



COURSE CODE: MAMCD 401

COURSE NAME: UNDERSTANDING
CINEMA

**CENTRE FOR DISTANCE AND
ONLINE EDUCATION
TEZPUR UNIVERSITY**

MASTER OF ARTS

**MASS COMMUNICATION
AND JOURNALISM**

BLOCK I



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MMC-401: UNDERSTANDING CINEMA

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BLOCK I

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COURSE INTRODUCTION

Films as a medium of communication play pivotal role in shaping the society through developing worldviews of the audience. Although films are commonly considered as piece of entertainment, yet it is beyond such common notion of the mass as films can bring changes in the society through representing the reality to us.

Film Studies as a significant course under the postgraduate programme in Mass Communication gives a holistic approach of understanding films from both theoretical as well as conceptual framework.

The **Module I** of the course deals with the growth and development of Cinema, **Module II** is about cinematic story telling, **Module III** explains Film Genre and Theories and **Module IV** is based on technology and film appreciation. The **Module I and II** comes under **Block I** and **Module III and IV** comes under **Block II**.

The **Module I** discusses meaning of cinema under Unit 1 which includes topics such as importance of film studies, National and International perspectives on cinema, cinema and society. Unit 2 discusses origin and evolution of film technology perceptual constancy, development of instrument and also it mentions the role of pioneers such as Lumiere Brothers, Thomas Alva Edison, George Melies, etc. in film making. Unit 3, 4 and 5 explains the growth and evolution of cinema in context to World, India and North East India respectively.

Module II of this course is based on the concept of cinematic storytelling. Unit 6 under this module talks about Film Structures including the form and content of film, camera movement, lighting, editing, etc. Unit 7 explains the semiotic theory of cinema, signs, symbols, codes, iconography, mise-en-scene, etc. as a part of film language. Again Unit 8 is based on the concept of Film Narrative.

Module III is based on Film Genres and Theories. Unit 9 under this module discusses meanings and functions of genre, Film genres and

characteristics, classical Hollywood genre and Indian formula films. Unit 10 emphasizes on the film theories including Auteurist Film Theory, Psychoanalytic Model, Feminist Model , Cognitive Model ideological model, etc. Unit 11 and 12 under this model discusses film movements and documentary films respectively.

Module IV is based on aspects of film technology and Film appreciation. Unit 13 focuses on films and technology and Unit 14 is based on Film appreciation and criticism including topics such as aesthetics of films writing, film reviews and criticism, film as art , textual and contextual analysis of film, etc.

MODULE I: GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF CINEMA

UNIT 1: MEANING OF CINEMA

UNIT STRUCTURE

1.1 Introduction

1.2 Objectives

1.3 Meaning of Cinema

1.3.1 Cinema? Film? or Movie?

1.4 Importance of film Studies

1.5 National and International Perspectives on Cinema

1.5.1. Cinema as an art

1.5.2 Cinema as business/industry

1.5.3 Cinema and Culture

1.6 Cinema and Society

1.7 Summing Up

1.8 Questions

1.8 References and recommended readings

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces you to the basic understanding of cinema from different aspects such as understanding its meaning as well as its importance in an academic perspective. You will learn different perspectives of understanding cinema which explain cinema as an art, cinema as an industry and also its relationship with society and culture. Cinema as a medium of mass communication is not only for the purpose of entertainment but also it plays a significant role in the society through shaping our worldviews. Thus, this unit provides the scope of understanding cinema beyond the idea of entertainment and focuses on interrelations among society, culture and cinema.

1.2 OBJECTIVES

A thorough study of this unit shall enable you to-

- Explain the meaning and importance of cinema

- Discuss on the national and international perspectives on cinema
- Explain the relations between cinema and society

1.3 MEANING OF CINEMA

Film is a form of visual art. Film has two primary properties: *basic* and *technological*. *Basic* properties are the properties of photography, while, *technological* refers to the production techniques to ‘reproduce’ the ‘reality’. The medium is most often considered as a manipulative medium, due to the editing technologies associated with it. The aesthetic values of cinema comes from the basic properties, which is more concerned with the way of ‘representation’.

Foundation for these basic properties are laid on the fact that, cinema is an expressive art with a narrative in it. The medium has resemblance with painting, music, literature, theatre and drama but it delineates from these art too, creating its own niche with specialised features. According to Ann Marie Seward Barry (1997), film differs from other visual art forms in the following aspects:

- i) It moves
- ii) It is manipulative
- iii) It involves a number of people, most often experts for production
- iv) It requires approval of masses to recoup its costs
- v) It has the extraordinary power of altering our perception and our image of the world.

Everything that happens within cinema may be *non-fiction*, i.e. direct treatment of actuality or *fiction*, i.e. based on actuality, not necessarily that happened/happening in the real world. Cinema, hence takes from life and also gives meaning, idea and perception to life. Due to such credentials, cinema is best comprehended as a product of social, political, cultural, psychological, economic and aesthetic association.

Both the properties of cinema (basic and technological) reveal that cinema is constituted with the meaningful conjugation of images. What is visible within the image or collection of images, further develops the language of cinema. Images may be self-sufficient or can be collaborative for generation of expression i.e. one single shot, sometimes, might not be strong enough to generate specific meaning. Joining together of shots (editing) in front or back, gives the expression of meaning (a collaborative effort). In visual analysis, images are considered as representations that gives ideas and meaning to the world. This is because, any kind of film and television product construct time and space with the conventions of the media and point of view of the director. With the help of continuity editing, editor creates and recreates events, confers coded information and gives scope to the audience to understand the meanings through their visual experience. The context of viewing, content of production and looking at the images (the gaze) play significant roles in creating patterns for subtle meaning of the images. These meanings are created through joining or omitting of images which determines the process of developing perception of the audience.

1.4 IMPORTANCE OF FILM STUDIES

Cinema, as an academic branch of studies, is basically an unexplored area in most of the countries. The first film school of the world was established in Moscow in 1919. The school, later, was upgraded to the status of a university in 1934. Fundamental objectives of setting up of the film school was to experiment with cinema as a medium of creative and cultural form as well as a form of representation of social reality. Teaching methods were primarily based on workshops and projects. One of the earliest teachers of the school was Lev Kuleshov, who developed the early concept of montage in film theory. Sergei Eisenstein, a student of Kuleshov, and later, the head of the institute, was well known for his contribution towards experimentation on film.

After the establishment of Moscow State College of Cinematography, two types of schools sprouted in the developed countries: national film institutes – directly funded by state and film study – as a part of the university curriculum, primarily guided by academicians and filmmakers. The wave of film schools extended to Italy, France, Spain, Netherland, Sweden, Britain, America, China, India, South Africa and then to the rest of the world. According to noted film critic, Cholin Crisp, the prime objectives of these early schools were:

- i) to produce film makers endowed with profound human values
- ii) to foster pure artistic and technical research and
- iii) to spread cinematographic culture.

Hollywood studio system in the 1950s, accelerated the integration of film studies in academic curriculum in America and Europe. Film schools became a bridge to the ‘new Hollywood’ in the 1960s and 1970s. Hands-on technical training, intellectual and cultural synthesis of cinema, inclusion of language and social dimension to the industry, help to set “National Cinema” globally. Policies were adopted in different countries, including India, to set up film institutes and to consider film as a branch of academic disciplines in 1960s. As a result, serious study on film making and film criticism began.

Today, film is a dominant art form, with economic potential. As a consequence, film industry demands relentless, resilient and trained creative people. Significance of film studies, hence, is growing bigger to meet the challenges of industry as well as to direct the industry with academic contributions and criticism. Europe and America has witnessed the growth of film schools in an exponential rate in recent times. Major school curriculum in the world focus on the areas such as in-depth knowledge and understanding of history of cinema, theories in practice, socio-political culture of different countries and cinema, comparative literature and film, performing art forms and film. For practical aspects, curriculum, in general, focuses on cinematography, editing, sound, production design, directing, acting, producing and

marketing. Many curriculum also need students to produce films in the end semester, consequently helping and guiding them to view, read and think critically on all the spheres of cinema, under the patronage of industry leaders (producers/directors /actors or critics). Film studies, therefore, is a combination of both theoretical analysis and technical skills, so that, students can directly be transferred to the creative industry to host their career.

ASSESS YOUR PROGRESS

1. Find out the institutes in India, which offer film studies as a part of academic curriculum. _____

2. Prepare a list of prominent film critics of India in recent times.

1.5 NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON CINEMA

1.5.1. Cinema as an Art

In comparison to all art forms, cinema is considered as the youngest genre of art. As such, some elements of all the art forms is invariably present in cinema. David Bordwell, a renowned film theorist asserted that, as an art, cinema has five dimensions which are illustrated in the following diagram (Fig. 1.1).

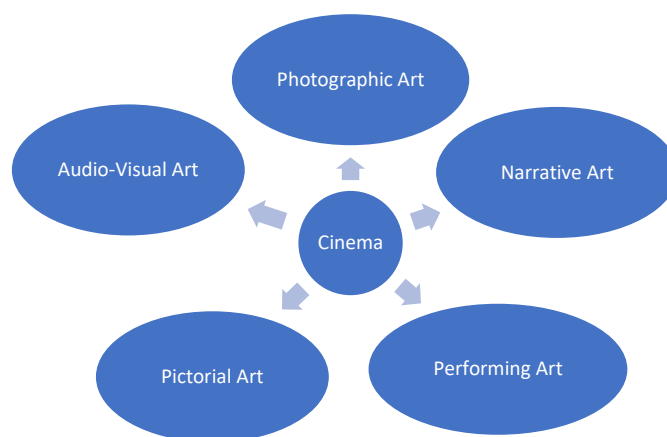


Fig. 1.1 Cinema as Art (an illustration using Bordwell's concept)

In cinema, everything (acting, set-design, costume etc.) unfolds in front of camera and the camera records it. This similarity of photography with cinema (termed as cinematography), therefore, relates to the *photographic art*. The power of camera rests on the fact that, whatever audience is allowed to view, is limited to the extent it will show to them. Many filmmakers take this advantage to make films with suspense and also to create dialectic conflicts in the minds of audience. The photographic art of films gives the director to play with the story.

Narrative art refers to the characters, plot pattern, storyline etc. Genre study is mostly the study of narrative structure. Directors are known for their mastery of treatment of the narratives alone. It is an established fact that without a good story, a movie cannot earn popularity. Commercial narratives are targeted for entertainment and pleasure with a concealed objective of profit for the investment. In contrary, art cinema is conventional mode of representing real life events through imaginary characters in fiction films. They are also referred as the mainstream cinema. The narrative strategies in art films are not governed by the style of popular, commercial movie. Instead, they are unpredictable, highly metaphorical and intangible in nature makes cinema the form of a narrative art.

As cinema is primarily is a medium of storytelling, therefore, we need characters to perform the roles in the story. Unlike traditional oral story, the stories in cinema are *enacted* instead of narrated. Hence, cinema has close relations with theatre which is another form of art-the performing art. Similar to theatre or play, we see the performance of actors in cinema. Major distinction between these two mediums lies in the presence of camera. In theatre, performers are in direct connection with audience, but in cinema, camera stands between character and audience. Therefore, the language of acting differs in cinema than in theatre. From the beginning of cinema history, actors are well known for their performances. From the days of silent movies to talkies, actors, in most of the time, takes crucial role in success or failure of a movie.

Another significant aspect of film is as a **pictorial art**. A film is always framed. A frame refers to all those elements (from settings to performance) that can be captured in a camera in a real time. Film frame is a dynamic space and has a pictorial field, where camera is allowed to speak freely. As such, camera angles, camera movements, set design, editing etc. are important to understand the medium. Film, therefore is considered as a *visual language*. The avant-garde filmmakers - Alexander P. Dovzhenko, Jean Renoir, Andrei Tarkovsky, Ingmar Bergman, Akira Kurosowa, Satyajit Ray, were polystylistic and explored individual visual pathways and help us to understand the medium as a pictorial art.

Film is also an **audio-visual art**. Audio or sound came to cinema in the 1920s. Since then, 'talkies' ruled the industry, leaving silent film into oblivion. Film, then, became a synthetic medium; a product of both visual and sound act. Sergei Eisenstein- the Russian filmmaker gave sound a major role in cinema with his famous experiments with sounds in *Alexander Nevsky* (1938). Here, he showed that, the movements of audience eye across a shot mimic the movement of the music. He liked to call it as "synchronization of senses". Along with Disney Studios film in 1930s, a few filmmakers also tried to experiment with sound in cinema. Notable ones are Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* (1941), Jean Renoir's *Rule of the Game* (1939), Vsevolod Pudovkin's *The Deserter* (1933) etc. Introduction of multitrack recordings during 1940s and 1950s gave the film industry another mileage for experimentation. 1970s is typically significant for the modern cinema, as, movies like Francis Ford Coppola's *Godfather* Trilogy and George Lucas's *Star Wars* series were highly experimental with audio-visual art and let everyone feel the power of sound in the medium. Movies like Martin Scorsese's *Raging Bull* (1980) created a balanced approach between music and sound effects. The Chinese martial art films of 1970s were also significant from the point of sound effect, slow motion and music. From 1980s, development of sound industry and sound engineering led film directors to emphasize on sound as equal to the visual part. Sound

juxtaposition, became a part of film study. Critics, from 1980s started to pay attention to the use of sound in their critique. Musicals, made its mark as a new genre with the advancements in audio cinema. For example, *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), regarded as one of the greatest musical of all time for its use of musical score has become an icon of American popular culture. Dolby technology, home theatre and online sound syncs are the latest addition to the industry. These new techniques make the job of filmmakers more challenging to make cinema as an audio visual art.

Although Hollywood produced a lot of musicals in early 1930s, subsequent films relied less on songs sung by the characters interwoven into the narrative of the film. However, in Bollywood, music plays significant role. Apart from story, songs play the vital part in Bollywood's commercial cinema. Probably, it may not be an overstatement, that songs are the early indicators of success or failure of commercial films in India.

SELF ASSESSMENT

1. Watch a few movies. Note down the art forms, you observed. _____
—
2. Observe the style of film art preferred by various directors of the _____ world.

1.5.2 Cinema as a medium of Mass Communication

The concept of mass indicates to a large aggregate of heterogeneous people, who are differentiable, widely dispersed, without any order but reflective of mass society. Mass communication process, therefore, is one directional in nature (without instant feedback), asymmetrical in relation, impersonal and anonymous, large scale in distribution and reception and has market relationship. Audience in mass communication, are object of management or manipulation. For mass

communication, technological devices must have to be utilized and is mediated in nature. As such, cinema is a medium of mass communication which can traverse geographical boundaries without any language barriers. For example, for a Hollywood movie, the target audience is not limited only to the USA but to the whole world. Booming of internet, is additionally helping cinema as a medium of mass communication.

Like other mass medium, film as a medium of mass communication can be used as a tool of propaganda for political manipulation. German filmmaker, Leni Riefenstahl's controversial masterpiece, *Triumph of the Will* (1935) is an instance of such political manipulations. The biggest turning point in the film history, after World War II is the 'Americanization' of film content. Contemporary film critics argue that in the aftermath of 9/11 attack, American filmmakers are newly experimenting with war films, trying to glorify American ideologies and are attempting to reflect the politics of Middle East from America's political point of view.

1.5.3 Cinema and Culture

The concept of culture is a complex term, with its roots in humanities, anthropology and in linguistics. Denis McQuail, in his book *Mass Communication Theory* (2010) states that culture refers to texts and symbolic artefacts that are encoded with particular meanings with particular cultural identification. He identifies the following characteristics of culture:

- Culture is collectively formed and held
- Open to symbolic expression
- Ordered and differentially valued
- Systematically patterned
- Dynamic and changing
- Spatially located
- Communicable over time and space

Culture, therefore, is a process that involves person's physical environment, tools, rituals, customs and practices or their whole way of life. Valsiner (2007) argues that culture suits three kinds of relationship with people.

- Persons belong to culture: The society or system makes it clear that all the persons who belong to the given culture are part of it and influenced by it.
- Culture belongs to the persons and
- Culture belongs to persons and the environment

'Media culture' or 'popular culture' refers to the media/mass product, consumed by people and sometime being influenced by it. Relationship between media and culture or 'mass culture' as a topic of discussion goes back to mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth century, when *critical theory* germinated in England. Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall are the stalwarts in bringing theoretical expression in their work. Their attributes, later, helped to develop the *Frankfurt School of Media Theory*. As time revolved, wide range of theories including feminist, philosophical, semiotics, psychoanalytic, film and literary theories were drawn in cultural approach by academics.

Culture, in cinema refers to the signs and symbols generated by combination of shots. Hence, it leads to the semiotic study of understanding, a closely related branch of linguistic study. The association between cultural codes and cinematic language is an intensely debated topic in film study.

Let us take an example of how cinema can influence a society's culture, with reference to Indian context. Indian cinema, particularly Bollywood, has influenced our day to day life and culture in the following aspects:

- i) India is a country with multilingual and multi ethnic fabrics. Representing this socio-cultural diversity of India, cinema helps us to view and understand different aspects of the society. Comprehending meanings represented in cinema and matching

it with our real world experiences which strengthens the interrelationship among society, culture and cinema.

- ii) Cinema is not just a piece of art but also it plays a significant role in shaping our behaviour and worldviews.
- iii) Indian cinema, particularly, Bollywood movies connect the Indian diaspora across all ages. It has connected people in all the geographical locations. Of late, Indian movies strategists are also trying to get the NRIs and as a result, overseas audience has expanded.
- iv) Cinema is not just a piece of entertainment, rather it plays a significant role in shaping our culture in terms of what we think, what we wear, etc. Especially, fashion and cinema has a very close relationship in India, from hairstyle to costume design, Bollywood cinema is omnipresent among Indian mass.

Stop and Read

Semiotics is the study of meanings. This includes the study of signs and symbols. Moreover, it leads to understand indication, designation, analogy, metaphor, symbolism, signification, and communication. The study of semiotics was developed Charles Sanders Peirce and nursed by linguists like Charles W. Morris, Ferdinand de Saussure and their followers. Semiotics is related to the field of linguistics, which, studies the structure and meaning of language more specifically. It is interesting to note that, when the concept of semiotics, signs and codes analysis is applied to a film study, it shows that meanings are woven together to generate a

1.5.4. Cinema as business/industry

“Cinema is an art for sale”. It is a business in which audience are the market. Although Lumiere brothers who are credited to have invented cinema and introduced it to the world. But, Thomas Alva Edison and Charles Pathé are credited to give cinema the form of economic

industry with technological discoveries and capital backing respectively for production, distribution and exhibition of films. In 1902, the first film theatre of America, was established in Los Angeles. It is interesting to note that, by 1908, there were more than 5000 'Nickelodeons' (Nickel- price of admission and 'odeon' a Greek word for small building used for presentation of programmes). This theatre culture was the first step towards establishing cinema as industry. In 1915, the unprecedented financial turnover of Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* (1915) gave a new hope to the filmmakers and producers to rethink on the business aspects of cinema. The shape of the cinema as business got vigour with the studio systems with Disney, Paramount, MGM (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer) and others.

In India, V. Shantaram and three others set up Prabhat Film Co. and started to produce films under this banner. In Calcutta, New Theatre Co., established by B. N. Sircar and Dhiren Ganguli in 1930s was the foremost one. Studios were also opened at Madras, Salem and Coimbatore. The studio system, however, failed in India, particularly in Bollywood, to set it as an industry after 1940s. Now, the banners of big production houses like Yash Raj Films, UTV Motion Pictures Ltd, Eros International, Dharma Productions, Red Chillies Entertainment, Bhansali Productions etc. take the major share of the cinema business in India.

Establishment of Television networks in the 1960s and 1970s was another milestone in the history of world cinema that helped the industry to reach audience to the nook and corner of the world. Concept of cross-media ownership also encouraged 'media moguls' to make cinema for 'profit'. Multimedia revolution in the new millennium, although counted as a challenge earlier, benefited the industry by reducing the cost of production and distribution. YouTube, now, is a major source of infotainment as well as platform of promotional activities for the filmmakers and producers to reach the global market.

1.6 CINEMA AND SOCIETY

From its inception, cinema is considered as a form of realistic expression. Lumiere Brothers' first experiments with camera were to show the workers' leaving out of the factory or arrival of a train, which were real. As cinema developed, many genres and directions (feature films, documentary or short films) evolved. Regardless of the various dimensions, cinema is regarded as a reflection of society, a caretaker of changing patterns of a society and a platform giving voices to the masses. While documentary films are considered as real, feature films move a step forward, giving realistic impression of a society (detail about documentary films are discussed in Chapter 12). Feature films, with the freedom to 'dream' to any extent, are viewed as one of the most powerful audio-visual medium of mass communication. They reflect society with cultural and traditional values. Cinema also helps to propagate nationalism and build cultural identity. Rise of the film society movements, after the neorealism movement in Italy and France, is another significant aspect of the relationship between film and society. Francois Truffaut, the French film critic and director is considered as the founder of French New wave film movement. *Cahiers du Cinéma*- the film journal in France is credited for spreading the movement in the world in 1950s and 1960s. Effect of this movement was so intense that, India too witnessed the new wave or parallel or neo-realistic cinema movement with the works of filmmakers like Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak, Shyam Benegal, Adoor Gopalakrishnan and their contemporaries.

Cinema is considered as a mirror of society. It is cinema, which reflects and refracts the social enigmas, stigmas or changes that happen in an ever changing society. Indian mainstream cinema have dealt with several social issues like widow remarriage, inter-caste relations (Acchutkanya, 1936), women centric issues (Mother India, 1957), problem of dowry system (Dahej, 1950), Socio-economic issues (Do

Bigla Zamin, 1953), post-partition struggle (GaramHava, 1974) etc. Of late, Indian cinema, particularly Bollywood is witnessing the development of a different realistic commercial movie making trends. Some argues that there is a 'resurgence' of parallel cinema after the critical and commercial success of *Satya* in 1998. It is interesting that new generation filmmakers like Madhur Bhandekar, Anurag Kashyap, Niraj Pandey, Anirudha Roy Choudhury etc. are focusing on stories that speaks of social realities of contemporary India in new ways.

The charmed and influence of cinema is unfathomable. Cinema shares a big part in socio-economic and cultural transformation and can generate national integrity, communal harmony and belongingness among people of different backgrounds.

1.7 SUMMING UP

Film differs from other visual art forms. Cinema, as an academic branch of studies, was basically an unexplored area in most of the countries. The first film school of the world was established in Moscow in 1919 (merely two years after the Bolshevik Revolution).

In comparison to all art forms, cinema is considered as the youngest genre of art. Cinema (termed as cinematography), relates to the **photographic art, narrative art, pictorial art, performing art** and **audio-visual art** as well. Cinema is a medium of mass communication which can traverse geographical boundaries without any language barriers.

Entering into another character of cinema, we find, culture has a profound relations with this art form. Culture, in cinema refers to the signs and symbols generated by combination of shots. It hence, leads to the semiotic study of understanding, a closely related branch of linguistic study. The association between cultural codes and cinematic language is an intensely debated topic in film study. Christian Metz, the philosopher and film semiotician, articulated that film image is borne out of cultural and mental perception.

1.8 QUESTIONS

1. Define cinema. State how cinema differs from other art forms.
2. Discuss the role of cinema in society.
3. Analyse film as an art form.
4. Do you think that film study is necessary? Give justifications.
5. Write short notes on:
 - a) Film as a cultural bridge
 - b) Cinema promotion in contemporary time
 - c) Film semiotics
 - d) Objectives of film studies

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UNIT 2: ORIGIN AND EVOLUTION OF FILM

UNIT STRUCTURE

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Objectives
- 2.3 Perceptual Concept
- 2.4 Evolution of Film Technology: Image, Sound and Projection
 - 2.4.1 Image
 - 2.4.2 Sound
 - 2.4.3 Projection
- 2.5 Contribution of the Stalwarts
 - 2.5.1 Thomas Alva Edison
 - 2.5.2 Lumière Brothers
 - 2.5.3 George Méliès
 - 2.5.4 Edwin S. Porter
 - 2.5.5 D. W. Griffith
- 2.6 Summary
- 2.7 Questions
- 2.7 Reference and recommended readings

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit focuses on the origin and evolution of cinema. It is based on the discussion of the evolution of film technology and the contribution of the stalwarts such as Thomas Alva Edison, Lumiere Brothers, George Méliès, Edwin S . Porter and D.W. Griffith towards the growth of cinema.

2.2 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- Explain perceptual concept, toys and techniques
- State the evolution of film technology

- Write the contribution of the stalwarts like Lumière Brothers, Thomas Alva Edison, George Méliès, Edwin S. Porter and D. W. Griffith

2.3 PERCEPTUAL CONCEPT

Human eye is considered as the window to the world. In conjugation with the interpretation of brain, human being creates 'visual field' where lights reflects the world and perception of individuals develop with prior experience of incidents, societal influence or with referential guidance of others. Perceptual ability is the quality of an individual to critically analyse and relate incidents with one another. This complex process of perceptual views were screened and studied effectively by philosophers and psychoanalysts in different phases of human evolution.

Gestalt psychologists in early twentieth century, namely Wertheimer, Kohler and Kafka tried to understand, how a 'whole' is created out of perceptual parts. For instance, a series of dots is perceived as a line instead of separated dots. Wertheimer, later found that, by illuminating series of spots in a screen separated by a brief distance, within a fraction of a second produces the effect of movement. This effect is known as '*phi-phenomenon*'. This eludes the fact that a series of collective conditions can lead a spectator to perceive apparent motion where no real movement has occurred. Another condition, that involves the perception of distinct motion from one point to another, referred to as '*beta movement*', helped to develop the most fundamental features of cinema. Beta movement is helpful in understanding, why viewers see motion in cinema and television. Projections of continuous moving images are the result of many factors associated with perception.

STOP AND READ

- Gestalt (German origin for “unified whole”) describes how human being usually observe objects by assembling similar elements, patterns and simplifying complex images.
- A beautiful example for beta movement is that, when a series of closely packed light bulbs are illuminated in sequence at a rapid interval, in a dark room, a viewer will see the movement of a single light instead of a series of

Persistence of vision refers to the fact that, human eye is able to retain an image for a fraction of a second, even after the image disappears. This persistence of vision, in conjugation with *flicker fusion* presents audience with moving images. If a light source is switched on and off repeatedly in a certain momentum, that attains a threshold moment, a fusion or blending of the light occurs. This is called as *critical fusion frequency*. For a sound film project, 24 frames per second are adequate to generate the *critical fusion frequency* to make the image appear as moving.

STOP AND READ

- Due to persistence of vision, audience fail to perceive the period of darkness that appears between each frame on screens and gets a continuous stream of light and picture.
- The popular term for movie ‘flicks’ dates back to the silent period, when slower projection speeds were used, leading audience to see the dim pulsing of the projector light. This slows projection a phenomenon is termed as flicker effect.

With perceptual development of event, other associated phenomena like illusion and erroneous judgment also generates. *Visual intelligence* therefore, refers to the understanding of the degree of reliability of our

own perception, and the ability to distinguish between manipulation of meaning with illusions and actual reality.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- Click continuous shots of a movement (e.g. moving of a hand from table to head) without a single pause. Now, do it in very high speed. Observe what you find.

2.4 EVOLUTION OF FILM TECHNOLOGY: IMAGE, SOUND AND PROJECTION

Technology and art has a conjugal entanglement, from its inception. Enactment of drama refers to this journey that appeared to be a frequent practice in early human societies. In ancient Indian and Greek architectures, drama staging for entertainment purpose, patronized by the rulers of different times are well documented. Films, like other forms of art demand more developed forms of technologies; technologies for sound recording, photography, editing and projection.

2.4.1 Image

Development of camera as a tool of photography, in the early nineteenth century is probably the most noteworthy milestone in human history. *Camera obscura* (meaning ‘dark room’), early photographic camera, is based on reflection of the incoming light on a screen at the top of the box so that an artist could trace the image. It includes all the basic elements of photographic camera except that the images generated were temporary in nature due to lack of film - the medium of image recorder.

Louis Daguerre (1839), Joseph Niepce (1833), William Henry Fox Talbot worked relentlessly to create a flexible machine for recording of

motion picture. Although magic discs of 1830s were able to create illusion of motions for magic shows, it was William Horner, whose sophisticated machine *Zoetrope* was capable of creating illusion of motion. When the cylindrical portion of the machine was rotated, the photographic impression in the walls of the drum, above the cylinder created illusion of motion to its viewers.

The production of photographic record was credited to Edward Muybridge, whose famous experiment with recording of galloping horse during 1870s led to the creation of motion picture in later period. The first projection machine for image was *Praxinoscope*, developed by Emile Reynaud in 1877. George Eastman developed the flexible photographic films during 1889 leading to the creation of an environment for the birth of cinema in 1895.

As shooting became a profession, camera technology also developed with expansion of photographic lenses (from pinhole camera obscura to wide lens, telephotographic lens, zoom lens, etc.) and transformation of film stocks (from black and white to colour and then to digital one). The major feature that differentiated between still and movie camera were that the later moves the film into a motion. This mechanism is referred to as *pull down* or *intermittent motion mechanism*. With progress in the cinematographic field, filmmakers gradually preferred to experiment with camera (e.g. *slow motion* or *fast motion* films) and light technologies, as a result of which various genres were established in the history of cinema. The most exciting fact about film is that, it is a series of still pictures with 24 frames moving per second). Showscan (it projects photographs at 60 frames per second) or IMAX (the film runs horizontally so that the image width is greater than the width of the film) installation in recent times has helped the industry to have better picture images and elevated the quality of standard.

STOP AND READ

Major technical advancement emerged with the introduction of 35 mm movie camera during late 1950s by Arriflex Company. This camera was lighter in weight and the dimension was also smaller than the existing Mitchell behemoths.

Shaky camera was a popular and inexpensive camera that was dominantly used during sixties.

Steadicam, developed in early seventies, streamlined the filmmaking process and gained popularity among the cinematographers.

During seventies and eighties, camera devices called 'luma' and 'Kenworthy' were developed to control the camera operation during shooting. There are a number of such devices that followed both these principles.

Skycam system during 1980s gave a quantum leap to the cinematography that included computer operation, action viewing during shooting and monitoring system.

With films becoming digital, functional and operational machinery for camera increased, reducing the size and weight.

2.4.2 Sound

Technology for sound developed in a much faster pace compared to the technology for images, with the development of 'Phonograph' for recording and reproduction of sound in 1877 by Thomas Alva Edison. Edison and his company developed 'Kinetograph' as an adjunct to the phonograph in 1894. William Kennedy Laurie Dickson, an assistant to Edison first came up with the concept of conjugation of sound and images. Dickson and his team at Edison Lab developed 'kinetoscope' and first prototype was unveiled in 1891. After his leaving Edison's Company, Dickson developed a 'Mutoscope'- a form of hand cranked peep-hole movie machine.

Although the efforts went on, due to technical difficulties, synchronization of sound was not in practice in cinema till early 1900s.

Lee De Forest's audition tube made it possible to translate sound signal into the electrical signal in 1906. This created history, as the electrical signals could be translated into light signals and could be imprinted in film stocks. Sound and image, thus became emerged together. As a result, the first sound film appeared in 1926. Long distance transmission of sound via telephone and telegraph, development of portable cables and magnetic tapes helped cinema to leap to the sound era leaving silent films as an obsolete choice of the filmmakers.

During 1970s, multitrack recording system was developed and filmmaker's like Coppola (*The Conversation*, 1974) and Robert Altman (*Nashville*, 1975) experimented with eight track system recording. Application of Dolby technology in films from mid-1970s, increased the fidelity in film sound. Standard for sophisticated sound reproduction were set by Sony and George Lucas's THX programme in the mid-1990s. In the late nineteenth century, optical soundtrack technology emerged, leading to further development of digital disk storage system. Appearance of the standard encoding system for DVD, MPEG 2 and MPEG 4 helped the industry to reduce sync-errors.

In the area of post-production works of sound, an immense technological development in sound mixing and editing happened since the talkies era. Matching of the soundtrack with the edited images was a challenging job in the early phases. Early Russian filmmakers experimented with sound. During 1960s, the task of sound mixing and editing became easier with development of professional machines, predominantly, *Moviola*, allowing editors to play with sound. Independent filmmakers during seventies and eighties experimented more with sound than feature film directors. During mid-seventies, CBS introduced the first computerized editing system with a cost of approximately one million dollar. After eighties, **Avid** developed sophisticated computer based editing system, revolutionizing the art of sound editing. From nineties onwards, it was the software programme development that attracted young sound engineers and helped the industries with on location recording system and special effect

designing that reduced the cost to a great extent. Post-dubbing or looping has become a secondary choice now for the sound editors. It is worth a mention that, before nineties, the entire film was post-dubbed sometime, making the job challenging as well as time consuming.

STOP AND READ

MPEG stands for Moving Picture Experts Group. It was established in 1988 to set standards for audio and video data compression and transmission.

2.4.3 Projection

Until the digitalization of cinema, film projector was the most untouched area by the industry. Except for addition of magnetic or optical heads, the projector remained almost the same as it was during 1920s. The projector, basically a camera, operated in a reverse mode. Larger amount of light was necessary for projection. This source of light was fitted behind the lens of the projector and helped to enlarge the picture (e.g. 35 mm frame sometime was enlarged even 30,000 times or even more to fill the screen). Light intensity for the projection camera was also higher (supported by carbon arc lamps or high voltage current).

It was during 1970s, that the change took place with more advanced Halogen Rotary projector. This replaced the complicated process of sprocket wheel, damping rollers, sound heads, pull down mechanism with two consistently sync revolving wheels and multifaceted prism. Projection became the last technological aspect of cinema industry that was digitized. It was only in 1999, after the release of fourth instalment of *Star Wars* series that the projection system was digitalized. Today, computer assisted programme helps cinema industry to produce high quality theatrical experience globally.

2.5 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STALWARTS

2.5.1 Thomas Alva Edison

After the great photographic experiment of Muybridge in 1877, Thomas Alva Edison and his team in his laboratory were the first to develop motion picture on celluloid strip. Much of the development of film is credited to his company that include the development of phonogram and demonstration machine (*vide supra*). Edison preferred private viewing or projection instead of large scale demonstrations, probably due to his technological limitations. He termed his individual viewer as 'kinetoscope'. The Kinetoscope motivated a number of inventors in Europe and America, including his chief experimenter William Kennedy Laurie Dickson to solve the remaining problems of filmmaking and projection that Edison could not resolve. Along with his immense contribution to the sound of cinema, Edison also filmed a few films on wildlife, which may be considered as his early contribution to the documentary film practice (Detail of his contribution to this field is discussed in Chapter 12). Some of his titles were, *The Kiss*, *Fatima's Dance* etc. *The Time* magazine once remarked that the invention of movie was only a diversion for Edison from his other interests. In 1894-95, Edison's employee Dickson, first attempted to make a sound film of 17 seconds duration. In 1896, Edison Co. released the most popular film of that time, *The Widow Jones*. The Company also promoted E.S. Porter and released his famous film, *The Great Train Robbery* (1903). Edison ran a large studio and also headed Motion Picture Patents Co. (MPPC).

STOP AND READ

Other than his contribution to the film industry, Edison is also considered as the leading industrial researcher with highest number of patents for his inventions. Invention of light bulb and his contribution to the electrical research led to many evolutionary achievements in the human history. Born in 1847, at Ohio, America, Edison started his career as telegraph operator. He died in 1931.

2.5.2 Lumière Brothers

History of world cinema changed with the works of Lumière brothers. As described in earlier section, Edison's kinetoscope machine inspired many inventors and businessmen of that period to develop better and sophisticated machines for film projection. Auguste and Louis Lumière, popularly known as Lumière brothers, in France, decided to concentrate on film projection and developed a machine which was lighter than Edison's machine in terms of weight. The advantage of the machine was that, it did not require a constant electrical source for power supply. The machine, termed as 'cinématographe' was easily adjustable in a projector as well as into a printing machine. Lumière brothers also experimented on the procedure for colour photographic plates and developed their own formula. The cinématographe machine became functional by the end of 1894 and both the brothers decided to demonstrate their invention in March 1895 at Grand Cafè of Paris. They did the demonstration with a short film *Workers leaving the Lumière Factory*. It was a huge success with repeated demonstration of the film in front of the businessmen and the common audience.

Eric Barnouw, in his book, 'Documentary: a history of non-fiction film' (1993) discussed the journey of Lumière brothers in detail and enumerated their colossal contribution in popularizing films worldwide. Lumière brothers are also credited for developing the innovative trend of capturing real life event instead of the existing theatrical recordings.

In December 1895, Lumière brothers held a public demonstration of the cinématographe. They also made several films during that time which included *Arrival of a Train*, *Feeding the Baby*, *The Gardener* etc. They then decided on worldwide projection of the films. A few operators were trained for the purpose. It is interesting to note that, these operators were instructed not to unveil the technique to anyone (not even to King or 'beautiful women'). The journey of Lumière brother's company soon included England, Belgium, Holland, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, Russia, Serbia, Australia, India, Japan etc. The Lumière operators virtually covered all the countries except Antarctica

with the cinématographe. The journey, led people believe that creating moving image is not a 'trick'. People from the world first became surprised, and a few among the spectators were convinced that they could also make movies. The idea of making cinema germinated in the entire globe triggered by the projections of Lumière brother's films. Many films enthusiasts including George Méliès approached Lumière brothers for purchasing a cinématographe but were rejected.

By the end of 1897, according to Eric Barnouw, "Lumière operators at work throughout the world had swelled the Lumière collection to more than 750 films." He further stated that the press release always featured 'Lumière' and 'cinématographe' during projection but not the name of the operators of Lumière's films, for which many creators of the films who made film on projection location are not known. At the end of 1897, Lumière Brothers Company announced their change of policy and the company's withdrawal from film production.

Although Lumière brothers later concentrated on manufacturing of raw films, with cinématographe they opened a new chapter in the history of cinema. The prototype of Lumière brothers' set in motion the journey of non-fiction films while Méliès is credited for bringing aesthetics in films by changing the reality with 'editing' and fantasy. Lumière brothers did not tell a story in their films, but they presented and reproduced time, place, movement and incident as it happened i.e., they gave everything in 'actuality', which is considered as the early precursors of documentary films.

2.5.3 George Méliès

George Méliès was a French stage magician and film director who was recognised for the first use of special effects. After attending the public screening of the Lumiere Brother's Cinematograph, in Paris in 1895, Méliès got interested in filmmaking. He unsuccessfully begged Lumiere brothers to sell him the cine machines that they developed. However, by 1902, Méliès mastered the art of film stagecraft and made his best known film *A Trip to the Moon* (1902). The film captured thirty

different scenes. It was about an inauspicious landing of man in the Moon's eye. The film is credited for the first use of artificial lighting, use of special effects and multiple exposures ever in the history of world cinema. Another remarkable film made by Méliès was *The Impossible Voyage* (1904) that has similarities with the description of Jules Verne's adventure book *Thousand Miles under the Sea* – a scientific feature. Méliès's contribution is significant due to the fantasy realism he introduced in filmmaking. These fantasy realism films are now considered as the antecedent of the science fiction movies. He also familiarized the concept of special effect by the “re-creation” of the coronation of Edward VII in his studio even before the event actually took place.

Commenting on the contribution of Méliès to the world film industry, Ann Marie Seward Barry in the book *Visual Intelligence* writes, “his credits include the first stop motion special effects, the first film studio with artificial lighting, the first time-lapse photography, and even the first complex multiple exposure, where he himself appears in as seven different persons in the same film. In 1907, his film *Tunnelling the English Channel* even prophetically fantasized the President of France and England's Edward VII dreaming together of an underwater tunnel between Dover and Calais.

2.5.4 Edwin S. Porter

Edwin S. Porter was a prolific director with a vision to expand narratives with a story. He was the person who introduced ‘continuity’ (imbibing it in editing) in film story, with his landmark movie *The Great Train Robbery* (1903). The film was an action-adventure movie of full 10 minute duration (instead of two to three minutes movies of his time) and was produced by Edison Company. Porter used a pan shot and a medium close up shot at the end. Otherwise, the camera was fixed and the events happened in front of the camera like a staged event. The last inclusion of pan and medium close up shot gave a new angle to film spectators. The film comprised of 14 different and separate shots. His

major films include *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1903), *The Ex-convict* (1904), *The Kleptomaniac* (1905) etc. Porter introduced the future great filmmaker of America, D. W. Griffith as an actor in his film.

STOP AND READ

Born in 1870, Porter contributed to the home movie camera industry. He also invented the Beadnell film projector. Porter left Edison Company in 1909 and established his own equipment company. Porter experimented on 3D photography too. He died in 1941.

2.5.5 D. W. Griffith

That the work of camera is only the extension of the human psychology and the expression in film is nothing but the perceptual concept of human being, was first realised by David Wark Griffith in America. Expressive lighting and camera angles were used by Griffith for the first time to give cinema a new identity that basically practiced only the theatrical and staged recordings of events during early nineteenth century (example, *Queen Elizabeth*, 1912). The colossal contribution of Griffith to the world cinema can be felt, with his introduction of editing to film story, constructed visual simile and juxtapositions, war shots, use of close up shots, conflict creation by playing with different shots (long, medium, close up high angle, etc.), movement of camera for expression generation etc. His film *Birth of a Nation* (1914) was the first commercially successful movie in America, which promised that cinema has a future as a business. The duration of the film was 185 minutes and was made on 16 frames per second. Another significant movie of Griffith was *Intolerance* (1916). The chemistry between Griffith and his camera person Billy Bitzer presented camera as a powerful medium to capture the reality and to captivate audience perception, and gave realization that cinema had 'effect' on audience. He also said that with the power of editing, cinema is a manipulative medium and can be used as a tool for propaganda. Griffith opened this medium for his successors to think beyond the construction of emotions

and ideas and to create ‘art’. Lev Kuleshov, Vsevolod Pudovkin, Sergei Eisenstein, later followed the path as a way of observation and experimentation on cinema.

STOP AND READ

Born in 1875, D. W. Griffith started his career as an actor in Edwin Porter’s **Rescued from an Eagle’s Nest**. He was also a founder members of the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences, popularly known as Oscars. Griffith died in the year 1948.

2.6 SUMMARY

Human eye is considered as the window to the world. In conjugation with the interpretation of brain, human creates ‘visual field’ where the lights reflects the world and ‘perception’ of individual develops with his earlier experience of incidents, societal influence or with referential guidance of others. Perceptual ability is the quality of an individual to critically analyse and relate incidences with one another. *Gestalt* psychologists in early twentieth century, namely Wertheimer, Kohler and Kafka tried to understand, how ‘wholes’ are created out of perceptual parts. Many theories and formulas were developed to understand perceptual ability. *Persistence of vision* refers to the fact that, human eye is able to retain an image for a fraction of a second, even after the image disappears. This persistence of vision, in conjugation with *flicker fusion* presents audience the moving images. *Visual intelligent* therefore, refers to the understanding of the degree of reliability of our own perception, and the ability to distinguish between manipulation of meaning and reality.

Films, like other forms of art demands more developed forms of technologies; technologies for sound recording, photography, editing and projection. Development of camera as a tool of photography, in the early nineteenth century is probably the most noteworthy incident in human history. *Camera obscura* (meaning ‘dark room’), the early

prototype of photographic camera, is based on reflection of the incoming light on a screen at the top of the box so that an artist could trace the image. It includes all the basic elements of photographic camera except that the image generated was temporary in nature due to the lack of the film medium of image recorder. Development of camera function became a topic of research for many inventors in the later phases. With film becoming digital, functional and operational machinery for camera increased reducing the size and weight of it.

Technology for sound developed comparatively faster than that of technology for images. With the development of Thomas Alva Edison's *phonograph* in 1877, sound in cinema developed tenaciously. Until the digitalization of cinema, film projector was the most untouched area of the industry. Except for addition of magnetic or optical heads, the projector remained almost the same. It was during 1970s, that evolution took place with more advanced Halogen Rotary projector. With digitalization, today, computer assisted programme helps the film industry to achieve high quality theatrical experiences globally. Thomas Alva Edison, Lumière Brothers, George Méliès, Edwin S. Porter and D. W. Griffith were the stalwarts who contributed for the development of cinema industry in its early days and have led to the current status of the cinema industry that we know of today.

2.7 QUESTIONS

1. Briefly discuss the evolution of cinema technologies (camera, sound and projection).
2. What do you mean by *perception of vision*? State the theories associated with perceptual concept.
3. Write notes on:
 - (a) Thomas Alva Edison
 - (b) Lumière Brothers
 - (c) George Méliès
 - (e) Edwin S. Porter

(f) D. W. Griffith

2.8 REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDED READINGS

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UNIT 3: HISTORY OF CINEMA -WORLD

UNIT STRUCTURE

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Objectives

3.3 Beginning of Cinema in Europe and America

3.3.1 Cinema in Europe

3.3.2 Cinema in America

3.4 Growth of cinema across the world

3.4.1 Cinema in Japan

3.4.2 Cinema in Latin America

3.5 Emerging of Hollywood Studios

3.6 American Cinema and World Cinema

3.7 Alternative Cinema

3.8 Summary

3.9 Questions

3.9 Reference and recommended readings

3.1 INTRODUCTION

History of cinema can be traced back to Europe and was established as a ‘business’ by the American cinema. While discussing about the stalwarts of the industry as well as the relationship between technology and growth of cinema in Unit 2, we focused on the early history of cinema and its present status. Cinema as an experimental medium by filmmakers and critics had its origin in Europe and America. Thus, rather than discussing chronologically the trends in the cinema of Europe and America we shall focus on the milestone events in the history of cinema in these continents and discuss how it helped in shaping the industry. From this unit, you will learn the world history of cinema emphasizing on the aspects such as beginning of cinema in Europe and America, cinema in Japan, alternative cinema, etc.

3.2 OBJECTIVES

A thorough study of this unit will enable you to-

- To write the history of cinema in the world, including Europe, America, Latin America and Japan
- Discuss different issues in world cinema and
- Describe alternative cinema

3.3 BEGINNING OF CINEMA IN EUROPE AND AMERICA

3.3.1 Cinema in Europe

As discussed earlier, cinema became people's medium with Lumiere brother's exhibition in Paris. As detailed in Unit 2, many stalwarts contributed later for the growth and development of cinema. Some of the notable trend setting milestones in the cinema are avant-garde cinema in Europe, Italian Neo-realism, French Nouvelle Vague or New Wave Cinema, New German Cinema and East Central European cinema.

European filmmakers primarily contributed to the avant-gardes and art films since early 1920s. These films were different from Hollywood cinema in terms of experience from audience's point of view (e.g. sense of realism in content, mode of production, aesthetics liberal in sexuality, slower pace, devoid of commercial interest, etc.). The International conference held in Switzerland in 1929 for the first time focused on the cooperation in production and distribution of filmmaking in Europe. Filmmakers like Sergei Eisenstein, Dziga Vertov, Rene Clair, Georg Wilhelm Pabst, Walter Ruttmann and their contemporaries from erstwhile Soviet Union, French and Germany set a space for parallel aesthetics in cinema. *Surrealism* movement that initially developed in art and culture as well as the *anti-avant-garde* movement had a lasting influence in European cinema. While cinema in Hollywood was commercially motivated, European cinema developed

dialectical view of realism in cinema bringing it closer to ‘intellectual’ or ‘literary’ work.

In Italy, a *neo-realism* revolution in cinema began from 1922 till mid 1950s. These movies, made after first world war depicted the post war crisis like poverty, unemployment, social strife, horror of the war, identity construction in post war period. These films primarily disobeyed fascism. Neo-realistic films not only brought changes in the content of the traditional films but also in production techniques. These films were unlike the studio productions of 1930 were characterized by use of location shooting, use of natural light, casting of unglamorous citizen or unprofessional actors etc. Interestingly, commercialism also ventured into the content of neo-realism, as a result of which, a new generic style of sentimental comedy (popularly termed as ‘pink neo-realism’) and melodramatic neo-realism (termed as ‘popular neo-realism’) developed. These approaches brought Italian neo-realism in films appealing to the common people. This trend continued till 1960s.

However, from 1960 onwards, a handful of critics and filmmakers challenged the existing pattern of neo-realism and asked for more societal intervention in filmmaking. Idealistic and humanistic concept, perpetuation of hegemony, cultural traditions were some of the core areas that these films tried to incorporate during 1960s. The new essence of filmmaking continued till 1970s. French New Wave also reflected similar ethos and led the world in establishing the role of cinema beyond its entertainment value.

In France, cinema enjoyed a golden period during the German occupation of 1940s as it was protected from foreign competition. World War I had significant effect on the film industry in France. Cinema was the lone source of entertainment after the War and therefore, attendance for cinema was high during post war period. Cinema, during post war period was used basically as a tool of propaganda. Yet, it is interesting to note that, France probably is the first country in the world, where cinema was considered as an object of study, even during War period. Many film magazines discussed issues

on cinema, 'cine-clubs' were established where fervent discussions on cinema took place and many critics themselves took to filmmaking. Noted filmmakers and critics like Jean Luc Godard, Francois Truffaut argued against the prevailing norms of cinema of that period. As a result, a new wave, *French Nouvelle Vague* developed. The term, coined by Francoise Giraud, represented *tradition de qualité* and attracted a large number of young filmmakers into filmmaking. These directors, also termed as *auteur* had the control on the total narrative of the film unlike the influence of producer or script writer. The *auteur* filmmakers preferred to do everything (from technicalities to casting) with their own point of view. They shifted the subject matter from 'large' to 'small' one, for portraying issues in detail. For them, societal reality and problems of common people were central questions that cinema tried to reflect. The *new wave* even spread to India and gave birth to the parallel cinema movement in India.

Although the cinema in Germany originated shortly after the birth of the medium, 1920s set a new trend for the industry. Films like *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919), *Nosferatu* (1922), *Metropolis* (1926) established expressionism in its purest form as a central character of German Cinema. Expressionism is an extremely stylistic mode of screen reality. It is anti realist in nature and makeup or set design are deliberately designed to have a distorted image (example; architectural design and human figure distortion in vampire and Dracula movies). Shadows and violent visual contrast were significant characters of lighting in German expressionist cinema. Although, developed in 1920s, German expressionism has influence in contemporary films also. Alfred Hitchcock extensively used German expressionism in his films. *Notorious* (1946), *Vertigo* (1958), *Psycho* (1960) are among his best known movies which celebrated expressionism.

From 1950s, immediately after Second World War, Young German Cinema or more popularly, New German Cinema during 1960s-70s emerged to counter the dominance of American cinema as well as to address the contemporary issues rather than focusing only on

entertainment. Division of Germany in 1949, themes on Holocaust, American cultural imperialism etc. are some of the crucial aspects that attracted the new German filmmakers. Critics define new German cinema as 'the struggle over an embattled national identity in the way in which the filmmakers negotiated the past, not as a heritage to be preserved, but as a site for investigation and excavation, and for reconstructing history as histories and her stories'.

Although growth of cinema can be traced back to 1920s, the end of Second World War had a prominent effect on almost all the European countries. Rise of national cinema, thrive for identity crisis, war effected economy and society, Marxist inspired ideology, political doctrine etc. were reflected in the works of prominent filmmakers from Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and erstwhile Yugoslavia. Polish cinema, after a sterile period during 1960s and 1970s, awakened during 1980s and 1990s with artistically and socially meaningful films. This legacy continues till date.

When other countries were busy with fiction films, British cinema industry, on the other hand, focused on documentary film genesis and maturation. Film academics were another significant contribution of the British cinema. Even though Ireland lacked indigenous film production, it had a presence in film contents both in the films of British and American production. Irish people had considerable representation in the story narratives of these industries.

Australian cinema was primarily dominated by American cinema till 1920s. Home to one of the World's first film studios, the Limelight Department, the country too experienced the effects of World War II. Australian literature had a profound role in the development of the cine industry during 1950s, as many of the remarkable films were based on the literary works of the country. New wave of Australian cinema started during 1970s. A handful production of thriller and horror movies were also notable films of the period. From 1990s, several new stars appeared in the global stage from Australian film industry. Low budget films were able to attain both commercial success and critical applause.

Despite the successful native production, American cinema still continues to dominate the screens in Australia. Similar reflection can be noticed in case of Canadian cinema, where American cinema strangled the Canadian films.

European cinema, recognized as culturally and aesthetically central to the growth of film both as ‘art’ and ‘industry’ is also remarkable for establishing film as a branch of academic interest. Russia, Italy, France, Australia, Poland and others attempted to understand the medium beyond its commercial perspective. Prominent figures like Jean Renoir, Ingmar Bergman, Federico Fellini, Luis Bunuel, Luc Besson, Andrzej Wajda, Chantal Akerman, Pedro Almodovar and Kicslowsci led the efforts for aesthetically and technically innovative cinema and gave a new identity to European film industry.

SELF ASSESSMENT

Prepare the list of raise to fame European Filmmakers.

1. List the significant films from the continent.
2. Find out the film policies of different European countries.

3.3.2 Cinema in America

The journey of American cinema has been elaborated in Unit 2 while discussing the contribution of the stalwarts. US film industry was based on New York at the beginning, but gradually the filmmakers shifted their nucleus of production to Los Angeles with Hollywood as the prime centre. Major studios were also established in Hollywood by 1920s. By 1930s and 1940s, these studios produced successful commercial cinema, gave birth to a star system, established different genres of production, and directors whose works dominated the world market. *Gone With the Wind* (1939) was most commercially successful film of its time. As discussed later in this Unit, World War had significant effect on cinema production. Those were the heyday of US

studios for making *propaganda* films and war films. Directors like William Wyler, John Ford, John Huston, George Stevens made memorable war time documentaries.

Post war period till 1960s witnessed the growth of films based on social issues, melodrama, comedy and western genre and shaped the US cinema. Several factors influenced Hollywood cinema during this period. Decrease of Paramount's control over the market, rise of television as a strong visual media, cultural and political turmoil (including civil rights struggle, feminist activism, anti-Vietnam War protests etc.) affected the sensibility of the filmmakers. Films like *Easy Rider* (1969) broke the conventional norms of Hollywood cinema. 1960s and 1970s is also significant in rise of a new group of talented directors (e.g. Francis Ford Coppola, Martin Scorsese, William Friedkin and Paul Joseph Schrader) and actors (like Robert De Niro, Al Pacino, Warren Beatty and Jane Fonda).

In film-making, new subgenres like *road movie* and *buddy movies* appeared in American Film history. Production of sequels was another new experience for audience. Independent film making movement was germinated in US film industry for giving alternative platform to various issues basically untouched by the mainstream feature films. With the advancement of technology in all the spheres of film production (Refer to Unit 1), production techniques of Hollywood cinema also shifted from analog to digital since 1970s. Commercially motivated films with family oriented themes were successful during this period. Success of Star War trilogy (1977-1983) and *E. T-The Extra Terrestrial* (1982) brought for new hope of sci-fi movie production in Hollywood. The period from late 1960s to early 1980s, therefore is referred to as the New Hollywood or Post classical Hollywood.

In the new decade of the millennium, American cinema dominated the world screen with commercial blockbusters and used multimedia platform for promotion and distribution. More explorations in digital medium shifted production costs from location shooting to graphics and

animation. James Cameron's 3-D film *Avatar* is considered to be the most commercially successful sci-fi cinema ever made in Hollywood. American cinema industry is credited for development of film studies as an academic discipline, archival maintenance, encouraging film journals, promoting cinema and media studies and generating techno savvy visual courses.

STOP AND READ

Road movies focus about stories based on travelling. Examples of such movies are – *Alice in the cities* (1974), *Mad Max* (1979), *The Last Detail* (1973), *MAjic Trip* (2011) etc.

Buddy Films usually presents two characters in pair, preferably men, with contrasting personality. Through the events of the buddy films, males gain a stronger friendship and mutual respect. Subject matters in Buddy films frequently deal with crises of masculinity. From 1930s onward, male comedy duos in most of the American cinema were common feature. Concept of biracialism entered in Buddy films after 1980s.

3.4 GROWTH OF CINEMA ACROSS THE WORLD

With the public demonstration of films by Lumière brothers, cinema developed globally. We shall focus on case studies rather than growth and development of cinema in all the countries of the world. In this section, we shall try to focus on the cinema of Japan and Latin America.

3.4.1 Cinema in Japan

With the arrival of *Kinetoscope* in 1896 and *Vitascope* in 1897, birth of Japanese cinema took place. One of the oldest and largest producing cinema industries in the world, Japan witnessed the pioneering works of Shozo Makino as early as in 1908. Rich tradition of Japanese theatre (*Kabuki* and *Bunraku*) profoundly influenced the stylistic presentation of Japanese cinema. Probably, this was the biggest contribution of

Japanese cinema. A supreme style of aesthetic, very own to the land was carried on to the world stage. Exotic setting, costume, acting style and narrative construction recognized Japanese film industry as unique to the foreign market and achieved critical attention. Though films were made since the last years of eighteen centuries, it was around 1920s, that the cinema in Japan enjoyed firm footing among the masses.

Government intervention to Japanese cinema came in the form of propaganda and documentary film promotion. A new film law was enacted in 1930. World War II, like other countries also had adverse influence on Japanese cinema. The golden phase of Japanese cinema was considered to be during 1950s. Akira Kurosawa made his venture to Japanese cinema with *Sugata Sanshiro* in 1943. His work with actor Toshiro Mifune led to the wonderful films like *Rashomon* (1950), *Drunken Angel* (1948), *Stray Dog* (1949). Yasujiro Ozu eclipsed the Japanese cinema with his critically acclaimed film *Late Spring* in 1949. Kenji Mizoguchi along with Kurosawa and Ozu raised the status of Japanese cinema to an 'auteur' idea and established an alternative concept of cinema, which delineated from the contemporary German expressionism or Italian neo-realism or French New Wave Cinema.

3.4.2 Cinema in Latin America

As a part of the Lumiere brother's cinema exhibition, the first movie-image was displayed at Brazil (at Rio de Janeiro) in 1896. Latin American cinema refers to the cinema, predominantly produced in Argentina, Brazil and Mexico. Many of the Latin American film industries are struggling for survival and many are yet to have their own film industry. American cinema dominated Latin America as early as 1914 and the legacy continues till date in many countries of the continent. It was only after the introduction of sound in cinema, Argentina, Brazil and Mexico developed their own industry and set a new trend of local variants of popular culture. This led to the establishment of a new wave in the history of filmmaking, termed as Third Cinema by Argentine filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio

Getino. Cuban director Julio Garcia Espinosa preferred to term the distinctiveness of Latin American cinema as ‘imperfect cinema’.

On the other hand, in Brazil, Bolivia, Columbia and in some other parts of Latin America, documentary filmmaking set a new trend, as the filmmakers tried to incorporate more of local or community videos into the narrative. Thus ‘indigenous film’ forms emerged in Latin America.

After 1990s, Latin American films have undergone considerable change with several continental projects. Recent shift for open market strategy and large audience attraction, Latin American cinema are seeking to hybridize their content, sharing cross border cinema and co-produced cinema along with US, France, Germany and others. Of late, films like *Como Agua Para Chocolate* / Like Water for Chocolate (1992), *City of God* (2002), *Motorcycle Diaries* (2003) were successful to attract international distribution as well as critical acclaim, giving new hope to the local industry.

ASSESS YOUR PROGRESS

1. Find out how American production system differs from India and other countries

2. Prepare a status report on the ‘Me too movement ‘ and relation to American cinema world

3.5 EMERGNCE OF HOLLYWOOD STUDIOS

In the Unit I, we mentioned how studio culture helped to establish cinema as an industry in America. From the early days of the film history, many companies were involved which performed the job of production, exhibition and distribution (e.g. Carl Laemmle’s Independent Motion Picture company, later it transformed into Universal Studios). During and post-World War I period, cinema

production in many countries declined due to the socio-economic crisis. Movies that were made also faced the challenges of marketing and distribution. As such, many companies were either newly established or were merged together to grab the new market that had already become global in nature. William Fox, an exhibitor and distributor set up his own production company in 1912, which later became Twentieth Century Fox Studio. In 1924, Metro Picture Corporation merged with Goldwyn Pictures and formed the Metro Goldwyn Mayer (MGM). Warner Brother's production company, later also turned into Warner Bros. Studio.

United Artists, an American Film and Television entertainment studio was formed by Charles Chaplin, D. W. Griffith, Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford in 1919. Harry Cohn, his brother Jack and his friend Joe Brandt established a small company for distribution. This company later transformed into Columbia Pictures. The domination of animation films since 1940s led Walt Disney to form his studio. These studios have their own objectives and principles that they maintain for establishing their own identity in terms of film production. In recent times, these studios are also financed and covered by various financial institutions.

Studios effectively control and operate each and every phases of cinema production. James Monaco, in his book *How to Read A Film*, states the studios first acquire necessary properties, script writers than remodel them for production, set design and costume design department than work on required physical elements of production. Technicians and staff work regularly like any other factory. Board of members of the studios decides the directors, actors, sound and graphic design etc. per cinema. Today, it is not unusual for a director to make more than one movie. Interestingly, between 1930-1939, Michal Curtiz shot 44 films and John ford made 26 films.

After 1990, the operational control of many studios slipped from US citizens and went into the hands of international moguls, e.g. Columbia is owned by Sony, a Japanese company, Toshiba has a significant stake in Warner Brothers, Rupert Murdoch—the media baron owns the Fox

studio. In recent time, to cope up with increasing demands of e-market, studios of America are shifting their strategies to control world screen with new technological and promotional strategies.

3.6 AMERICAN CINEMA AND WORLD CINEMA

The growing dominance of Hollywood market worldwide apparently made critics and filmmakers anxious about the existence and growth of cinema in other countries. Trade connection between Pacific, Asia, Africa and Mediterranean countries, many times becomes worried about the issues and content of the films. Perception of American views on crucial issues and misinterpretation or bias in presentation of the facts of developing countries and Central Asia or screen stereotyping or monster portrayal of character whose ideology differs from America are some of the major concern areas of rest of the countries.

Cultural imperialism is another frequently expressed issue by the critics. This emphasized the power of the dominant culture and to establish other culture subservient. Meanwhile, US Department of Commerce has a policy on globalization that Hollywood is free enterprise and the American Government is uninterested in blending trade and cultural change.

Hollywood as an industry is continuously redefining itself from its genesis, adding technological advancement, addressing target audience need, innovative ideas with passing time, addressing promotional and distribution strategies as and when required and uplifting film study as an academic discipline with equal importance as film production.

3.7 ALTERNATIVE CINEMA

Alternative films follow non-conventional topics, form of production, treatment of the subject, point of view etc. than mainstream cinema. As such, they have similarities with experimental, avant-garde and art cinema. Many critics also claim alternative cinema as an industrial practice having a degree of autonomy in total production process. As such, it is synonymous to independent cinema. These films are non-

commercial in nature. Critics also term alternative cinema as *Event cinema* ‘that show concerts, events and performances which are not traditional feature films’. In a recent research, it was found that The UK leads Europe in alternative cinema content that earned 12.5 million Euro at the UK box office in 2012 alone. The term is also used to refer to films that challenges or resists existing norms, establish alternative or independent form. Alternative cinema can also be defined as ‘common men cinema’ as these are primarily low budget films and deal directly with lives of common people and therefore powerful enough to give voice to the voiceless section of the society.

3.8 SUMMARY

History of cinema can be traced back to Europe and was established as a ‘business’ by the American cinema. Some of the notable trend setting milestones in the cinema are avant-garde cinema in Europe, Italian Neo-realism, French *Nouvella Vague* or New Wave Cinema, New German Cinema and East Central European cinema. European filmmakers primarily contributed to the avant-garde and art films since early 1920s. These films were different from Hollywood cinema in terms of experience from audiences point of view (e.g. sense of realism in content, mode of production, aesthetically sound, liberal in sexuality, slower pace, devoid of commercial interest, etc.). In Italy, a *neo-realism* revolution in cinema began from 1940s till mid 1950s. These movies, made after first world war depicted the post war crisis like poverty, unemployment, social strife, horror of the war, identity construction in post war period. Neo-realistic films not only brought changes in the content of the traditional films but also in production techniques. However, from 1960 onwards, a handful of critics and filmmakers challenged the existing pattern of neo-realism and asked for more societal intervention in filmmaking. The new essence of filmmaking continued till 1970s. French New Wave also reflected similar ethos and

led the world in establishing the role of cinema beyond its entertainment value.

Although the cinema in Germany originated shortly after the birth of the medium, 1920s set a new trend for the industry. Expressionism in its purest form was the central character of German Cinema. World War II had profound impact on the film industry in Europe and America. Rise of national cinema, thrive for identity crisis, war affected economy and society, Marxist inspired ideology, political doctrine etc. were reflected in the works of prominent filmmakers. British cinema industry, is credited for emphasizing on documentary film genesis and maturation. European cinema, recognized as culturally and aesthetically central to the growth of film both as 'art' and 'industry' is also remarkable for establishing film as a branch of academic interest.

American cinema, on the other hand, dominated the world screen with commercial blockbusters and used multimedia platform for promotion and distribution. In the recent times, more explorations in digital medium shifted production costs from location shooting to graphics and animation in Hollywood.

Japanese film industry as unique to the foreign market and achieved critical attention with the supreme style of aesthetic presentation with exotic setting, costume, acting style and narrative construction.

Latin American cinema refers to the cinema, predominantly produced in Argentina, Brazil and Mexico. Many of the Latin American film industries are struggling for survival of film industry and many are yet to have their own film industry.

During and post World War I period, cinema production in many countries declined due to the socio-economic crisis. Movies that were made also faced the challenges of marketing and distribution. As such, many companies were either newly established or were merged together to grab the new market that had already become global in nature. Studio system in America originated from this convergence. In reality, studios effectively control and operate each and every phases of cinema production till date.

Alternative films follow non-conventional topics, form of production, treatment of the subject, point of view etc. than mainstream cinema. As such, they have similarities with experimental, avant-garde and art cinema. Many critics also claim alternative cinema as an industrial practice having a degree of autonomy in total production process.

3.9 QUESTIONS

1. Briefly write on the beginning of Cinema in Europe and America.
2. Examine the features of Japanese cinema.
3. Briefly mention the present status of cinema in Latin America
4. Describe the role of Hollywood Studios
5. Write Short notes
 - (a) Alternative Cinema
 - (b) Cultural Imperialism

3.10 REFERENCE AND RECOMMENDED READINGS

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UNIT 4: HISTORY OF CINEMA- INDIA

UNIT STRUCTURE

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Objectives
- 4.3 Beginning of cinema in India
 - 4.3.1 Father of Indian Cinema
 - 4.3.2 Silent Era of Indian cinema (1913-1930)
 - 4.3.3 Talkie Era and the 1930s
 - 4.3.4 1940s and thereafter
- 4.4 Parallel film movement
 - 1.4.1 Characteristics of Parallel Film Movement
- 4.5 Hindi Cinema
- 4.6 Regional Cinema
 - 4.6.1 Bengali Cinema
 - 4.6.2 Marathi Cinema
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 - 4.6.4 Telugu Cinema
 - 4.6.5 Assamese Cinema
- 4.7 Crossover cinema
- 4.8 Summing up
- 4.9 Questions
- 4.10 References and Recommended readings

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Film has a rich and complex history spanning a little over 100 years. In the previous chapters, you have already gained an understanding of what cinema means, the importance of film studies, the origin and evolution of films and the world history of cinema.

In this Unit, we will talk about the history of films in India, the humble beginning and the gradual evolution. You will also learn, in brief, about the different film industries in India.

4.2 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this unit are-

- To discuss the Indian history of films
- To write the different phases of development of films in India
- To explain the concept of parallel films
- To discuss the concept of 'cross-over' cinema

4.3 BEGINNING OF CINEMA IN INDIA

As discussed in the previous Unit, The Lumiere Brother's – Auguste and Louis Lumiere are considered as the makers of the first motion picture of the world *Worker's Leaving the Lumiere Factory* (1895). It is a 46 second black and white film consisting of a single scene in which workers are seen leaving the Lumiere Factory after their day's work. During the initial years, films were of short durations and the themes were mostly local scenes and activities, newsworthy events, views of foreign lands etc. They were also devoid of sound and mostly consisted of a single shot and scene.

India, too, has a similar story. The history of cinema in India dates back to 1896. India was first exposed to motion pictures when the Lumiere Brothers' Cinematographe of France screened six soundless short films at Bombay's Watson Hotel on July 7 in 1896. The short films made by the Lumiere Brothers' consisted mainly of moving images from scenes of everyday life. Their short film of a sequence of a train pulling into the station was an instant hit with the audiences. The success of these films led to the screening of more foreign films in India. In fact, many foreign films makers visited India during the last decade of the 19th century and produced film highlighting places of historical and natural significance. A few prominent films of Indian origin by foreign film makers include *Coconut Fair* (1897), *Poona Races* (1898), *A Panorama of Indian Scenes and Possessions* (1898) etc.

During the same time, film makers of Indian origin like Hiralal Sen and Harishchandra Sakharam Bhatvadekar (also known as Save Dada) started making films in Calcutta and Bombay in 1899. Bhatvadekar, who was present at the Watson Hotel for the screening of short films by Lumiere Brothers', was so fascinated with the films that he ordered a camera from England. Bhatvadekar's first movie, and the first by an Indian film-maker, was shot in 1899. He captured a wrestling match in Mumbai's Hanging Gardens. In 1901, he filmed a felicitation ceremony organized in honour of R.P. Paranjpe on his return to India after excelling in Mathematics examination held at the Cambridge University. In 1903, he filmed the Delhi Durbar of Lord Curzon. Just like the Lumiere Brothers', Bhatvadekar made films on day-to-day life of the city and events of importance. This is why he is credited for making India's first reality films which were also known as 'actuality' i.e. films made on actual or real-life incidents.

In 1910, another person Jem Shetji Premji Madan was actively involved in film production, distribution and exhibition in Calcutta. Abdul Yusuf Ali, a business man, also worked as a film distributor during 1901-07. During this period, i.e. the early years of the 20th century saw people involved in documentary films and news reel production in Bombay and Calcutta. In 1912, Rama Chandra Gopal directed and produced a silent film *Pundalik*. However, it is not considered as the first film of India. This is because the film was a stage play not specifically shot for the screen. Also, the film was shot by a cameraman of British origin and processed in London.

4.3.1 Father of Indian Cinema

Dhundiraj Govind Phalke, called Dadasaheb Phalke, is considered as the father of Indian Cinema. He was born in 1870 at Nashik. His father was a priest and his mother conducted religious discourses in the temple. Dadasaheb Phalke grew up in a holy ambience and knew by heart *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana*, *Bhagwata*, the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*.

His father wanted him to be a Sanskrit scholar. However, from his childhood Dadasaheb Phalke was drawn to art. So his father granted his wish to join the J.J. School of Arts at Mumbai in 1885. He completed a one-year course in drawing from the institute. His eldest brother took him to Baroda and put him in the famous Kala Bhavan to further develop his art. It was in Baroda that he made real progress in the various arts necessary for movie-making.

He produced India's first indigenous silent film *Raja Harishchandra* in May, 1913. The film made its debut in Bombay's Coronation Cinematograph Theatre on April 21st, 1913. Hence, despite the production of *Pundalik* in 1912, *Raja Harishchandra* which was produced a year later in 1913 is accorded the status of being the 'first film of Indian manufacture'. The film was a mythological epic - a story of an honest king who loses his family and kingdom and undergoes severe trials and tribulations. The film was a success and ran in Bombay for a month. Films during that period normally ran less than a week.

With this film, Dadasaheb Phalke introduced an endearing and popular genre – mythological - to the Indian cinema. It brought to life stories of gods and goddesses. Mythological films dominated the early years of Indian cinema. Films were mostly based on epics and myths which helped in making the experience of cinema familiar and less alien to the audience. After his return from England in 1914, Phalke closed down his Phalke Films. In 1918, he set up the Hindustan Cinema Films Company, the first Indian film studio with corporate backing. The studio produced around 44 silent features, several short films and a talkie. It made its last film in 1932 and closed down in 1933.

Phalke was the greatest pioneer of Indian cinema. He established the basic norms of film making in almost every department of this conglomerate art. Phalke served as scenarist, cameraman, art-director, costume designer, editor, developer and even distributor. Phalke made more than 100 films and 30 short films in 25-year span. Some of the notable silent movies produced and directed by Phalke include *Raja Harishchandra* (1913), *Sri Krishna Janam* (1918), *Kalia Mardan*

(1919), *Kans Vadh* (1920), *Sant Tukaram* (1921), *Bhakt Gora Kumbhar* (1923) etc. His last silent movie was *Setubandhan* (1932). Phalke's first talkie and his last film was *Gangavataran* (1937).

Phalke was a pioneer in many ways. He was the first to introduce a male in a heroine's role in Indian cinema. He was not only the first director and producer, but also first writer, cameraman, make-up man, editor, art director and cine-technician. His film *Raja Harishchandra* was the first Indian film to be screened abroad. He was also the first person who distributed his film himself.

Phalke died in 1944 and it was only a decade later that his contributions to Indian cinema were given due recognition. In 1966, the Dadasaheb Phalke Lifetime Achievement Awards were instituted to honour pioneering contribution and accomplishments in Indian cinema.

4.3.2 Silent Era of Indian Cinema (1913-1930)

Dadasaheb Phalke's *Raja Harishchandra* (1913) kick started the silent era of Indian cinema. Following this he made several other silent films like *Mohini Bhamasur* (1913), *Satyavan Savitri* (1914), *Lanka Dahan* (1917) etc. *Mohini Bhamasur* (1913) is India's second full-length feature film and the second by Phalke. The film is noteworthy as it is the first Indian film to introduce woman to act in front of the camera. Kamalabai Gokhale is the first woman to have acted in Indian films. Significantly, the first film *Raja Harishchandra* had males playing female roles. *Lanka Dahan* was India's first box-office hit.

The silent era saw the establishment of many film companies. Two such significant film companies were the Kohinoor Film Co. and Hindustan Cinema Film Co. by Phalke. Both the companies came up in 1918. By 1920, film-making transformed into a regular industry in India. Dhiren Ganguly's *Bilat Ferat* (1921) was the first Indian love story. Other directors of that period were Ardeshir Irani, D.S. Ganguly, V. Shantaram, Chandulal Shah and Himanshu Rai. D.S. Ganguly made satirical comedies like *England Returned* (1921), Chandulal Shah made films on social issues and problems (e.g. *Guna Sundari*, *Typist Girl*).

Himanshu Rai made *Light of Asia* (1925), *Chirag* (1926), *A Throw of Dice* (1929), *Karma* (1934) etc. Some of the noteworthy films of the silent era include *Nala Damyanti* (1921), *Pati Bhakti* (1922) and *Noor Jehan* (1923) by Madan, *Maya Bazaar* (1923), *Kala Naag* (1924) and *Cinema Queen* (1926), *Anarkali* (1928) by Ardeshir Irani, *Gopal Krishna* (1929) by V.Shantaram etc.

The silent era is regarded as one of the most productive eras in Indian cinema. Around 1313 films were made during 22 years. Several genres such as mythological, historical, folklore and fantasy dominated the silent era.

4.3.3 Talkie Era and the 1930s

Sound and music arrived in Indian cinema in 1931. Ardeshir Irani's *Alam Ara* (1931) is the first talkie of Indian cinema. The film was produced by the Imperial Film Company and released on March 14, 1931 at the Majestic Theatre in Bombay. Advertised as an 'all-talking, all-singing and all-dancing film', *Alam Ara* incorporated seven songs and dance sequences. The film became a grand hit because of its Hindustani dialogues and songs. With the arrival of *Alam Ara*, songs, dance and music became staples of Indian cinema. This trend caught up with other directors who sought to imitate the success of *Alam Ara* by incorporating songs and music. Infact, *Indrasabha* (1932) incorporated as many as 70 songs. Film songs became a pan-Indian phenomenon. The talkie era came with a bang with the birth of sound film in India and quickly displaced the silent movies.

The arrival of sound changed the face of Indian cinema. The incorporation of sound gave films their distinctive identities. Within a decade of the advent of sound, the ratio of foreign films screened in India dropped to less than 10 percent. This period also witnessed the rapid growth of film industries in Bombay, Calcutta, Lahore, Pune and Madras. Starting from *Alam Ara*, there were revolutionary changes in the whole set up of the industry. The year 1931 also marked the beginning of talkie era in Bengal and South India. *Jamai Shasthi*,

Bhakta Prahlad and *Kalidas* were the first talkies in Bengali, Telugu and Tamil languages. The regional film industry also flourished during this period.

The early 1930s saw the emergence of the studio system in India. With production of films developing into a small industry, the studio system made its appearance in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. Some of the leading studio during that period were V. Shantaram's Prabhat Film Company (1929), Himagshu Rai's Bombay Talkies, Imperial Film Company, JBH Wadia's Wadia Movietone, B.N Sircar & Dhiren Ganguly's New Theatre Company, K. Subramaniam's Madras United Artist. Another landmark of the 1930s was the first colour film of India *Kisan Kanya* (1937). The film was directed by Moti B. Gidwani and produced by Ardeshir Irani.

4.3.4 1940s and thereafter

The 1940s saw the dominance of certain themes in Indian films. This included the use of star system, making of formula films, playback singing in films etc. The films started experimenting with bold themes. The concept of anti-hero was also initiated in the films of this period. *Kismet* (1943) is the first Indian film to introduce an anti-hero as the film's protagonist.

The 1950s-60s is regarded as the golden age of Indian cinema. This period marked a boom in the production of commercial Indian cinema. Songs and dance formed the nucleus of most movies produced during this period. Some remarkable films of this period include V. Shantaram's *Jhanak Jhanak Payal Baje*, Mehboob Khan's *Mother India* etc. The 1950s saw a remarkable transformation of the Indian film industry. It saw the emergence of the Indian New Wave which is also known as parallel cinema. The concept of parallel cinema is discussed in the later sections.

The 1960s also set the pace for films with a Mughal background. This was spearheaded by K. Asif's *Mughal-E-Azam* (1960). The film was an epic costume drama dependent on its luxuriant sets, dance and music

sequences and most importantly the easy-flowing Urdu dialogues. Some of the remarkable films of that period include *Ganga Jamuna* (1961), *Sangam* (1964), *Aradhana* (1969), *Jis Desh Mein Ganga Behti Hai* (1960), *Guide* (1965), *Love in Tokyo* (1966), *Kashmir Ki Kali* (1964), *Brahmachari* (1968) etc. It was the film *Ganga Jamuna* which introduced the figure of the wronged man turning into a dacoit. Raj Kapoor's *Sangam* set the trend of shooting on foreign locations. It also introduced love triangles in films.

The 1970s saw the advent of *masala* films in India. With a view to give viewers a pure entertaining experience, the coming of the *masala* films changed the narrative style, story structure, characters and content of films. Violence became an ingredient in the film story to attract audience. The 1970s saw a large number of films which were action oriented with violence as its central theme. Perhaps, the greatest spectacle of this period was the Ramesh Sippy's *Sholay* (1975). It set the trend of violence in Indian cinema and gave Amitabh Bachchan the recognition of a 'superstar'. Another remarkable film of the 1970s was *Bobby* (1973). The film proved how a young love could be like on the Indian screen.

Disco trend caught up in the films of the 1980s. Disco with music and dance sequences became the norm of the films made in this period. It was Feroz Khan's *Qurbani* which set the disco trend. This period saw the coming of several women directors like Meera Nair, Aparna Sen and others who made ground breaking films. However, the end of the 1980s, the formula mix of songs, dance and violence hit a new low. This was primarily due to the emergence of cable television, video piracy etc.

The late 1980s and early 1990s saw musical love stories hitting the Indian screens such as *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* (1988), *Maine Pyar Kiya* (1989), *Rangeela* (1995). The 1990s saw directors experimenting with mixed genres such as romantic, thriller, action and comedy films etc. Technological advances paved way for Dolby digital sound effects

and advanced special effects. Increasing emphasis on choreography was another highlight of this period.

The new millennium i.e. 2000 and thereafter has seen the emergence of a whole new breed of directors and film-makers who infused rural elements with modern urban tales. This period saw a growth in the popularity of Indian films all over the world. Films like *Lagaan* (2001), *Devdas* (2002), *Koi Mil Gaya* (2003), *Rang De Basanti* (2006), *Chak De India* (2007) and the more recent ones such as *Pink* (2016), *Dangal* (2016) have also succeeded in leaving a mark among the audience. Films revolving around societal themes such as *Toilet-Ek Prem Katha* (2017), *Padman* (2018) etc have also won appreciation of the audience. In terms of the sheer number of films produced every year and theatrical admissions, the Indian film industry easily surpasses Hollywood. Indian movies are no longer restricted to India. Their popularity has soared high in the international market with films being distributed across more than 100 countries across the globe. Rigorous marketing and distribution strategies have resulted in yielding a remarkable contribution to the box office collection of Indian movies abroad. No wonder, movies like *3 Idiots*, *Dangal* & *Secret Superstar* have done remarkably well in China's box office beating the likes of Hollywood films such as *Star Wars: Last Jedi*, *Guardians of the Galaxy, Vol 2*, *King Arthur: Legend of the Sword* etc.

Film as a mass media has a tremendous influence on people. Over the years, Indian cinema has succeeded in carving a name for itself in the hearts of the audience. Although entertainment remains the staple of cinema, in a developing country like ours, cinema has a far more responsible role to play in impacting the audience and ushering in much-needed and desirable social changes.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Who was Dadasaheb Phalke?
2. Which is the first talkie of India and when was it produced?
3. Which period is known as the golden age of Indian cinema and why?
4. What were the technological developments of the 1990s?

4.4 PARALLEL FILM MOVEMENT

“Parallel cinema” emerged in the 1950s. Pioneered by one of the greatest directors Satyajit Ray, ‘parallel cinema’ was a term to refer to a style of film-making that defied the codes and conventions of the mainstream or popular cinema. Parallel cinema was considered as an alternative to mainstream cinema and was inspired by Italian neo-realism. Parallel cinema movement is also known as the Indian New Wave. There was indeed a wave of new film directors who defied the style of making of popular conventional cinema and made films which were realistic and portrayed the working class, themes and issues that were socially relevant during those times.

Satyajit Ray’s *Pather Panchali* (1955), *Aparajito* (1956), *Apur Sansar* (1959) set the stage for parallel cinema in India. Other noteworthy directors of the parallel cinema movement includes Ritwik Ghatak, Mrinal Sen, Tapan Sinha, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, G. Aravindan, Shyam Benegal, Girish Karnad, Girish Kasaravalli, Shaji N.Karun, Buddhadeb Dasgupta, Goutam Ghose, Rituporno Ghosh etc.

The main thread of difference between the parallel cinema and mainstream cinema was that unlike the latter the former focussed on the trials and tribulations of the working class, their miseries and their means of survival. Film with social messages and themes started to dominate the 1950s. The focus was on realistic portrayals of life and

human beings. During this period, historical and mythological films took a backseat. Social issues such as dowry, polygamy, prostitution and other malpractices infesting the society were the themes of films made during this period. (Different film movements including the Parallel Film Movement shall be discussed at length in Unit 11).

4.4.1 Characteristics of Parallel Film Movement

The major characteristic of the Indian New Wave films was that they were realistic. These films highlighted social and political issues and critiqued feudalism, nepotism, patriarchy, corruption, religious intolerance etc. New Wave films also focussed on the position of women. Issues such as poverty, caste and communalism were portrayed with complexity and subtlety.

In terms of style and presentation, the New Wave films rejected the conventions of the popular, mainstream cinema such as the song and fight sequences, dependence on star actors etc. They focussed more on rural settings, concentrating their attention to the working class and use of method actors. The focus of the New Wave films was not on offering spectacle and glamour to the audience but on giving a social realist approach to their subject. The use of close-ups and lengthy shots marked the making of these films. Musical scores were rarely used, the colour palettes were toned down and a formalist approach to editing was followed. These films were produced on low-budgets and were mostly funded by state-owned institutions.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What is 'parallel cinema'?
2. Who is known as the pioneer of parallel cinema and when did it emerge?
3. Name some directors of the parallel cinema movement.

4.5 HINDI CINEMA

In India, cinema can be divided into two broad categories- Hindi cinema and Regional cinema. The term 'Hindi cinema' is used to refer to the Indian Hindi-language based film industry based in erstwhile Bombay, now known as Mumbai. The Hindi film industry is popularly known as 'Bollywood'. The term 'Bollywood' is a combination of two words – Bombay and Hollywood. Hollywood is a neighbourhood in Los Angeles, California and is known as the home of the U.S film industry.

Experiments began in India with the production of silent film in late 19th and early 20th century. The film industry in Bombay found a firm footing with the launch of different studio systems in the early 1930s. Prabhat Film Company was launched by V. Shantaram in 1929, Bombay Talkies by Himanshu Rai in 1934 etc. The beginning of studios spearheaded the growth of cinema in India. Bollywood has experimented with different genres over the years such as historical epics, western, mythological, comedy, romantic etc. During the growing years of the Indian film industry, stars rather than plots were the driving force behind films. Actors Ashok Kumar and Devika Rani emerged as the first onscreen star pair in Indian cinema beginning in 1936.

The Bollywood industry has seen the rise of many amazing male actors such as Raj Kapoor, Dev Anand, Dilip Kumar, Rajesh Khanna, Amitabh Bachan, Dharmendra etc. The 1990s saw the rise of actors such as Shah Rukh Khan, Aamir Khan, Salman Khan etc. The new millennium has seen the rise of method actors such as Nawazuddin Siddiqui, Irfan Khan, Adil Hussain etc. Female icons who ruled the screen since the 1950s include Madhubala, Mumtaz, Zeenat Aman, Hema Malini, Sridevi Madhuri Dixit, Kajol, Karishma Kapoor etc. Faces that have rocked the screen in the new millennium are Priyanka Chopra, Kangana Ranaut, Deepika Padukone, Sonam Kapoor etc.

Indian film industry – of which Bollywood remains the largest component – is the largest producer of films in terms of quantity. High on entertainment quotient, Bollywood films centre on formulaic story lines, dance and song sequences, proficiently choreographed scenes, melodrama and often larger-than-life onscreen stars.

4.6 REGIONAL CINEMA

India is home to one of the largest film industries in the world. As discussed above, cinema in India can be divided into two broad categories- Hindi cinema and Regional cinema. While Hindi film industry popularly known as Bollywood has succeeded in carving a niche for itself, regional film industry, too, has thrived well in different parts of the country. When the film industry began in India, there were three important centers that led to its growth. These centers were Mumbai (erstwhile Bombay), Kolkata and Chennai. While Hindi films produced in Bombay found a good market across the country, Marathi cinema in Mumbai, Bengali cinema in Kolkata, and Tamil cinema in Chennai also flourished producing its own brand of entertainment.

Although Bollywood may seem to dominate the Indian film industry, frequent experimentation with themes and the financial strength received through corporate funding have signalled way for rebirth of regional Indian cinema. The Indian government has patronized regional cinema by establishing state-level film development corporations and institutionalizing national awards with regional cinema being given due recognition. Some of the prominent regional film industries are Bengali cinema, Marathi cinema, Telugu cinema, Tamil cinema, Kannada cinema, Malayalam cinema, Gujarati cinema, Odia cinema, Bhojpuri cinema, Assamese cinema, Punjabi cinema etc. Some of the key regional film industries are discussed below.

4.6.1 Bengali Cinema

The Bengali film industry is known as Tollywood, a combination of ‘Tollygunge’ and Hollywood. The Bengali film industry is based in the

Tollygunge region of Kolkata and the term ‘Tollywood’ was coined in 1932. In fact, the Hindi film industry came to be known as Bollywood much after the coining of ‘Tollywood’. Led by reputed director like Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak, Mrinal Sen, Rituporno Ghosh etc, the Bengali film industry has succeeded in getting national and international acclaim. *Billwamangal* (1919) is known to be the first Bengali film produced under the banner of Madan Theatre. The Bengali film industry is also credited for pioneering the ‘parallel cinema’ movement in the 1950s.

4.6.2 Marathi cinema

The Marathi film industry or Marathi cinema refers to those films produced in Marathi language. Marathi cinema is considered as old as Indian cinema. Infact, the first Indian film *Raja Harishchandra* (1913) by Dadasaheb Phalke involved a Marathi crew. Marathi cinema has almost walked simultaneously with Hindi cinema. Marathi cinema got its first talkie – *Ayodhyecha Raja* (1932) immediately a year after the first Indian talkie *Alam Ara* (1931) was released. Over the years, the Marathi film industry has grown manifold. Marathi cinema like *Shwaas* (2004), *Harishchandradi* (2009) etc have been India’s official entry to Oscars. Sprouting in Kolhapur and then in Pune, the Marathi film industry is now based in Mumbai.

4.6.3 Tamil Cinema

By the sheer number of movies produced every year, Tamil cinema or the Tamil film industry is the third-largest film industry in India. The film industry is based in Kodambakkam in Chennai and therefore derives the nomenclature of ‘Kollywood’ – a combination of Kodambakkam and Hollywood. Tamil films are distributed and screened all the over world by the Tamil diaspora. Directors like K.Balachander, Balu Mahindra, Vetrimaaran and Mani Ratnam. Is Kamal Hassan is popular across alternate regions. Acclaimed music directors like Ilayaraja and A.R. Rahman also hail from the Tamil film industry. Rajnikanth considered a superstar is a popular figure across the country. Film and politics shares a symbiotic relation in Tamil

Nadu, where film industry paved the way for two CMs namely M.G. Ramachnan and J. Jayalalitha.

4.6.4 Telugu Cinema

Based in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, the Telugu film industry is the second largest in the country in terms of the number of movies produced annually. *Bhishma Pratigna* (1921) is the first Telugu silent film by Raghupati Venkaih who is considered as the father of Telugu cinema. Telangana, which was earlier a part of Andhra Pradesh, is home to one of the largest film production facility in the world – Ramoji Film City. Filmmakers like B.N. Reddy, Ramakrishna, K.V. Reddy, L.V. Prasad, Ramgopal Varma are some of the stalwarts of Telugu cinema.

4.6.5 Assamese cinema

Assamese cinema owes its origin to the works of distinguished poet, playwright, composer, writer and filmmaker Jyoti Prasad Agarwala. He produced the first Assamese film – *Joymoti* (1935). Other leading filmmakers like Jahnu Barua and Bhabendra Nath Saikia have won national and international acclaim for their films. Loosely termed as ‘Jollywood’, the Assamese film industry has been lagging behind in comparison to the other regional film industries of the country owing to stiff competition and lack of financial support. However, a young breed of filmmakers is coming up with productions which have succeeded in winning the hearts of the regional audience. We will discuss Assamese cinema at length in the next Unit i.e. Unit 5.

4.7 CROSSOVER CINEMA

The term ‘crossover’ cinema is used for an emerging form of cinema that crosses cultural borders in terms of concept, production and marketing. Such film, therefore, manifest a hybrid cinematic grammar and appeals to a broader audience. Such films are not grounded in a single culture and are directed towards attracting international audience.

Crossover films may also mean cross-culturally conceptualized cinema. Crossover films are global due to their ability to transgress cultural borders, genre and audience.

A few examples of crossover cinema made by directors of Indian diaspora are: *Bend it like Beckham* (2002) and *Bride and Prejudice* (2004) by Gurinder Chadha, *Monsoon Wedding* (2001) by Mira Nair, *Unindian* (2015) by Anupam Sharma etc. We will discuss crossover cinema at length in Unit 9 – Film Genre.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q8: What is Hindi cinema and regional cinema?

Q9: Name some pioneers of Assamese cinema.

Q10: What is crossover cinema?

4.8 SUMMING UP

- In India, the history of cinema dates back to 1896.
- Lumiere Brothers' Cinematographe of France exposed India to films when they screened six soundless films in Bombay in 1896.
- Inspired by the Lumiere Brothers', people like Hiralal Sen and Harishchandra Sakharam Bhatvadekar started making actuality films which entailed coverage of real-life events and incidents.
- Dadasaheb Phalke, who is regarded as the father of Indian cinema, gave India its first feature film. He made *Raja Harishchandra* in 1913. With this film, he introduced the mythological genre to the Indian cinema. This film also kickstarted the silent era of Indian cinema.
- The silent era (1913-1930) saw the establishment of a number of film production companies and film-making became a regular industry in India.

- Sound and music arrived in Indian cinema in 1931 with Ardeshir Irani's *Alam Ara* (1931) which is the first Indian talkie. The success of *Alam Ara* made other filmmakers also incorporate songs and dance sequences in their films. Music and dance, thereby, became a pan-Indian phenomenon. The year 1931 also marked the beginning of talkie era in Bengal and South India.
- The 1930s also saw the first colour film of India *Kisan Kanya* produced in 1937.
- The 1940s saw formula films in India. Filmmakers introduced the concept of anti-hero in their films.
- The 1950s-60s is regarded as the golden age of Indian cinema. This period marked a boom in the production of commercial Indian cinema. This period is also remarkable as it saw the coming of the Indian New Wave or parallel cinema. Parallel cinema was a term to define those films which defied the norms and codes and conventions of the mainstream cinema. Inspired by Italian neo-realism, the parallel cinema was considered as an alternative to mainstream cinema. The Indian New Wave was pioneered by film-makers such as Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak, Mrinal Sen etc.
- With K. Asif's *Mughal-E-Azam* hitting the Indian screens in 1960, this phase set the pace for films with a Mughal background.
- The 1970s saw the advent of *masala* films in India. This period also saw a large number of films with action and violence as its central theme. Perhaps, the greatest spectacle of this period was the Ramesh Sippy's *Sholay* (1975).
- The 1980s saw the disco trend catching up in films. Disco with music and dance sequences became the norm of the films made in this period. Several women directors like Meera Nair, Aparna Sen and others also entered into film-making with their ground-breaking films.

- The late 1980s and early 1990s saw musical love stories hitting the Indian screens such as *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* (1988), *Maine Pyar Kiya* (1989), *Rangeela* (1995) etc.
- The 21st century has seen a new breed of film-makers who are experimental and do not shy away from infusing rural elements with modern urban tales.
- In terms of the sheer number of films produced every year and theatrical admissions, the Indian film industry easily surpasses Hollywood. Indian films are not restricted to the domestic market but have succeeded in appealing to an international audience.
- Parallel cinema that emerged in the 1950s thrived on serious content and realism that reflected the socio-political climate of the times. The term 'parallel cinema' was meant to refer to those films that defied the codes and conventions of the popular mainstream cinema.
- The major characteristic of the Indian New Wave films was that they were realistic. These films highlighted social and political issues and critiqued feudalism, nepotism, patriarchy, corruption, religious intolerance etc.
- The Indian New Wave films rejected the conventions of the popular, mainstream cinema such as the song and fight sequences, dependence on star actors etc. They focussed more on rural settings, concentrating their attention to the working class and use of method actors.
- In India, cinema can be divided into two broad categories- Hindi cinema and Regional cinema.
- The term 'Hindi cinema' is used to refer to the Indian Hindi-language based film industry based in erstwhile Bombay and is popularly known as Bollywood.
- Although Bollywood may seem to dominate the Indian film industry, frequent experimentation with themes and the financial

strength received through corporate funding have signalled a way for rebirth of regional Indian cinema.

- Regional film industries are based across the length and breadth of India such as the Bengali film industry, Marathi film industry, Tamil film industry, Telugu film industry, Assamese film industry and many others.
- An emerging concept, 'crossover cinema' refers to those films that cross cultural borders in terms of concept, production and marketing. As evident in the term itself, crossover cinema crosses over cultural boundaries by not concentrating on a single culture but targeting multiple cultures and appealing to an international audience.

4.9 QUESTIONS

1. What are 'actuality' films? Who pioneered actuality filmmaking in India?
2. What were the contributions of filmmaker Dada Saheb Phalke to Indian cinema?
3. What is parallel cinema? Mention a few characteristics of parallel cinema.
4. How do you distinguish between mainstream cinema and parallel cinema?
5. Essay the contribution of Bollywood to the Indian film industry.

4.10 REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDED READINGS

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UNIT 5: HISTORY OF FILM- NORTHEAST

UNIT STRUTCURE

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5.1 INTRODUCTION

The story of cinema from the India's Northeast is more than 80 years old. This industry has produced internationally acclaimed filmmakers, musicians, actors, and technicians, even in the midst of various odds. It is indeed a tremendous treatise of a journey from a geographically diverse area which is home to hundreds of ethnic communities speaking hundreds of dialects, and most of the time, one community does not understand the language of the other. This unit primarily focuses the

origin and growth of film industry in the Northeast India and also discusses challenges faced by the film industry in this particular region. From this unit, you will also learn about film education in Northeast India.

5.2 OBJECTIVES

A thorough study of this unit will enable you to:

- Describe the origin and growth of cinema in Assam and Manipur
- Evaluate the status of cinema in different states of India's northeast.

5.3 ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF ASSAMESE CINEMA

The story of Assamese cinema, like most other regional cinemas in India, is the struggle against the gamut of odds that the region faces. Jyoti Prasad Agarwala, the doyen of Assamese music and drama, ventured to make the first Assamese film in 1935, four years after *Alam Ara*, the first Indian talkie. His dedication to the cause of art, combined with a deep understanding of the language and form of cinema that he acquired during his stay in Germany in the late 1920s led him to make *Joymoti*, based on a powerful, assertive and self-respecting Assamese woman. *Joymoti* was produced under the banner of Chitrakala Movietone. The film was completed with a budget of ₹ 50, 000 and was released on 10th of March 1935 in the Raunaq cinema hall in Calcutta.

Jyoti Prasad made another film after a gap of two years titled *Indramalati* (1939). It was his second and last film. The eminent composer and singer of Assam and Dada Saheb Phalke awardee Dr. Bhupen Hazarika played a key role in this film. Despite Jyoti Prasad's bold effort, in the 15 years following the release of *Joymoti*, only six films were produced. Altogether, 19 films were made in 1950s, focusing on varied themes, ranging from the mythological, historical to the socially relevant themes. *Puberun* (The Sunrise, 1959), directed by

renowned Bengali filmmaker Prabhat Mukherjee, was an Indian entry at the Berlin International Film Festival. Bhupen Hazarika directed his debut film *Era Bator Sur* (Tunes of the Abandoned Road) in 1956. It was the first Assamese film to use background score and playback singing, with Lata Mangeshkar, Hemant Kumar and Sandhya Mukherjee lending their voices in addition to Hazarika himself.

The 1960s saw the simplification of form and content to suit the taste of middle-class cine-goers. Fourteen films were produced during the period. Brajen Baruah's *Dr. Bezbaruah* (1969), a crime thriller heavily influenced by mainstream Hindi cinema of the time, was a big box office hit. It was the first film shot entirely in Assam with a unit consisting of local artistes and technicians. Many of the 58 films made in the 1970s were commercially successful. The first colour film in Assamese, *Bhaity* (1972), by Kamal Narayan Choudhury, was released during the period. Padum Baruah's maiden venture, *Ganga Chilonir Pakhi* (Feathers of the Tern, 1976), questioned the vacuous model of development in post independent India. The simple and linear narration, infused with poetic flavour and an austere realism made Baruah's work a milestone in Assamese cinema. Assamese cinema made its mark on the Indian parallel cinema movement with Bhabendra Nath Saikia's debut venture, *Sandhyarag* (The Evening Song, 1977). It was the first Assamese film to enter in the Indian Panorama segment of the International Film Festival of India (IFFI). It was also the first Assamese film to receive funding from the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC). Saikia continued to bring laurels to Assamese cinema with his neorealistic, socially relevant films, such as *Agnisnan* (1985), *Anirban* (1980) and *Kolahol* (1988). Among the commercial successes of the 1970s was *Chameli Memsaab* (1975) by Abdul Mazid which was a runaway hit. The melodious songs of the film got Bhupen Hazarika his first national recognition as Best Music Director.

The 1980s saw the emergence of a new generation of filmmakers, such as Jahnu Baruah, both in commercial and parallel cinema. The

respectability that Assamese cinema has achieved vis-à-vis Indian cinema owes much to Jahnu Baruah's volume of work. He began his illustrious career with *Aparoop*a (Expectation) in 1982. However, it was his *Halodhiya Charaye Baodhan Khai* (The Catastrophe, 1987) that catapulted Assamese cinema to the next level. In 1987, it became the first Assamese film to win the Swarna Kamal (National Award for Best Feature Film). Indra Bania, who played the protagonist in the film, received the Best Actor Award at the Locarno International Film Festival. In the 1990s, Jahnu Barua continued his battle for the cause of meaningful cinema with works like *Bonani* (The Forest, 1990), *Firingoti* (The Spark, 1992) and *Xagoroloi Bahudoor* (It's a Long Way to the Sea, 1995). Moloya Goswami, who essayed the role of the protagonist in *Firingoti*, received the Best Actress award. Suprabha Devi became the first woman film director of Assam, through her directorial venture *Nayanmoni* in 1983. The 1990s witnessed the emergence of quite a few promising directors – Gautam Bora, Sanjiv Hazarika, Bidyut Chakraborty, Santwana Bordoloi and Manju Borah - who made their presence felt at the national and international circuits. Although 64 films were made during the decade, many producers failed to release their works in theatres and had to premiere them on television. It was only in the late nineties that the Assamese film industry showed signs of revival, with films like *Joubone Amoni Kore* (1998) by Ashok Kumar Bishaya.

Commercial Hindi films heavily influenced Assamese films at the turn of the century. Manju Borah's *Akashitorar Kathare* (2003), a feminist film, got Tarali Sarma the National Film Award for Best Playback singer. Manju Bora's *Ai Kot Nai* (2008) was adjudged the Best Film in the National Integration category. A few young directors like Sanjib Sabhapandit, Suman Haripriya, Arup Manna, Chandra Mudoi and Moirangthem Maniram made socially relevant films dealing with human relationships and values.

The current decade started on a dismal note, with just three films being made in 2010. *Baandhon* (2012), a film by Jahnu Barua, became the first Assamese film to get a multi-city release outside Assam. Kenny Basumatary's two martial arts comedies, *Local Kung Fu* and *Local Kung Fu 2* (first one was made on a budget less than Rs 1 lakh and became a cult film almost overnight with its humour) were released in metros outside Assam and got good response from the critics and the masses. Bhaskar Hazarika, an young director, tried to experiment on Assamese films from both content and promotional aspects with his film *Kothanodi* (The River of Fables, 2016). It is master craft in Assamese film industry as it amalgamates four folk tales from *Burhi Aair Xadhu* (Grandma's Tales) written by Lakshminath Bezbarua, with metaphorical interventions.

Assamese language action drama film *Mission China* (2017), directed by Zubeen Garg and produced by Garima Saikia Garg under the banner of I Creation Productions, is being considered as a milestone in the history of Assamese cinema in terms of budget and box-office collection. The film registered sales as high as ₹ 39.97 lakh on the very first day of release. *Mission China* is the first Assamese film to give Bollywood films to give tough competition to in the last two decades. Very recently, *Village Rockstars* (2018) with an unfeigned theme of rebellion and female empowerment and eventual self-realisation and fulfilment directed by a self-taught filmmaker Rima Das, received the Swarna Kamal (National Award for Best Feature Film) in the 65th National Film Awards. The film also received awards in three other categories – Best Child artist for the main protagonist Bhanita Das, Best Location Sound Recordist and Best Editing.

5.3.1 Films other than Assamese

To define Assamese cinema as films produced for and by the majority Assamese speaking people is a misconception. Assamese society is a melting pot of diverse cultures and social heritage, with several tribal communities speaking languages not understood by others. Films in

other languages of Assam have made their presence since the beginning of eighties. Quite a number of short films and documentaries have been made in the language of *Bodo*, *Karbi* and *Mising* besides full-length feature films. It is interesting to note here that though few in numbers, these films have earned national acclaim and Indian Panorama entry because of their aesthetic quality. The 20 minutes long sensitive documentary, *Daaia*, directed by Amar Hazarika, with a script written by Kamal Brahma was the first cinematic venture in Bodo language. *Alayaron* (The Dawn, 1986) by Jwngdao Bodosa, which won the National Award for Best Feature Film in Bodo in 33rd National Film Awards, was the first feature film in *Bodo* language. Bodosa's another film *Hagramayao Jinahari* (Rape in the Virgin Forest, 1995) won National Award for Best Film on Environment Conservation /Preservation in 43rd National Film Awards and both of his films were selected for the prestigious Indian Panorama package. The Bodo film *Duphang-Ni Solo*, directed by Pinki Brahma Choudhury was selected for the Indian Panorama in 1999. Suraj Duwarah, made the first Rabha dialect film *Örong* and received National Award in 2014.

Gautam Bora's Karbi language film *Wosobipo* (The Cuckoo's Call, 1990) received the Swarna Kamal for Best Film by a Debutant Director. The film also earned Sher Chowdhury the Best Music Director prize. Again the Mising film *Panei – Jangki* (2001) earned the jury's special mention at the national awards for its directors Dilip Dole and Narayan Seal. While these films won recognition through some awards, *Ser Along* (The Golden Juice, 1991) by Indrajit Narayan, *Ko: Yad* (A Silent Way, 2012) by Manju Bora and *Panoi- Jonki* (2001) by DilipDoley and Narayan Seal are other significant films in the Mising language that have earned appreciation for their content.

In this connection mention must be made of a documentary film made in Mising language (*Sons of Abotani, The Missings*, 1991) by Gautam Bora which brought home the national award for country's best

documentary. The film also received awards for best audiography for Gautam Bora and Anil Mazumdar.

5.3.2 Challenges of Assamese Cinema

With considerable national and international acclaim have been achieved by Assamese cinema, it is lamentable that even after 80 years, the Assamese film industry is struggling against a variety of odds - financial, technological constraints and is often overshadowed by Bollywood when it comes to regional appeal. The dearth of funding is stifling its growth. As it has not received the status of a full-grown industry, financial assistance from the corporate sector is limited. Many artistes and technicians prefer popular and lucrative Assamese theatre assignments over the film industry. Films produced in Assam are often victims of the exhibitor distributor nexus. A regional film that is doing decent business is often removed from theatres when a big-budget Hindi movie is released. For those making films in ethnic languages, the situation is even grimmer.

In *Jyoti Prasad Rasana wali*, Jyoti Prasad pointed out five factors which were the biggest challenges for a producer in Assam much of which are still relevant today. Assamese films are crippled in all the phases of production (i.e. pre-production, production and post-production phase). In the words of Jyoti Prasad, the first and most significant task is the budget and its turn-over. The industry, from its inception has been in loss. This compels a producer to compromise in many aspects of film production - regimentation in story-telling, cutting off shooting on varied locations, reduction of casts or taking inexperienced actors. He shared his experiences while making *Joymoti* and *Indramalati*. *Joymoti* had the budget of fifty thousand while its turnover was only twenty thousand rupees. With a learning lesson from *Joymoti*, *Indramalati* was made with a budget of fifteen thousand rupees, for which there were 'bad effects on the beauty of the film'.

Other than budget, another barrier of Jyoti Prasad's time was finding of female actors. Even though male actors were present, they were

influenced from drama and contemporary Hindi film acting which has the tendency of merging both drama and film language together. As the first filmmaker of the region, Jyoti Prasad was a one man army. From script writing, direction to music composition, he had to look after each and every aspect of the film. He therefore reminisced that if a single man has to do all these, no one can expect good cinema from Assam. Even today, the scenario remains almost perennially the same.

Studio was another limitation at that time which is now been addressed by setting up of Jyoti Chitrabon. Use of technology, as Jyoti Prasad asserted, was a luxury for him and his successors were also handicapped due to the lack of studio and a sturdy budget. For a filmmaker, technology not only helps to set the grammar of cinema right but also encourages to experiment, break the canons and to set new dimensions.

Jyoti Prasad emphasized the significant role of critics in popularisation, understanding and accepting a film by audience. He shared his discomfort by stating that, 'it is sad to express that some literate people, cultural activists and dignified audience fail to understand what and how *Joymoti* featured everything'. He urged the audience to love and care for the industry as films not by set international standard but also let them be more culturally inclined or else, he feared, new generation will succumb to the western culture only. This stereotypical thought process however still persist. Sanjib Sabhabpandit, recently shared how he faced bitter experiences for the new movie (*Diksou Banat Palas*) in the *Gariyashi* magazine (January, 2017) and he appealed for audience neutrality for Assamese movies and laments the stereotyping image of new generation towards the industry.

The disturbing fact is that cine industry in Assam lacks cinema hall in every pocket of the state. Establishment of mini cinema halls-a much desired demand of the fraternity has not seen the light of the day. Despite daunting challenges, dedicated filmmakers are emerging, seeking to tell stories that strike a chord with people. As long as these

young filmmakers keep their dreams alive, the Assamese film industry will continue to live.

5.4 CINEMA OF MANIPUR

In India's Northeast, similar to Assam, Manipur has long legacy of filmmaking. Manipur has completed three decades of its film industry with the release of its first feature film *Matamgi Manipur* on April 9, 1972 simultaneously at three Cinema Halls in the state. The film bagged the President's Medal in the 20th National Film Festival. Prior to that, Kasturi Chand Jain and Ramkumar-the pioneer film exhibitors in Manipur ran show houses in the state during the pre-war period. Kasturi's show house Manipur Talkies and Ramkumar's show house in Imphal had regular film shows, giving Manipur the palate of film art. Towards the end of the War, more cinema halls came up, prominent among them were the MNB Talkies, Victory Cinema and Friends Talkies etc.

Aribam Syam Sharma's *Imagi Ningthem* (My Son, My Precious, 1981) bagged the prestigious Grand Prix in the International Film Festival in France in 1982. The cinema introduced four aspects of Manipur to the international audience: Manipuri dance, Manipuri theatre, Sports and Manipuri cinema. Another Manipuri Feature film – *Ishanou* (1991) won a special mention award for the leading actress. Selected officially in the Cannes international film festival, France in 1991, *Ishanou*, remains the only film from North East India till date to be shown as an official selection at the Cannes Film Festival, where it was creened as part of the *Un Certain Regard* segment in 1991. The film, the best Manipuri film till date is based on famed writer M. K. Binodini Devi's script. This powerful film draws on the traditions and beliefs of the Meitei community to compile a powerful story about relationships. The film also won the National award in 1991. Manipuri short film *Pebet* bagged the Best Short Film (Non Fiction) award in the international short film festival held in Calcutta (now Kolkata) in 1985. The non-feature

film *Sangai*, the dancing deer of Manipur, bagged 5 awards for, Artistic Excellence in Choreograph, Interpretation of an Animal's Spirit, delicate depiction of wildlife, fostering cultural perspective of conservation and Inter relationship between animals and human being in the 12th International Wildlife Film Festival of 1989 held at Montana, USA. In the same festival, the *Deer on the Lake*, 16 mm documentary film won another merit award.

First colour feature film *Langlen Thadoi* directed by M. A. Singh was released in 1984. *Lammei* (2002) is the first Manipuri digital film. With the production of digital films the Manipuri film industry got expanded and about 50 films are made each year. Among the prominent directors of the state are: Oinam Gautam Singh, Ningthousa Lancha, Premjit Naoroibam, K. Ibohal Sharma, Mohen Naorem, Oken Amakchan, Sambal Wangam, Oinam Doren etc. *Loktak Lairembee* (2017) a film made by Haobam Paban Kumar, participated in various International Film Festivals across the globe and won several awards. It Won Best Film on Environment Conservation / Preservation at the 64th National Film Awards.

Similar to Assamese cinema, average investment for a film in Manipuri is around INR 15 lakhs. The state government has a film policy for giving financial assistance to film producers on the recommendation of Manipur Film Development Corporation (MFDC) Ltd. established in 1987 for developing film industry in the state (it was established as Manipur Film Development Council in 1980 and was transformed into a Corporation in 1987). Basic objectives of MFDC is to set up film laboratory, studio, production of Manipuri films, instituting awards and festivals for establishing institutes in film technology for helping film societies etc.

5.5 FILM EDUCATION IN NORTHEAST INDIA

Though the history of regional film industry dates back to 1935, there is lack of professionally qualified and experienced technicians till today.

To overcome the hurdle of shortage of technicians, efforts on the personal front as well as from institutes and government has resulted in instituting various centres for such studies. Jyoti Chitrabon Film and Television Institute in Assam and higher study centres are result of some efforts. It was established by the Government of Assam in the year 1999 at Kahilipara, Guwahati. Named after the pioneer of Assamese film industry “Rupkonwar Jyoti Prasad Agarwala”, the inception of this prestigious organisation was done by the Government of Assam with a view of mitigating the various difficulties faced by the film producing entrepreneurs of the state. In 1973, Jyoti Chitrabon Film Studio was converted to a registered society with its official and non-official members. Thus, it rendered tremendous services for the development of film industry for the last three and half decades.

5.5.1 Film Education in Higher Institutes

The Universities of north east India include curriculum studying cinematic understandings as part of Mass Communication course. These are designed to introduce students for evolving the nature of cinema both as a social institutions as well as powerful forms of contemporary culture.

5.5.2 Film Appreciation Course of Cine Clubs and other Non-Governmental Organisations

Critics play the role of a catalyst for both promotion and provide critical analysis of the various aspects of films. A good, educated critic is one who is unbiased and writes about the films and their merits, points out its demerits.

To overcome this problem Gauhati Cine Society (established in 1965) came forward and organized “Film appreciation Course” for the first time in the North Eastern Region. After the initiatives of cine clubs, many NGOs and interested persons came forward to organise workshops on cine education in different parts of the region. Although such initiatives can help the industry, yet the region needs firm

movements to spread the film education culture to reach grass root level.

In Manipur, Film Society Manipur, was established in 1966 with an objective of promotion of good film through regular screening and holding film festivals, seminars and appreciation courses in the state. The legacy continued with the setting up of Imphal Cine Club in 1979.

In Mizoram, considering the growing influence of Korean films in the state, Information and Public Relations Department in coordination with Mizoram Film Development Society, have started providing basic training to aspiring filmmakers by organising seminars and workshops.

In Arunachal Pradesh, the ongoing project for establishment of Film and Television Institute (FTII) at Jollang, Itanagar with the support from Ministry of Information and Broadcasting is under progress. With its establishment, the filmmaking is sure to get a stimulus in Arunachal Pradesh.

5.6 CINEMA IN OTHER STATES OF NORTHEAST INDIA

Cinema in Northeast India, other than Assam and Manipur, is still in its infancy. In Meghalaya, *Ka Synjuk Riki Laiphew Syiem* (The Alliance of Thirty Kings), was the first Khasi film made in 1981. The film was directed by late Hamlet Bareh Ngapkynta. *Manik Raitong*, the first colour film in Khasi language was directed by Ardhendu Bhattacharya and produced by Rishan Rapsang in 1984. The movie also represented the Indian Panorama at the Tokyo Film Festival. Pradip Kurbah's National Award winning Khasi movie *Onaatah - of the Earth* received praise from film fraternity of the country. Pradip Kurbah's *Ri-Homeland of Uncertainty* based on insurgency and reconciliation in Northeast India and clashes between insurgents and the government also won National Award. *Chake* was a film from the Jaintia hills. At least 15 films are made every year in Meghalaya alone.

In Arunachal Pradesh, film by natives started as late as 1986 with the film by Taro Chatung. However, even before this, people of the state were directly or indirectly associated with filmmaking. *Rashmi Rekha*, an Assamese feature film was co-produced by Late Rani Thansen Wangchadong and Kanpey Wangsu from Tirap in 1974-75. It was followed by *Mera Dharam Meri Maa* by Bhupen Hazarika in 1975 which dealt with the social structure of the Nyishis. Ahsad Muzid made *Sonam*, written by Y. D. Thongchi on Yak herding community, the *Brokpas*. The film was released across India through PVR Cinemas Director's Rare label in 2014. This first feature film made in Monpa, a dialect of the Indo-Tibetan language of Arunachal Pradesh was made in 2006. Monpa is spoken by a little more than 40,000 people. It is the first feature film in any Arunachali dialect. *Crossing Bridges* made in 2014 by Sange Dorjee Thongdok in *Sherdukpen* dialect received wide spread acclaim including a national award. Moji Riba produced two documentaries *When the Mist is Lifted* and *Between Me and God*. The two documentaries have received much acclaim both within and outside the country. Taro Chatung, Moji Riba, Sange Dorjee Thongdok, Dorjee Khandu, Hage D. Appa and Late Ligang Tachang are some of the prominent film personalities who have contributed immensely in various fields of films in Arunachal Pradesh.

The dubbed Korean films and serials are a mode of entertainment for Mizoram, until a few years back. The film *Khawnlung Run*-The Raid of Khawnlung (2012), achieved a level of visual quality that is being discussed quite vigorously among at least the younger generation of Mizoram. Directed by Lunglei-based Mapuia Chawngthu, *Khawnlung Run* is a story of doomed love set in the real backdrop of the 1856 raid of Khawnlung village by rival Lushai chieftains. The fact that Mizoram does not have any cinema halls, save one or two low capacity 3D halls that have come up in last few months, reflects the sorry state of the film industry in the state.

Nana – A Tale of Us (2017) is a Nagamese language drama film directed by Tiakumzuk Aier. It made a grand international debut at the 2nd Edinburgh Festival of Indian Films and Documentaries (EDIFD). Director Taikumzuk Aier won the prestigious Golden Calton award for Best Director. Sanjib Dey with his debut film, *III Smoking Barrels*, an anthology of three stories from Northeast India, depicts the socio-political scenario of the region. *III Smoking Barrels* was the official selection in the International Competition section at the 66th International Film Festival Mannheim-Heidelberg, the second oldest film festival in Germany after Berlin. The film is a seamless blend of 6 languages - English, Hindi, Bengali, Assamese, Nagamese, and Manipuri. Nagaland does not have a major film industry. One reason for this is that the people of Nagaland are divided into about sixteen linguistic groups – with Nagamese, a modern hybrid language, stepping in as a lingua franca. *O Suko Pani Kile Giri Ase* (2008) film is considered as the first film made in Nagamese.

Film industry of Sikkim is relatively new although Satyajit Ray made one documentary *Sikkim* in 1971. Director like Pradip Rasaily and Usha Rajak are taking initiatives to make films in the state. Rasaily's films *Katha* and *Acharya*, Rajak's film *Iku- The Jungle Man* are well received by the audience of the state. Of late, Priyanka Chopra's home productions Purple Pebble Pictures, *Pahuna-The Little Visitors* became the first Sikkimese feature film, completely shot in Sikkim with a local cast of little actors, written and performed entirely in Nepali. Directed by first-time filmmaker, Paakhi A Tyrewala, the children's film received a standing ovation at Toronto International Film Festival 2017.

5.7 EIMPA AND ITS ROLE IN CINEMA OF NORTHEAST INDIA

Eastern India Motion Pictures Association (EIMPA) is an organized body for the welfare of northern India's films comprising of producers, directors, distributors and exhibitors group. EIMPA formulates rules

and regulation for systematic distribution and exhibition of films. Every director has to register his film in EIMPA. Distributors, while taking distribution policy will have to give first preference to regional films. Provisions have also been made for the release and distribution of cassettes before the coming of a film. EIMPA is working to prepare a better channel for distribution network. Improvement of Hall conditions are also under its supervision. To create a good environment, EIMPA organizes different mass related programmes so that it can attain public share and support.

5.8 SUMMING UP

Cinema from the Northeast India is a story of more than 80 years old. This industry has produced internationally acclaimed filmmakers, musicians, actors, and technicians, even in the midst of various odds. It is really amazing that a struggling industry in a geographically diverse area which is home to hundreds of ethnic communities speaking hundreds of dialects, and most of the time, one community does not understand the language of the other have brought laurels at national and international arena.

The story of Assamese cinema, like most other regional cinemas in India, is the struggle against the gamut of odds that the region faces. Jyoti Prasad Agarwala, the doyen of Assamese music and drama, ventured to make the first Assamese film in 1935, a mere four years after *Alam Ara*, the first Indian talkie. Assamese society is a melting pot of diverse cultures and social heritage, with several tribal communities speaking languages not understood by others. Films in other languages of Assam have made their presence since the beginning of eighties. Quite a number of short films and documentaries have been made in the language of *Bodo*, *Karbi* and *Mising* besides full-length feature films.

Manipur also has a long legacy of filmmaking in Northeast India. During its three decades of filmmaking in Manipuri language several films has received accolades in national and international arena. Other

than Assam and Manipur, filmmaking in other Northeastern states are still in their infancy.

Like all other regional film industries in India, film industry in north east is facing the challenges of financial assistance, social challenges, technical issues and screening problems due to lack of screening halls.

5.9 QUESTIONS

1. Briefly analyse the growth of film industry in Northeast India after 1990s.
2. Write a note on the stalwarts of film industry in Assam and Manipur.
3. State the problems of the film industries in Northeast India.
4. Write short notes
 - (a) Bodo films
 - (b) Aribam Shyam Sharma
 - (c) Jahnu Barua
 - (d) Dr. Bhupen Hazarika

5.10 REFERENCE AND RECOMMENDED READINGS

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MODULE II: CINEMATIC STORYTELLING

UNIT 6 : FILM STRUCTURE

UNIT STRUVTURE

6.1 Introduction

6.2 Objectives

6.3 Film Form

6.3.1 Narrative

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6.3.4 Editing

6.3.5 Special Effects

6.3.6. Sound design

6. 4 Summing Up

6.5 Questions

6.5 Reference and Recommended Readings

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous units, we learnt about meaning and history of cinema. In this chapter, we shall try to understand the structural components of film. By structural, we mean, the basic elements that give the totality of a story, which we term as cinema. Cinema, as you know, is a form of storytelling presented through narratives. Elements (e.g. plots, sub-plots, dialogues etc.) that helps to construct the narrative or the series of events of a story is called as the *content*. The way in which this content is presented is called *form* of a cinema. In other words, content is the subject of an artwork, while, forms are the way or means through which

that subject is expressed. Content gives the look of a film. On the other hand, form is the happening of a film that leads to the formation of different genres (example musical genre, sci-fi, horror, action, romance, etc.

6.2 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- Define *form* and *content* of film
- Explain camera, camera movement, lighting, and other aspects of film
- Analyse the role of sound in cinema
- Discuss CGIs and Special Effects

6.3 FILM FORM

A film is a series of events constructed with a connection between events, so that meaning can be generated. This storytelling property is also applicable to documentary and other non-fiction films. Differences between feature films and documentary films will be discussed in chapter 12. For films to be a narrative, there must be cause and effect relationship between the events. These events construct plots and sub-plots of a film. Cinematic narratives are considered as the ‘most sophisticated’ narrative, as it is multi-tracked, with both audio and video in its form. These narratives are again presented in a cinematic language. James Monaco, in his book, *How to Read A Film* (2009) states that cinematic language differs from verbal language. According to Monaco, “film is not a language, but is like language, and since it is like language, some of the methods that we use to study language might profitably be applied to a study of film. Yet, since film is not a language, narrowly linguistic concepts can be misleading.” Therefore, analysis of a film needs careful approach.

The basic *elements of film forms* are: narrative, mise-en-scène, cinematography, editing and sound design. These are also called as the

core of film forms. Illusion of movements (created by the persistence of vision), manipulation of space and time (through editing) and creation of stylistic designs (through mise-en-scène and cinematography) are the fundamentals of film forms. Expression of ideas and emotions are built on these primary elements. Rudolf Arnheim, in his anthology *Art and Visual Perception* suggests that balance, shape, form, growth, space, light, colour, movement, tension and expression are the major areas of concern that formulate visual codes. Later, many film theorists inserted colour, line and form to the basic visual texts. In this unit, we will focus on a few vital aspects of these components.

6.3.1 Narrative

Narrative is the central element of cinema where events unfold before audience through plots and stories. The ‘cause-and-effect’ relationship, as stated earlier, is found in cinematic narratives. Bordwell in his book *Poetics of Cinema* proposes that in narrative there are three dimensions that constitute the totality of narrative structure. Story world (its agent, circumstances and surroundings), plot structure (the arrangement of the parts of the narrative), and narration (moment by moment flow of information about the story world). Syd Field, in his influential book, *Screenplay* argues that classical Hollywood narrative has three-act structure. In the first Act a problem or conflict is established; in the second Act the conflict moves to a peak of intensity and in the third act the climax and denouement takes place.

Narrative structure of storytelling in general establishes the character’s goal in the beginning and revises and refines to take it to the climax and denouement. According to Bordwell, a narrative is designed to give strong and accurate first impression of their characters and is rarely designed to introduce evidence that would alter audience views. Defining what narrative is, Bordwell says that it is ‘a process by which the film prompts the viewer to construct the *fabula* (the story’s state of affairs and event) or the mental concepts, on the basis of *syuzet* (the arrangement of the story’s state of affair in the narrative) organization

and stylistic patterning that converts the concepts to concrete visuals. For Bordwell, narrative has three different ways of telling stories:

- Firstly, narrative may be treated as a representation, considering the story's world, its portrayal of reality and its broader meanings.
- Secondly, narrative has a structural value depending on a particular way of combining parts to make a whole.
- Thirdly, narrative is a *process*; the activity of selecting, arranging and rendering story material in order to achieve specific time-bound effects on a perceiver.

6.3.2 Mise-en-Scène

Considered as the 'voice' of visual language, mise-en-scène (French meaning for the term mise-en-scène is "put on the stage") includes almost everything that goes into the composition of a shot, framing, set design, setting visual environment and movement of character. Developed earlier for theatre, mise-en-scène directs a spectator's attention to the space of the shot i.e. lighting, camera and composition. Therefore it helps in the aesthetics of a film regardless of it being fiction or non-fiction. Film writers and film makers like André Bazin, Jean Luc Godard and Eisenstein were the early proponents of this concept.

In simple terms, mise-en-scène is everything that we see on screen. It is the answer to a filmmaker for the questions such as what to shoot, how to shoot and how to depict a shot and how to move a character. Hence, we may summarise various parts of mise-en-scène as such:

- **Performance/acting:** It is the domain of an actor. Actor's gestures, expressions, and movement constitute the performance arena.
- **Blocking:** It is the conjugation of arrangement for performer and props before camera. Blocking also includes directions for an actor's movement in a shot.

- **Lighting:** Light is one of the most vital part of character formation, growth and maturation in cinema. Quality of light, shadow, amount of specific areas that are to be illuminated etc. determines meaning of a film. Lighting contributes to perception, meaning, and mood formation. e.g. Horror films extensively uses low light and shadows for meaning generation.
- **Hair and makeup** of actors adds significant flavour to the storytelling, e.g. making of period cinema demands extensive research for the hair design. Likewise, a horror film or a Hollywood Western needs different make up for bringing out the feelings of reality in a character. Special effects makeup like wounds, blood or fake anatomy, body forms are also included as a part of makeup design. In the film *Paa* (Dir. R. Balki, 2009), make up of Amitabh Bachchan was specially made to portray a 12-year-old boy, suffering from a rare disease called progeria. Challenging part of the makeup was that, in such disease, the boy looks five times older (i.e. aged to look like 60) than his normal age (Fig. 6.1).



Fig. 6.1: Special make up of Amitabh Bachchan in the film *Paa*.

- **Costume** is what the character wears. Costume indicates the time and period a character represents in the film (Fig. 6.2 & 6.3). It is the expressive way of defining personality of a character portrayed in a film. Proper costume in a period

cinema can help in identifying the time that the character was set. Each and every character, including the supporting roles specifies time of the story in movie.



Fig. 6.2: Period Costume of Brad Pitt in the *Troy* (Dir. Wolfgang Petersen, 2004).



Fig. 6.3: Costume for the characters of the film *Bahubali* (Dir. S. S. Rajamouli, 2015).

If not well researched, a movie can face criticism from historian and critics for the costume. Commercial movies, on the other hand, often use costumes that reflect the fashion trends that are in vogue. Costume may also function as a indication of change in a character's psychological status, as in the film *Bhool Bhulaiyaa* (Dir. Priyadarshan, 2007) where, dress of Vidya Balan changes to show the psycho dualism nature of the character (Fig. 6.4).



Fig. 6.4: Costume for psycho representation of character in *Bhool Bhulaiyaa* (2007)

Status and social standing of a character is also often portrayed through costume designs viz. depiction of rich and poor, change of fortune, change in morality in characters. Costume is also used to represent cultural connotations. Films from different countries, e.g. Japanese, Indian, Korean, Iranian etc. have distinctive costume design which is indicative of the culture and tradition of that country/region.

SELF ASSESSMENT

1. Watch five movies of different genres and different story times and find out, how dress design helps in character identification. _____

2. Find out how, hair design is associated with story line in a cinema. _____

- ***Set design*** is the vital part of framing a shot. It is the arrangement or set up of the background space. This space may be outside a room (exterior shooting) or inside room (interior) design for supporting of the character's expression and maturity throughout the story events and situations. Set design also includes insertion of props (short forms of property) to support the characters. Props act as iconographic demonstrations of genre (say, stakes, crosses, coffins, silver bullets etc. with horror films, guns with westerns, and so on). Props are connotative expressions in cinema which may bear metaphoric significance for some directors. Set designing should be appropriate according to the story's time, place and space (Fig 6.5-6.7). Today's film industry uses CGI (Computer Generated Imagery) for visual pleasure in set designing.

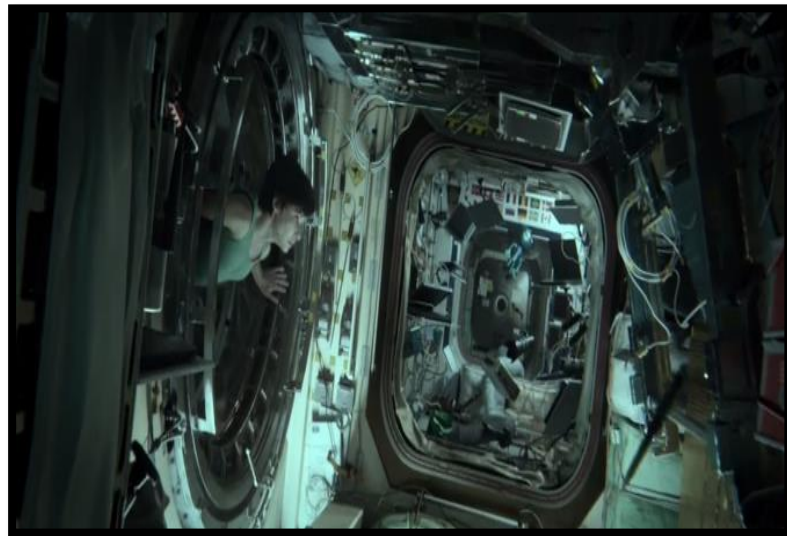


Fig. 6.5: Set design in *Gravity* (2013) was as such that it generates real feelings of a space station.



Fig. 6.6: S. S. Rajamouli's *Baahubali* blended both Indian medieval art and architecture.



Fig. 6.7: The **Hobbit Village** set for the movie *Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit Trilogy* has become a part of Tourism Industry in New Zealand.

Stop and Read

Framed images are of two types: when the frame is self-sufficient to express the image, it is termed as *closed form*. When the frame is dependent on other frames also, than it is termed as *Open form*.

6.3.3. Cinematography

Cinematography deals with the actions related to camera function. It includes major strategies of light and colour for movie making. In addition to planning camera set ups and movement, the cinematographer organizes the lighting design of scenes and placement of colour gels to enhance certain colour on screen. Before understanding colour and lighting, let us discuss about shot design and camera movements.

6.3.3.1. Shots

Shots are the basic elements of a film. It is the single frame construction constituting either static or dynamic environment inside. Stephen Prince, in his book *Movies and Meanings: An Introduction to Films* mentions two major functions of shots – expression of movements and symbolization of thematic ideas.

Depending upon the distance of camera's position from a character, shot may be divided into **long shot**, **medium shot** and **close up shot**. Each of these shots has distinctive functions in a cinema. Long shots are also referred as **establishing shot**, when it is used to open or establish a shot. Many filmmakers use this shot, primarily to show an urban or rural environment, sometime, with the help of helicopter. These **aerial shots** are also considered as establishing shot. The Documentary film *Home* (2009) was made entirely with aerial shots. **Medium shots** brings audience closer to a character as well as shows some of the elements of the environment. On the other hand, **close-up** shots are used to reveal expression, deep emotion of characters. Charlie Chaplin is considered as one of the finest filmmakers who understood functions of close up shots and extensively used for emotional expression of his characters. Shot scale may vary with the variation of camera-character distance. Several other shots are connoted like extreme long/close up shots, medium long or medium close up etc.

On the basis of the character(s) involved in a frame, shots are termed as **two** or **three shots** (two/three characters in the shot).

Depending on the position of camera, a shot can be categorized as **high angle** and **low angle** shot. In high angle shot, the camera looks down from above to the character, while, in low angle, the camera looks up at object. Alfred Hitchcock used high angle shots extensively in many of his films, e.g. the extreme high angle shots used in *Psycho* and *North by Northwest*. On the other hand, Japanese director Yasujiro Ozu is known for his liking for low angle shots. Another significant camera angle is **canted angle**. This tilted angle is basically used for distorted and disorganized mind of character. The mise-en-scène appears slanted due to this shot.

However, it should be noted camera angles by itself do not express anything, rather it is the filmmaker's organization of the angles in context to other shots during editing that give desired meaning to the content.

SELF ASSESSMENT

- i. Compare the types of shots used in news casting and movie making. _____

- ii. What type of shots are commonly used in music videos? Analyze. _____

6.3.3.2. Camera Movements

Audience looks at the movie through the camera, as such movement of camera is the movement of the spectators. When camera moves, it is, as if, the audience move to the proximity and distance from the characters. Camera dissolves the barrier between film screen and spectators.

Camera movements are of three categories: (i) pan and tilt shots, (ii) dolly or tracking and (iii) boom or crane shots. In pan and tilt shots, the **head** of the camera moves. In **pan**, the camera head moves from side to side (in 180° angle), while in **tilt**, the camera head moves from up and down. Both **pan** and **tilt** are used to establish relationships between

scenes. They are the bridging movements for adjusting character movements.

In contrast to pan and tilt, **dolly**, **tracking**, and **Boom**, the camera along with its base or tripod moves through the space. In tracking or dolly shots, the camera may move slightly towards the character, such as, towards the face, or body, for extended and elaborate expressions or might go away from the object. Tracking helps audience to visualize the power of a character and adds extra boost to the shot. In **crane movement**, a camera mounted on an arm of a special crane moves the camera above the ground in any desired direction. Reality show production often uses crane shots.

6.3.3.4. Lighting

Lighting is a tool of filmmaker's artistic expression. Through lighting, filmmaker establishes mood and psychological or emotional effect of a scene or sequences. It is a significant tool to establish timing of a day i.e. day or night timing. Light may be on-screen or off-screen in nature. In most of the time, filmmaker takes the help of off-screen light and mimic the real environment, for example, in a day time, the sun light is hard in nature and therefore, the filmmaker will choose for hard lighting. In contrast, during morning or evening, light becomes softer and likewise the filmmaker will suggest for soft light. Sometime, filmmaker uses light to create disturbing images as in horror films. *Fall of* and *contrast* are the properties that define the distinction between **hard** and **soft light**. Soft light is highly scattered and diffused and creates a flat appearance, following low contrast and slow fall off lighting. On the other hand, in hard light, strong shadows are created and hence the boundary lines are distinct. Sharpness arises due to fast fall off. It helps in defining space and emotions of characters.

In classical Hollywood narrative, directors follow **three-point lighting**. Here, the primary source of light is the **key light**. **Fill light**, set in ninety degree to the key light, helps to cancel shadows, generated from

key light. **Back light**, often helps in illuminate rear proportion of the set and separates the actor and the rear set.

High-key lights are typically used to give brightness to the character. Musical genre in Hollywood as well as the family dramas in Bollywood practice high-key lighting. In contrast, low-key lighting is used to portray darkness in stories and character. Thriller and detective movies are good examples, where extensive low-key lighting is used to give the feelings of thriller. *Gloomy, high shadow, low-key light* is also a tool for establishing sadness in characters life and helps audience to guess the gloomy appeal in the content. Satyajit Ray, Dr. Bhabendra Nath Saikia and many parallel cinema directors also used low-key light to portray central character's depressions in many of their films. In high-key lighting, there is little contrast between light and shadow contact of the frame, while in low-key lighting, sharp contrast between light and shadow in the framing image is apparent.

6.3.3. 5. Colour

Colour is an important element of cinematography especially in lighting, costume, and set design. In early era of filmmaking, filmmakers had only the **grey scale** (It is the scale of brightness from white to black, through intermediate shades of grey). Till 1960s, this was the common practice for filmmakers. More artistic presentation of black and white colour can be seen in the works of Francis Ford Coppola, Alfred Hitchcock, Ingmar Bergman, Satyajit Ray, Adoor Gopalakrishnan and their contemporaries.

Three properties of colour are important:

Hue: It refers to the colours viz.: red, blue, green and yellow. They are unique and they do not resemble each other. For example, pink is not considered as unique hue as it is derived from red.

Saturation: This is the strength of the colour, e.g. in comparison to pink, red is highly saturated.

Intensity: It is the appearance of colour. Level of brightness is the intensity of light. Stephen Prince states that, colour has three functions in cinematography:

- i. It *conveys symbolic meaning* that comments upon the character's feelings or actions in a scene. This is necessary to create additional, more intellectual perspectives on the action.
- ii. It helps in *establishing narrative organization* of the story. This is particularly helpful in films that have long running time like Francis Ford Coppola's *Godfather (1972)* and sequels. Replication of same colour helps in continuing the narrative of cinema.
- iii. Conveys psychological modes and emotional tones of a scene. Although, emotion and psychological tones are context dependent, colour intensify the level of mood. James Cameron's science fiction *The Terminator* illustrate the context dependent nature of colour design.

6.3.4 Editing

Editing simply refers to stitching together of different shots from the film stock, taken during shooting. It is referred to as the post-production phase of film production. Editing helps in development of the story, according to the director's visualization. Relationships between story, plot and real time can be manipulated through editing. It is the job of an editor to evaluate all the footage, select and cut the necessary and important ones and join them together to give meaning and life to all these fragmented shots. Editing in earlier days (linear form) was a tiresome process as the editor had to perform everything manually. From the original negative, an intermediate positive print was developed (called as first generation), which then led to negative printing (a second generation). The negative reversal copy (the third generation), which now carries all the properties for printing, leads for subsequent copies for production and distribution. Original negative of

a film is considered as too valuable to use in production. It is worth mentioning here that with each step, the quality of production is lost and the print in theatre is several generation far from the original one. Most often, a CRI (colour reversal intermediate) is developed to bridge the intermediate positive intermediates. This time and labour intensive process is largely replaced by digital editing (Non-linear). Here, the hard disk, containing all the digital recording in camera, is installed in the editing computer, an EDL (Edit Decision List) is prepared, digital intermediate is prepared, special effects or CGIs are added, master positive copy is organized and finally, a release print is generated. Digital post-production, thus, reduces the number of necessary generations into two: *rough cut* (elimination of all unstable footage with errors) and *final cut* (furnished one with all effects and ready to release). In digital process, therefore, the quality remains intact till release of a film. With the advent of editing software, the task of editing is has become less arduous.

Juxtapositions of different shots can be presented in a number of ways, like, **cut**, **fade**, **dissolve** etc. A cut is generally used to join shots, where there is no change of narrative time or place involved. It is the most commonly practiced transition both in fiction and non-fiction films. D.W. Griffith, developed the style of **cross-cutting**, to show events that happen simultaneously but in different locations. Length of a shot depends on the choice of a director. For example, in the film *Rope* (1948), Hitchcock took 10-minute long shot, joined together to show as if there are no cuts in the movie. Interestingly, the same director, in another influential movie, *Psycho* (1960), took 78 shots to show a murder at the bathtub.

A **dissolve** specifies minor changes in the time, place or space of a story. In this technique, a shot begins to fade out to black, but before it disappears in black, another shot begins with a superimposition. In contrast, while using a fade **in** or fade **out**, no superimposition takes place. Hence, the shot directly goes into black and a clear and distinct change in time and place in the story takes place.

Editing demands both mastery in imagination and skilled in technology. It is the editor, who implements director's cut and establishes a story for the audience. A few important functions of editing in cinema are:

- Editing helps in continuity of the storyline. For continuity, director applies different rules like, 180° or 30° rules during shooting phase. Hollywood is known for using continuity editing since 1930s. On the other hand, Eisenstein's famous *Odessa steps* sequences in *Battleship Potemkin* (1928) is a beautiful example of **impact editing** and **overlapping editing** to show the contrast between events and repetition of actions respectively. The **eye-line match**, **matching of master shots**, **shot reverse** are some of the other techniques of continuity editing.
- Editing creates dramatic mode. It is the editing, that joins raw footage, syncs sound, adds special effects, configures colour and presents the dramatic modes in a story. An editor must have to determine the most influential character in the story for the audience to follow. Different genre of films (like horror, suspense, western, sci-fi etc.) demand different types of editing for the storyline presentation. In rare cases, director and editors gives chances to secondary characters to become a major character. Woody Allen's academy award winning *Annie Hall* (1977) is a good example of such kind of editing.
- Editing creates tempo and rhythm. In the film *Whiplash* (2014) that won award for Best Film Editing along with Best Sound Mixing and Best Supporting Actor in 87th Academy Awards, mesmerizes audience with 'sharp and gripping rhythm'.
- Editing controls narration and Point of View (POV). The editor in association with the director decides, to what extent, audience will be allowed to look at an event, implying association of shots. Both in fiction and non-fiction films, editors help director to set POV through the arrangement of the shots.

SELF ASSESSMENT

1. Watch movies from different genres: horror, sci-fi, melodrama, gangster and musical. Observe, how the technique of editing differs in these genres. Make a list, how they differ from each other.

6.3.5. Special Effects

Special effects are aspects of mise-en-scène which assists character to express and help audience to acquire dramatic mode with the storyline. Although, it is an essential part of post-production, a director has to imagine the editing storyline, use of special effects in the pre-production phase itself. Now-a-days, Hollywood movies develop character with CGI effects and production is done accordingly. The character of Gollum in the *Lord of the Ring* trilogy, for instance, was created with CGI effect and actor Andy Serkis gave live performances for the character (Fig. 6.8). *The Jungle Book* (2016), *Avatar* (2009), *Gravity* (2014) are example of recent movies, which primarily depend on special effects. According to James Monaco, special effects are used on the premises that: (i) film need not be shot continuously, each shot can be framed separately (ii) drawings, paintings, models can be added in such way that it stands for reality and (iii) images can be combined. According to Andrew Whitehurst, the British visual effect artist of *Troy*, *Harry Potter and Order of the Phoenix*, *Charlie and Chocolate Factory* and *Ex Machina* ‘what perhaps many cinema goers don’t notice is that, more lower budget, less spectacle-heavy films are making much greater use of VFX.’



Fig. 6.8: Live performances of actor Andy Serkis for the character Gollum in *Lord of the Rings* trilogy.

Use of Chroma-keys are another tool for special effects. Chroma-keys are particularly helpful for the news industry, television channels and music videos to grow rapidly. This visual effect technique is dependent on the colour and composes or streams two video images based on colour hue. Use of green screen and blue screen are preferred as it differs heavily from human skin, than the other colours. It is interesting that, no colour in the character attire can duplicate the background colour, when Chroma key is used, as it will distort the image during editing (Fig. 6.9).



Fig. 6.9: Use of chroma-key in *The Jungle Book*.

It is worth mentioning here that, though, VFX is extensively used today, the use of special effects in movie dates back to early nineteenth century. For instance, Edward S. Porter used the technique of double exposure in his film *The Great Train Robbery* in 1903, to add background scenes.

Stop and Read

Montage is an art of editing, where two shots are joined together to give a third but with a new meaning. Individual meanings of the shots differ from what generate as a result of the joining of these two shots. In simple understanding, if shot *A* and *B* are joined, the meaning generated will be '*C*', instead of '*AB*'. Lev Kuleshov, V. I. Pudovkin and Sergei Eisenstein are synthesizer of the concept of montage. Eisenstein, in Russia, added new ideas to the existing concept of montage. For Eisenstein, montage has the function of creation of ideas, generation of a new reality, instead of supporting narrative- the old reality of experience.

6.3.6. Sound Design

Sound design deals with the sound components, what we hear in the film. Dialogue editing, sound effects, and music contribute to the story. Mood, environment, character, time and place are just a few of the story aspects that can be established or emphasized with sound.

Let us discuss a few arguments that establishes the significance of sound in cinema.

- David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, while discussing the aesthetics of sound in film, argue that universal acceptance for some of the sound types like *diegetic*- the inbuilt sound from the frame where the sources of sound are from the actions and *Non-diegetic* sound: the artificially synchronised sound to the frame; such as effect sound and music that draw audience attention and supplemented into the images and to give another sense mode to the content. They further argue about the temporal relationships of sound by stating that some sounds are earlier than image and they are called as displaced diegetic.

Such types of sounds are used to give the audience a feeling of past stories or of future sense when a character or a voice over states about the future projection when sound is simultaneous with images and dialogues are synchronised they are termed as simple diegetic.

- As in practice, there are three basic modes of cinema sound. Penny Mintz identifies these three modes as spatial sound (they obey the laws of real sound and conforms the behaviour of natural sound in space. Space and surroundings are determined by the volume and quality of the sound), ideational sound and music.
- Langkjær states that ‘sound becomes meaningful by the fact that we recognize them as sounds of certain activities. But the movie experience implies something more than the listening of sounds and their causes. First, film sound is very much about structuring and timing attention and secondly, sound not only identifies an event they also characterize events so they make sense in a certain way.

In film, sound is primarily used for mood cueing. In many a time, sound can identify and represent a cinema e.g. the magnificent composition of the sound track for the movie *Lord of the Rings* now has become the identity of that movie. Silence, on the other hand, is also a part of sound. It is pertinent to note here, sometime, silence gives stronger emotion to character than music or sync sound.

Stop and Read

Mood Cueing is a term used by John Corner in *Sounds Real: Music and Documentary* for discussing the relationship between audience attentions that musing brings

Sound Bridge

It is the audio connection between scenes. Named as bridge, because, the sound from one scene continues into the beginning of the following scene, or preceding scene.

In a nutshell, we can say, along with silence, sound in films consists of two types, i.e. diegetic and non- diegetic. Diegetic sound comes from inside the scene of action. On the other hand, non-diegetic sounds are those, that comes from outside the story, sound attributed from outside as an assistance to the story. Music, added to the story, also is a part of the sound. Sync-sound (synchronized sound) is the sound recorded during the time of filming a movie. The film *Jazz Singer* (1927), for the first time, included dialogue, heralding the use of sound in cinema. In India, *Alam Ara* (1932) was the first talkie. *Lagaan* (2001) and *Dil Chahta Hai* were among the first films in Bollywood, which used sync sound. Prior to that, dubbing was common practice in almost all the post-production stages in Indian cinema.

6.5. SUMMING UP

The basic *elements of film forms* are: narrative, mise-en-scène, cinematography, editing and sound design. These are also called as the core of film forms. Illusion of movements (created by the persistence of vision), manipulation of space and time (through editing) and creation of stylistic designs (through mise-en scène and cinematography) are the fundamentals of film forms. Narrative is the central element of cinema where events unfold in front of audience through plots and stories. The ‘cause-and-effect’ relationship is found in cinematic narratives. Another crucial part of film is mise-en-scène. It is considered as the ‘voice’ of visual language and includes almost everything that goes into the

composition of a shot, framing, set design, setting visual environment and movement of character. Developed earlier for theatre, mise-en-scène directs a spectator's attention to the space of the shot i.e. lighting, camera and composition. Cinematography on the other hand, deals with the actions related to camera function. It includes major strategies of light and colour for filmmaking. Camera movements are of three categories: (i) pan and tilt shots, (ii) dolly or tracking and (iii) boom or crane shots. Lighting, the major portion of film production, is a tool of filmmaker's artistic expression. After the production phase, joining of different shots from the film stock stands as the biggest challenge for filmmakers. It is editing which helps in development of the story, according to the director's visualization. It is referred to as the post-production phase of film production. Relationships between story, plot and real time can be manipulated through editing. During post-production, special effects are used to assist character to express and help audience to acquire dramatic mode with the story line. Vital aspect of films comes from Sound design. It deals with all the sound components we hear in the film. Dialogue editing, sound effects, and music contribute to the story. Mood, environment, character, time and place are just a few of the story aspects that can be established with sound.

6.6 QUESTIONS

1. Define film forms. Briefly discuss a few elements of film forms.
2. Analyse the role of sound in cinema.
3. Discuss CGIs and Special Effects.
4. Illustrate different types of camera movements.
5. Write notes on:
 - (a) Shots
 - (b) Functions of editing
 - (b) Narratives in cinema
 - (d) Make-up in cinema

6.7 REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDED READINGS

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UNIT 7 : FILM LANGUAGE

UNIT STRUCTURE

7.1 Introduction

7.2 Objectives

7.3 Film Language: Signs and Syntax

7.4 Signs

7.4.1 The Physiology of Perception

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7.7 Questions

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7.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous unit i.e. Unit VI gave you an understanding about the form and content of a film starting from the camera work to editing to special effects. After going through the previous Unit, you should be able to discuss the different aspects that go into making of a film.

In this unit i.e. Unit VII, you will come to learn about the language of films. Films also have a language of their own. And this is expressed through different signs and syntax that the filmmakers employ for meaning making. This Unit will explore the concept of film semiotics i.e. the study of film signs.

7.2 OBJECTIVES

After going through this first unit, you will be able to-

- Explain about the language of films
- Discuss the different concepts associated with film language
i.e. signs and syntax of films

7.3 FILM LANGUAGE: SIGNS AND SYNTAX

Film language is a part of human language. Human language makes use of words as a system of signs and symbols to communicate. These words are either written or spoken. This system has expanded to art as well, and includes images, movement and sound. Just like prose and poetry have a language; film has evolved its own language.

Film language is a combination of three things primarily – visual imagery, written or oral discourse and sound, either natural or artificial or both. Film language must be primarily understood as a visual medium. The moving pictures and images on screen are interpreted as signs and symbols in order to understand a film. A film also makes use of oral and written discourses in the form of dialogue, voice over, narration and through letters and words projected on screen (credits and sub-titles).

However, the power of a film lies mostly in its visual character. The force of film language lies in the visual imagery which includes people, objects, landscapes etc. The sound track of a film is also a part of the film language. Sound helps in establishing the mood for the film and emphasizing on key dramatic moments. Other aspects of film language include the exploration of time and space within a film. This can be achieved by the use of montage and mise-en-scene. These concepts will be discussed later in this Unit.

In simple words, whatever a film tries to communicate becomes a part of the film language. So the visual imagery, the discursive language, sound, mise-en-scene, editing etc all become a part of film language.

Film language is a system involving signs that the audience need to decipher in order to understand the meaning of a film.

In order to understand films, you must have an understanding of the different signs and syntax employed by a filmmaker. Let us try to learn more about signs and syntax and what they mean.

7.4 SIGNS

A sign may consist of a word, image, object or any practice. The study of signs is known as semiotics. Semioticians justified the study of film as a language by redefining the concept of written and spoken language. They justified that any system of communication is a ‘language’ and the way we do it within a ‘language system’. Thus English, Assamese or Hindi is a ‘language system’. Cinema, therefore, is clearly a language but not clearly a language system.

Film semiotics is the study of signs that pertain to film on a variety of levels. Well-known film semiotician Christian Metz pointed out that cinema can tell fine stories not because it is a language but rather it has become a language by telling such fine stories.

As stated above, semiotics is the study of signs. The semiotic theory makes an attempt to study the social and cultural meanings of signs and codes. A sign must contain two parts:

- Signifier and
- Signified.

The relationship between the signifier and the signified determines the meaning of signs. ‘Signifier’ is a word, symbol, drawing, object or any form of representation and ‘signified’ is the idea or thing it represents or the implied meaning. In literature, the relationship between the signifier and the signified is a main locus of art. In film, however, the signifier and the signified are almost identical. For example, in cinema an image of a rose is simply an image of a rose and nothing else. In English, the

rose can simply be a rose too. However, the word may be mixed with similar words like rose, rosy, risen, rows, arose etc.

In language system, there is a great difference between the signifier and the signified. However, in film the difference does not arise. This is what makes the language of a film so difficult to discuss. A film image does not suggest, it states. In a film, the artist's choice is not limited unlike literature. Therefore, literature gives one the liberty to imagine, whereas a film does not. This entails efficiency in a viewer to read a film. In order to understand a film, one must know how to read a film.

Film language consists of short circuit signs in which the signifier is similar to the signified. In language such as English, German or French, the word is the smallest semantic unit. The standard theory suggested that in case of film, the smallest semantic unit is a shot. The shot was the word of film, the scene its sentence and the sequence its paragraph. However, it is difficult to identify a shot as the basic unit of meaning in a film. This is because every frame includes infinite amount of visual information. Film presents its viewers with a language that depends on a continuous, non-discrete system which defies a basic unit and thus cannot be described quantitatively. In the words of Christian Metz, "A film is difficult to explain because it is easy to understand".

7.4.1 Physiology of perception

Perception is the act of perceiving by means of the senses or of the mind. It is understood as the process of recognizing and understanding sensory stimuli. Every individual perceives differently. The perception of an individual is dependent on a number of factors such as how we are taught, how we look at things and how we hear things. How we perceive things is based on our learning.

Every normal human being can perceive and identify visual images. So in case of films, too, every individual can make sense of what they see. In fact, even infants understand images much before they start to speak. So while every individual can perceive and identify visual images, even

the simplest visual images are interpreted differently in different cultures.

The process of perception and comprehension involves the brain. It is a mental as well as a physical experience. How we perceive an image depends not on the physiological functions of our eyes but on how the brain processes the information received. Hence, there is a strong element of our ability to observe images that depends on learning. This is however not the case with auditory phenomenon. The difference between the two senses can be described in terms of their function – while ears hear whatever is available for them to hear, eyes choose what to see. This brings us to the conclusion that we read an image physically, mentally and psychologically just like reading a book. The only difference is that while we know how to read a book from left to right and top to bottom, we are seldom conscious of how we read an image. Different individuals read and perceive an image in more or less three different ways: physiologically, ethnographically and psychologically. This implies that in order to understand an image, we need to read it physically, mentally and psychologically.

Even in case of films, anyone can see a film, but some people tend to comprehend the visual images in three different ways with far more sophistication than others. Film is not a language but is like a language. Ever since the beginning of films, theorists have compared film with verbal language. However, it was only in the fifties and the early sixties that a new category of thought developed i.e. semiotics that saw written and spoken language as just among two systems of communications. It validated the study of films as a language.

7.4.2 Denotative and Connotative meaning

A film can easily fall a victim to easiness. In simple words, it means that a film is so intelligible that it can really become difficult to analyze it. Despite this, films do communicate meanings. Films convey two types of meanings - 1) Denotative Meaning and 2) Connotative meaning.

Let us first try to understand both the words in plain terms. The meaning of words in general can either be denotative or connotative. These two terms were coined by Roland Barthes with a view to give greater clarity to the way in which signs work. Denotation refers to the literal, actual or obvious meaning of a word. Connotation, on the contrary, refers to meaning making through positive and negative associations that a word naturally carries with it. For example, the literal meaning of the word 'home' is 'residence' or 'a place where one lives'. This is the denotative meaning of 'home'. In the connotative sense, 'home' may mean family, comfort, security (positive associations) or even fear, discomfort (negative associations) depending on the context in which the word is being used.

Just like written language, film language also conveys denotative (literal) and connotative (suggestive) meaning. While a film image or sound has a denotative meaning, you cannot underestimate the fact that films also convey connotative meanings that you need to strive in order to recognize it. Perhaps this is the power of films – they are what we cannot imagine. Films have immense connotative language which perhaps makes it difficult to analyze it. Inability to analyze makes a film fall a victim to easiness.

Denotation is the first order of signification and connotation is the second order of signification in a film. It is both the denotative and connotative meanings that make for a film language. In a film, the first order of meaning i.e. denotation would refer to what is on the screen and the second order of meaning i.e. connotation refers to the suggestive meanings that are culturally encoded to that first order of literal or denotative meaning.

Denotative meanings are those that the audience can see and hear in a film. They do not have to make efforts to recognize it. Connotative meanings are those that evoke a certain feeling in the audience. It involves emotional overtones, interpretations, ideological assumptions and social values. For example, in the film *Richard III* (1995) the image of a rose is linked to the connotation of white rose as a symbol of

houses of York and red rose as symbols of the houses of York and Lancaster.

7.4.2.1 Paradigmatic and Syntagmatic Connotations

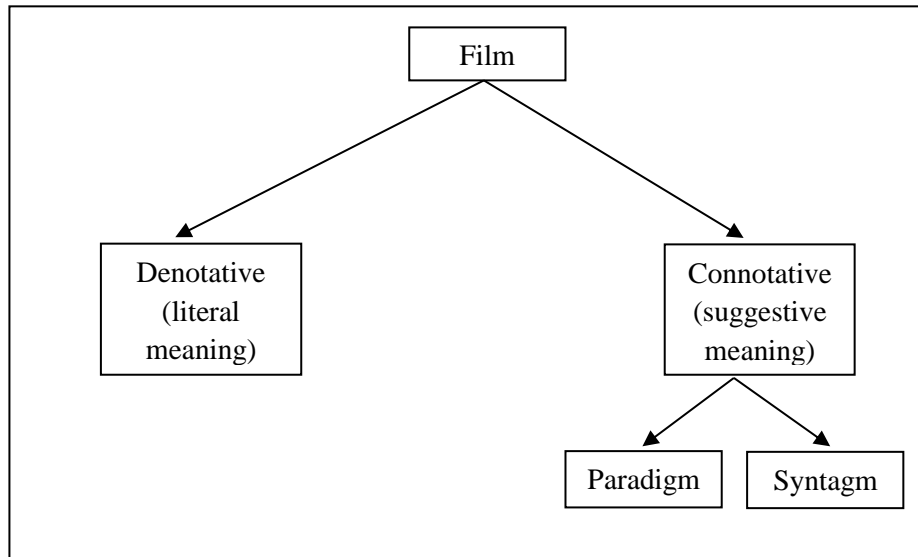
As discussed above, films convey two kinds of meanings – denotative and connotative. Denotative meanings are those which are obvious, visible or literal. However, connotative meanings are suggestive. They are not directly implied but it is left to the imagination of the viewers to extract the connotative meanings suggested by different visuals. Connotative meanings can be divided into two types. Films convey two forms of connotative meanings.

- *Paradigmatic* and
- *Syntagmatic*

Paradigmatic connotation refers to the connotative meanings that viewers attach to an image. These meanings stem from the viewer's own experience of various objects in the image and the resultant associations. Paradigmatic connotation, thus, stems from the comparison of a shot, not necessarily consciously, also unconsciously from all other options the director could have used with its unrealized companions in the paradigm. For example, a low-angle shot of a rose conveys a sense of dominance because as viewers we tend to consciously or unconsciously compare it with an overhead or high angle shot of a rose that would diminish its importance. An image of a dog shown with a boy may remind the viewers of their childhood and they may associate the image with innocence and carefreeness.

Syntagmatic connotation would stem from not comparing a shot with other potential shots like the example of rose given above but comparing it with actual shots that precede or follow a shot. Therefore *syntagmatic* connotation of a shot would be derived by comparing it with other shots that we actually see. It refers to the semantic associations formed by the interrelationship of various shots. For example, in Soviet filmmaker Eisenstein's film *Strike* (1924), he first showed shots of workers being mowed down by machine guns. He then uses another shot of cattle being butchered in a slaughter house. This

combination of shots may give rise to a syntagmatic connotation that people are shot like animals.



The paradigmatic and syntagmatic meanings are vital for understanding a film. As an art, film depends upon two sets of choices by a filmmaker. After a filmmaker arrives at a decision of what to shoot, he or she is immediately confronted by two questions: how to shoot it (what choices to make - the paradigmatic) and how to present the shot (how to edit it - the syntagmatic). Film semiotics has so far concentrated on the syntagmatic aspect of film which entails editing, montage etc that defines film as different from other arts.

In his book *Signs and Meanings in the Cinema* (1969), Peter Woollen suggested that there are three orders of cinematic signs.

- Icon
- Index
- Symbol

The icon refers to a sign in which the signifier represents the signified because of its similarity to it or its likeness. The index measures a quality not because it is identical to it but has an inherent relationship to it. The symbol is an arbitrary sign in which the signifier does not have a direct or indexical relationship. These three cinematic signs are mainly denotative. A film image is iconic, indexical and symbolic because the interpretation of that image is influenced by the cultural and social

codes of the viewer. In order to understand a film, viewers fill it with their knowledge based on their cultural and ideological background.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Define denotative and connotative meaning in a film with an appropriate example. _____

2. What are the two forms of connotative meaning?

7.5 SYNTAX

There is no grammar as such film, but there are some loosely defined rules of usage in cinematic language. This is called the syntax of film language and comprise of what is known as the grammar of a film. It is the syntax of a film that orders these rules and indicates the relationship among them. Syntax refers to the systematic arrangement of shots. The syntax of a film is an organic development. It has evolved naturally and has changed over the years.

In written and spoken language systems, the syntax deals with the linear aspect of construction i.e. putting together words to form phrases and sentences. This is called the syntagmatic category in films. However, films can also include spatial composition. Therefore, film syntax must include development in time as well as space. In film criticism, the modification of space is called “mise-en-scene” and the modification of time is called “montage”. The concept of montage will be discussed a little later in the Unit.

Film syntax can be studied under the following categories.

- Codes
- Mise-en-scene
- Sound
- Montage

7.5.1 Codes

The difference between sign and code is that while sign is something that stands for something else, codes are by and large a cultural and social phenomenon. Codes define the structure of a cinema – codes in which a film operates and the codes that operate within a film. Different codes combine to give meaning to a film. These codes are primarily of three types.

- Culturally derived codes
- Shared codes with other art forms (such as gesture that is common to theatre)
- Unique codes those are peculiar to cinema such as the montage.

All films contain codes and their interpretation leads to decodification. Both the culturally derived codes and the shared codes are vital to cinema. However, it is the unique codes that form the specific syntax of film. It is these codes that bring out the meaning of a film. For example, in Alfred Hitchcock's movie *Psycho* (1960), the popular shower scene of the murder has certain codes. The scene has only two elements- the character taking a shower and eventually her murder. The culturally derived codes are taking a shower and the murder. In western culture, taking a shower is an activity that has elements of privacy, relaxation, openness and sexuality. Therefore the choice of the place i.e. the bathroom and a shower scene beautifully emphasizes the elements of violence and sexuality in the assault. The concept of murder fascinates a viewer because of its motives. Shared codes are almost non-existent in this scene because of its high cinematic value. Shared codes i.e. acting hardly plays a part in this scene as the shots are brief and the character on screen only mimes a few simple expressions instead of acting. The rapid cutting of shots in the scene is the unique cinematic code or the montage.

7.5.2 Mise-en-scene

Mise-en-scene is a French term that means 'to put on stage'. Originally a theatre term meaning 'staging', it has crossed over to film production practices involved in the framing of shots and everything that appears in

the framing of the shot- actors, costume, décor, lighting, props etc. Mise-en-scene refers to everything that appears before the camera and its arrangement. It basically suggests the director's control over the visual elements within the film. Mise-en-scene refers to the overall look and visual design of a film.

It is assumed that the mise-en-scene of a film along with its overall cinematography and editing goes a long way in influencing the believability of a film in the eyes of the audience. It includes both what the audience can see and the way in which they are invited to see it. Mise-en-scene is used in film studies to discuss the visual style.

So mise-en-scene essentially connotes two things: 1) setting, costume and lighting and 2) the movement within the frame. This means that apart from what is inside the scene, the frame and camerawork are also considered a part of the mise-en-scene of a film.

While mise-en-scene refers to the overall look and feel of a movie, it is achieved through the work of different specialists involved in the making of the film. It is, however, still the director of a film who oversees the entire mise-en-scene. Mise-en-scene is an expressive tool at the film-makers disposal. The mise-en-scene of a film can determine the specificity of the cinematographic work of a film-maker. It is an essential part of a director's creative art. Mise-en-scene aids in the setting the mood of film and expressing the vision of the film. It also generates a sense of time and space within the film.

Now that you have understood the concept of mise-en-scene, let us discuss the different components of mise-en-scene.

Set Design: Set design or setting is one of the most important visual elements of a film. Set design refers to the overall décor of a film set. It means the arrangement of elements like furniture, props and the overall set itself. The set design plays an extremely important role in the film and sets the actions and the events within the film. A good and experienced director does not randomly arrange the set. The position of elements and the overall set design bears a deeper significance. It is aimed at provoking thoughts and creating meanings.

The set design of a film can either be natural or created depending on the requirement of the shot or scene. The set can be similar to a particular place or created to resemble a particular place. Whether the set is real or constructed, it adds meaning to the narrative of a film and contributes to its overall dramatic impact.

The set design in a film is not just a background for the characters to act and deliver their dialogues. It is not essential that an action has to necessarily take place within the set. Sometimes no action within the frame can also bear deeper significance in the film's narrative.

Properties or props are objects that are used in the setting and are a part of the action of the film. Props are not placed by chance within the setting of a film. A director meticulously chooses the props that add to the meaning of the film and may sometimes serve as an important element of the film narrative.

The colour scheme of a set design also bears deeper resemblance about the characters within the film or the overall film as such. For example, the use of colour red for a psychopath killer's room may signify the inner state of mind of the killer, his anger, violence and aggression. The use of milder tones like grey for an elderly woman's room may signify her maturity, her calmness resulting from her age or her mellow nature. Selecting and arranging the elements of a set design lend a director total control over his art. A director can exhibit his or her creativity by designing a set that adds different layers of meanings to his or her film.

Lighting: Lighting is an important aspect of video production. Lighting helps in creating the mood and atmosphere of a film. In a film, lighting is much more than just an illumination to help audience see the action that unfolds in the film. It is much more than that. The use of appropriate lighting can add depth to the character of a film or the overall narrative of the film. Lighting helps to accentuate or highlight the personality of the characters within the film. Lighting may enhance or suppress form, draw attention to texture or even hide it. Lighting is an important element of composition in a film.

Lighting has four properties: 1) intensity, 2) colour quality, 3) dispersion and 4) direction. The intensity of light refers to the amount of light in a given area. The colour quality refers to the warmth or coolness of light. Dispersion refers to the hardness or softness of light. And finally, direction refers to the height and angle at which the lights are placed.

By controlling all these four properties of lighting, a director can convey the desired meanings about a character or the film narrative to its audience. For example, in many Ram Gopal Varma films, you will find that the director uses low-key lighting to add depth to a character or add meaning to the film narrative. In low-key lighting, the intensity of the fill light is reduced leading to large shadows. It creates a stark contrast between the lighter and darker parts of the subject or image. Low-key lighting is often used in thrillers and horror films to create the element of suspense, mystery and darkness. American film-maker Orson Welles of *Citizen Kane* fame was known for using low-key lighting in his films. *Touch of Evil* (1958) is one such film where Welles made extensive use of low-key lighting.

On the contrary, high-key lighting involves increasing the intensity of light to give brightness and softness to the frame. Musicals and comedies of the classic Hollywood age made use of high-key lighting. *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) is one such example.

Likeness, dispersion i.e. the hardness or softness of light can add different layers of meanings to a character. Hard lighting creates crisp edges around images whereas soft lighting creates a diffused illumination. Therefore depending on the portrayal of characters on screen, a director makes use of hard or soft lighting.

By controlling the direction of light, a director can set the mood and feel of a particular scene. The five primary types of directional lighting are frontal lighting, back lighting, side lighting, under lighting and top lighting. For example, the use of side lighting on a character illuminates one side of the character, leaving the other side dark and causes an object or character to cast sharp shadows. This can create an element of

suspense about feature or personality of a character. Likewise, back lighting illuminates an object only on the sides thereby creating a silhouette. The use of back lighting creates suspense about the character by not revealing his or her identity. To create fear or horror effect, under lighting is used by director. This means placing the light below the object. Under lighting tends to magnify the subject and gives an eerie feel. Any of the types of directional lighting or a combination can be used to create special effects within a film's frame.

By controlling the intensity, dispersion, direction and quality of lighting in a film, the director can influence the audience's understanding about the narrative of the film, the characters of the film or both. Proper lighting can emphasize shapes, textures, moods, time of the day and draw attention to an element or either suppresses it. This way lighting becomes an important element in creating the mise-en-scene of a film.

Costume: Costume design is a feature of all films. The primary purpose of costume designing is to dress an actor according to the characters he or she portrays on screen. Costumes are an important visual element in films. Costume designing serves many purposes in a film. It adds to the overall look and feel of films, may indicate a time-period, enhance the film's narrative, establish the social position of characters, establish hierarchy, imply the psychological disposition of characters etc.

For example, the romantic film *Pretty Woman* (1990) directed by Gary Marshall establishes a social order through costumes by portraying Julia Roberts as a prostitute in skimpy and revealing clothes and stockings. However, during the film itself, we see a transition in how she dresses and momentarily transforms into a classy, well-dressed woman. The costumes in this film are not just indicative of the societal hierarchy but also portray the inner desires of a woman to be loved and lead a fairytale life.

As mentioned above, costumes are indicative of the time period of a film. For example, Indian film *Bombay Velvet* (2015) directed by Anurag Kashyap portrays Bombay of the 1960s. Hence, the costumes of the film were designed to fit the look of the 1960s. Double-breasted

suits and jackets, short ties, hats, feathers, polka dotted dresses etc made up for the look of the film. In this sense, the costume played an important role in depicting the time period of the film.

Composition: It refers to the organization of characters, objects and space within the frame. Usually a director aims at achieving balance of symmetry while deciding the composition of a frame. Balance of symmetry is achieved by having light, colour and objects equally distributed in a shot. However, at certain times, the director may purposefully use an unbalanced composition. This is done when the director wants to emphasize certain elements of a film for the viewers to pay more attention to. Unbalanced composition easily draws attention of the viewers towards it.

Space is an important element that affects the reading of a film. By means of camera placement, lenses, lighting and set design, the depth, proximity and proportions of elements within the frame can be manipulated effectively. This representation of space determines the mood or relationships between the different elements in the frame or the story.

There are different ways of representation of space. Frontality is one such technique where the character directly faces the camera. It gives a feeling to the viewers as if the character is looking right at them or directly addressing them. Deep space is a technique used to emphasize that there are important components both close to and far from the camera. Deep space is generally used to indicate the space or distance between the character and his goal or the hurdles that exist between them. The opposite of deep space is shallow space. Shallow space makes the character appear flat or two dimensional primarily because of the lack of depth in the frame. Similarly, offscreen space refers to the space that is physically not present in the frame. It gives a feeling to the viewers that something exists outside the frame either through a character's response to someone offscreen or an offscreen sound.

Staging and Acting: Staging refers to the movement and performance of a film. The expression and movement of figures within a film are

vital to a film's narrative. Figure expressions refer to the facial expression and posture of a character. Figure movement, on the other hand, refers to the actions of a character including the gestures. An actor's expression and a director's control over an actor's movement are crucial for a film. Both the expressions and the movement must support the thematic element of the film. An actor's acting is supposed to complement the message of the film.

7.5.3 Sound

Sound also constitutes an important part of film language. Sound includes all sound materials in a film – dialogue, natural sound of the film's action environment, music and all sounds internally related to the film etc. In technical terms, it is called a 'mix'. A mix is a final product of all the sounds in the film as they are synchronized with the images on screen. So when we talk of sound, it doesn't simply imply the music but all other sounds such as dialogue of the characters, ambient sound and all other sounds used in a film. All sounds in a film are signals that contain meanings.

Film theorist Christian Metz identified five channels of information in a film – 1) the visuals 2) print and other graphics, 3) speech, 4) music and 5) noise or sound effects (environmental sound). If you examine these five channels in the manner they communicate, you will find that only two of them are continuous. The visuals and the noise of sound effects are continuous in a film. The other three channels of information i.e. print and other graphics, speech and music are intermittent or irregular. They are switched on and off and used only in certain parts of the film as required. In fact, it is easy to conceive a film without print, speech or music.

The two continuous channels communicate in separate ways. We 'read' images by means of directing our attention to it, but we do not read sound in the same conscious manner as we read images. Thus sound is omnipresent and omni-directional. It is so pervasive that we often tend to discount or ignore it. The most attractive quality of sound is its

pervasiveness. It acts to realize both time and space. Sound becomes crucial in creation of a locale. Images naturally receive more conscious attention. Speech and music also receive attention because they convey specific meanings. But the use of sound effects is paramount because this is where the real construction of the sound environment takes place. Alfred Hitchcock's movie *The Birds* (1961) is a good example of a film where the sound draws significance without any music. The sound of attacking birds heard throughout the movie was essential to the theme or subject of the movie. The soundtrack was composed electronically and used whenever required in the film. Much like music in a film, the use of sound in the movie was to signify the emotional and psychological state expressed by the character on screen and invoke the same emotions in the viewers.

In the movie *The Birds* (1961), Hitchcock uses a sound of fluttering gull wings in a scene where the protagonist is trapped inside a telephone booth. The sound used was the thumps of birds smashing against the glass of the booth. The sound was used to create anxiety and fear among the viewers.

Sound can be primarily of two types – synchronous and asynchronous. Sound which has its source within the frame is called synchronous sound. An editor must work to synchronize it. Asynchronous sound refers to the sound that comes from outside the frame. A combination of these two gives us parallel sound and contrapuntal sound. Parallel sound is actual sound. It is synchronous and connected with the image. Contrapuntal sound is commentative. It is asynchronous and is opposed to or in counterpoint with the image. Whether we are dealing with speech, music or sound effects, all three are at times parallel or contrapuntal, actual or commentative, synchronous or asynchronous.

7.5.4 Montage

Montage is a term of European origin. In the United States, the act of putting together the shots of a film is called 'editing' or 'cutting'. In Europe, it is called 'montage'. While the American term of 'editing' or 'cutting' suggests a trimming process, the European term 'montage'

suggests an action of building by working up from the raw material. The concept of montage poses a film as being constructed rather than being edited.

‘Montage’ is derived from the French word ‘monter’ that means mounting or putting together. Montage is a technique of editing. In simple words, montage is a technique of film editing in which a number of short shots are edited to form a sequence that condenses time, space and information. It is a technique of placing together different fragment of shots to form a continuous whole. In this technique, shots are placed in succession to illustrate an association of ideas. When several separate shots are juxtaposed to create a meaning, it may be termed as a montage. It is considered as a dialectical process that creates a third meaning out of the original two meanings of the adjacent shots. A montage may be used to communicate enough information in a short time.

Example of montage: *Citizen Kane* (1941) is an American mystery drama directed by Orson Welles. The movie has a number of montages to depict the protagonist’s Kane’s disintegrating relationship with his two wives. There is a montage in the movie, where Kane is arguing with his wife Susan who is shown working on a puzzle. The shot transitions to a few years later and shows the couple still arguing as Susan still works on a puzzle. In a brief duration of two minutes, the movie shows the prolonged unhappiness in their relationship and its escalation over time. This montage depicts the passage of time and character progression.

The concept of montage is perhaps the principle contribution of Russian film theorists to world cinema. The Soviet montage theory attempts at understanding and creating cinema that relies heavily upon editing. Although film theorist Lev Kuleshov is considered the father of the Soviet montage, it was Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein who introduced montage to cinema. He considered montage as the essence of cinema. Eisenstein's concept of montage was the collision of elements rather than linkage. His idea behind montage was that shots

should not be seen as linked, but rather as conflicting with one another. The resulting conflict is intended to create new ideas in the audience. He saw montage as a technique to create new realities.

In his essay “A Dialectic Approach to Film Form”, Eisenstein noted that montage is the ‘nerve of cinema’. He believed that the use of montage can aid in manipulating time, space and information to create and convey new meanings. According to Eisenstein, this could be achieved not just by linking images together but through juxtaposition or combination of shots.

Eisenstein argued that editing represented the juxtaposition of shots and the collision of two adjoining images to create a third independent entity. He believed that the human mind is capable of subconsciously associating images one with another to produce a unified effect. He saw the technique of montage as a means of eliciting responses from the audience.

Eisenstein classified montage into four types.

1. Metric montage,
2. Rhythmic montage,
3. Tonal montage; and
4. Overtonal montage

Metric montage is a type where shots are joined together according to their length. The absolute length of the piece is already determined. As the tension builds on in the scene, the shots may get progressively shorter. However, although the shot length gets shorter, they remain the same in proportion to each other. In this type of montage, the content is determined by the absolute length of the sequence.

Rhythmic montage is one where the action within the frame is given as much weightage as the physical length of each shot. Tension is generated when the rhythm of the montage comes to a conflict with the rhythm of the movement or action within the frame. Eisenstein’s *The Battleship Potemkin* (1925) has a rhythmic montage in the popular Odessa step scene. The scene shows boots of soldiers marching down stone steps to the protestors gathered below. The motion of boots

stepping down creates a rhythm that lends power to the soldiers who later empower the victims in a shootout.

Tonal montage is directed by the emotional tone of the sequence. This type of montage juxtaposes shots that connect to the cognitive reactions of the audience. For example, an editor may show shots of blooming flowers, bees around flowers, waterfalls after the female protagonist of the film realises that she is in love.

Overtonal montage is a type of montage that combines metric, rhythmic and tonal montage. Hence more than one type of montage occurs simultaneously to create meanings.

7.6 SUMMING UP

- Film language is a part of human language. Much like human language that makes use of words, films also use signs and symbols to communicate meanings.
- Film language is a combination of three things primarily – visual imagery, written or oral discourse and sound, either natural or artificial or both.
- The force of films, however, lies in its visual imagery. Along with visuals, the sound of a film also constitutes an integral part of a film's language.
- In order to understand a film, one must understand the signs and syntax employed by the filmmaker in the film.
- Signs are those elements that signify certain things. A sign may be a word, an image, an object or any practice associated with a culture. The study of signs is known as semiotics. Film semiotics attempts to study the social and cultural meanings of signs and codes.
- A sign has two parts – the signifier and the signified. It is the relationship between the signifier and the signified that determines the meanings of signs.

- A 'signifier' is a word, symbol, drawing, object or any form of representation and 'signified' is the idea or thing that the signifier represents or the implied meaning.
- While in literature there is a difference between the signifier and the signified, in film studies, the difference does not arise. Film language consists of short circuit signs in which the signifier is similar to the signified.
- Usually just like the word is the smallest semantic unit in any language, a shot is considered as the smallest semantic unit in films. However, film semioticians deem that it is difficult to consider a shot as the smallest unit because it consists of several frames and each frame presents an infinite amount of visual information.
- Film presents its viewers with a language that depends on a continuous, non-discrete system which defies a basic unit and thus cannot be described quantitatively.
- While films communicate meanings in different ways, every individual perceives and identifies visual images differently in different cultures. This is what is termed as the physiology of perception.
- Different individuals read and perceive an image in more or less three different ways: physiologically, ethnographically and psychologically.
- Films in general convey two types of meanings – denotative and connotative. As the name implies, denotative meanings refer to the actual or literal meaning of an image. Connotative meanings are not literal but rather suggestive. They are derived from the positive and negative associations that a word or image carries with it.
- In a film, denotation is the first order of signification and connotation is the second order of signification.
- Denotative meanings are the ones that audience see and hear on screen. Connotative meanings are those which cannot be seen

on screen. They are suggestive meanings which are culturally encoded to the first order of literal or denotative meaning.

- It is both the denotative and connotative meanings that make for a film language.
- Connotative meanings in a film can be further divided into two types –paradigmatic and syntagmatic.
- *Paradigmatic* connotation refers to the connotative meanings that viewers attach to an image based on their own experience of various objects in the image and the resultant associations that we do not see on screen.
- *Syntagmatic* connotation stem from comparing a shot with actual shots that precede or follow a shot. Therefore *syntagmatic* connotation of a shot would be derived by comparing it with other shots that we actually see on screen.
- The paradigmatic and syntagmatic meanings are vital for understanding a film.
- Syntax refers to the systematic arrangement of a film. It comprises of what is known as the grammar of a film.
- Film syntax does not just include the linear aspect of construction of a film but also deals with spatial compositions. So it basically includes developments in both time and space.
- Film syntax can be studied under four categories – codes, mise-en-scene, sound and montage.
- Codes define the structure of a cinema. Codes are by and large a cultural and social phenomenon. There are primarily three types of codes - culturally derived codes, Shared codes with other art forms (such as gesture that is common to theatre) and unique codes those are peculiar to cinema such as the montage.
- All films contain codes and their interpretation leads to decodification. Both the culturally derived codes and the shared codes are vital to cinema. However, it is the unique codes that form the specific syntax of film. It is these codes that bring out the meaning of a film.

- Mise-en-scene is a French term that means ‘to put on stage’. Originally a theatre term meaning ‘staging’, it has crossed over to film production practices involved in the framing of shots and everything that appears in the framing of the shot- actors, costume, décor, lighting, props etc. The term refers to everything that appears before the camera and its arrangement. It basically suggests the director’s control over the visual elements within the film. Mise-en-scene refers to the overall look and visual design of a film. So, mise-en-scene essentially connotes two things- firstly, the setting, costume and lighting of a film and secondly, the movement within the frame. Mise-en-scene is an expressive tool at the film-makers disposal. It is an essential part of a director’s creative art and aids in setting the mood of the film.
- Sound constitutes an important part of film language. Sound includes all sound materials in a film – dialogue, natural sound of the film’s action environment, music and all sounds internally related to the film etc. All sounds in a film are signals that contain meanings. Sound is omni-present and omni-directional. It is so pervasive that we often tend to discount it. Sound can be synchronous or asynchronous. Synchronous sound refers to the sound which has its source within the frame. Asynchronous sound refers to the sound that comes from outside the frame.
- A combination of synchronous and asynchronous sound gives us parallel sound and contrapuntal sound. Parallel sound is actual sound whereas contrapuntal sound is commentative.
- Montage is a French word for “putting together”. The term is of European origin and is a technique employed in film editing. It is considered as a dialectical process that creates a third meaning out of the original two meanings of the adjacent shots. By way of montage, a number of short shots are juxtaposed to

communicate enough information in a short time. This technique can be used to condense time, space and information.

7.7 QUESTIONS

1. What do you mean by film language?
2. What is semiotics?
3. What is the difference between the two parts of sign – signifier and signified?
4. Why is it difficult to identify a shot as the basic unit of meaning in a film?
5. Why is the process of perception referred to as a mental and physical process?
6. What are the three different ways in which individuals read and perceive a film image?
7. What is film syntax?
8. What are the three types of codes that give meaning to a film?
9. Define Mise-en-scene? What are the different elements of mise-en-scene?
10. What is a montage?
11. Who is known as the ‘father of montage’?
12. Name the four types of montage propounded by Eisenstein.

7.8 REFERENCE AND RECOMMENDED READINGS

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UNIT 8 : FILM NARRATIVE

UNIT STRUCTURE

- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Objective
- 8.3 Narrative – Fictional and Non-fictional
- 8.4 Significance of Narrative
- 8.5 Elements of a Narrative
- 8.6 Narrative Structure
 - 8.6.1 Three-act structure
 - 8.6.2 Four-act structure
 - 8.6.3 Deviant plot structure
- 8.7 Story and Plot
 - 8.7.1 Principles of Plot Construction
 - 8.7.1.1 Selection and Omission of details
 - 8.7.1.2 Principle of Causality
 - 8.7.1.3 Sub-plots
- 8.8 Summing up
- 8.9 Questions
- 8.10 References and Recommended Readings

8.1 INTRODUCTION

After going through Unit VII, you now have an idea of film language. As discussed in the previous unit, films also have a language of their own and this is expressed through different signs and syntax that the filmmakers employ for meaning making. The study of film signs is known as semiotics.

In this Unit, you will learn about film narrative. Narrative, in the most generic sense, refers to a film's storyline. This Unit will give you an understanding about the significance of a film narrative, the elements of a film narrative, different narrative structures, the difference between a story and a plot and the principles of plot construction. Although all this

may sound a little difficult, let us try to discuss each of these one at a time.

8.2 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to-

- Explain a film narrative and its significance
- Discuss the structural elements of a narrative
- Differentiate between story and plot
- Discuss the different principles of plot construction

8.3 NARRATIVE- FICTIONAL AND NON-FICTIONAL

The term narrative is used to refer to the storyline in a film. It is a sequence of events placed in a manner that conveys meanings. A narrative is a story or account of events or experiences. A narrative may be based on a true event or be completely fictitious. Narrative is an important element of a film. It refers to the art of storytelling. A narrative is an account of a string of events occurring in a particular space and time. Narrative is a universal human activity since stories are found in all cultures.

Like novels, plays and television shows, films are also driven by a narrative. Although storytelling was not there from the beginning of films, it came very early. The early films focused on documentary subjects or actualities like a train coming into a station, workers leaving a factory etc. One of the first films that used film as a storytelling medium is *The Gardener Gets Watered* (1895). This short film is based on a gardener watering a lawn and how he is tormented by a mischievous boy who stamps on the pipe resulting in water on his face. What follows is retaliation by the gardener who chases the boy and spanks him. This short film had a basic design of a narrative with a clear beginning and a clear end.

A film narrative can be both fictional and non-fictional. Fictional narrative refers to any film story which is essentially imaginary. Non-fictional narratives are based on true stories of persons or events.

8.3.1 The Emergence of Narrative Film

Narratives appeared in films as early as the beginning of the twentieth century. However, they co-existed with a vast amount of nonfiction film material. Despite this, the narrative films became a dominant category owing to the public's enthusiastic acceptance. The nickelodeon boom indicated an explosion of popular interest in the movies. This boom challenged producers to organize film production in a systematic manner. While documentary film-makers had to wait for an interesting event to occur to make a film, narrative film-making enabled film-makers to produce films in an orderly fashion as and when required. Production did not have to wait for unpredictable current events as stories could be written as fast as films were needed.

D.W. Griffith perfected the technique of motion picture narrative. His understanding of the principles of film structure and methods of cinematic storytelling was sophisticated, as was seen in his *Birth of a Nation* (1915).

8.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF NARRATIVE

As stated above, narrative is a universal human activity. Since every culture have their different and unique stories, narratives also differ from culture to culture. While some cultures such as the industrialized western societies tell narratives for entertainment, many other cultures use narrative as a primary means for socialization and transmission of social values. Narratives are a universal cultural expression because it is a fundamental human way of thinking.

It is because of the universality of narratives that many writers believe that it constitutes an essential method employed by human beings to think about their world. Narrative is a fundamental human way of thinking and therefore it qualifies to be a universal cultural expression.

Such is the significance of a narrative that it is found in a variety of disciplines. Narrative is a basic mode of explanation in history. In the discipline of psychology, Freudian psychoanalysis is essentially a narrative mode where a person or a patient is invited by a psychoanalyst to construct the story of his or her life.

8.5 ELEMENTS OF NARRATIVE

All narratives have a time-based or temporal dimension. A narrative presumes the existence of a real or implied narrator, a point of view from which the story is told and an audience for whom the story is told. These elements are common for both fictional and non-fictional narratives. However, fictional narratives have an additional characteristic which is referred to as the 'fictive stance'. Coined by Peter Lamarque, the fictive stance refers to the agreement that narrator and audience confer on a tale as being fictive. Because of this fictive stance, the audience may not agree to give the fictional narrative the same factual weight as it would to be a non-fictional narrative. The fictive stance gives an advantage to the film-maker who is not limited by the need to be truthful to its audience as the audience has already agreed upon to take the narrative as fiction. The fictive stance refers to the make-believe world that the audiences agree to enter upon.

Be it fictional or non-fictional narratives both have three fundamental characteristics.

- Contract between the audience and the narrator which is decisive of how the audience evaluates the tale.
- A story and a plot
- A narrator and a narrative point of view.

8.6 NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

A narrative structure refers to the framework or the formula that filmmakers employ to tell or unfold the narrative. The most common narrative structure is usually identified as the classical Hollywood

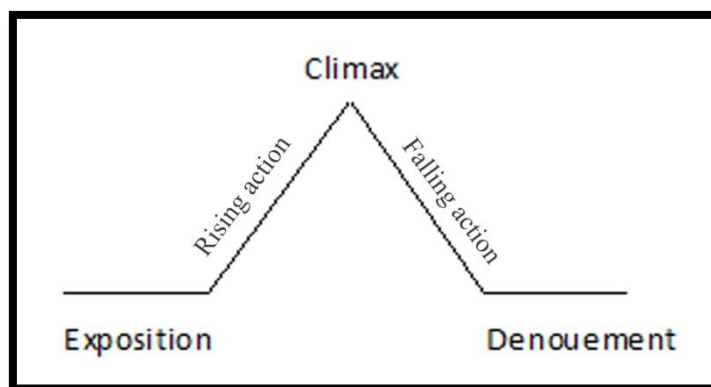
narrative structure. Some art films may, however, deviate from the classical Hollywood narrative structure.

8.6.1 Three-act structure

The most standard pattern that shapes a film is the three-act structure. This three-act structure sticks to the following pattern of presenting the story.

- Act one: Exposition leading to a turning point
- Act two: Complications leading to climax
- Act three: Action leading to resolution or denouement

In the three-act structure, Act one introduces the character, goals and conflicts and ends with a turning point. Referred to as exposition, it is the opening of the film with dense narrative details. In Act two there is a major change in the situation. The conflicts increase and leads to a major turning point known as the climax. The third Act is denouement which refers to a series of events that resolves the conflict, though not always on a happy note. The third Act eventually leads to the film's closure with no unanswered questions left.



Figure

8.1

: Three-act narrative structure

8.6.2 Four-act structure

While the three-act structure is the usual norm, film scholar Kristin Thompson has argued that films – both classical and contemporary –

exhibit a four-act structure. According to her, the four-act structure has the following narrative pattern.

- Act one: Exposition leading to a turning point
- Act two: Complicating action leading to a major turning point at halfway mark
- Act three: Development and climax
- Act four: Resolution and epilogue

In this four-act structure, the first act is that of exposition or introduction leading to a turning point. This is followed by Act two which entails some complicating action which marks a central turning point in the story. The third Act is where some developments take place and the protagonist struggles towards achieving his goals. This leads to the climax. This is followed by the fourth Act which brings a resolution to the conflict and finally the epilogue.

8.6.3 Deviant Plot Structure

As the term signifies, a deviant plot structure is a narrative which fails to conform to viewer's expectations. While watching a film, viewers have certain expectations regarding what is proper or permissible. A deviant plot structure is a narrative that strays away on a different route in terms of design and organization thereby not conforming to viewer's expectation regarding the same.

A good example of a deviant plot structure is Howard Hawk's *Red River* (1948). The plot portrays Tom Dunson who leads his cattle on a perilous trek. He is assisted by his adopted son Matthew Garth. During the trek, Dunson becomes a borderline psychopath and tyrannical and prevents cowboys from quitting the drive. He threatens to hang those who wish to quit. The men eventually revolt after being unable to bear his obsessive behavior. Duncon's adopted son Matthew Garth leaves Dunson behind and takes the herd with him. His obsessive father threatens to kill him.

The film moves in a traditional Western genre fashion. Characteristically American in nature, western films are all about the untamed and expansive American frontiers and the borderline between civilization and wilderness. Such films are set in the frontier West that existed in North America before the process of civilizing took place (Read Unit IV to know more about Western films). Like all Western films, it is expected that the *Red River* would also climax with a gunfight. But because of the deviant plot structure, the gunfight never takes place. Instead of a gunfight, the film climaxes with the father confronting the son leading to a comical fistfight between the two and eventually reconciliation between them. The original screenplay by Borden Chase ends with Mathew killing Dunson and the film's plot ending on a tragic note. However, Howard Hawks deviates from the original screenplay. Instead of gunfight, he adds comedy and ends the film's plot on a happy note. The unexpected turn of events is referred to as deviant plot structure.

8.7 STORY AND PLOT

A narrative is made up of two elements - 1) a story, the content, the chain of events and characters and 2) a discourse (plot). In simple words, the story is the 'what' in a narrative and the discourse is 'how' the content of a film is communicated.

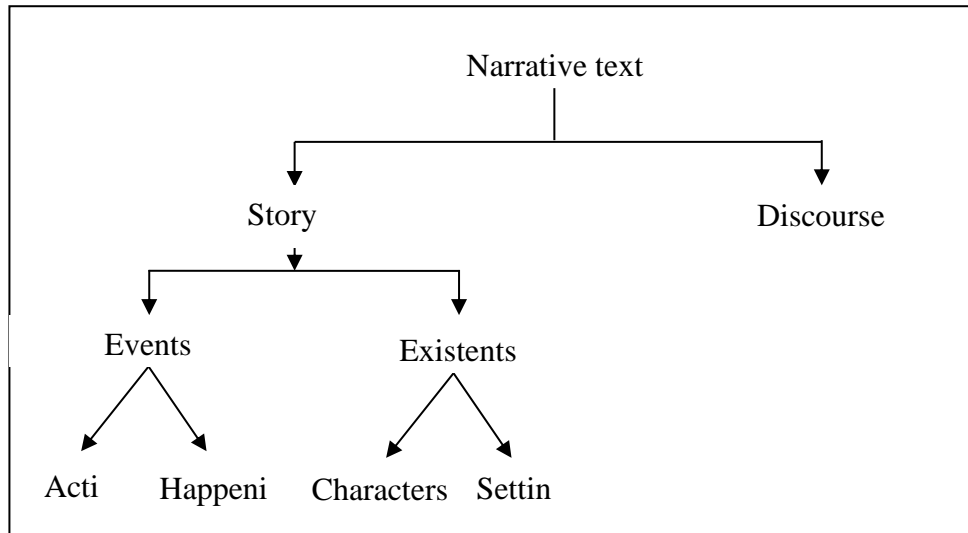


Figure 8.2 : Elements of a Narrative (Chatman, 1980. Pg 19)

The Russian formalists used two terms- *Fabula* and *Sjuzet*. In Russian, *fabula* means ‘story’ and *Sjuzet* means the ‘plot’ of a narrative. The *fabula* is the sum total of events related in the narrative. The manner in which the story is being told by linking the events together is called the *Sjuzet*.

Story (*fabula*) and Plot (*sjuzet*) are two important characteristics of any narrative. While both the terms may appear synonymous, they do not mean the same thing. Story and plot are quite different from each other. Let us first understand the difference between the two.

A *fabula* or story refers to the chronological order or sequence of events of the narrative. A *sjuzet* or plot, on the other hand, refers to the representation of these events or the order in which the events are told.

Story is the larger set of events some of which may not be directly portrayed in the narrative. A story may present infinite number of possibilities and understanding the struggle of the characters as the story progresses. This means that the story of a film is not just the events that audiences see on screen but also those events that do not appear on screen. Plot refers to the directly shown events in a film. It indicates the Who, What, When, Where, How and Why of the narrative. Plot is a highly organized structure composed of non-arbitrary and non-accidental sequencing of events. In simple words, while plot refers to the concrete events of the story, a story refers to the abstract meaning

behind the plot. The plot is the main thread of the story composed of concrete events of the story also called the narrative. It is the plot which combines the events of a story.

Let us discuss the difference between a story and plot with the help of an example. Sujoy Ghosh's mystery thriller *Kahaani* (2012) is the story of a woman who comes from London to Kolkata to avenge her husband's death. The story has a number of layers of woman and explores the themes of feminism and male-dominated Indian society. In terms of plot, the film is about a pregnant woman who comes looking for her missing husband in Kolkata. As the story unfolds, we find that there exist no records of her husband in the city- neither in the hotel where he stayed nor the company where he had supposedly come for an assignment. The plot shows how she, in her quest for her missing husband, is helped by a local police officer of the city. The story gets entangled when people involved in the interrogation gets murdered. It is only in the end that the viewers find that the woman had actually come not looking for her missing husband but to avenge the death of her husband who was killed in a poison gas attack in a Kolkata metro rail compartment. The attack was carried out by her dead husband's colleague. The plot leaves the viewers amused by showing that the woman had faked her pregnancy, faked her identity as well her husband's identity and was actually in the lookout for the person who was behind the attack. So while the story sounds quite simple, the plot or the way in which the events have been presented adds to the appeal of the film.

The above film is an example of a story and a plot that does not seem to match up pretty closely. However, there may be films where the story and plot are almost similar. At times, a filmmaker may choose not to structure the plot of the film in the exact linear fashion of the occurrence of events and may use back to front and front to back style of storytelling.

In simple words, we may conclude that while a story is a chronological order of events as they occur, a plot refers to how these events are

structured and presented to tell the story. This implies that a plot may correspond to the story by sequencing the events in a linear, chronological pattern as it occurred or a plot may not correspond to a story by scrambling up the events and presenting them in a non-chronological manner.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What is the difference between a story and a plot?-

8.7.1 Principles of Plot Construction

In simple terms, a plot is the way in which a film is organized. It is an organized structure of non-arbitrary and purposeful sequencing of events. The construction of a plot follows laws of organization peculiar to the type of story being told. A film's narrative has a clear shape and sequence and this is achieved by a film-maker by employing three principles.

- Selection and Omission of detail
- Principle of Causality; and
- Subplots

Let us discuss these three principles at length.

8.7.1.1 Selection and Omission of detail

A film narrative is constructed through the careful arrangement of events. This implies that a film-maker employs the technique of selection and omission of details to arrange the narrative. As evident in films, not all events need to be included in the plot. Many events can be implied in the story instead of including them in the plot. This means

that while constructing a plot, there is a deliberate selection and omission of detail. While some events are included, few others are left out. For example, in case of mystery, thrillers or suspense films, a film-maker may choose to deliberately withhold some events from the audience for revelation at some other point of time during the course of the film. Withholding of any detail is an effective narrative principle as it invites audience's participation. Audiences tend to engage in the film by filling in the missing information withheld by the film-maker in order to make sense of the story being told.

The principle of selection and omission of details occurs at two levels:

- Micro level; and
- Macro level.

Small or micro-level selection and omission of details refers to omitting, compressing or leaving out tiny bits of information for effectively speeding up the story. Sometimes a film-maker makes deliberate use of jump-cut to omit a bit of action. This makes the event on screen seem to jump in way that creates deliberate discontinuity. Micro-level selection or omissions of events do not usually pose interpretational problems for the audience. For example, if a character is leaving office to go home, it is not essential to show the character exiting the door, opening the car door, starting the engine etc. All viewers need to see is a shot or a dialogue that established the destination. Micro-level is a standard kind of selection and omission of a narrative that is fundamental to making of a film.

Macro level of selection and omission refers to omission of key scenes that delays giving important information to viewers in order to understand the story. At the macro level, selection and omission of details may pose interpretational problems for the viewers by making it difficult for them to understand the story.

8.7.1.2 Principle of Causality

The second principle of plot construction is causality. In films, a plot is not randomly constructed. Rather, a plot structures events in a way that gives the film a clear sense of direction. A film story moves in a certain direction giving the viewers an understanding of how the story will unfold and reach a conclusion. One event in a story causes or leads to the other. This is what is called causality. The relationship between something that happens and the thing that causes it is referred to as causality.

Causality may be of two types: 1) Explicit and 2) Implicit.

In most of the films, we get to see that the plot is tightly constructed with events placed one after the other in a strong causal sequence. This is called explicit causality. Explicit causality demonstrates a highly organized and directional plot structure. Events within the film's story are linked to each other in a chain or highly organized manner. The plots of such films are goal-oriented and give a clear sense of direction to viewers.

For example, John Ford's *The Searchers* (1956) illustrates explicit causality as it is goal-oriented with highly motivated action. There is a sense of order in the film and the narrative is not loosely organized. The film is a story of a middle-aged Civil War veteran who spends years looking for his niece abducted by the Indians. The film has a proper goal of the protagonist trying to rescue his niece which later changes to destroying her when he comes to know that his niece lives among the Indians as a member of their culture. He, however, forgives her and honours his original quest of returning his niece to the white society of Texas settlers.

On the other hand, in many films we see that the plot is open-ended and loosely constructed. There is a limited sense of direction in such plots and the causality is minimal. This is called implicit causality. Films with loosely organized sequences and void of a sense of direction would demonstrate implicit causality.

For example, John Sayles' *City of Hope* (1991) is a film which illustrates implicit causality. The story is not goal-oriented and does not delve into the psychology of the central characters. Unlike *The Searchers*, the story of this film cannot be easily summarized. This is because the narrative events are not tightly tied and the narrative focuses on many characters instead of one central character.

8.7.1.3 Sub-Plots

Sub plots are a fundamental narrative element and constitute the third principle of plot construction. It refers to those elements in a film's narrative that distract a viewer's attention from the main chain of events. Sub-plots may draw a viewer's attention to minor characters or a secondary episode that may not be highly vital for a film. Filmmakers often employ sub-plots to deliberately divert viewer's attention for a brief period of time. Sub-plots are woven into the principle sequence of the narrative. The use of sub-plots to divert the attention of viewers is called digressive sub-plots. These digressive sub-plots are vital as they add a texture to the story.

A film audience desires or expects two key things from a film. Firstly, that the narrative reaches a satisfying conclusion and secondly, that the narrative as a source of pleasure does not come to an end. The conflict between these two desires requires the use of digressive sub-plots as a means of extending the narrative and not letting it end too soon. A film with a strong chain of narrative has less digressive plots compared to a film with a weak chain of narrative events.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What is the difference between implicit causality and explicit causality? _____

2. What is the necessity of a digressive sub plot in a film's narrative? _____

8.8 SUMMING UP

- Narrative is an important element of a film. It is a story or account of events or experiences. It is the art of storytelling.
- Narrative is a string of events occurring in a particular space and time.
- A film narrative can be both fictional and non-fictional.
- Fictional narrative refers to any film story which is essentially imaginary. Non-fictional narratives are based on true stories of persons or events.
- Narratives appeared in films as early as the beginning of the twentieth century.
- Despite their co-existence with the non-fiction category, narrative films became a dominant category owing to the public's enthusiastic acceptance.
- Narratives are found in all cultures and they differ from culture to culture.
- Narratives are a universal cultural expression because it is a fundamental human way of thinking.
- Narratives draw significance as it is a fundamental human way of thinking and therefore it qualifies to be a universal cultural expression.
- A narrative presumes the existence of a real or implied narrator, a point of view from which the story is told and an audience for whom the story is told. These elements are common for both fictional and non-fictional narratives.
- Both fictional and non-fictional narratives have three common characteristics: Be it fictional or non-fictional narratives both have three fundamental characteristics 1) contract between the audience and the narrator which is decisive of how the audience evaluates the tale, 2) a story and a plot and c) a narrator and a narrative point of view.

- A narrative has essentially two parts: 1) a story, the content, the chain of events and characters and 2) a discourse also called plot.
- A narrative may follow a three-act or four-act narrative structure. The three-act structure consists of exposition, climax and denouement. The four-act structure consists of exposition, complicating action leading to a major turning point at halfway mark, development and climax and finally resolution and epilogue.
- In order to appeal to the audience, plots often conform to a deviant plot structure. Deviant plot structure refers to a narrative which fails to conform to viewer's expectations. This means that a narrative which was expected to end in a particular manner ends up in a different manner much against the expectation of the audience.
- Story and plot are two important elements of a narrative. Although they appear to be synonymous, they are actually not the same
- The Russian formalists used two terms- *Fabula* and *Sjuzet* to mean 'story' and 'plot' of a narrative. While the *fabula* is the sum total of events related in the narrative, *Sjuzet* is manner in which the story is being told by linking the events together.
- While story is the larger set of events, plot refers to the directly shown events in a film. A story is the chronological order of events in a narrative. Plot, on the other hand, is the representation of these events or the way in which a film is organized.
- In terms of plot construction, there are three main principles: 1) selection and omission of detail, 2) principle of causality and 3) subplots
- A film narrative is constructed through the careful arrangement of events which entails selection and omission of details by the

filmmaker. The inclusion and exclusion of details happen at two levels: micro level and macro level.

- Micro-level selection and omission of details refers to omitting, compressing or leaving out tiny bits of information for effectively speeding up the story.
- Macro-level of selection and omission refers to omission of key scenes that delays giving important information to viewers in order to negotiate the story.
- The second principle of plot construction is causality. A plot is not randomly constructed. Rather, a plot structures events in a way that gives the film a clear sense of direction. The relationship between something that happens and the thing that causes it is referred to as causality.
- Causality may be of two types: 1) Explicit and 2) Implicit.
- Explicit causality refers to those plots which are tightly constructed with events placed one after the other in a strong causal sequence.
- Plots which are open-ended and loosely constructed with a limited sense of direction minimal causality are referred to as implicit causality.
- Sub plots constitute the third principle of plot construction. Sub-plots refer to those elements in a film's narrative that distract a viewer's attention from the main chain of events.
- A digressive sub-plot is one which digress the attention of the viewers. It is essential in terms of meeting the viewer's expectation of a satisfactory ending yet retaining the pleasure of a narrative by not letting it end too soon.

8.9 QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between fictional and non-fictional film narrative?

2. What are the three fundamental characteristics of a narrative?
3. What is the three-act and four-act narrative structure?
4. Name the three principle of plot construction.
5. What is the difference between implicit causality and explicit causality?
6. What are sub-plots?

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