

Post-1979 Iranian Cinema and Post-1947 Indian Cinema: Responses to Changing Times

Zulfikar Ali Ansari¹

Abstract

Iranian and Indian films have received global recognition for their unique story-telling style, which is rooted in their culture. A few countries like the United States, United Kingdom, Italy, France, Japan, and China can match the film making of these two countries whether at the level of content or technical aspects. These two Asian countries have many cultural aspects in common given their historical relations, which does not only confine itself to political connections but extend to their economy, literature and arts, and aesthetics as well. This commonality of culture makes the study of films of Iran and India an interesting enterprise.

From the film footages of the first Persian filmmaker Mirza Ebrahim Khan Akkas Bashi, in July 1900 to the present, Iranian cinema has undergone several changes. Here, we trace the changes which have occurred after the Revolution of 1979. While commercial cinema has been entertaining the domestic audience during this period, Iranian art films have achieved international acclaim and now enjoy a global following.

Like Iranian cinema, the history of the Indian cinema also begins quite early, i. e., in 1896, and has reached the present with enormous changes regarding the concept, genres, and technical aspects of film making, particularly after 1947.

¹. *Assistant Professor, School of Foreign Languages, Ministry of Defence, New Delhi.*

While Indian films are a global phenomenon with their commercial success, Iranian films have increasingly become a favorite at many international film festivals in the last two decades. The main aim of this article is to analyse the evolution of cinema in Iran and India and show how these two countries can cooperate with each other in this field.

Keywords: Iran, India, Post-Revolution, Post-Independence, New Wave, Art Cinema, Commercial Cinema, Bollywood

Introduction

Post-Revolutionary Iran and Post-Independence India witnessed a paradigm shift in their social and political approaches, which brought about drastic changes in their cinemas. The content of films, film-making processes, censor codes, film techniques, their reach, marketing, that is, every aspect of cinema has changed in response to changing times. Tracing these changes makes a very interesting study.

In the last four decades after the revolution, Iranian cinema has traversed a long and difficult path, maturing in the process to such excellence that it has been showered with appreciations all over the world. Iran became one of the best exporters of cinema in the 1990s and has been praised by some critics as the producer of world's most important national cinema, artistically, with a significance that invites comparison to Italian neorealism¹ and similar movements in past decades (web.stanford.edu, Retrieved on April 2021). Iranian cinema has

¹.Italian neorealism is a national film movement characterized by stories set amongst the poor and the working class, filmed on location, frequently using non-professional actors. Italian neorealism films mostly contend with the difficult economic and moral conditions of post-World War II Italy, representing changes in the Italian psyche and conditions of everyday life, including poverty, oppression, injustice, and desperation.

garnered various categories of awards at a variety of international film festivals in the last twenty years. At present, however, the Iranian box office is dominated by commercial Iranian films despite the fact that Iranian art¹ films are internationally acclaimed.

While the main language of Iranian films is Persian, multilingual India produces films in a number of languages. Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Tamil, Telgu, Malyalam, Kannad, Gujarati, Punjabi, Odia, and Assamese are the main languages in which most of the films are made. Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Thiruvananthapuram, Bangalore, Bhubaneshwar, and Guwahati are the major centers of film production in India (Film Making Centres of India, Retrieved on September 2021).

The world-famous Indian film industry, Bollywood², with its center in Mumbai, produces Hindi language films and has the largest revenue share at the box office, followed by Tamil and Telugu films (DNA, July 2, 2007 & Namrata, Feb 18, 2020).

While Hindi films represent mainly the north Indian culture, the South Indian film industry encompasses five film cultures: Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, and Tulu. Another prominent film culture is Bengali cinema, where the parallel cinema movement flourished most in contrast to the masala films more prominent in Bollywood and Southern films at the time.

¹.Art cinema is intended to be a serious, artistic work, often experimental and not designed for mass appeal made primarily for aesthetic reasons rather than commercial profit. It is also referred to as parallel cinema as against mainstream commercial cinema.

².The term “Bollywood” was initially coined as a derogatory term by the western media to refer to Hindi films. Term was derived based on the city of Bombay which is now called Mumbai.

Indian cinema is now a global enterprise having a following throughout Southern Asia and across Europe, North America, Asia, the Greater Middle East, Eastern Africa, China, and elsewhere, reaching over 90 countries (Embassy of India in Sudan, Retrieved on June 2020). Along with the story, song, dance, and music play an important part in Indian films. Recently, Indian cinema has been undergoing drastic changes both in terms of content and technical aspects as well as market ventures with the ongoing processes of its corporatization, globalization, and diversification.

Post-1979 Iranian Cinema

The story of post-revolution Iranian cinema exhibits the courage of the Iranian filmmakers who continued their artistic journey even during the most difficult times and reminds us about their determination not only to make films but to make world-class films. After the revolution of 1979, the Iranian cinema came to a halt as the disturbed political conditions were not conducive to its production (Filmreference Encyclopaedia, Retrieved on March 2021 & Issa, March 3, 2004). However, film production began again though slowly in the early 1980s. In 1982, the annual Fajr Film Festival¹ started to promote and finance films (Sarsangi, and Soleimanzadeh (2018).

Later, the Farabi Cinema Foundation was established in 1987 to promote high-quality films and reassemble disorganized cinema. The following year, the government began to provide financial aid.

The films made in Post-1979 Iran can be dealt into two categories:

¹The festival is supervised by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. It takes place on the anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution every year since 1982.

1. Iranian Art Films (Second Wave Films)
2. Iranian Commercial Films

1. Iranian Art Films (Second Wave Films)

The Iranian art films which are being produced in the Post-Revolutionary era are often referred to as the Second Wave Films as they are considered to have evolved out of the First Wave¹, which began in the 1960s with Forogh Farokhzad's documentary *The House is Black* (1963) being considered as the precursor of the movement (Henderson, February 22, 2005). According to film critic Ahmad Talebinejad² "A new trend began in the cinema since 1968. It was due to developments in the cultural arena with origins in the political, social, and cultural developments of the 1950s and 1960s (Paras Times, March 7, 1995)." Moreover, Iranian filmmakers often cite Vittorio de Sica's "Bicycle Thieves" (1948) as one of the most influential films. Iranian filmmakers find their favorites also in the themes dealt with by India's Satyajit Ray's films, whose "Appu" trilogy (1955) depicts the collapse of traditional values whilst criticizing the social failures of a political system (Issa, *ibid*). Despite the fact that Iranian films share these common characteristics, they have their own unique cinematic language and

¹First Wave films were influenced by schools as varied as Italian neo-realism and Nouvelle Vague in their aesthetics. They were often critical of the ruling Shah regime, exposing the moral and spiritual emptiness of urban existence. They drew material from the more classical arts such as poetry and painting. They also employed innovative, unconventional and disjunctive narrative structures. Some of the notable films of the First Wave are *The Cow* (Darius Mehrjui, 1969); *Qeysar* (Masoud Kimiai, 1969); *Tranquility in the Presence of Others* (Nasser Taghvai, 1969/1972); *Downpour* (Bahram Beizai, 1972); *A Simple Event* (Sohrab Shahid Saless, 1973); and *Still Life* (Sohrab Shahid Saless, 1974).

² Ahmad Talebinejad is the author of the book titled "A Simple Event - A Review of the New Wave Trend in Iranian Cinema."

visual aesthetics to present the everyday life of an ordinary person blurring the boundaries of fiction and reality, a feature and documentary (Issa, *ibid*).

The First New Wave had a profound impact on what could be called the Second New Wave of Iranian cinema: a group of radically innovative — if not as politically overt — films during the 1980s-90s and 2000s which call into question most of our assumptions about the medium and our relationship to it (Srinivasan, June 09, 2012).

By the year 2001, the number of features produced in Iran rose to 87 (from 28, which is the number of films that were produced in 1980, after the fall of the Shah). The most popular genres were melodramas and historical pageants, which seldom attended festivals. In 1997, the newly elected president, Mohammed Khatami, would eventually come to play a role in helping filmmakers achieve a certain degree of artistic freedom (Sadr, 2006 & Khalili Mahani, July 31, 2006, p.200). Further, The Government encouraged a whole new generation of filmmakers, which included female directors as well. With this, the focus shifted to children overcoming obstacles: true stories, lyrical, mystical drama, real-life problems, documentary footage, etc (Sarsangi, *ibid*). Some of the main characteristics of the Second Wave films are: Realistic, documentary-style; Poetic and allegorical storytelling; Use of 'child trope' (in response to regulations on adult material within films); Self-aware, reflexive tone and; Focus on rural lower-class.

Post-revolutionary Iranian cinema has been praised and awarded in many international forums and festivals for its distinct style, themes, authors, the idea of nationhood, and cultural references. Khosrow Sinai's¹ *Viva...!* (1980) was the first

¹. Sinai won a Crystal Globe at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival for *Viva...!*

Iranian film to receive recognition at an international forum (Sarsangi, *ibid*). Jafar Panahi achieved international recognition with his feature film debut, *The White Balloon*¹ (1995), which won the Caméra d'Or at the 1995 Cannes Film Festival, the first major award an Iranian film won at Cannes (Brooks, December 10, 2005). However, it was after Abbas Kiarostami² won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival for *Taste of Cherry* in 1997 that Iranian films have been increasingly recognized at the global level for their content and style (BBC, Nov 29, 2018 & Sarsangi, *ibid*). For instance, in 1998, Majid Majidi's film *Children of Heaven*³ had the honor to get nominated at the Academy Awards, better known as Oscar, for the Best Foreign Film category but it lost the award to *Life is Beautiful* the Italian movie.

Later, Asgar Farhadi's "*A Separation*" won the Oscar for the best foreign-language film in 2012, becoming the first Iranian movie to win the honor (Grover, February 27, 2012). In 2017 Farhadi was honored with his second Oscar in the same category for his film *The Salesman*. The film relates the story of a young married couple of Tehran who performs Arthur Miller's 1949 play *Death of a Salesman* on stage.

In fact, in the last three decades, the most important international film festivals have included one or more Iranian features in their programs nearly every year (Cross, April 04, 2019). In 2006, six Iranian films of six different styles

¹.The Guardian has listed this film as one of the 50 best family films of all time.

². Abbas Kiarostami is regarded by some critics as one of the few great directors in the history of world cinema. His films *Where Is the Friend's Home?*, *Close-Up*, and *The Wind Will Carry Us* were ranked among the 100 best foreign films in a 2018 critics' poll by BBC Culture. Akira Kurosawa has rightly said, "Words cannot describe my feelings about them and I simply advise you to see his films... When Satyajit Ray passed on, I was very depressed. But after seeing Kiarostami's films, I thanked God for giving us just the right person to take his place."

³.Majidi's Indian venture *Beyond The Clouds* (2017) made in English, Hindi, Tamil and Persian may be seen as another version of his previously directed *Children of Heaven* (1997).

represented Iranian cinema at the Berlin Film Festival. Critics considered this a remarkable event in the history of Iranian cinema (Sadr, *ibid*, p.147). Along with men, Iranian women film makers such as Hana Makhmalbaf (*Buddha Collapsed in Shame*, 2008), Manijeh Hekmat (*Zendane zanan*, 2003), Rakhshan Bani-Etemad (*Under the Skin of the City*, 2001), Tahmineh Milani (*The Unwanted Woman*, 2005), and quite a few others have garnered accolades for their films at international forums.

As the government started funding film in 1998, Iranian Kurdistan has particularly witnessed the rise of numerous filmmakers such as Bahman Ghobadi, and the entire Ghobadi family, Ali-Reza Rezai, Khosret Ressoul, and many other younger filmmakers in the region (Sarsangi, *ibid*).

It must be noted that Iran is also known for high-quality documentaries which are often critical of society's assumptions and ideals, such as the films directed by Mohammedreza Eslamlu. For example, Eslamlu's political documentary "The 9/11 Black Box" refers to the term '9/11 black box', which was frequently used by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in his speech at the UN headquarters in New York. The film is about a committed Iranian documentarian named Mohammad who has an apocalyptic view of contemporary events in the world. Accompanied by the French journalist and political activist Thierry Meyssan, Mohammad tries to make a documentary according to Meyssan's research on 9/11 (Tehran Times, January 30, 2011).

The 2016-documentary *Starless Dreams* by Mehrdad Oskouei is a haunting portrait of stolen childhood which plunges the viewer into the lives of seven young teenage girls sharing temporary quarters at a rehabilitation and correction center on the outskirts of Tehran. Ziba Mir-Hosseini's co-directed *Divorce Iranian*

Style (1998); Jafar Panahi and Mojtaba Mirtahmasb directed *This Is Not A Film* (2011); and *Chauka, Please Tell Us the Time* (2017) about a journalist persecuted in Iran who flees but arrested and kept by the Australian government in a detention center are only a few examples among the huge Iranian documentary treasure.

Cinema Verite (The Annual Iran International Documentary Film Festival) has been held in Tehran since 2007. It provides a venue for encouraging artists from all parts of the world. The festival is organized by the Documentary and Experimental Film Centre (DEFC).

Recently, Mohammad Rasoulof's film *There Is No Evil* (2020), dealing with capital punishment, has won the top prize at the Berlin International Film Festival. Rasoulof was banned from directing in 2017. He produced his sixth film in secret (BBC News, February 29, 2020). Iranian films "No Choice", "TiTi," and "The Wasteland" competed in the Tokyo International Film Festival (Rezapoor, September 29, 2020).

2. Iranian Commercial Films

Domestically oriented films made for local consumption and the Iranian diaspora are totally different from the Iranian cinema the outside world enjoys at international film festivals. Produced with the main motive of profit, the domestically oriented commercial Iranian cinema genre falls into three categories:

Films with strong religious and National sentiments about the victory of the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and the ensuing Iran–Iraq war and action filled: Barzakhiha, The Viper, Boycott, Duel, Taraj, Ekhrajiha, The Glass Agency, Kani

Manga, Ofogh, Bashu, the Little Stranger, Leily Ba Man Ast, M as in Mother, etc.(Sarsangi, *ibid*).

Formulaic films starring popular actors: Cinema managers generally prefer crowd-pulling comedies, romantic melodramas, and family comedies over the other genres. *The Blue-Veiled, Ghermez, Leila, Outsiders, Actor, Ejareh-Nesheeha, Shokaran, Dayere Zangi, Aquarium, Cease Fire, No Men Allowed, Charlatan, The Kingdom of Solomon, Guidance Patrol, Killing Mad Dogs, Girls Don't Scream, A Separation and Hush!* were among the post-revolutionary films that have been the most successful at the box office (Dabashi, 2001, p.139).

Crime thrillers crime such as *Senator, The Eagles, Boycott, The Tenants, and Kani Manga* occupied the first position on the sales charts during the war years.

Post-1947 India Cinema

With independence in 1947, Indian cinema underwent a huge change, focusing on social themes. Along with this kind of cinema, commercial cinema started its own success story whereby it has now become a global affair. It now has a variety of themes and genres ranging from the usual run-of-the-mill films trying to woo the audience through romantic comedies, thrillers, action films to such movies based on true events such as *Gangs of Wasseypur* and biopics¹. In 2001, the Government of India bestowed industry status on film production to give further impetus to Indian movies.

¹ Directed by Shyam Benegal, Bose *The Forgotten Hero* gives a complete account of freedom fighter Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. Some of the other biopics include *Mary Kom, Bhaag Milkha Bhaag, Paan Singh Tomar, The Legend of Bhagat Singh, Richard Attenborough's Gandhi* and Shekhar Kapoor's *Bandit Queen* on the dacoit Phoolan Devi.

Golden Age (late 1940s–1960s)

The beginning of the Golden Age of Indian Cinema almost coincides with India's independence in 1947. During this period, Indian cinema underwent a huge change from the earlier mythological and historical stories to social themes focusing on the lower classes, poverty, dowry system, prostitution, etc. This period lasted till the early 1960s (Moti Gokulsing & Dissanayake, 2004, p.17). This gave rise to the emergence of the parallel cinema movement. The movement emphasized social realism. Early examples include Khwaja Ahmad Abbas's *Dharti Ke Lal* (1946), Chetan Anand's *Neecha Nagar* (1946), Ritwik Ghatak's *Nagarik* (1952), and Bimal Roy's *Do Bigha Zamin* (1953), laying the foundations for Indian neorealism and the Indian New Wave (Rajadhyaksha, 2016, p.61). *Neecha Nagar* won the Palme d'Or at Cannes, putting Indian films in competition for the Palme d'Or for nearly every year in the 1950s and early 1960s, winning many major prizes.

Satyajit Ray's *The Apu Trilogy* (1955–1959) won major prizes at all of the major international film festivals and firmly established the Parallel Cinema movement. *Pather Panchali* (1955), the first part of the trilogy, marked Ray's entry into Indian cinema (Rajadhyaksha, 2016, p.638). Cinematographer Subrata Mitra, who debuted in the trilogy, had a significant influence on cinematography globally. One of his most important techniques was bounce lighting to recreate the effect of daylight on sets (Encyclopaedia of Cinematographers, Retrieved on July 2021).

Commercial Hindi cinema began thriving, including acclaimed films like Guru Dutt's *Pyaasa* (1957) and *Kaagaz Ke Phool* (1959); Raj Kapoor's *Awaara* (1951) and *Shree 420* (1955). These films expressed social themes mainly dealing with

working-class urban life in India; *Awaara* presented the city as both a nightmare and a dream, while *Pyasa* critiqued the unreality of city life.

Mehboob Khan's epic film *Mother India* (1957), a remake of his earlier *Aurat* (1940), was the first Indian film to be nominated for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. *Mother India* defined the conventions of Hindi cinema for decades (Tarini, November 25, 2012). It spawned a new genre of dacoit films. Dilip Kumar (Muhammad Yusuf Khan) starred *Gunga Jumna* (1961) was a dacoit crime drama about two brothers on opposite sides of the law, a theme that became common in Indian films in the 1970s (Ganti, 2004, p.153). With his *Madhumati* (1958), Bimal Roy popularised the theme of reincarnation in Western popular culture (Doniger, 2005, p.112-136).

Dilip Kumar debuted in the 1940s, rose to fame in the 1950s and was one of the biggest Indian movie stars. He was a pioneer of method acting, predating Hollywood method actors such as Marlon Brando. Much like Brando's influence on New Hollywood actors, Kumar inspired Indian actors, including Amitabh Bachchan, Naseeruddin Shah, Shah Rukh Khan and Nawazuddin Siddiqui (Mazumder, December 11, 2015).

This period also saw the beginning of independent production, as against the studio system prevalent in the early thirties and the forties, it allowed more flexibility to the filmmakers. It saw the emergence of playback singing and also gave rise to the 'formula' films of Bollywood, along with elaborate songs and dances (Dwyer and Patel, 2002, p.20-21).

Classic Bollywood (1971s–1980s)

Realistic Parallel Cinema continued throughout the 1970s, practised in many Indian film cultures. Mrinal Sen's¹ Utpal Dutt starred in *Bhuvan Shome* (1969) is considered a landmark in modern Indian cinema. His *Akaler Sandhane* (1981), *Kharij* (1983), *Khandhar* (1984) and *Ek Din Achanak* (1989) were honoured at Berlin, Cannes, Montreal and Venice Film festivals, respectively. Another renowned director Shyam Benegal has such notable films to his credit as *Ankur* (1973), *Nishant* (1975), *Manthan* (1976) and *Bhumika* (1977). Mahesh Bhatt's *Saaransh* (1984), Prakash Jha's *Damul* (1984); and Govind Nihalani's *Aakrosh* (1980) and *Ardh Satya* (1983) continued the parallel cinema in the 1980s.

However, it was commercial cinema that dominated the box office, first with Rajesh Khanna and then with Amitabh Bachchan as superstars. The decade of the seventies worked on three important formulas. The first is the lost and found story which involves the parents and children and often siblings being separated and reunited years later following 'revelation of mistaken identities, often after much emotional churning. The second important theme was that of the male bonding through a number of dosti films. Two male friends fall in love with the same woman and the one who discovers the triangle first, sacrifices his love and often his life for the sake of his dost. The revenge theme too was an extremely important component of this decade (Rosie, 2006, p.288). Other writers have listed a number of defining characteristics for Indian cinema (Kazmi, Fareed, 1999).

¹*Calcutta 71* (1972); Mithun Chakraborty's debut film *Mrigaya* (1976), are also among his notable films.

Here it may be noted that by the early 1970s, Hindi cinema was experiencing thematic stagnation, dominated by musical romance films. The arrival of the screenwriter duo Salim–Javed, consisting of Salim Khan and Javed Akhtar, revitalized the industry. They reinterpreted the rural themes of *Mother India* and *Gunga Jumna* in an urban context reflecting 1970s India, channelling the growing discontent and disillusionment among the masses, unprecedented growth of slums and urban poverty, corruption and crime, as well as anti-establishment themes. This resulted in their creation of the "angry young man", personified by Amitabh Bachchan, who reinterpreted Dilip Kumar's performance in *Gunga Jumna*, and gave a voice to the urban poor with his films like *Zanjeer* (1973) and Yash Chopra directed *Deewar*¹ (1975) (Awaasthi, January 30, 2017).

In the 1970s, the conventions of commercial Bollywood films were established. mainly associated with the creation of the masala film genre, which combines elements of action, comedy, romance, drama, melodrama and musical. With his *Amar Akbar Anthony* (1977), *Coolie* (1983) and other films, Manmohan Desai further expanded the genre in the 1970s and 1980s.

In the late 1980s, Hindi cinema experienced another period of stagnation, with a decline in box office turnout, due to increasing violence, a decline in melodic musical quality, and a rise in video piracy, leading to middle-class family audiences abandoning theatres. The turning point came with Yash Chopra's musical romance *Chandni* (1989), starring Sridevi. It was instrumental in ending the era of violent action films in Indian Cinema and rejuvenating the romantic musical genre. It also set a new template for Bollywood musical romance films that defined Hindi cinema in the coming years. Commercial Hindi cinema grew in

¹ Danny Boyle described Yash Chopra directed *Deewar* as "absolutely key to Indian cinema".

the late 1980s and 1990s, with the release of *Mr. India* (1987), *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* (1988), *Chaalbaaz* (1989), *Maine Pyar Kiya* (1989) (Ray, December 18, 2016).

Cinema for NRIs- the 1990s

During this period, many successful films were also made with consideration of the Non-resident Indians (NRIs¹). The notable films of the period are: *Darr* (1993), *Hum Aapke Hain Koun* (1994), *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (1995), *Dil To Pagal Hai* (1997), Subhas Ghai's *Pardes*, *Pyar Kiya Toh Darna Kya* (1998) and *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* (1998). Cult classic *Bandit Queen* (1994, Shekhar Kapur) received both international recognition as well as controversy.

In the late 1990s, Parallel Cinema began a resurgence in Hindi cinema, largely due to the critical and commercial success of crime films such as *Satya* (1998) and *Vaastav* (1999). These films launched a genre known as Mumbai noir, urban films reflecting social problems there (Nayar, December 16, 2007).

21st-century Indian cinema

In the 21st century, Indian cinema has distinctly undergone three main kinds of changes: 1. Corporatization, 2. Globalization and 3. Diversification.

1-Corporatization: Indian film industry is being increasingly corporatized whereby film production, distribution and exhibition companies are coming out with public issues. More multiplexes are being built in the country, and initiatives to set up more digital cinema halls are coming up. While this process will

¹ NRI is abbreviation for Non-resident Indians, the Indians who live in other countries.

improve the quality of prints making film viewing a more pleasurable experience, it will also reduce piracy of prints as a by-product (FICCI & PwC, 2006).

2-Globalization: Although some Indian films *Dharti Ke Lal* (1946) by Khwaja Ahmad Abbas; Mehboob Khan's *Aan* (1952), and *Mother India* (1957); Raj Kapoor's *Awaara* (1951); Shahrukh Khan starring in *Dar* (1993), *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayege* (1995), *Dil Se* (1998); Salman Khan starring *Hum Apke Hain Kaun* (1994) and quite a few other films had been released overseas earlier and had made successful box-office ventures, it was at the beginning of the 21st century Indian films started targeting the western market, especially the Indian diasporas systematically. For instance, a proper public relations company was employed for Shahrukh Khan starring in *Ashoka* and was presented as a 'normal western film' in the media. Seventy-five percent of the cinema halls where Ashutosh Gowarkar directed Amir Khan starring in *Lagaan* was screened in the United Kingdom were those which did not normally show Hindi films, so it was the first crossover film (Rashmee, October 28, 2001).

Devdas¹ (2002), Sanjay Leela Bhansali's opulent adaptation of Saratchandra Chatterjee's classic romantic tragedy ran for several consecutive weeks in theatres in North America (www.indiatoday.in, May 21, 2012). The action-packed thriller *Kaante* is another example of the globalization of Hindi cinema. Based on *Reservoir Dogs*, it gives the viewer an experience of a Hollywood movie. *Kaante* (Thorns) has the credit of becoming the first Bollywood movie by a Hollywood production crew (PTI, December 25, 2002). Amir Khan, starring in *3 Idiots* (2009), *Dhoom 3* (2013), *PK* (2014) and *Dangal* (2016), had a record-making performance overseas, especially in China (Statista, December 2017). Apart from

¹ Time Magazine has ranked the film *Devdas* eighth among the ten greatest movies of the millennium.

the above Indian movies, Bahubali 2 – The Conclusion (2017), My Name is Khan (2010), Padmaavat (2018) and several other films have been huge commercial success overseas.

3-Diversification: Different types of films on a variety of subjects are being attempted with a number of young and energetic filmmakers joining the filmmaking in India. In 2001, Farhan Akhtar's directorial debut *Dil Chahta Hai* received critical acclaim for portraying modern youth. The film also won a National Award. Anurag Kashyap is one of the most distinguished filmmakers of 21st century India. Kashyap is regarded as an auteur and is credited for pioneering India's indie scene in the early 2000s (Szaniawski & Seung-hoon, 2016, p.287). Most of his films deal with realistic scenarios and take clues from real incidents¹. The protagonists of his films often deal with excessive drug, smoke or alcohol consumption, personal guilt, extreme rage, and arrogance, leading them into self-shattering situations. Often portrays small but strong female characters.

While promoting Bombay Talkies² in Anupama Chopra's show, Dibakar Banerjee described Kashyap's aesthetics as "purely new age or purely Indian", projecting "modern post-independence India" in his films. Kashyap prefers shooting on real locations by employing guerrilla-filmmaking techniques with hidden cameras and often makes his actors improvise their dialogues on set (Rediff.com, 7 February 2007). In *Ugly*, he did not show the script to any of the

¹For example, the 1976–77 Joshi-Abhyankar serial murders reference in *Paanch*,[25] the 1993 Mumbai bombing in *Black Friday*, the 1999 Delhi hit-and-run case and DPS MMS Scandal in *Dev.D*[169] and the depiction of real life gang wars in *Gangs of Wasseypur*. *Ugly* came from his "personal guilt" of not spending enough time with his daughter and the fear of losing her.

² *Bombay Talkies* is a 2013 Indian Hindi-language anthology film consisting of four short films, directed by Karan Johar, Dibakar Banerjee, Zoya Akhtar and Anurag Kashyap.

lead actors. He frequently uses the hand-held camera and experimental soundtracks.

Starting his career as a writer for Ramkumar Verma-directed crime film *Satya*¹ (1998), Kashyap has directed path-breaking films like *Black Friday* (2006), *Dev D* (2008), and *Gangs of Wasseypur* in two parts (2012 and 2013), among others.

After facing hurdles at the censor board for two years, his film *Black Friday* received universal acclaim after its release. According to the film critic Nikhat Kazmi, *Black Friday* "was indeed a difficult film to make, yet the director has managed to grapple with all the loose threads and put them together in a composite whole. So much so, the film moves like a taut thriller, without ideology coloring the sepia frames" (Kazmi, 10 February 2007).

Kashyap's ambitious venture, *Gangs of Wasseypur* (2012), was a two-part crime saga centered on the coal mafia of Dhanbad. It has received appreciation from Indian and international critics alike. Kashyap's work inspired British director Danny Boyle who has cited *Black Friday* and *Satya* as the inspirations² for his Academy Award-winning film *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008) (Kumar, 23 December 2008).

Delhi-based stories of Dibakar Banerjee's films like *Khosla Ka Ghosla* (2006) and *Oye Lucky! Lucky Oye!* (2008) marked a shift in Bollywood themes, which typically focus on stories and characters in and around Mumbai. In 2010,

¹ *Satya* was a critical and commercial success,[19][20] and is regarded as one of the best films of Indian cinema. Kashyap co-wrote *Satya* with Saurabh Shukla.

² Boyle stated that a chase in one of the opening scenes of *Slumdog Millionaire* was based on a "12-minute police chase through the crowded Dharavi slum" in *Black Friday*. [173] He also described *Satya*'s "slick, often mesmerizing" portrayal of the Mumbai underworld, which included gritty and realistic "brutality and urban violence," directly influenced the portrayal of the Mumbai underworld in *Slumdog Millionaire*

Banerjee directed India's first film shot entirely on Digital Camera, and to be presented in the found footage style, *Love Sex Aur Dhokha*. The film was shown through Handycams, CCTV cameras, and mobile cameras.

Following his mentor Gulzar¹, Vishal Bhardwaj is known for his film adaptations of three Shakespearean tragedies --*Maqbool* (2003) from Macbeth, *Omkaara* (2006) from Othello, and *Haider* (2014) from Hamlet. Bhardwaj is developing a film franchise based on the works of Agatha Christie. With his biopics² like *Shahid* (2012) and *Aligarh* (2015), Hansal Mehta has earned a reputation as a great filmmaker. Vikramaditya Motwane's *Udaan*, a coming-of-age genre film, has been acclaimed by critics with particular praise on the direction and the performances.

Anubhav Sinha's 2018 Hindi film *Mulk* (Country) deals with a Muslim family trying to reclaim its lost honor after a family member gets involved in terrorism. Sinha's *Article 15* (2019) deals with the question of equality, and *Thappad* (Slap) (2020) raises the question of the prejudiced and misogynistic approach of society towards women (Bollywood Hungama, Feb 27, 2020).

Nitesh Tiwari's Amir Khan starrer *Dangal* (Wrestling competition) released in 2016, is a biographical sports drama film that has been praised for its subject matter, camera work, and direction apart from its record-breaking box office collections. NagrajNagraj Manjule's *Sairat* (2016) is a historic milestone in Indian cinema. Selected at the Berlin Film Festival and a commercially successful

¹ Gulzar had directed *Angur* (1982) based on William Shakespeare's play *Comedy of Errors*.

² *Shahid* is a powerful and compelling film, a biopic based on human rights lawyer Shahid Azmi, who fought cases for the marginalised, including the Muslim minority, routinely accused of terrorism and imprisoned for years without trial or evidence. *Aligarh* (2015), too, is a courageous biopic on the real story of homosexual Professor Ramchandra Siras of Aligarh Muslim University.

film in the Marathi language, it deals with a rural teenage romance amid the savage realities of the caste system.

South Indian Films

Malayalam has been at the forefront of technological innovation in Indian cinema. The first neorealistic film (*Newspaper Boy*), the first Cinemascope film (*Thacholi Ambu*), the first 70 mm film (*Padayottam*), the first 3D film (*My Dear Kuttichathan*), the first Panavision film (*Vanaprastham*), the first digital film (*Moontanmathoral*), The first Smartphone film (*Jalachhayam*), the first 8K film (*Villain*) in India were made in Malayalam (Cinemaofmalayalam.net, Retrieved on October 4, 2020). Kannada cinema contributed to Indian parallel cinema. Influential Kannada films in this genre include *Samskara*, *Chomana Dudi* (B. V. Karanth), "*Bangarada Manushya*", "*Mayura*", "*Jeevana Chaitra*", "*Gauri Ganeshha*", "*Udbhava*". Tamil cinema is influenced by Dravidian politics and has a rich tradition of films addressing social issues. Tamil films are distributed to various parts of Asia, Southern Africa, Northern America, Europe, and Oceania. The industry-inspired Tamil film-making in Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore, and Canada.

Known by the sobriquet Tollywood. India's largest number of theatres are located in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, known for producing Telugu feature films. Ramoji Film City, which holds the Guinness World Record for the world's largest film production facility, is located in Hyderabad. The Prasad IMAX in Hyderabad is the world's largest 3D IMAX screen and is the world's most viewed screen. The Telugu cinema created history with S. S. Rajamouli's¹ two parts of magical spectacle *Baahubali: The Beginning* (2015) and *Baahubali 2: The*

¹*Magadheera* is another great movie by him.

Conclusion (2017). The *Baahubali*¹ franchise has achieved the highest-grossing Indian multilingual film franchise of all time globally, with a box office of approximately ₹1,900 crores (US\$270 million) (Sudhir, May 1, 2017).

Women Directors of India

Compared to men, the number of women filmmakers may have been quite less in India, but they have made many memorable films. In 1981, Aparna Sen received the top prize at Manila Film Festival and National Film Award for Best Direction for her *36 Chowringhee Lane* (English). The film portrays the plight of a lonely woman in a society that cares little for questions of female subjectivity and self-fulfillment (Dissanayake, June 1989)." Kalpana Lajmi is known for her films like *Rudali* (Professional Mourner) (1993) and *Daman: A Victim of Marital Violence* (2001). Meera Nair won 23 international awards for her film *Salaam Bombay* (1988), where we can see a real and authentic portrayal of street children. Her film *Mississippi Masala* (1991) which told the story of Ugandan-born Indians displaced in Mississippi.

The film revealed the evident prejudice in African-American and Indian communities. Nair's *Monsoon Wedding* (2001), a movie about a Punjabi wedding, was awarded the Golden Lion award at the Venice Film Festival, making Nair the first female recipient of the award (Whitney, 10 September 2001). *Hysterical Blindness* (2002), *Vanity Fair* (2004) and *The Namesake* are other remarkable films of Nair (2006). Deepa Mehta is an Indo-Canadian film director and screenwriter is an internationally acclaimed filmmaker best known for her

¹ The film was a record-breaking commercial success, becoming the highest-grossing Indian film ever, the fifth highest grossing non-English film ever and the highest-grossing sports film worldwide.

Elements Trilogy, *Fire* (1996), *Earth* (1998), and *Water* (2005). Other well-known women filmmakers include Tanujaa Chandra (*Dushman*, 1998), Nandita Das (*Firaaq*, 2008 and *Manto*, 2018), Zoya Akhtar (*Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara*, 2011 and *Gully Boy*, 2019), Meghna Gulzar (*Talvar*, 2015; *Raazi*¹, 2018 and *Chhapak*², 2020), Reema Katagi (*Gold*, 2018), Kavitha Lankesh (*Deveeri*, 2000) and Anjali Menon (*Manjadikuru*, 2008).

Conclusion

Both Iranian and Indian cinema have tried to woo the masses through their commercial films. At the same time, they have registered their creative potentials through parallel cinema at the global level. The filmmakers of both countries have exhibited great creative talent and courage despite the enormous difficulties and odds that they have come across. They have always tried to come up with new solutions as answers to their challenges. Various types of experiments tried by leading filmmakers show that there is no shortage of talent in both countries for churning out a movie that is superior in quality at content and technical level. If Iran and India promote filmmaking positively and enthusiastically, there would be a tremendous rise in the number of good films, and more and more talented people will be able to contribute to the process of filmmaking. We have a very good example of Indo-Iranian film collaboration dating back to 1932 when Abdolhossein Sepanta of Iran produced a film called *Lor Girl* (Iran's first talkie released in 1933) in Bombay (now Mumbai) with Indian veteran filmmaker Ardeshir Irani. This type of collaboration will prove beneficial for both countries

¹ A thriller based on Harinder Sikka's novel *Calling Sehmat* became one of the highest grossing Bollywood movie.

² It is a biopic on the life of acid attack survivor Laxmi Agarwal.

keeping in view their common cultures. Indian cinema is relatively popular among the Iranian masses – six to eight Bollywood films make it to Iranian movie theatres each year. Moreover, there is already a recent example of successfully producing a film *Beyond The Clouds* in India under the direction of Majid Majidi.

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