

Indian parallel cinema essay



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While Indian Cinema known as Bollywood was thriving in the 1950s, the film industry also saw the emergence of a new Parallel Cinema movement. A group of film-makers broke with the past traditions and made exciting, experimental and innovating films (Gupta 11). Indian Parallel Cinema is a specific genre of Indian cinema which is known for its serious content, realism and naturalism, which reflected social and politics during those times (Gupta 14). Indian parallel cinema represents a change of direction or a break with the traditional Indian cinema.

Early examples of Hindi films in this movement include Chetan Anand's *Neecha Nagar* (1946) and Bimal Roy's *Two Acres of Land* (1953). Their critical acclaim, as well as the commercial success, created a way for Indian neo realism called as Indian Parallel Cinema (Kabir 53). Some of the internationally-acclaimed Bollywood filmmakers involved in the movement included Mani Kaul, Kumar Shahani, Ketan Mehta, Govind Nihalani, Shyam Benegal and Vijaya Mehta.

This Parallel Cinema movement takes off in three areas of the country: the Malayalam speaking southernmost state of Kerala, West Bengal in the east and in to an extant in the southern state of Karnataka. The Indian Parallel Cinema is influenced from Italian Neo-Realism and French Parallel Cinema which were taking place during the same time. It is also influenced from the literature of India. The Parallel Cinema was a cinema by intellectuals and for the intellectuals who were frustrated with the mindless song-dance dramas made typically in Bollywood films (Gupta 21).

They wanted to break the film industry boundaries and do things differently and they did. They wanted to capture India in its true color, no space for nonhuman heroism, no melodrama to make the script sell, moving away from the stereotype that large budget, big star movies are the one's which are good to see (Gupta 18). They wanted to translate their personal preoccupations into films that are proud of their local roots and ethos. They wanted the films to portray serious content, realism, and naturalism. It was truly regional portray of conflicts between low, middle, and rich classes in the best sense (Kabir 53).

Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, V. Shantaram, Chetan Anand and Bimal Roy were the ones who started this movement, back in the 1940s. Kumar Shahani, Mani Kaul, Saeed Mirza, Shyam Benegal and Ketan Mehta were the important names of Parallel Cinema (Kabir 45). Mani Kaul's *Ashad's Ek Din* (1971) and *Duvidha* (1973), Kumar Shahni's *Maya Darpan* (1972) and Shyam Benegal's *Ankur* (1973) played important role in this new movement during the 1970s. Saeed Mizra made famous political films like *Arvind Desai ki Ajeeb Dastan* (1978), *Albert Pinto ko Gussa Kyon Aata Hai* (1980), *Mohan Joshi Haazir Ho!* (1984) and *Salim Langde Pe Mat Ro* (1989) (Kabir 47).

Adoor Gopalakrishnan through *Swayamvaram* (1972) extended the Parallel Cinema Cinema to Malayalam cinema. Aravindan through his first film *Uttarayanam* (1974) strengthened the movement. John Abraham, K R Mohanan and P A Backer were strong presence of the new Malayalam cinema. Kannada was the other film industry in South India, which took over the cinema movement in South India. B V Karanth, Girish Karnad and Girish Kasaravalli started the Kannada parallel cinema (Gupta 45). Girish

Kasaravalli, directed his first film, Ghata Shradha in 1977, which won the National award for best film.

In Assam, Janu Barua made his first film Aparoop (1982). His Halodhia Choraye Baodhan Kali (1987), which achieved international recognition, dealt with social problems of rural Assam state. Indian parallel cinema is distinct from the traditional Bollywood cinema in many perspectives. Moreover Parallel Cinema directors functioned as a group, they worked together, exchanging ideas, screenplays, technicians and even actors. This collaboration certainly helps explain some common characteristics in the films that were, and still are, associated with the Parallel Cinema (Gupta 25).

This parallelism to the mainstream cinema (Bollywood) was the reason for the origin of the term Parallel cinema (Kabir 62). Parallel cinema was relatively made on small budgets. It was mostly either co-produced or self-produced. The director wants to show the reality of life in these films and usually involves morality. It portrays poor people suffering and how the society treats them unjustly. Some films also show how the rich use their power and wealth to control and use the poor to their benefit.

Usually protagonist is a poor man going through financial hardships and antagonist is a rich person like a landowner. Parallel Cinema is used for more than entertainment; it is used to highlight prevalent issues in the society that included realism and naturalism (Kabir 68). It sometimes throws open new issues for the public so they get real idea of how society is functioning. New ideas, the enthusiasm of youth and a sense of freedom are brought into

Indian cinema with the help of Parallel Cinema (Gupta 53). Parallel cinema also provided the need for new and young actors and directors.