Chapter 7

Summary and Conclusion

The history of Hindi Parallel Cinema as one could see from the stated discussions above, contains several threads working together to logically lead up to the development of this form of cinema as we can see today. Even though this form of cinema emerged as a result of social consciousness and under the context and against the backdrop of an urgency to showcase social realities, today the motivations for making a serious film based on intends of mirroring socio-cultural facets, gets a new motive and strength from the advanced technical know-hows as well. As the world today is turning “glocal,” even Hindi Parallel Cinema is celebrating the multidimensional modes of representing multiple identities that our country is indeed composed of. Representations of the cultural facets of the country and the contemporary dimensions of social problems and the undercurrent issues are dealt in depth by this kind of films. It could therefore be claimed that Hindi Parallel Cinema has come a long way convincingly materializing its task of transforming itself along with the passage of time and the changes it calls for by adopting features from the latest technological modes of moving making and enhancement schemes.

The different observations and personal takes of different experts from the film fraternity, one could lay claim that it has undoubtedly, guided tremendously in writing this chapter in an strategically and well-informed manner. To sum up, the following observations could be presented.
According to a filmmaker like Shyam Benegal it was in 1955 when Satyajit Ray, Mrinal Sen, Ritwik Ghatak made the kinds of films that were reacting to a cinematic tradition that disagreed with what was going on in the mainstream cinema. Satyajit Raj broke away from it and they created a cinema and the impact of that was felt by young people in other parts of India, particularly, in Karnataka, Girish Karnad and many more and in Kerala, Adoor Gopalakrishnan and many more and finally in the beginning of 1970s in Bombay.

He admits that he is interested in the world as people are interested in the world and people are interested in the society they live in, in the problems they have, and says “I am interested in the problems they are facing because naturally I have a connection, you understand, if it didn’t have a connection, the audience will not have a connection.”

He claims that he is happy that a change is happening because the present generation of filmmakers are looking at issues that a serious filmmaker must be aware of and says “If you want something more to take home, you can only take home an experience that you feel while seeing the film, that kind of taking home is important to me when I am making films.” According to his opinion there is no such thing as “true representation,” and something like true representation of India through Bollywood films since India has many Indians and all parts of India are parts of India and all are different kinds of inhabitants and is almost like the world of Indian people is a part of India with distinct ethnic group, languages, cuisines, than any other part of the world. It’s a fascinating thing and he argues that it would take a lifetime in even exploring a part of it.

One infers many interesting takes again from the interview done with Govind Nihalani, he says “What we call the “parallel” cinema, started before the name came related it.” There was a chain of names that were in currency like “new wave” cinema, drawn from the European new wave, then “art cinema” before “parallel cinema” that means it runs parallel to the mainstream cinema.
became the working definer of this category of Hindi films. He admits that all these terms were being used to identify what these films were doing. In his perception, after the Second World War, the world was devastated, and the cinema that emerged from the devastation, was very much like parallel cinema – “very realistic and themes relating to the lowest strata of the society.” He admits though that in India, the movement started as a reaction to popular cinema as an expression of anger and frustration in general, to what was happening in our society, politically, financially or otherwise.

He says that it is better than before since the gap between audience and films are getting bridged through the entrance of multiplex culture. Even though multiplex is not the answer to everything but as he stressed, parallel film makers started feeling that they have to reach the audience and a genuine effort was made to make the narration style simpler. The stories, they chose were very different but they tried to put the story in a less experimented and in a more simplified way.

There was a reaction to that tendency and that several filmmakers disagreed to follow this middle road cinema. The term itself was used in a derogatory sense and was equated to be not pure. But he declares that the films they were doing were cinema without any compromise. There were also the filmmakers who said audience is not important for us and their expression is important; the audience should educate itself to understand their language. There was one tendency, the school of thought that was like that also and Mr Benegal came under tremendous criticism on that note.

The open-ended nature of Parallel cinema means to him, that there is no full stop to it and that it is not the end of the story for the time being. He admits that “open ending also could mean, this is not the solution. It’s like in this kind of cinema, it is the end of the chapter of a novel, so there is a life before the chapter and there is a life beyond the chapter.” Regarding his attitude towards
watching the mainstream and the Parallel cinemas, he says that he doesn't mind being an audience for both. Quoting Bernard Shaw, he says, “we need as a human being, classics and trashes in a pot, it is the question of proportion that’s all.” But we need both.

An extremely established film critic like Bhawana Somaaya endorses the notion that “Cinema is creating illusions and breaking them and creating illusions again and it is this illusion that is being transformed to the big screen.” To her, the thought and the word “parallel” cinema were coined because they were experimenting with a cinema that was parallel to the mainstream cinema, but at a personal level, she admits that she believes that there are two kinds of cinema – one that is good and the other that is bad and there are no diversifications.

The reasons that motivated to a start for such a kind of emergence of a category of films was because there were artists of different kinds who needed a platform for self expression and that is why it came into existence, but except for those who worked in it, it was difficult for the audience to accept that kind of cinema initially but ironically, at the same time by making this kind of movie and movement, they created this kind of an audience. She also reflects upon an interesting thing about India that is, it lived multiple centuries at the same time; so there is “a village in India, there is a city in India, there is a small town in India and there is also a foreign country in India, there is a poor man, there is a rich man, there is a beggar and there is a king and all these are there in Bollywood Cinema.”

She argues that parallel cinema never went away, according to her, Khosla Ka Ghosla, is parallel cinema and that Vicky Donor is also parallel cinema because it is breaking path from new kind of cinema. Talking about the current trend, she notes that “what we see now in Bollywood is the mixture of both, the sensibility from the parallel cinema and the entertainment from the mainstream.”
Samar Khan, a leading film maker today emphasizes that “parallel cinema can be defined as cinema which is not made for the mainstream or it’s not made for mass consumption” but “for a certain kind of audience which prefers cinema not just to be an entertainment but also may be, to have some cerebral level of working for that.” Personally he feels that cinema is cinema and that there are different kinds of cinema and there is a commercial mainstream cinema and there is another kind of cinema that we call parallel cinema. Highlighting about the general perception that there is only one kind of cinema that is Hollywood, and which is not true, similarly to him, in India Cinema seems to mean only mainstream Hindi film industry. He further states that the notion that Bollywood is the most authentic representation medium of India needs a clear check. He states “Bollywood is pretty much drawn or fuelled by populist movements and we have a lot of sub-cultures within our country which makes very good and watchable films. But those films never get a chance to be seen because the strength of Bollywood and marketing and the ability to reach out to a larger audience is so strong that that cinema gets somewhere diluted or not being able to be seen by people but yeah it’s about popular representation of cinema.”

These films according to him, if had been made today would have found a wider acceptance than what they would have found at that time, since there were no social media like facebook, twitter, and above all, there was no way that our filmmakers would go and tell the world that they have made those films. Hugely influenced by Godard and the Italian filmmakers, the new age filmmakers came from a certain school of thought that desired a break away from the conventional modes of film making and expressions. That’s how new wave cinema came into existence and they felt that because everybody is making films which are only entertaining and
are of certain kinds, they wanted to break that system and break that mould and went to the other extreme.

In 2000, he admits with people like

Anurag Kashyap or Sudhir Mishra, who reinvented and said that it’s not necessary to go the other extreme and there is a middle path that we can travel which is exactly, what is happening today. So there is a middle path that’s been the travelling path today. That middle path is a *Vicky Donor* (2012), *Kahani* (2012), *Shaurya* (2008). Like *Gangs of Wasseypur* (2012) or *Dev D* (2009). So it’s the balance between the both that makes socially relevant films, but packed it in such a way that people don’t find it unappetizing.

The personal interview with Lesle provided me much more informative notes regarding Hindi Parallel Cinema in particular with the point he raised about the change and the rigidity that India is so used to. To him, “What is the film all about? It should be about something, it should do something to you. Not that you just sit there and do nothing and walk out, that’s Bollywood.” He says that he loves Parallel films because they are an expression and they are not trying to sell anything but also points out that when they club with some entertainment values like in *Ardh Satya* by Govind Nilhani, it was a killer. It has an art value to it, at the same time the entertainment value to it too.

Looking at Hollywood, he points out that there is no Hollywood music and non Hollywood music, but there is Bollywood and non Bollywood music. He laments that everything about Bollywood wants to be Hollywood but not the music. He highlights that:

So it can also say look, can we have a song from your album in my movie, it can happen but that culture hasn’t come, because in abroad, a movie director hands him a movie, she is not going to compose a song and the background score, he is known for that, he is the
musical director of the film, songs come from pop artist and from their album, whatever, it comes from some album.

Another fascinating outcome into the forefront with my conversation with the well-known TV host and actress, Renuka. She states that the whole global is becoming a sort of village but she still feel that the money constrain has increased so much that it is more of a struggle to make a complete film without commercial consideration. To her “this is what parallel cinema is all about. They would not have any commercial constrain, they would do exactly what they have thought of and they would not compromise their thought in any way except technically.” Welcoming the widening change in outlook at the contemporary time, not just among the filmmakers but as well, among the actors, she expresses:

I think the stars right now are different. They are not like Anil Kapoor or Sanjay Dutt, today’s stars like Ranbir Kapoor, Imran Khan and Shahid Kapoor, they love to do different stuffs. They are not those who are interested in flexing the muscles and beating up the bad guys or getting the girl, they like to do these gray roles where everybody is not perfect.

Highlighted points on social issues and hindi parallel cinema

1. Based on the study and analyses of the selected parallel films aforementioned, it is found that Parallel Cinema since the time of Bhuvan Shome (1969) have best attempted to mirror the evolving face of our nation. Each film chosen for the proposed research work highlighted a microscopic vision of the specific segment of Post- Independent India in a state of flux. The political upheavals and the resultant life-altering side-effects endured by many as well as other Social Issues in a Post-colonial India are well captured in Hindi Parallel cinema.
2. Parallel cinema is born out of the maddening roars of suppressed voices during times of cultural crises. To mention some, the unfaithful event of the Partition of the nation into Pakistan and India on the wake of Independence, or the bloodshed that resulted in the name of mapping the nation and dividing it in terms of border designing, has been intellectually dissected through various discourses in M.S. Sathyu’s *Garam Hawa* (1973). The revolutionary new wave ideals imported into the nation by the generation of Indians who witnessed the fast changing orders of the developed nations were injected into the body of Parallel Cinema that were produced during the time. It is evident that films like this in India offered the practical platform for diverse intersecting, conflicting, negotiating polyphonic voices to interact for a better social order.

3. The study of Chandraprakash Dwivedi’s *Pinjar* (2003), hasn’t only explored the theme of partition, but also portrayed the stereotypical representation of patriarchal society. Through the protagonist Puro (Urmila Matondkar) who ruins her life in order to bring herself and her family out of the problem, women are typecast in traditional roles and represented as reliant and meek.

4. India’s independence struggle and independence are a very important landmark in the history of parallel cinema. Preaching for the society which is free of exploitation from colonial power which was exploiting the people of India or what we called the ‘aam admi’ of the society became one of the fundamental highlights of Parallel Cinema and its concerns. The analysis of M.S. Sathyu’s *Garam Hawa* (1973) and Chandraprakash Dwivedi’s *Pinjar* (2003) reflected the socio-economic crisis of that particular era.

5. Mrinal Sen’s *Bhuvan Shome*, with its ascetic style, scornful humor, and expressionist exploration of the politics of class, is a landmark in modern Indian cinema and became
highly significant for what used to be called the 'New Indian Cinema'. In the film humanizing is synonymous with “corrupting” in a desirable sense of the word in the sense of becoming less rigid, accepting the importance of compromise. “Corruption prevailed, injustice continued, laws were not changed as fast, so the economy was not changing. People were still following the bureaucratic system set up by the British. Constitution led down a certain procedure, to change the law, and the elections had the democracy so suddenly Hindu Muslim riot started as cast politics emerged. And then the dissatisfaction leads to the emergence of the communist ideology, which leads to the surfacing of many young filmmakers who made films with a cause,” Govind Nihalani (Interview, 2013).

6. Filmmakers like Shyam Benegal also took inspiration not only from the European cinema but also from the European painters like Rembrandt, who is known for doing the lighting in paintings.

Fig: Rembrandt’s key lighting, courtesy: Reinoud Kaasschieter.
Fig: Rembrandt’s Night Watch, the security guards are walking at night and they are carrying some lanterns and the feel is, their faces are lit from the light of the lamp, courtesy: Reinoud Kaasschieter.

7. The discourse analysis of Shyam Benegal’s film *Ankur* (1977) showcases a realistic feel to a village life with the theme of criticizing the caste system and exposing the hypocrisies of the ruling class with excellence. *Ankur* is a powerful, emotionally complex work, beautifully filmed with stunning performances by the cast. Shot almost entirely on location, the film captures the lush green beauty of the Indian countryside in which the multi-colored saris of the women stand out like rainbows. *Ankur* is probably the most effective condemnation of the caste system ever made – and the implications are not for India alone. It is, above all, an important work of art and any cinema aficionado should not give this one a miss.
8. In a country where 70 percent of the population is the rural mass, Govind Nihalani’s *Aakroash (1980)* stripped the class and caste politics prevailed in our society through the film. *Aakroash* is a scathing satire on the corruption in the judicial system and the victimization of the underprivileged by the able and the powerful.

9. Over 35 million girls have gone missing in our country in the last decade, killed while still fetuses, executed soon after they were born, murdered because of sheer neglect. Female infanticide has led to an alarming fall in the ratio of men to women. The discourse analysis of Manish Jha’s *Matrubhoomi: A Nation Without Women (2005)*, explores the notion of what would happen if women were to disappear from India completely. *Matrubhoomi* uses relentless brutality to shock, but at a certain point, the shock turns to numbness, as Jha hammers away with endlessly repeated close-ups of Kalki’s battered face with yet another man untying his pyjamas in the background. Manish Jha gives the film a masterly and sensitive touch that a subject like this needed.

10. Based on the study of Madhur Bhandakar’s *Page 3 (2005)*, which takes a candid look into the lives of celebrities and stars that adorn the third page of newspapers. The film penetrates through the facade of their phony lives and reveals the hypocrisy, superficiality and shallowness that lie underneath. Considering that he is part of the same fraternity, Madhur has let loose his camera on the world of glitz and glamour, probing and reaching into the deep and often dark recess of the glamorous world of celebrities. The story is told through the perspective of a protagonist Madhavi (Konkana Sen) who writes columns on page 3.

11. Anybody who drives in Mumbai has experienced the 2-odd minute wait at a traffic signal. There are beggars (kids and adults), prostitutes, tricksters, eunuchs and others who
sell clothes, flowers and trinkets. They speak quickly, act fast and operate somewhat honourably (with each other) to eke a meagre living out of the harsh Mumbai street life. *Traffic Signal* (2007), brings out the life of those who have made the Signal their ‘office’ in focus; how they earn their living, how they mark their boundaries and how they pay hafta (rent) to the manager who in turn does the same with the higher-ups is all portrayed here. Madhur’s *Traffic Signal* just opens your eyes and mind to an unfortunate world that exists in the glam cities of India.

Perhaps no new cinema remains a ‘wave’ for long, in the first flush of enthusiasm, many get caught up in the promise and later fall by the wayside. It is talented individuals and not the ‘wave’ that remains. It is also significant that some film makers have found a way to come to terms with the box office, and others are on the search of theirs, without giving up their individuality together. The governmental role is, in other words turning into one of providing the first impetus, which is as it should be. The absence of art theatres has forced directors of new cinema to find their audience in the market place, away from the ivory tower and that may not be a bad thing. It also indicates that the gap between parallel and commercial cinema is being bridged, if not altogether closed, and where it is starting to produce masterpieces within the box office.