# UNIT 13   INDIAN CINEMA

## Structure

## 13.0   OBJECTIVES

This Unit discusses about Indian cinema. Indian cinema has been a very powerful medium for the popular expression of India's cultural identity. After reading this Unit you will be able to:

● familiarize yourself with the achievements of about a hundred years of Indian cinema,

● trace the development of Indian cinema as an industry,

● spell out the various ways in which social reality has been portrayed in Indian cinema,

● place Indian cinema in a political perspective,

● define the specificities of the images of men and women in Indian cinema,

● outline the importance of music in cinema, and

● get an idea of the main achievements of Indian cinema.

## 13.1   INTRODUCTION

It is not possible to fully comprehend the various facets of modern Indian culture without understanding Indian cinema. Although primarily a source of entertainment, Indian cinema has nonetheless played an important role in carving out areas of unity between various groups and communities based on caste, religion and language. Indian cinema is almost as old as world cinema. On the one hand it has gifted to the world great film makers like Satyajit Ray, it has also, on the other hand, evolved melodramatic forms of popular films which have gone beyond the Indian frontiers to create an impact in regions of South west Asia.

In this Unit we will familiarize you with those characteristics of Indian cinema which enable a better and fuller understanding of modern India. Although it is not possible to include all the aspects of Indian cinema in one Unit, we would nevertheless try to introduce you to those aspects which would provide a background to your activities in relation to tourism. This Unit, therefore, focuses on those aspects of Indian cinema which will prove useful in your pursuits e.g. an overview of hundred years of Indian cinema, its development as an industry, identifying Indian social reality as expressed in cinema, and the political context of Indian cinema. This Unit will also looks at cinema as an art form and highlights those factors, like Indian film music and dance, which have contributed to its popularity.

## 13.2    INTRODUCING INDIAN CINEMA

When Lumiere brothers invented cinema in the last decade of the 19th century, they did not quite realize the fact that their invention would, in years to come, entertain millions across the world in an unprecedented manner. India may have lagged behind other countries in many fields but has maintained near parity in the field of cinema. Only seven months after its inauguration (premier show) in France, Lumiere brothers' films were shown in Bombay for the first time on 7 July 1896. In 1899, Harishchandra Sakharam Bhatwadekar made a film on a wrestling match in Bombay. In 1901 Bhatwadekar made the first news reel. The honour of making the first feature film goes to Dada Saheb (Dhundiraj Govind ) Phalke who made the first silent film **Raja Harishchandra** in 1913. Indian cinema has thus completed about a hundred years and feature films have completed a span of more than 80 years. The history of Indian cinema can be broadly divided into three phases:

1.    **The era of silent films**: 1913-31.

2.    **Pre-independence talkies**: 1931-47.

3.    **Post independence films**: 1947 till today.

We will now study all these phases separately.

### 13.2.1  The Era of Silent Films

The era of silent films lasted for almost two decades. To begin with in only three silent films were made in 1913. This number kept increasing every year. By the end of silent era in 1934 around 1300 films were made. 1931 was a year of climax for silent films. When a total of 200 silent films were made it was also the time of the making of first talkie. This number declined to 64 the next year. In 1934, the last year of silent cinema, only seven silent films were made.

In 1916, three years after the making of **Raja Harishchandra**, R.Natraj Mudliar made 'Keechak Vadham' (The killing of Keechak a character from the epic Mahabharat) in south India. The very next year J.F.Madan made '**Satyavadi Harishchandra**' in Calcutta. In the same year Babu Rao Painter, a famous film maker and Dada Saheb Falke's disciple, started a Maharashtrian film company. The same year Dada Saheb Phalke made a short film on movie making itself, called,**How Films are Made**. Film Censor Boards were established in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras in 1920. The first film magazine '*Bijoli*' was published in bengali from Calcutta the same year. A film **Nal Damyanti** was made with Italian collaboration, again in 1920. This was the first Indian film made with foreign collaboration.

The themes of silent films were invariably religious and mythological and sometimes social. **Sawkari Pash**, a film made by Baburao Painter in 1925, is rated by many film critics as the first Indian art film. V. Shantaram played the role of a peasant whose land is appropriated by a greedy moneylender. The peasant is forced to become a mill worker in a city. Sawkari **Pash** was the first realistic cinema in an era of religious films based on a melodramatic formula. Both the trends in film making were to culminate later into very very different traditions of film making, broadly classified as **art films and commercial films**. The melodramatic and theatrical tradition of film making owed itself to Parsi theatres which were quite popular among the people when cinema made its entry. (You must have read about it in Unit-12.)

### 13.2.2  Pre-Independence Talkies

Foreign talkie films had been screened in India before the first Indian talkie was made. These films inspired Ardeshir M. Irani to make the first Indian sound feature film (talkie) **Alam Ara**. The film was in hindi and had twelve songs in it. It was from here that songs and music became an integral part of Indian cinema. The year 1931 witnessed the making of 28 talkies , of which there were 23 in hindi, four in bengali and one in tamil. The first tamil talkie **Kalidas**, directed by H.M. Reddy, was also made in 1931. The number of talkies increased to 84 the next year and kept increasing in subsequent years. In 1947 alone a total of 280 films were screened in as many as 15 languages. Of these 33 in bengali, 11 in Gujrati, 183 in hindi, five in kannada, six in marathi, three in oriya, 29 in tamil and six in telugu were screened.

The traditions of realistic and melodramatic cinema ran parallel to each other in the era of talkies also. But the dividing line between them was not as strong and clear as it became after

**V. Shantaram**



**Guru Dutt**



**Satyajit Ray**

independence and particularly in the era of **new cinema** in the 1970s. Today films are known for their heroes and heroines but the films of 1930s and 1940s were known for their production companies. Bombay Talkies, Prabhat Films, New Theatres and Filmistan were some of the famous film companies. In south India A.V.M. (A. V. Meiyappan) film company and Gemini Pictures were established. Although Bombay was the centre of film making, Calcutta, Madras and Pune were also important places for such activity.

The films, to begin with, were not only silent but also devoid of any colours. Even talkies continued to be made only in black and white although attempts were made to impart colours to films. In 1933, Prabhat Films, Pune got their film **sairandhri** processed in Germany and this was the first coloured indian film. But coloured films did not catch on and during the first two decades after 1933 films continued to be made in black and white only. The decade after that witnessed both coloured and black and white films. It was not until 1970 that the making of black and white film virtually came to an end.

During the pre-independence period the Indian cinema did not directly contribute to the struggle for freedom for fear of being censored. But the ideas of freedom continued to be expressed indirectly through religious and historical cinema. Often such films had to face bans and censorship. The second major contribution of cinema during this period was in the field of social reform. **Achhut Kanya**, made in 1936 by Bombay Talkies, focused on the question of social justice. Similarly **Sant Tukaram** (marathi, 1936) became a classic in the history of Indian cinema. The year 1936 witnessed the emergence of leftist movements and this was reflected in the cinema as well. **Duniya Na Mane** (hindi, 1937), **Pukar** (hindi, 1939), **Tyagbhumi** (tamil, 1939), **Roti** (hindi, 1942), **Ramshastri** (hindi/marathi, 1944), **Dharti Ke Lal** (hindi, 1946), **Doctor Kotnis Ki Amar Kahani** (hindi, 1946), **Neechanagar** (hindi, 1946) were important films in this direction.

All of them were artistic attempts at portraying existing social contradictions in a realistic form (manner). Among the main film makers of this era were V.Shantaram, Nitin Bose, P.C.Barua, Dhiren Ganguli, Himanshu Roy, Sohrab Modi, Chetan Anand, Mehboob Khan, K.Subramanyam, V.Damle, S.Fattelal and Khwaja Ahmad Abbas.

### 13.2.3 Post-Independence Cinema

Attempts at combining entertainment and social relevance in the cinema continued even after independence. Although the censor boards, created during the British period, remained, movie makers now enjoyed greater liberty in making political and social films than they had before. Technically the world of cinema had advanced quite a bit and this was reflected in Indian cinema too. The movie makers, active during this phase, displayed an acute awareness of the changes taking place in world cinema. Combined with this was an optimism, determination and a resolve to do something new. Satyajit Ray, Bimal Roy, Ritwik Ghatak, Guru Dutt, Rishikesh Mukerjee, Raja Paranjpe, L.V.Prasad, K.Balchander, Raj Kapur, Rajender Singh Bedi, Mrinal Sen, Dutta Dharmadhikari, Anant Mane, Dinkar Patil, B.Naga Reddy and C.P.Sridhar etc. were the main movie makers of the post independence period who based their cinema on social realism, aesthetic sophistication (excellence) and healthy entertainment. Many films of this period were acknowledged and awarded nationally and internationally. Pather Panchali (bengali, 1955), Charulata (bengali, 1964), Chemmin (malayalam, 1965), Jagte Raho (hindi, 1956) and Do Bigha Zameen (hindi, 1953) were distinguished films of this period. Kismat (hindi, 1943) had already created a record for the longest running at a cinema hall in Calcutta- three and a half years! Similarly Mughal-i-Azam ( urdu, 1960), Mother India (hindi, 1958) and Ganga Jamuna (hindi, 1962) created new standard in popular cinema. Awara (hindi, 1951) extended the popularity of Indian cinema beyond Indian frontiers to U.S.S.R. and West Asia. In South India, N.T.Ramarao (telugu), Shivaji Ganeshan and M.G.Ramchandran (tamil), Prem Nazir (malayalam) and Rajkumar (kannada) achieved popularity with their hero centred (hero oriented) films and captured popular imagination as regional heroes.

Hope, faith and optimism reigned supreme in the Indian society and people in the first two decades of the post-independence India. The newly won freedom had ushered in an era of hope among the people. They believed that in independent India old promises would be fulfilled and new changes will bring about prosperity, equality and a better life for the common people. This romanticism was reflected fairly clearly in contemporary cinema. **Dukh Bhare Din Beete Re Bhaiya, Ab Sukh Aayo Re** ( Gone are the days of sorrow, it's happiness ever after, a song from the hindi film **Mother India**) was really the voice of this cinema. Expressions of pain and agony were also tinged with a hope for a better tomorrow- **Woh Subah Kabhi To**

Aayegi (better days will be here some day, a song from the hindi film **Phir Subah Hogi**). But hopes began turning into despair by the seventh decade of the century. Culture of self aggrandizement and consumerism began to dominate the Indian cinema. The technical excellence acquired by the cinema during the 1970s was also accompanied by a certain moral degeneration in the theme selection.

Parallel to this ran another kind of cinema. Deteriorating social situation motivated people into collective popular political action. This popular urge for social action found its voice in the new cinema also. It was called the **new cinema** or the **parallel cinema**. As you are aware, a tradition of realistic cinema had always existed, but now it became a very significant trend and also created a space for new experiments. This cinema was made possible by contributions from N.F.F.C. (National Film Financing Corporation) and financial assistance from state governments. This new cinema was of two kinds – the experimental cinema of Mani Kaul and Kumar Sahni on the one hand, and the 'committed' cinema of Shyam Benegal, Adoor Gopal Krishnan, Gautam Ghosh, Govind Nihlani, Syed Akhtar Mirza, Ketan Mehta and Jabbar Patel, on the other. The second category of cinema was essentially an expression of social protest. Indian cinema in this phase benefitted immensely by the entry of actors, directors and technicians trained in the Film Institute of Pune. **Bhuwan Shome** (hindi, Mrinal Sen), **Uski Roti** (hindi, Mani Kaul), **Sanskar** (kannada, Girish Kasarvalli), Swayamwaram (Malyalam, Adoor Gopal krishnan), **Ankur** (hindi, Shyam Benegal), **Pasi** (tamil, Durai), **Umbartha** (marathi, Jabbar Patel), **Bhawani Bhawai** (gujarati, Ketan Mehta), **Sadgati** (hindi, Satyajit Ray), **Paar** (hindi, Gautam Ghosh), **Maya Miriga** (oriya, Nirad Mahapatra), **Aakrosh** (hindi, Govind Niblani), etc.were some of the important films of this phase.



Shyam Benegal

The **new cinema** did not flourish for long and had a somewhat premature end in the 1980s. Popular cinema also began changing its complexion. The romance of the 1960s gave way to sex and violence. But it should be admitted that the number and influence of socially relevant films, although on a decline, has not disappeared altogether.
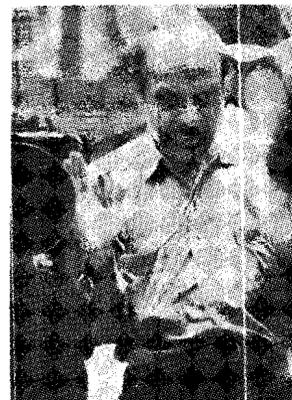
## 13.3    INDIAN CINEMA AS AN INDUSTRY

India tops the list in the number of films made every year. Approximately 800 films in about 25 languages are made every year. In the last eight decades India has made about 25000 films in about 50 languages. It did look at some point that the expansion of the television might send the cinema into oblivion. On the contrary, the number of films has increased with the television boom. In 1990 only, a total of 948 films were screened.

The maximum number of films are made in hindi, tamil, telugu and malayalam. Apart from these Karnataka, Bengal, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Orissa and Assam have a long tradition of good film making. India has a total of 13000 cinema halls catering to a population of 900 million people. Of these, 8000 are permanent cinema halls. They entertain a total of 15 million movie goers every week. More than half the cinema halls are located in the four states of South India whereas the seven hindi states, put together, have only 2400 cinema halls. The single state of Andhra Pradesh has more cinema halls (2600) than all the hindi states put together.



Gautam Ghosh

The cinema as a medium has been used, ever since the beginning, for making feature films mainly. This has been partly because of the ability of this medium to portray a story in its totality. But this must be borne in mind that making a feature film is very different from writing a story, novel or poetry. The latter are primarily individual ventures. Film, on the contrary, is a collective effort which requires investments at a very large plane, both at the level of making and screening. It is for this reason that film making, distribution and screening have taken the form of an industry. A total of six lakh people are involved and employed, in various capacities, in the industry. According to an estimate, approximately seven billion rupees have been invested in the making of the films, four billion in distribution network, 13 billion in the form of cinema halls, 400 million in laboratories and the same amount in recording studios. A total of three billion rupees are invested every year in movie making and the expenditure on an average film comes to more than ten million rupees.

The government receives eleven billion rupees annually as tax from the sale of tickets. In the year 1988-89 the total income from the film industry was to the tune of six and a half billion rupees after paying all the taxes. Hence, cinema is an important source of government revenue.

Cinema has also played an important role in earning money through exports. Indian films are exported to 50 countries. This includes countries which do not have Indian population. During 1978-80, National Film Development Corporation (N.F.D.C.) received 120 million rupees from the export of Indian films. In a decade's time this increased to 750 million. The exact import figures are not available, but the income of N.F.D.C., active in this field, has been on an increase. Strangely enough, in such a huge industry churning out 800 films every year, the proportion of commercially successful films is not more that ten percent. Another ten percent manage to break even and the remaining 80 percent end up commercially unsucessful. This does not, however, deter movie makers in their ventures. In hindi only, the making of about 300 films is declared every year, although only half of them are made and barely one third manage to get a screening.

In spite of such losses for a majority of the films, it is the incentive of huge profits which explains the investment of billions of rupees every year in the Indian cinema. The successful films at the box office normally return five to ten times the original cost of the film. The successful film of 1994, **Hum Aapke Hain Kaun**, with an estimated investment of about seventy million, earned one and a half billion rupees in one year only.

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**Check Your Progress-1**

1.     a. Social relevance and aesthetic sophistication being the criteria, which Indian film can be called the first art film?

        b. Which was the first coloured Indian film?

        c. Which was the first talkie made in tamil?

        d. Who directed the above mentioned film?

        e. Which talkie was the first to acquire the status of a classic?

2.     a)    Name the four languages in which maximum films are made.
            i)_____ ii)_____ iii)_____ iv)_____

        b)    Which are the four states with maximum number of cinema halls?
            i)_____ ii)_____ iii)_____ iv)_____

        c)    What makes following persons famous?

            i)   Dada Saheb Falke
            ii)   Babu Rao Painter
            iii)   Ardeshir M. Irani

3.     80 percent of the films flop at the box office. Why is there so much of investment in the cinema?

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## 13.4   INDIAN CINEMA : FANTASY OR REALITY

Like other art forms cinema is both **a part of existing social reality and also a medium of portraying it.** But the way in which the reality is portrayed in cinema is different from other art forms. This aspect is often ignored while analysing Indian cinema. A great motivating force

behind movie making is the huge ocean of audiences, drawn from the middle and lower middle classes, located in big cities and small towns. Although not more than one fourth of the population, it still forms a great bulk of the people. This bulk consists of groups with diverse habits, priorities, expectations and life styles. The Indian cinema has to, necessarily, cater to these diverse groups and represent their variety.

The long span of popular Indian cinema over the last 80 years has rested on certain formulae which have also undergone periodic changes. Films revolving around love story, song and dance, comic interludes and sex and violence are also a reflection of the time and social surroundings. Cinema uses various contradictions inherent in our society like raw materials.

A central contradiction, used by the cinema, is the one between the rich and the poor. Apart from this, the rural and the urban, different generations, Hindus and Muslims, upper caste and lower caste, man and woman often form the core of the films' story. Situations of conflict, harmony and struggle are created out of these contradictions. Also, an attempt to transcend differences of religion, caste, language and region to adopt a humanitarian view and position has also been central to Indian cinema. This is, however, not to imply that popular cinema provides any meaningful and socially creative alternative to the real contradictions of our society. On the contrary, popular cinema, in its ideological moorings, does not posit any radical solutions to societal problems.

There is also a sense in which hindi cinema is different from their regional counterparts. hindi films try to express forms of pan-Indianism in their stylistic representations. Regional films, on the other hand, are able to portray their specific regional cultural flavour without diluting it in any way. In spite of this difference, popular films in all languages use social contradictions like raw material. Reality is moulded to such an extent that it acquires the shape of a fantasy, in harmony with middle class aspirations and fantasies. Popular cinema, thus, on the one hand, becomes contextual and credible by establishing a link with reality, and , on the other, constructs a world of fantasy, providing the audiences a certain release (escape) from their 'real' world, full of sorrow and agony.

## 13.5 INDIAN CINEMA IN POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

Indian cinema has developed primarily as a source of entertainment and has, therefore, been unable to play an important role in bringing about basic political transformation. On the contrary, popular cinema has tended to avoid political tension to be able to establish a larger social base. But it is generally not possible for any source of entertainment to make itself popular without taking into cognition the existing social reality. Therefore, Indian popular cinema has, paradoxically enough, used the existing social reality and sought to escape it, at the same time. Cinema before independence, maintained a safe distance from the freedom struggle and avoided echoing, after independence, popular aspirations. Although , on the one hand, Indian films expressed and upheld positive values of democracy, nationalism and communal harmony; on the other hand, they also lent legitimacy, directly or indirectly, to the feudal structure of the family, deep religiosity and male domination in the society. If hindi cinema tended to promote national chauvinism, regional cinema promoted, though unconsciously, regionalism. Quite often, a condemnation of westernisation also became, in popular cinema, an attempted resurrection of the rotten feudal structure.

Along with being a source of entertainment, India's popular cinema has also acted like opium for the people, thus tranquilising their consciousness into deep slumber. The politics of cinema has always been a supporter of status quo. Through a fantasisation of the social reality, the popular cinema has prevented the exposure of the popular consciousness towards the naked truth of their own lives and has often trapped them into an unreal, fantastic world. Admittedly, cinema is not the **only** medium to be doing this and not **every** cinema is misleading the popular consciousness in this manner. B.R.Painter, V.Shantaram, Satyajit Ray, Bimal Roy, Guru Dutt, Shyam Benegal and Adoor Gopal Krishnan etc. have provided a better alternative to Indian cinema by making pro-people films.

1) What is the identity of the audiences of the Indian films?

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2) Give one important difference between hindi cinema and regional cinema?

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3. What kind of a value system has been portrayed in the popular Indian cinema?

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## 13.6   IMAGE OF HERO

The prevalence of hero centred cinema is merely a reflection of the male dominated society of ours. The pre-independence hero was well aware of his social responsibility and fully committed to change the society. But his own life had nothing but pain and sorrow. The post-independence hero, by contrast, was a romantic who nurtured softer emotions. He dreamt of setting up a home with the beautiful girl he loved. This was interrupted by the entry of the villain who was a bad man, with dubious morality and motivated by greed. His singular mission was to capture and win the heroin by hook or crook. The hero- villain conflict reached its climax in the fight between the two and the film ended with the defeat of the villain. The fight between the hero and the villain provided the only instance of violence in film full of romantic scenes, softer emotions and a musical environment. Such were the films of Dilip Kumar, Raj Kapur, Guru Dutt and Ashok Kumar.

The films from south followed more or less the same pattern expect that their hero behaved in a more heroic fashion than their counterpart in the hindi films. He also had strong regional roots unlike heroes from the hindi films. M.G.Ramachandran, Shivaji Ganeshan, N.T.Ramarao and Prem Nazir etc. represented this regional hero. This was the product of the optimism generated during the Nehru era.

The 1970s came up with crude versions of this romantic hero. The romance became shallow, almost verging on consumerism. By now the optimism of Nehru era had begun evaporating in thin air. It was this climate which produced a new hero. This was a rough, tough and angry man motivated by vengeance. His motto in life was an eye for an eye. Needless to say this was

Amitabh Bachchan era. In regional cinema this image was carried mainly by Rajnikant. In their basic attributes these heroes were so different from their predecessors that they were called anti-heroes.

The crisis of the Indian society deepened in the decades of 1980s and 1990s. Greed for wealth increased among the middle and upper classes. Idealism became a thing of the past. Degeneration in values became rampant. Distinction between good and bad got blurred. Violence and intolerance were on an ascent. Increasing communalism, separatism, regionalism and consumerism were indicators of the decay that had set in the society.

Indian cinema was merely the reflection of the increasing violence in the society. The anti-hero of the earlier decade became a proper **Khalnayak** (villain) now. The distinctions between the hero and the villain almost disappeared. Sanjay Dutt, Shahrukh Khan and Nagarjun are the heroes of this villain era. A challenge to this 'villain' era is the unprecedented success of the heroine centred, romantic musical **Hum Aapke Hain Kaun** which perhaps shows that it is still possible for the society to overcome its degeneration of social values.

## 13.7 IMAGE OF WOMAN ,

The image of woman, like that of the hero, has been constantly changing in the Indian cinema. This is also related to the changing roles of woman in the society. During the silent cinema the movie makers had questioned the feudal restrictions on a woman's life. Dhiren Ganguli, Baburao Painter and V.Shantaram opposed child marriage through their films and promoted widow remarriage, women's education, freedom to choose their own husbands, and working along with men outside the house.

Indian cinema continued to embrace and espouse this reformative attitude towards woman but also glorified motherhood, and fidelity among women. An ideal woman was a devoted wife and a loving mother who would make any sacrifice for the family. Even now it is virtually impossible to show the ideal woman resorting to divorce, remarriage or marriage with a man of other religion.

In order to highlight the orthodox image of the devoted wife, the Indian films have counterposed this image with that of the vamp who is just the opposite. She is a westernised woman, smokes and drinks, and is cruel, selfish and unscrupulous. In other words, she is the anti-thesis of the 'womanly' attributes- soft, polite and sacrificing. Needless to say the real woman's image did not correspond to any of these extremities. The real picture of the woman has been portrayed very powerfully by movie makers endowed with a strong sense of social awakening. They have also posited the alternative of woman's liberation in a commendable manner. V.Shantaram, Ritwik Ghatak, Guru Dutt, Satyajit Ray, Bimal Roy, Shyam Benegal and Jabbar Patel etc. have emphasised the real plight of the woman through some of their important films. Simultaneously she has also been upheld for her courage and the capacity to struggle.

Whether it is the traditional woman or the modern liberated one, Indian actresses have enacted these roles and images very powerfully. Devika Rani, Durga Khote, Nargis, Meena Kumari, Nutan, Waheeda Rehman, Sharda, Smita Patil and Shabana Azmi are some of India's all time greats.

## 13.8 MUSIC IN INDIAN CINEMA

During the days of silent cinema, the cinema halls used to keep an orchestra in front of the screen facing the audience. The orchestra would provide the viewers an outline of the story and background music along with the film. In between the scenes they would also entertain the viewers with songs. Music, song and dances had been the integral part of the popular theatres, and so it was assumed that cinema, too, should be accompanied by songs and music. In the Parsi theatres the dialogues, too, used to be delivered in a lyrical manner. Indian cinema inherited this tradition. Whereas the first talkie **Alam Ara** (1931) had twelve songs in it, **Indrasabha** had 70. Films in other languages maintained this tradition. The non theatrical (realistic) films, in which songs were avoided owing to respect for realism, were invariably rejected by the people. Even today films with as many as fourteen songs are box office hits.

In fact, music has been a major factor in the recent hits **Roja, Bombay** and **Hum Aapke Hain Kaun**.

The 60 years' march of filmy music has gone through many stages. In the initial days when dubbing was not possible, songs had to be recorded along with shooting. The entire orchestra used to be present at the shooting sight. The actual singing had to be done by the actors and actresses themselves, as background singing was not possible. Noorjahan, Suraiya, Surendra, Ashok Kumar, M.S.Subbalakshmi and K.L.Sehgal were all actors/actresses cum singers. With dubbing came a new tradition of playback singers.

Music in Indian films is generally not conceived as an autonomous entity within itself, but has to be intimately connected to the storyline. Songs and music are created in accordance with the requirements of the film and are woven into the various situations of the film. In spite of these limitations, the melodious music produced by the Indian cinema is an example in itself and has few parallels.

Film music has derived its melodies from three diverse sources- Indian classical music, folk music from different regions and western classical and popular music. Initial music directors did not copy this music but adapted and modified it to create a music tradition suitable to the common man.

In the fourth and the fifth decades, the use of the orchestra was minimal and the music director displayed his musical abilities with the help of very few musical instruments. This did not, however, take away from the music its melody and charm. R.C.Boral, Pankaj Malik, K.L.Sehgal, Kanan Devi, K.C.Dey, Pahari Sanyal, Saraswati Devi and Khem Chandra Prakash were some of the greatest singers and music directors of this period whose melodious voices and lyrical music is very popular even today.

Many new and promising music directors emerged during the 1950s. Anil Biswas, Vasant Desai, Naushad, C.Ramchandra, S.D.Burman, Jaidev, Madan Mohan, Roshan, M.S.Baburaj, S.Bal Chander, Salil Choudhry, Bhupen Hazarika, Hemant Kumar, P.Nageshwar Rao and Sudhir Phadke were some of them. Part of the credit for their success should also go to a whole generation of immensely talented lyrists, drawn from the world of poetry and literature. Sahir Ludhianvi, Majrooh Sultanpuri, Shailendra, Kaifi Azmi, Pradeep and Gopal Das Neeraj were some of the leading lyrists of the 1950s. Apart from these, Lata Mangeshkar, Geeta Dutt, Asha Bhonsle, Mohammad Rafi, Talat Mehmood, Mukesh, Kishore Kumar, Manna Dey and Hemant Kumar were great singers who, in company with the music directors and the lyrists, produced ever lasting melodies. These singers sang not only in hindi and urdu but in various other Indian languages. Lata Mangeshkar alone is credited to have sung about 25000 songs in fifteen different languages. Not only that, the magic of her voice has completely mesmerised and captivated the Indian people for five full decades. This duration must be a record in the history of singing.

The golden phase of film music began fading by the 1970s when violence began to dominate the Indian films. Romance and soft emotions, fodder for good music in the films, received a set back in the popular films of the 1970s and 1980s. In trying to keep pace with life, softness and subtle nuances of music gave way to fast, loud and orchestral forms. R.D.Burman, Ilia Raja, Laxmikant Pyarelal and Bappi Lahiri were some of the popular music directors of this period though occasionally they gave pleasing music also. The cacophonic tradition of music continues even today but the 1990s has brought reminders of the golden period of film music. A.R.Rahman, the famous young director from south, and some budding music directors from hindi films are trying to revive the glorious past.

Like music dance has also been an integral part of Indian films. Music and its strong presence in the films is actually rooted in India's rich cultural tradition. Classical dance forms like Bharat Natyam, Kathak, Odissi, Kuchipuri and Manipuri etc. are a part of this tradition. Apart from these , the tradition of folk dances is no less rich and diverse. It is indeed a truism to say that the dance and music form an important part of Indian life.

The dance forms in Indian cinema have borrowed very heavily from Indian classical tradition, folk tradition and the western dance tradition. But film dances do not use them in their original, pure form. Thematically speaking, dances are used in films in three ways. First is a solo performance by the heroine or the vamp on the stage or at a party. The dance form employed here is often a classical one. Second is a chorus at a festival or some big occasion. Situations for these dances are somehow woven into the theme of the film. These are often a combination of folk and western dance traditions. The third form is often employed by the

hero and the heroine to express their love for each other. The most intimate moments between the hero and the heroine are portrayed through songs and music in the films. No specific dance form is resorted to, by the hero or the heroine.

The combination of songs and music is generally used to convey a sense of happiness, elation or sorrow. The focus is generally not on its pure and classical form but on its popular manifestations. Sometimes it becomes quite difficult to decipher the exact dance form in the films. Of late, there has been an increase in vulgarity in film dances which is nothing but a part of increasing vulgarity in Indian cinema in general. There is not much to distinguish regional films from their hindi counterparts, as far as dance is concerned. The regional cinema generally does not use the specific dance form and music of that particular region. Nonetheless, it can not be denied that dance and music have played a very crucial role in popularising Indian cinema.

## 13.9 ACHIEVEMENTS OF INDIAN CINEMA

Indian cinema may not have played a revolutionary role but has definitely contributed to the welding together of 900 million Indians from different languages, religions and cultures. Different parts of the country have contributed to the development of the film industry. Interestingly, people from the non hindi areas have contributed to popular hindi cinema, more than the hindi speaking people. Paradoxically Tamilnadu, where hindi as a language has never been popular, has played an important role in the promotion of hindi films. Film producing units A.V.M., Gemini Films, Vijaya pictures and Prasad Productions from Madras have constantly made films in hindi and thereby provided the much needed bridge between north and south. South has also given a number of famous heroines to hindi cinema. Waheeda Rahman, Vyjayanti Mala, Hema Malini, Jaya Prada, Shri Devi and Rekha have dominated the silver screen for a long time. Great film makers like Dada Saheb Phalke, Hiralal Sen and Baburao Painter of the silent era and V.Shantaram, Himanshu Roy, Nitin Bose, Guru Dutt, Bimal Roy, Rishikesh Mukerjee, Sohrab Modi, Mrinal Sen, Shyam Benegal, Ketan Mehta, Raj Kapur and Jabbar Patel have all come from non-hindi areas. Even today Mani Ratnam's films, A.R.Rehman's music, S.P.Bala Subramanyam's voice and Sridevi's acting have brought together millions from across the regions. This contribution from non-hindi areas in the development of hindi cinema has not only helped popularise hindi all over the country but has also helped in creating a pan indian scenario which has been equally acceptable to people from different religions, regions and languages.

The other major contribution of Indian cinema has been towards developing and preserving a composite culture for India.

Indian cinema has always espoused love and good will among hindus, muslims, sikhs and christians. Even while upholding religious faith Indian cinema has always condemned religious bigotry and communal animosity. Themes in popular cinema have been replete with instances of inter-religious friendships particularly those between Hindus and Muslims. This has resulted in both Hindu and non-Hindu actors becoming the idols of cinema lovers. The list of non-Hindu idols is very long and stretches from Dilip Kumar (Yusuf Khan) to Shahrukh Khan, Naushad to A.R.Rehman, Nargis to Shabana Azmi, Sahir Ludhianvi to Kaifi Azmi, Noorjahan to Mohammad Rafi and K.Asif to Jabbar Patel. The importance of this contribution of Indian cinema, in providing idols cutting across cultures and religions, should not be under estimated.

Yet another contribution of Indian cinema is its music about which you have read in Section 13.7. Indian cinema has also given to the world Satyajit Ray whose films have been appreciated the world over and who has been honoured with a special oscar award.

Apart from making the maximum number of films in the world, India has other records also. Lata Mangeshkar (for singing 25000 songs in fifteen languages), famous malayalam actor Prem Nazir (for playing the leading role in 600 films) and hindi actor Jagdish Raj (for maximum roles as a police officer) have all figured in the **Gueniss Book of World Records**.

Indian cinema has retained its popularity even in the age of television. The number of film watchers has increased manifold thanks to dish antenna. Television channels like movie club, zee cinema and other regional film channels show films round the clock. It is thus that Indian cinema has become the most popular medium of India's popular cultural expression.

1)   What are the dominant characteristics of the hero in the Indian cinema after 1970?

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2.   How has the woman been portrayed in popular Indian cinema?

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3.   Which different sources did the film music derive itself from?

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## 13.10   LET US SUM UP

In this Unit you have learnt about the main achievements of a hundred years of Indian cinema. You also know how Indian cinema entertains million by making 800 to 900 films in more than 25 languages every year. Cinema has been portraying contemporary reality and fantasy through silent films and then through talkies over decades. It has also protected the composite culture of the country and played an important role in establishing unity among Indian people. However the political perspective of popular cinema has been that of the ruling classes of the country. That Indian cinema has reflected and responded to the societal changes becomes evident when we see the changing image of its heroes and their changing attitudes towards women. The most outstanding feature of Indian cinema has been its music. It is virtually impossible to imagine Indian cinema without music, songs and dances. This symbolises the vitality, not only of popular Indian cinema, but also of different Indian cultures and communalities and their deep faith in life. Lata Mangeshkar is a product of this great tradition. Finally the contribution of Indian cinema should be seen not only in the field of entertainment but also in achieving excellence in the field of popular art. All the glory and greatness of Indian cinema is symbolised in the contributions of Satyajit Ray.

# 13.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress-1

1) a) Sawkari Pash b) Sairandhri c) Kalidas d) H.M.Reddy e) Sant Tukaram.

2) a) i) tamil ii) telugu iii) hindi iv) malayalam
   b) i) Andhra Pradesh ii) Tamilnadu iii) Karnataka iv) Kerala
   c) i) For making the first feature film **Raja Harishchandra**
      ii) For making the first realistic art film, iii) For making the first talkie

3) See Sec. 13.3.

Check Your Progress-2

1) See Sec. 13.4.

2) See Sec. 13.5.

3) See Sec. 13.5.

Check Your Progress-3

1) See Sec. 13.6.

2) See Sec. 13.7.

3) Indian classical music, folk music from different regions and western classic and popular music have all influenced film music.



Smita Patil: A versatile actress



Ritwik Ghatak: A legend in Bengali Cinema.