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## A Study on Regional Industries of Indian Cinema w.r.t “Firsts” in Movies

**Omkar Milind Sobalkar**

B. K. Birla College of Arts, Commerce and Science, Kalyan (Maharashtra)

Email: [omkrs83@gmail.com](mailto:omkrs83@gmail.com)

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### **There’s More to Indian Cinema Than “Bollywood”**

The term “Bollywood,” though often inaccurately conflated with Indian cinema as a whole, refers just to the Hindi-language industry in the city of Mumbai. There are several different regional film industries throughout the country, each in different languages; the most prominent ones are Tamil, Telugu, Bengali, and Kannada languages. The regional cinemas share a variety of common tropes (music, dancing, fabulous costumes, high melodrama, et cetera, ad infinitum), with noticeable differences; in a general sense, the south cinemas, Telugu and Tamil in particular, are more floridly rowdy than the comparatively restrained Bollywood industry. The highest paid star in Asia after Jackie Chan is the Tamil-language star Rajinikanth, also known as “Superstar Rajinikanth” — who, when such things were in vogue, featured in the Indian version of Chuck Norris jokes, owing to Rajinikanth’s similarly titanic dominance over all forms of cinematic villainy.

### **Marks the Centennial of Indian Cinema (Or Close Enough)**

The centennial of Indian cinema is being observed 21<sup>st</sup> century because of the 1913 feature-length “Raja Harishchandra,” an adaptation of Sanskrit epics. From there a rich cinematic tradition emerged, with Indian films being recognized for their global commercial appeal as early as the twenties, and through on to the present day.

Political influences led the Indian film industry — which is not to say filmmakers themselves — to evolve in direct but discrete parallel to their Western counterparts:

The Golden Age of production was roughly concurrent with the various New Waves in Europe, the rise of blockbusters in the 1970s coincided with the time they took off in America, and so on. Increasingly in the 21st century, there’s been a tendency, particularly in Bollywood, to emulate American and European films (shortening running times, cutting musical numbers, etc.), though this has yet to carry over to the regional cinemas, which still proudly flaunt their idiosyncrasies.

### **Know Your Indian History-**

A great deal of the creative isolation of early Indian cinema, and the development of its own set of rules largely separate from those of the other world cinemas, dates back to regulations the British government established to promote British films over American ones (in the days when Britain ruled India). After winning political independence from Great Britain in 1947, the national film industries, already aesthetically independent, remained that way.

Beyond the aesthetic impact of politics, the thematic content of many Indian films naturally reflects Indian history and politics. Countless films deal with rebellions against the British, or remember rebellion against the British fondly. The partition between India and Pakistan is a frequent subject as well, with political tensions between the two countries providing stories for everything from Cold War-style espionage between the two countries to doomed romances between an Indian boy and a Pakistani girl, to — this being India — both at the same time.

#### **OBJECTIVES OF STUDY-**

- To study the various regional industries of Indian Cinema.
- To study the milestone movies who have contributed to set a new trend in industry of Indian RegionalCinema.

#### **RESEARCH METHOD-**

- Descriptive method of research is followed for the study.

#### **SOURCES OF DATA-**

- Secondary data is used including newspapers magazines, internet, newspapersetc.

#### **LIMITATIONS OF STUDY-**

- Only published and commonly known information about movies of Bollywood industryare studied.
- Only various industries in Indian cinema and various milestone movies are studied.

Following are some findings from the study-

#### **FINDINGS-**

- **11 Indian regional film industries-** India produces the largest number of movies in the world but that is not just Bollywood's contribution. There are numerous other film industries who are responsible for this world record. And these regional movie industries are way cooler than they are presumed to be. Some of them date back to 1910s and have produced movies that have influenced filmmakers worldwide. There are many regional film industries in India and you have got to check them out. We cannot list them all here, so take a look at these 11 Indian regional film industries and some of the coolest trivia about them.
- **Tollywood (Not to be confused with Bengali film industry)-** The Telugu film industry houses some of the most talented filmmakers and has won several Guinness World Records. Some of these include D. Rama Naidu for the most prolific producer, Dasary

Narayana Rao for the most number of movies directed and Brahmanandam for acting in the most number of films in a single language (1000+).

- **Tollywood (Not to be confused with Telugu film industry)-** The cinema of West Bengal has given us legends like Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak, and Mrinal Sen who have inspired filmmakers all over the world. The industry is known to be the most artistically and intellectually inclined. With movies like The Apu Trilogy (1955-59), Nagarik (1952), Charulata (1964), Subarnarekha (1965), etc. the industry has a history of inspirational work.
- **Bhojiwood** The Bhojpuri film industry has been in existence since the 1960s but it earned renown only in the 80s with movies like Mai(1989) and Hamar Bhauji (1983). Since then, there have been many blockbuster movies and Bollywood actors like Amitabh Bachchan, Dharmendra, Jaya Bachchan, Hema Malini, and Ajay Devgn have all starred in Bhojpuri movies. Reports suggest that Bhojiwood now stands at a worth of 2000 crores.
- **Pahariwood** Pahariwood refers to the Dogri Cinema, a language mainly used in the northern area of the country like Jammu, Himachal Pradesh, Northern Punjab. This industry is not as large as the others with only a few movies produced since its inception (1966). Dille Ch Vasya Koi (2011) is the only Dogri movie which has been awarded a National Film Award under the regional category.
- **Dhollywood/Gollywood** Gujarati cinema is one of the major regional film industries in India. It has been in existence since 1932 and has produced more than a thousand movies. It is saddening to know that of all the 1030 movies produced until 2011, only 20 were archived at the National Film Archive of India (NFAI). None of the silent films/talkies from the 30s and 40s survive
- **Sandalwood** The Kannada film industry is the fifth largest film Industry in India after Bollywood as per the box office performance. It is also referred to as Chandanavana throughout the country as ‘chandan’ means ‘sandal’ in English. There are more than 1000 single screen cinemas in Karnataka and the madness is worth an experience during the release of a movie starring
- **Mollywood** The Malayalam film industry has been in existence since 1928 but they weren’t actively producing till the 1950s. With the support of the Govt. of Kerela, the industry developed massively with every decade and has now become one of the top film industries of India with a crazy fan following of stars like Mohanlal, Mammooty, and Prithviraj.
- **Ollywood** The Odia film industry is based in Cuttack, Odhisa. The first Odhiya film released in 1936 and was prepared at a meagre budget of INR 30,000 only. The industry had released only a couple of movies in the next two decades and it wasn’t until the 70s that Ollywood was established properly. The industry now boasts of 36 National Awards in the regional category
- **Pollywood** The Punjabi film industry has been in existence since the 1920s and is one of the earliest internationally recognized regional film industries of India. Punjabi cinema is amongst the most developed industries before Indian Independence and the Partition highly affected the industry as Punjab went through a huge crisis after the division. The

next decade was spent reviving the industry, which now boasts of movies like Carry on Jatta 2 with box office collection of more than 60 crores.

- **Kollywood** Tamil cinema is the second largest film industry in India and is home to Thalaiva. The first Tamil silent movie Keechaka Vadham released in 1918 and the first talkie Kalidas released in 1931, six months after India's first talking motion picture Alam Ara came out. And there's no explaining to the madness that follows during the release of any movie starring Rajinikanth.
- **Deccanwood** The Deccani film industry is based in Hyderabad, Telangana and caters to the Deccani language/Hyderabad Urdu speaking people. A comparatively newly established industry, the films produced under them were originally labeled as 'Hindi' films by the Central Board of Film Certification. Now the industry has been granted its own language tag of Dakhini.

## II) 'Firsts' of movies which have crossed milestones and set up new trends in Indian cinema all these years-

The first-ever film made in India was released in 1913. More than a 100 years have passed since then and Indian cinema has crossed milestones which were almost impossible to imagine when motion pictures were introduced in our part of the world.

**1) Raja Harishchandra (1913) - First Indian film** The film marked a historic benchmark in the Indian film industry. Only one print of the film was made and shown at the Coronation Cinematograph. It was a commercial success and paved the way for everything that makes up Indian cinema today.

**2) Alam Ara (1931) - First Indian talkie** The film that gave the medium of cinema a voice was a period fantasy about an ageing king and his two rival queens. The film took months to make because of hazardous recording conditions and the secrecy surrounding the project.

**3) Kisan Kanya (1937) - First colour film of India** Kisan Kanya was a 1937 Hindi Cine colour feature film which was directed by Moti B. Gidwani and produced by Ardeshir Irani of Imperial Pictures. The film unfolded the poor plight of a farmer and the consequences he faces for being a peasant. The film was not a commercial success but is remembered for being the country's first colour film.

**4) Dhoop Chhaon (1935) - First playback song** One of the most important developments in Indian cinema was the introduction of playback singing. Rai Chand Boral was the first to use the systematic technique of playback singing in the film Dhoop Chhaon. Prior to this, actors would sing live on the set and that was recorded just like dialogues.

**5) 1942: A Love Story (1994) - First Dolby sound film** R.D. Burman's last film as a music composer was also the first film in Indian cinema which had Dolby sound.

**6) Apradhi (1931) - First Indian film to be shot with artificial lights** One of the most iconic personalities in Indian cinema, PC Barua is also noted for being the first to use artificial lights

while filming. He observed the production techniques in a London studio and bought lighting equipment used in the studio. The first film from his studio Apradhi, directed by Debaki Bose, was made using artificial lights.

**7) Sangam (1964) - First film to be shot abroad** Raj Kapoor's Sangam had various scenes shot in Europe. The cinema goers at that time would queue up just to see the foreign locales in motion picture.

**8) Awaara (1951) - First dream sequence** Raj Kapoor's classic film Awaara had the first-ever dream sequence in the song Ghar Aaya Mera Pardesi. The video was quite surreal for those times.

**9) Roop Lekha (1934) - First Indian film with a flashback** Flashbacks have always been an important part in the telling of cinematic stories and the first movie to use the technique was P C Barua's, Roop Lekha.

**10) Marthanda Varma (1933) - First on-screen kiss** The second Malayalam feature film, Marthanda Varma, released in 1933 and raised a lot of eyebrows for showing a kiss between the lead actors. Later that year, Devika Rani and Himanshu Rai also shared a four-minute-long kiss in the Hindi movie, Karma

**11) Hanste Aansoo (1950) - First Indian film to receive an A-certificate** Hanste Aansoo featuring Madhubala and Motilal became the first film to receive 'only for adults' certification following the amendment of the original Indian Cinematograph Act (1918) in December 1949.

**12) Bhakta Vidur (1921) - First film to face a ban** This film directed by Kanjibhai Rathod came in the wake of the Rowlatt Act which put restrictions on Indian imports. This mythological allegory alluded directly to political issues of the day and was banned in Madras and Karachi.

**13) My Dear Kuttichathan (1984) - First 3D film** India was introduced to 3D motion pictures with the Malayalam film, My Dear Kuttichathan, in 1984. This film was dubbed and released in Hindi as Chhota Chetan in 1998. A few additional scenes were shot and added to this release with Hindi actors Urmila Matondkar, Satish Kaushik, Shakti Kapoor and Ravi Baswani.

**14) Taal (1998) - First film to be insured** Subhash Ghai is credited with starting the trend of insuring movies in India and Taal became the first ever Bollywood film to be insured for a whopping sum of ₹110 million! Almost 85 years after the release of first Hindi movie, the Indian film industry addressed the demand for risk cover against any mishap prior to the release of the film and insuring movies quickly became a trend.

**15) Fatma Begum (1926) - First female director of Bollywood** In 1926, actress Fatma Begum became the first woman to take an important role behind the camera by establishing her own production company, Fatma Films, and later directing Bulbul-e-Parastan.

**16) Bhanu Athaiya (1983) - First Indian to win an Oscar** This veteran costume designer was the first Indian to win the prestigious Academy Award for the film Gandhi released in 1982. This award was shared with John Mollo.

**17) Seeta (1934) - First international award for an Indian film** Directed by Debaki Bose, Seeta was the first Indian talkie film to premiere at the Venice Film Festival in 1934. The movie, featuring Durga Khote and Prithviraj Kapoor, won an Honorary Diploma, making Debaki Bose the first Indian director and Seeta the first film to have won an international award.

**18) Lage Raho Munna Bhai (2006) - First Indian film to be screened at the United Nations** Lage Raho Munna Bhai directed by Rajkumar Hirani was the first Indian film to be screened at the United Nations on November 10, 2006. The film had a goon protagonist learning the lessons of non-violence from none other than Mahatma Gandhi.

**19) Neecha Nagar (1946) - First film to win the Palme d'Or at Cannes Film Festival** Directed by Chetan Anand and produced by India Pictures, Neecha Nagar was the first Indian film to win the Palme d'Or at 1946 Cannes Film Festival. The film portrayed a contrasting picture of the rich and the poor society.

**20) Naujawan (1937) - First talkie film without songs** Right after the first talkie film released in 1931, songs became an indispensable part of Hindi films. J.B.H Wadia's Naujawan released in 1937 and became India's first song-less talkie film. It was a fast paced thriller, hence no songs were included.

**21) Bilat Ferat (1921) - First Indian social satire** Bilat Ferat means 'foreign returned' and foreign generally meant England at that time. The film was about Indians returning from abroad and adapting pro-western attitudes in contrast to the conservatives in India who were opposed to change. This Bengali silent film was directed by N.C. Lahiri and Dharendra Nath Ganguly.

**22) Sivaji Ganesan (1964) - First actor to play 9 roles in a film** The film is well known for starring Sivaji Ganesan in nine distinct roles: the basic emotions - wonder, fear, compassion, anger, peace, love, courage, repulsion and happiness. Navarathri traces Nalina's (the female protagonist) experience of these nine emotions on nine consecutive nights. Kamal Hassan broke this record by playing 10 different roles in his 2008 film Dasavatharam.

**23) Yaadein (1964) - First film to be shot with a single actor** Yaadein was directed and produced by Sunil Dutt also starring himself. The only other actor in the film is Nargis Dutt, that too in a silhouette in the final scene. This film is first-ever Indian and one of kind films in world cinema as it features only a single actor and hence has found an entry in the Guinness Book of World Records in the category 'Fewest actors in a narrative film'.

**24) Kismet (1943) - First film with an anti-hero in the lead and a double role** With Ashok Kumar in the lead role, the film came with some bold themes for the first time in Indian cinema

showing an anti-hero character, double role and an unmarried girl getting pregnant. The movie was the first blockbuster movie of Indian cinema. This film also started the trend of lost and found family members which continued till the '90s.

**25) Lanka Dahan (1917) - First actor to play two roles in the same film** Dadasaheb Phalke cast Anna Salunke, the actor who played Rani Taramati in Raja Harishchandra, in a double role in Lanka Dahan. Anna Salunke played both Ram and Sita in the movie. It is said that when the film was screened in Mumbai, people took their shoes off when Lord Rama's character appeared on the screen.

### **Conclusion-**

It All Comes Down to Family-

- In too many mainstream Hindi films to count, the big tough hero who can throw cars with his mustache and is master of all that he surveys comes home to find his mother yelling at him about his lack of responsibility, his need to get married and other pedestrian concerns. It's not just something that's played for laughs, either.
- Generally (in mainstream films at least), in a choice between an individual and either a literal family or a group standing in for one, the moral point of view expressed is that the family/group should come first and nearly always does. For Americans, maybe the most individualistic people in history, this is occasionally a tough pill to swallow — but more than any of the other items on this list, it's essential that one understands the source of this ingredient before approaching these films.
- For American audiences, Indian films offer a cultural challenge unlike others posed by different foreign cinemas. Because of the relative isolation of the Indian film industries with regard to the West, since it took almost a century before any broad tendency to emulate other film cultures arose, India occupies a unique place in film culture, one every cinephile should explore. With the right mindset, immersion in these waters can be a wonderful experience indeed.
- Although Indian cinema is one of the oldest world cinemas, and the largest in terms of output, its evolution in parallel to the West with little crossover until very recently leaves a lot of Western moviegoers with the impression that it's daunting and inscrutable. But with a few simple guidelines, any American movie buff should be able to explore Indian cinema, particularly when it comes to the massive Hindi-language industry based in Mumbai commonly known as "Bollywood."

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