as an actor.
In the film *Om Shanthi Om*, the end film credits feature an exclusive song for the film team with film workers across crafts shown walking on red carpet including Junior Artistes agents and his assistants. It is interesting to observe that the film director Farah Khan, who appears in a small role as a Junior Artist, in the introductory scene, is credited in the film as – ‘Aggressive Junior Artistes – Farah Khan’. The usage of adjective 'aggressive' is to distinguish oneself (Director/actor) from the rest of the Junior Artistes whom the industry treats as a collective or as crowd. Surprisingly, both the films *Om Shanthi Om* and *Shukno Lanka* do not mention about the supplier or the agent who in reality functions as mediators between the Junior Artistes and the film industry. While they are mentioned in the film credit they are not part of the narrative. Also, but for Om’s mother, there is absolutely no reference to female Junior Artistes in both the films. Interestingly, among the few films made on the theme of film industry, a good number of them have been on the lives of actresses. The male-dominated work place where gender segregation is an everyday reality, women have been excluded from most of the work in the film industry, limiting their engagement to stereotypical roles as actresses, hair dressers and dancers. Not surprisingly, the portrayal of life stories of the actresses is tragedy-driven further alienating the women from the film industry. In the past the same film industry had complained about stigma associated with film industry as the reason for women not willing to take up film as occupation. But in reality the stigma of women working in film industry is not just societal perspective but industry itself reinforces this stigmatized view, by such tragic narratives about their work lives, which further excludes women from working in the film industry. The absence of reference to female Junior Artistes in the films - *Om Shanthi Om* and *Shukno Lanka* made on them is somewhat surprising, because Junior Artistes, are the only film craft that recruits women in large number, but they don’t find place in a film about Junior Artistes, showcasing the inherent gender bias prevalent at every level in the film industry.

Among the several crafts working in the film industry, the choice of making film about film industry has usually been restricted to certain prominent crafts like director or actor and very few crafts at the lower strata of film industry like the Stunt Artistes and Junior Artistes find reference in the Indian film. The two big budget films with a prominent star cast for presenting the life of Junior Artistes shows the
significance of this craft in film making and the vital role it plays in construction of a Star in Indian film industry.

Conclusion

Junior Artistes whether cast in background scene or as body double they continue to be the invisible work force in the Indian film Industry, and meet the same invisibilization in real life too; the arrangement of screen artists in the frame shows one’s place in the hierarchy of screen roles, showing the inherent relationship with acting role and identity. But what cannot be negated is the fact that Junior Artistes 'presence' on screen is essential to constitute stardom; hence casting of these artistes in a film shot depends upon certain psychological and learned facets of visual perception and the ideologies about identity they embody. Therefore Junior Artistes and everything else that constitutes this industrial-aesthetic form is crucial for comprehending the construct of an actor.