Early 'glocalization' in Indian cinema : an analysis of films of Dada Saheb Phalke and Himanshu Rai

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Early 'Glocalization' in Indian Cinema: An Analysis of Films of Dada Saheb Phalke and Himanshu Rai

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Abstract: That the adaptation of international ideas and foreign technology had an impact on local film culture, is not a new idea in Indian cinema. Nevertheless, more scholarship and greater familiarity with extant literature are needed. This article aims to contribute to the study of the integration process of early Indian films into World cinema. This article considers the early 'glocalization' in Indian cinema which traces the process of universalizing particular experiences in silent cinema and transcending from the local to (achieve) global levels. Through the analysis of the films of Dada Saheb Phalke and Himanshu Rai, two film producers who were hugely impacted by the European style of filmmaking, I will discuss how their global vision with local considerations played a decisive role in shaping the early Indian film history. I argue how local and global forces in Phalke and Rai's cinema boosted cultural open-mindedness and economic growth.

Keywords: glocalization, early Indian Cinema, Himanshu Rai, Dadasaheb Phalke, Bollywood

1 Introduction

In the twenty-first century, Indian cinema contends with Hollywood and the Chinese films for world domination in the global film market.[1] With the increase in media of entertainment like the internet, satellite channels, cable televisions,[2] local Indian cinema finds a more significant film distribution channel globally.[3] In the context of Indian cinema, 'glocalization' can be defined as the

1 Bose 2006: 108–110.

2 Mitra 2008: 268–281.

3 Kumar 2008: 132–152.

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amalgamated result of originative local and global cultural themes for a globalised audience.[4] Though the term 'glocal'[5] is relatively recent, glocalization in Indian cinema dates back to the early twentieth century. In the wake of the birth of cinema as a new medium, several new collaborations at a global as well as a local level were introduced.[6] These collaborations contributed to the establishment and development of several production houses, the rise of new stars, the emergence of new styles of filmmaking and the fostering of new relationships between global and local cinema. These relationships contributed to shaping Indian cinema in general and framing Bombay cinema in particular. In this case, two film producers, Dadasaheb Phalke and Himanshu Rai, played a significant role in channelising cultural flow, using international networks and making cinema a commercially viable enterprise.[7]

In this paper, I want to show how the impact and evolution of global cinema, teamed with local innovations helped Phalke and Rai revolutionize Indian cinema. In this context, reference to 'global' cinema will be frequently made in order to contextualize the role of Phalke and Rai in their professed locations as auteurs of non-Western cinemas. I will, of course, acknowledge the impact of Western cinema in the lives of these two film producers. The claim to see them as founding figures of Indian cinema might not seem overstated and misleading due to their roles as creative individuals who transmitted cultural influences between Indian and Western cinema. Their sources of inspiration, ideas and ways to creatively implement them will be explored against the social, political and cultural background characteristic of the period in which they worked. World politics of the early twentieth century, India's colonial rule, and the nationalist movement will be used as a backdrop to show the evolution of early Indian cinema and the role of Rai and Phalke.

2 The protagonists and their influences

Before discussing the impact of European cinema on the lives of Phalke and Rai, an understanding of their backgrounds is necessary to anchor this study. Dhundiraj Govind Phalke[8] (1870- 1944) who is attributed as the *Father of*

4 Schiller 2003: 83–95.
5 Robertson 2000: 8–31, 129–137, 146–181.
6 Kumaravadivelu 2008: 28–47.
7 Chatterjee 2003: 3–7.
8 Summanwar 2012: Chapters 1–17.

Indian cinema, was born to a family of priests and followed the footsteps of his father Daji Shastri, a reputed Sanskrit scholar. However, his fascination for arts, painting, play-acting, and,especially, magic prompted him to join the Jamsetjee Jeejebhoy School of Arts in Bombay. Phalke not only learned art but also honed his skills in sculpture, engineering, drawing and painting at the Kala Bhawan in Baroda. His work as an assistant to the celebrated American magician Carl Hertz and his film training in England had an indelible impact on his career. These various experiences, which also included landscape painting, photography and stage makeup, had an ensemble effect in preparing him for the silver screen. Phalke not only gave India *Raja Harishchandra* (1913), the first Indian feature film, but also a host of further popular films like *Mohini Bhasmasur* (1913), *Satyavan Savitri* (1914), *Lanka Dahan* (1917), *Shri Krishna Janma* (1918) and *Kaliya Mardan* (1919), *Setu Bandhan* (1932) and *Gangavataran* (1937). In the course of close to twenty years, Phalke made ninety-five features and twenty-five short films. He also experimented with several other genres like documentary, educational and comic films. His specialised thematic field of focus[9] was mythological films.[10]

Himanshu Rai (1892–1940), a pioneer of Indian cinema, was a founding member of one of the most successful film production houses in India, Bombay Talkies.[11] After his education at the University of Calcutta and in Santiniketan, under Rabindranath Tagore, he went to London to become a barrister. However, his inclination towards films and his association with Niranjan Pal, an aspiring playwright, fostered his possibilities in cinema. Rai travelled extensively across Europe, especially in England and Germany. He was able to handpick a team of technicians for India, with whom he established a lifelong collaboration.[12] One of them was Franz Osten, who made seventeen films for Rai's production house. Besides, being a film producer of repute, Rai was also a successful actor, director, and writer. Besides silent films, Rai successfully produced talkie films like *Karma* (1933), *Achhut Kanya* (1936), *Janmabhoomi* (1936), *Jeevan Naiya* (1936) and *Izzat* (1937).

For both Phalke and Rai, a few personal experiences with screen and stage became life-altering. In 1910, Phalke suffered a severe illness and temporarily lost his vision. Upon regaining his vision, he experienced an extraordinary incident which changed the course of his life. Phalke had watched the French

9 Chatterjee 2003: 3–7.
10 Rangoonwala 2003: 28–31.
11 Bhattacharya 2013: 260–262.
12 Manjapra 2014: 238–39, 261–74.

film *The Life of Christ* (1898)[13] at the Christmas Cinema Show of 1911 in Bombay.[14] This had a great impact on him. As he saw the images of Christ on screen, the idea of making films in India with Hindu Gods like Ram and Krishna fired his imagination.[15] In London, Rai was similarly bitten by the theatre bug as new opportunities came his way. Having got a small part in the famous British musical *Chu Chin Chow,* Rai was inspired to do more. Meeting Niranjan Pal and playing a role in his play *The Goddess*, instilled confidence in Rai to plan a film series on world religions.[16]

Having discovered his 'purpose' of making films on mythological themes, Phalke made his most significant journey abroad in 1912 with the idea of learning the art of filmmaking. Phalke, who was enamoured by Cecil Hepworth's book on cinematography, also met him in person.[17] Hepworth's Walton-on-Thames studio, near London, which housed some of the best equipment in the world, became Phalke's school for learning. If Phalke is remembered as a legend of special effects today, this is where he learned his trick photography. Phalke also met some eminent personalities associated with the film industry in England like John Cabourne,[18] the editor of *The Bioscope.*[19]

During the editing of *Shiraz* and *A Throw of Dice,* both Rai and his wife Devika Rani had the opportunity of closely observing the work at Universum Film Aktiengesellschaft, UFA Studios in Neubabelsberg.[20] Their orientation through intensive seminars and training under great film directors of the early 1920s like Fritz Lang, G.W. Pabst and a producer like Erich Pommer, influenced their perspective on filmmaking.

3 Analysis of Phalke's *Raja Harishchandra* and Rai's *Shiraz*

A deeper acquaintance of the craft and contributions of Phalke and Rai can be achieved by carefully analysing the films of these two auteurs. I will approach *Raja Harishchandra* (1913) and *Shiraz* (1928), the earliest films produced by

13 Dharap 1985: 34–35.
14 Guptara 1982: 5.
15 Summanwar 2012: ch. 13.
16 Roychoudhury 2013: http://thebigindianpicture.com/2013/10/birth-of-an-industry/
17 Dharap 1985: 36.
18 Summanwar 2012: ch. 15.
19 Low 1971: 37.
20 Mukherjee 2015: 32–33.

them, and compare the differences in their individual styles, content, technique and their contributions to Indian Cinema.

Phalke understood the local taste and wanted to choose a story that was mythological and could be a crowd puller. He based his first film *Raja Harishchandra* on the life of a mythological king from the Indian epic *Mahabharata*. Harishchandra was the 36th king of the Solar Dynasty, Surya Maharishi Gothram, who is popular in Indian mythology for never telling a lie and never breaking his promise.[21] Phalke chose a character whose popularity in India is legendary.

The film[22] opens in the garden of Raja Harishchandra's palace. The king is seen teaching his son Rohitas the art of archery in the company of his wife, Queen Taramati. Harishchandra is interrupted by the arrival of his subjects who invite him to a hunting expedition. Harishchandra obliges countrymen, and they move on to the countryside. While hunting, Harishchandra hears some women crying. The king and his men set out in search of the women in distress. The intertitle reads 'In the mere strength of his penance the sage Vishwamitra achieves the help of three powers against their will.' The three powers are explained as 'Trishakti'. Three women come out of the fire in front of a meditating sage (Vishwamitra).[23] The women express their helplessness by waving their hands. The three women can be assumed to be Sattwaki, Rajoshi, and Tamashi, the three natures of Goddess Durga. The three natures symbolize her power to see the past, present and future. To Harishchandra and the audience, it appears as if the women are captives of Vishwamitra and are trying desperately to set free. Harishchandra does not think twice before jumping in to save the women in danger. He shoots an arrow at the fire where the three women are trapped. Though the fire goes out, the women vanish! The meditating sage Vishwamitra loses his concentration and gets up in a towering rage. Harishchandra tries to apologize and even goes to the extent of offering Vishwamitra his empire. Vishwamitra accepts Harishchandra's Empire and his crown. Queen Taramati and Rohitas are also ordered by Vishwamitra to give him *dakshina*. Naturally, the three leave the palace.

The plot becomes more gripping as Harishchandra gets separated from his wife and son. Harishchandra ends up working at a cremation ground, Taramati works as a maid, and Rohitas has a premature death. In a strange turn of fate, Taramati brings his son's dead body to Harishchandra for cremation. Husband and wife recognise and embrace each other. Unable to pay a gold coin to his

21 Shulman 1993: 87–107.

22 Phalke 1913: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y6FuYf7r46Y

23 Pargiter 1997: 92.

uncompromising husband Harishchandra for the cremation, Taramati sets out to look for the payment. During her search, Taramati comes across the dead body of the prince of Kashi, who is killed in a hunting spree. When Taramati sits near the corpse and tries to touch her, she is caught by the soldiers of Kashi and is immediately arrested. This is again a trap set by Vishwamitra to test Taramati. Harishchandra's empire is restored to him and his son Rohitas regains life. The film ends on a happy note.

Phalke is credited with writing, producing and directing the film. However, to face the challenges of directing and producing *Raja Harishchandra*, Phalke started his studio in Bombay's Dadar Main Road. He created the sets, wrote the screenplay and started shooting the film with very little financial support from his investors.[24] The story of the film was developed by Ranchhodbhai Udayram, and the cinematographer of the film was Tryambak B. Telang. The central character of Raja Harishchandra was played by Dattatraya Damodar Dabke, an experienced Marathi stage actor. Phalke introduced his son Bhalchandra D. Phalke who played the role of Harishchandra's son Rohitas. The significant role of Vishwamitra was played by G.V.Sane. Other members of the cast included Dattatreya Kshirsagar, Dattatreya Telang, Ganpat G. Shinde, Vishnu Hari Aundhkar and Nath T. Telang.[25]

The style of acting was theatrical, and the technique is a carry forward from the contemporary stage. Most of the actors used animated actions and emphasized on facial expressions to convey an emotion. In the USA, for example, silent film actors traced their acting origin from Vaudeville shows.[26] Around the first few years of the 1910s, the American audience had already started expressing their strong liking for natural screen acting. The acting in *Raja Harishchandra* may seem rather raw, affectedly dramatic and overacted for the modern audience. Harishchandra's gesture of cupping his ears to listen to the sound of crying women in the forest, the expressions of the entourage assisting the king and the three women expressing '*triguna shakti,*' lack the finesse of screen acting. In fact, in the scene of *triguna shakti*, after the women emerge from the fire, is hard to read from their actions and gestures. The random and haphazard waving of their hands is supposed to express fear and their attempt to escape from Vishwamitra's fire. However, the swinging of their hands can easily be mistaken for an exotic dance movement. Most of the extras and junior artists in the film were unclear about the new medium and film craft. Naturally their acting on-screen either looks confusing or overdone. When juxtaposed with Paul

24 Dharap 1985: 36–40.

25 Summanwar 2012: 109–122.

26 Gunning 1991: 36.

Wegener's subtle yet artistic portrayal of Balduin in representing societal alienation and collapse in the German Empire [27] in *The Student of Prague* (1913)[28]; the daredevil adventures of René Navarre as *Fantomas* (1913)[29] or the range of emotions exhibited by Salvatore Papa as Dante in *Dante's Inferno* (1911),[30] Phalke's protagonist fails to deliver the larger-than-life expressions with naturalness.

The English and Hindi intertitles are helpful in several occasions but are sometimes equally confusing. *Raja Harishchandra*'s highlights are the few minutes of special effects, which deserve special appreciation but pales in comparison to cinematographer Guido Seeber's effective use of mirror double for the representation of Dopplegänger with the help of double exposure in *The Student of Prague*.[31]

Phalke's camera work is elementary compared to Seeber's use of chiaroscuro technique to establish sharp contrasts between light and shadow on the screen. Since the static camera has been used most of the times and the concept of a close-up of the actor's faces was not in vogue, most of the emotional expressions had to be conveyed through strong body movements. For example, a sensitive scene like Harishchandra and Taramati's reunion after separation had to be expressed only through their embrace. There was no scope for showing tears or smile as the camera was mostly placed quite far away from the object. As a result, most of the emotions expressed by the actors, without little or no experience of proper camera acting, is by exaggerated body movement. Since cinema in India is a carryover from a strong theatre tradition, there is not much difference between the costume for the stage and *Raja Harishchandra*'s costume and makeup. As mythological plays were equally popular in those days, arranging costume for a mythological film might have been easy. Though it was an all-male cast, the women roles were presented convincingly. As the heroine of the film, Salunke has a convincing appearance. Nevertheless, even the minor female characters and the extras look visually convincing.

Raja Harishchandra enjoys its cult status for more reasons than being the first Indian feature film. Many films of the pre-1930s Indian cinema were lost due to lack of preservation and restoration. Though only 1475 feet[32] of the original film exists of the first three-fourths of the film, *Raja Harishchandra* is one of the

27 Hake 2008: 22.
28 Ewers 1913: DVD.
29 Feuillade 1913: DVD.
30 Bertolini et al. 1911: DVD.
31 Schlüpmann 1986: 10.
32 Dwyer 2009: 147.

very few gems of this era which has survived the ravages of time and negligence. *Raja Harishchandra* also features a few bold scenes for the contemporary audience. The onscreen embrace of Raja Harishchandra and Taramati and the bathing scene are worth mentioning. Both the scenes were firsts in Indian cinema. The depiction of 'women in wet saris' created an icon in Indian cinema which is popular even to this day. The boldness with which the film was conceived and directed opened the gate for a film industry renowned for its dance, drama, dynamism and deepest emotions which have its roots in *Raja Harishchandra.*

Shiraz (1928), along with *The Light of Asia* (1925) and *A Throw of Dice* (1929) forms a part of the silent film trilogy directed by Franz Osten in collaboration with Rai as the principal actor and producer and Niranjan Pal as the screenplay writer. *Shiraz* introduces a new genre of films in Indian cinema which became popular as the *Mughal Romance.* These films feature love stories of historical characters against the rich Mughal backdrop and grand narratives. All these films are epic stories of love, romance, courage, and war, set in the Mughal era. *Shiraz* goes down in history among the first and most influential of these early epics on the lives of the national legends. Unlike *Raja Harishchandra*, *Shiraz* had a larger budget and huge production team. *Shiraz* was released in Germany under the title *Grabmal einer großen Liebe.* Under the direction of Franz Osten, *Shiraz* was produced by three production companies which included Himanshu Rai Film, Universum Film (UFA) and British Instructional Films (BIF). BIF's interest in collaboration with Rai and UFA reflect British Raj's interest in the Empire's history, new geographical boundaries and expeditions. BIF's interest in films like *Shiraz* and *A Throw of Dice* was actually with the motive of broadening territorial boundaries and investing in aerial photography for the purpose of map making.[33] Bruce Woolfe who had an interest in films and his "general idea was to show the life of a British district officer in a remote part of the Empire, administering justice, building roads and bridges, teaching the natives to develop their country and live peaceably together."[34] Rai's collaboration with BIF and the successful production of the film *Shiraz* contributed in the introduction and popularity of the term 'empire as a resource'. Obviously, the resource in this context is the "oriental spectacle". The high production value of *Shiraz* was achieved by the accumulation of 50,000 people as extras, 300 camels, seven elephants and the entire army of the State of Jaipur.[35] The collaboration between Rai and Woolfe contributed to setting the image of the Empire's vast cinematic resources to the world.

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33 Low 1979: Chapter 3.

34 Low 1971: 180.

35 *The New York Times Film Reviews 1913–1968* 1970: 473.

Shiraz[36] is set in the time of the Mughal Empire, in seventeenth century North India. The film tries to reveal a story behind the construction of the Taj Mahal. The film chronicles the life of Shiraz who, according to the film, designed the mausoleum for the love of his life, Princess Selima. Princess Selima was born in a royal family. She is separated at birth from the royal family and is raised by Hassan, Shiraz's father. Shiraz and Selima grow up together. Shiraz is in love with Selima. The sweetness of their adolescence ends abruptly as Selima is kidnapped and sold in Al-Kalab, a famous slave market. Kasim, Mughal Prince Khurram's most trusted assistant buys Selima from the market and brings her to the court. Prince Khurram falls in love with Selima and proposes to marry her. This angers Dalia, who has an eye on the throne of India as a prospective Queen. Shiraz tries to meet Selima, and Dalia uses this opportunity to trap both Selima and Shiraz. After several misunderstandings and clarifications, the truth finally triumphs. Shiraz accepts the fact that Selima never loved him. She merely liked him like a brother. Dalia is punished for her misdeeds. Prince Khurram ascends the throne of India and comes to be known as Shah Jahan. He marries Selima, and she comes to be known as Mumtaz Mahal. Their happiness is short lived as Mumtaz Mahal dies during childbirth. Emperor Shah Jahan decides to build the most beautiful monument in the loving memory of his beloved wife. Shiraz designs the monument. When the mighty monument is built, the Emperor decides to call it Taj Mahal, in the memory of his beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal, whom both he and Shiraz loved.

Shiraz opens with the acknowledgement that 'The actors are all Indian'. Actors like Himanshu Rai (Shiraz), Charu Roy (Emperor Shah Jahan), Seeta Devi (Dalia), Enakshi Rama Rao (Princess Selima), Maya Devi (Kulsam), Prafulla Kumar (Kasim), not only shine as actors in their respective roles, but also impact the film by their collaborative effort. The chemistry between Rai and Enakshi Rama Rao, Enakshi Rama Rao and Charu Roy and the love-hate relationship portrayed on screen by Seeta Devi and Charu Roy not only help the audience understand the complexity of the situations in the film but also makes the characters realistic.

Henry Harris and Emil Schunemann are responsible for the cinematography of Franz Osten's magnum opus *Shiraz*. Since the film was set in India, Indian art directors Lala Brij Mohan and Promode Nath were useful in setting up the ambience for the film. For a large-scale project of this grandeur, the director was naturally in need of additional assistance. Victor Peers was responsible as Assistant Director and Himanshu Rai as the Supervising Assistant. *Shiraz* was co-written by William A. Burton and Niranjan Pal. The camera work of *Shiraz* is

36 Osten 1925: DVD.

the backbone of the film, which helps in establishing the grandeur of the Mughal rule in India. At the same time, it helps in establishing the conflict and bloodshed involved in the struggle for supremacy. *Shiraz* is thus a forerunner of several epic films made in India and sets the mood and standard for the treatment of such films.

The camera is successful in portraying a chaotic Mughal era in North India, set close to 600 years ago. As much as the film tells us the story about the history behind the erection of one of the wonders of the world, the Taj Mahal, it brings to life a history which cannot be overlooked. The filmmakers have taken plenty of creative liberty while writing the script of the film. Ustad Ahmad[37] (a.k.a. Isa Khan[38]), an architect in the court of Shah Jahan from Lahore, is most often credited as the chief architect (or plan drawer) of the Taj Mahal.[39] This is based on a seventeenth-century manuscript which claims that Ustad Ahmad was the architect of both the Taj Mahal and the Red Fort in Delhi. Other historical references say that Isa Khan was born either in Shiraz(Iran), Ottoman Empire or Agra. Other research shows that not one but a team of skillful architects were involved in its design and construction.[40] The lack of complete and reliable information as to whom the credit for the design belongs, led to innumerable speculations. Reliable historical accounts about Mumtaz Mahal do not reveal anything similar to what has been portrayed in the film. Though historical records vouch for Mumtaz Mahal being earlier known as Arjumand Banu and also being the niece of Empress Nur Jehan, the wife of Emperor Jahangir, the story about her abduction and being sold in the market is yet unknown.[41] It is also unknown whether she was raised by the family of Shiraz after being found by Hasan or if she was named Selima by Hasan. Naturally, the story of Shiraz's love for Selima is also not reliable.

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37 Honour/Fleming 2005: 541.

38 Pritchett 2017: http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00islamlinks/ikram/part2_14.html#shahjahan.

39 Janin 2005: 124.

40 R. A. Jairazbhoy in his article Taj Mahal in the Context of East and West (1961) quotes (p.84) Moin-uddin's seminal work History of the Taj (1905) which makes reference to the variance in different Persian manuscripts. Moin-ud-din cites Badshah Nama, which mentions that artists from different parts of Emperor's territory came to take part in the construction of the Taj Mahal. Moin-uddin also mentions Calcutta Library Imperial manuscript which suggests that the artists came from Baghdad, Samarkand and Shiraz. These contradictions neither confirm the relationship between the film's protagonist and Isa Khan's birthplace (Shiraz); nor does it establish that Taj Mahal was designed by a single architect.

41 Nicoll 2009: 161–180.

Nevertheless, *Shiraz,* as a work of fiction, stands out as one of the most progressive films of the silent era and one of the best works of Rai primarily because of its comparatively superior camera work, acting style and response from the audience. Himanshu Rai's *Shiraz*, in collaboration with BIF created an opportunity to showcase the mystical East to the rest of the world. The caravans of camels, deserts and the dunes, the costumes and bazaars, the palaces and the gardens, the men and women and most importantly the Taj Mahal have been used as symbols of the Orient. These images, as depicted through the film, became stage spectacle for the west. However, Rai's films did not give a one-dimensional perception of oriental films to the western audience. Whereas *The Light of Asia* exemplified the virtues of sensitivity and spirituality, *Shiraz* reflected spirituality and love and *A Throw of Dice* became a metaphor for the dark world of greed and power of the aristocracy. However, all of Rai's films were similar in spirit in offering the audience a collective image of the Orient.

4 Glocalization of India in the 19th and 20th century

In order to properly grasp how glocalization emerged with various cultural spheres which resulted in the development of early Indian cinema, it is important for us to understand the age in which both Phalke and Rai made their expeditions to Europe. Comparing the works of these two Indian filmmakers, I will discuss them in relation to their historical, economic and cultural ideas in the early decades of the twentieth century.

The focus will be on the West-to-India relations, of course. I would like to present a chronological account of several socio-political experiments which would focus on India's interaction with the rest of the world and the world's perspective on India. Building on the global and national (local) narratives, I will discuss the features of Phalke and Rai's work which speak about glocalization trends in early Indian cinema.

The interim of the two world wars was a critical era in world history. After the end of the first World War and the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, nations began a new struggle for socio-political equality and independence.[42] The *Angst* of the people found new expressions in movements such as Feminism, Communism and new voices of protest such as Anti-imperialism, youth movements, demand for suffrage, Pan-Islamism etc. The urge for optimism and the

42 Trubnikova 2015: 72–75.

desire to reshape history was not eliminated by World War I. There is a strong overlap between the voices of the people and the themes of films by Phalke and Rai. Most remarkable among them is a film produced by Rai named *Izzat* (1937, dir. Franz Osten). It is a social drama about the birth of hostility and hatred between two Indian clans, the Bhils, and the Marathas. The clash of the two clans for honour, revenge of the victim's family, the tribe's struggle against further animosities, death and eventual martyrdom of the protagonist are all reminiscences of the era.

Glocalization through the intellectual association of Indians with Europe dates back to the mid-eighteenth century. It has been enforced by Tagore, who highlighted Pan-Asianism and its 'Eastern' virtues. Similarly, radical Hindu nationalists of the nineteenth century and politicians within India or in exile played an essential role in defining and redefining the notion of India as a nation, nationalism, and nationality to the world.[43] The ideas of Indian nationalists about nationalism were highly inspired by German ideas and had strong British influences. Swami Vivekananda's speech at the Chicago World Congress of Religions in 1893[44] and his lecture tours in America had strong influences on his Western audience.[45] The October revolution of 1917, which had a profound impact on European politics had a far-reaching impact on India as well. The Bolshevik revolution[46] inspired the All India Trade Union Congress.[47] After the Great War, India's position in world politics was greatly felt not only as a nation but also for its service with the army and other resources for the war on behalf of the British Empire. Indians found themselves sharing the centre stage with the oppressed people from around the world. Jawaharlal Nehru's contribution[48] in developing the League Against Imperialism (1927),[49] a body that represented colonies in Asia, Africa, and South America, made him an important leader in the global struggle against imperialism. Rai and Phalke banked on these growing intellectual and political associations around the world to create a platform

43 On March 2, 1908, the *Bande Mataram* newspaper published an article expressing: "India is the *guru* of the nations, the physician of the human soul in its profound maladies; she is destined once more to new-mould [sic] the life of the world and restore the peace of the human spirit. But *swaraj* is the necessary condition of her work and before she can do the work, she must fulfill the condition." from Ray 2011: 132–133.

44 Vohra 2001: 102.

45 Waghorne 1999: 222–223.

46 Windmiller/Overstreet 1959: 366–370.

47 Jalan 2004: 215–223.

48 Ghose 1993: 48.

49 Maale 2015: 161.

to showcase India to the global audience. Rai produced the three silent films to promote Indian culture to the world.

The popularity of Hindu traditions in the British Raj impacted Western cultural thoughts and sowed the seeds of new religious movements. The impact of Indian philosophical thought and spirituality in Europe led to further research perpetuating the knowledge of basic Sanskrit texts that had influenced the intellectual elites of the nineteenth century. Influence of the fifth century Indian Sanskrit poet Kalidasa was largely visible in the works of Alexander Von Humboldt, Herder, Schiller, Arthur Schopenhauer and Goethe.[50] The translations of Kalidasa and Bhagavad Gita had a profound impact in Europe in general and Germany in particular. The celebration of Indian culture is reminiscent not only in the popularity of classical texts but also in contemporary literature like E.M. Foster's novel *A Passage to India* (1924), Hermann Hesse's popular novel *Siddhartha* (1922), Rudyard Kipling's novels, poems and short stories especially *The Jungle Book, Kim, Gunga Din* and T.S. Eliot's most noted work *The Waste Land* which ends with a mantra from *Upanishads*, 'Shantih, Shantih, Shantih' (peace, peace, peace). I contend that Phalke's films on the adventures of the heroic characters from Indian mythology like *Ahilya Uddhar* (1919, Rescue of Ahilya), *Kansa Vadha* (1920, Slaying of Kansa), *Ram Ravan Yuddha* (1924, War of Ram and Ravan), most of which are unfortunately lost, must have ingrained a sense of curiosity and awe through its visual representation.

Literature played an important role in instilling the pride and honour of the nation amongst its citizens. Besides Rabindranath Tagore winning the Nobel prize in 1913, Mulk Raj Anand, Prem Chand, Raja Rao, Manik Bandopadhyay and Ahmed Ali used literature as platforms to address and inspire the nation. Several significant Indian personalities of historical relevance were introduced to the Indian and world audience through the films of Rai and Phalke. These figures include Gautam Buddha in Rai's *The Light of Asia* and Phalke's *Buddha Dev* (1923), Maratha warrior Shivaji Bhosle in Phalke's *Shivaji's Escape from the Mughal court in Agra* (1924), seventeenth century Marathi Bhakti saint and poet Sant Tukaram in Phalke's *Tukaram* (1921), Sanskrit poet and the author of *Ramayana* Valmiki in Phalke's *Walmiki* (1921), Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan in Rai's *Shiraz* and Hindu mystic poetess and Bhakti Saint Meera Bai in Phalke's *Sant Mirabai*(1929) and many more.[51] Cinema played a major role in helping Indians rediscover their cultural

50 Whyte et al. 2017: https://indianreview.in/nonfiction/indian-literature-how-kalidasa-reached-germany/

51 Dharap 1985: 47–48.

identity through great examples of the past. While many inventions of the past, like typewriters and automobiles, came to India at least a decade after its invention, cinema came to India within seven months.[52] This placed India on the same pedestal with the rest of the world. The roles played by Phalke and Rai's global exposure and their contribution to local cinema has thus provided the much-needed impetus to Indian cinema.

In India, *Satyagraha*, *Swadeshi* movement and the call to end untouchability led by Gandhi made news in Europe[53] and made Europeans curious about India.[54] After World War I, the political approach towards British rule in India changed remarkably.[55] Call for self-rule in India was complemented by repressive legislation and the Non-Cooperation movement. The 1920s and 30s were transitional years in India not only because it was the period between the World Wars, but also because they evoked a revolutionary spirit during the turn of the century.[56] The years of torture by British rule unleashed a passion for freedom. Though Rai and Phalke were highly inspired by western filmmaking techniques, their ideas for films have strong messages in favour of the contemporary movements in India. Phalke established the idea of glocalization in one of his famous comments: "My films are Swadeshi in the sense that the capital, ownership, employees, and stories are Swadeshi. The material and the equipment required for the factory (studio) are simply not available at any cost, they are all foreign ... .I had been abroad thrice. Yes, I have a desire to go there for the fourth time, as it is necessary. There is no end to observation, education and self-improvement."[57] In Rai's *Janmabhoomi* (1936, dir. Franz Osten) the spirit of *Satyagraha* and *Swadeshi* are omnipresent. The protagonist, Dr. Ajoy Kumar Ghosh, dedicates his entire life to serving his village (a metaphor for motherland) besides simultaneously fighting against the evils of the system like prejudices and the old order. Besides Rai's most successful venture *Achhut Kanya* (1936, dir. Franz Osten), untouchability and caste system are the central themes of *Jeevan Prabhat* (1937, dir. Franz Osten) and *Janmabhoomi.*

From a socio-political point of view, Europe suffered from the disasters of World War I. Germany's Weimar Republic suffered one of the worst economic

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52 "The film industry in India is more than a hundred years old. The first film screening took place in July 7, 1896, when the Lumiere Brothers' Cinematographe unveiled six soundless short films at Watson's hotel, now the Esplanade Mansion, in downtown Mumbai." Basu 2000: 98.

53 Brown/Parel 2001: xiv–xv.

54 *The Pioneer mail* 1920: 7.

55 Self 2010: 43.

56 Robb 1991: 144–147.

57 Dharap 1985: 40.

crises in the early 1920s, and this was followed by hyperinflation of the currency in 1923.[58] Surprisingly, this era is also called the *Roaring Twenties*.[59] It is reminiscent of highly visible social and cultural prosperity in Europe. Cities like London, Paris, New York, and Berlin were characterized by economic growth. The term '*années folles*' or crazy years is associated with this kind of economic boom.[60]

During the troubled phase of World War I, Hollywood took a clear lead over the European cinematographic scene and emerged as a market leader. This development was in no small extent due to the disastrous economic situation in Europe in the post-World War I phase. The British economy was no exception, and, accordingly, British cinema also suffered a steep setback as it was unable to face the competition of Hollywood. The British Government focused on developing a film market in the Empire by building a domestic market. The objective of the Empire Film was to produce films within the Empire and compete with Hollywood. In order to gain a niche in Hollywood, Empire films did not solely depend on films from Great Britain. It was open to the idea of collaboration between various nations and the use of the Empire as a resource. The term 'Empire films' was quite vague, and it was also open to the possibilities of films made by the colonies. However, it was quite clear about using the Empire as an economic and cultural resource. More than using the Empire Film for its economy, the British Government anticipated a huge market for Indian films in Europe and North America.[61] It was possibly anticipated that Empire films, rich with Indian traditions, customs and visuals from urban and rural life, would be highly saleable in the international film market. It believed that the Empire films would offer a fresh perspective on films and would be a sharp contrast to films produced by their rivals, Hollywood. The British Government was also concerned about the image portrayed by Hollywood films of white men and especially women (images of women kissing, smoking, in bed with men, sometimes bold images) on the conservative Indians. It was believed that it portrayed the British in poor light and it loosened the hold over its subjects. The British administration blamed Hollywood for such poor representation of whites and found it detrimental to their dignity, honour and glory.

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58 Kolb: 2001: 159–161.

59 Palmer 2006: 2.

60 Paxton/Hessler 2012: 203–231.

61 Jarvie 1992: 65-67.

5 Early 'Glocalization' in Indian cinema, initiated by Phalke and Rai

When Phalke and Rai came back to India, they had brought with them not only technicians and technology but also the experience needed for giving a boost to the budding film industry. Phalke's experiments with equipment like the Williamson camera, the Williamson perforator, developing and printing equipment, raw film, techniques like time-lapse photography and short films like *Birth of a Pea Plant*, were watermarks in early film history.[62] However, the reason why Phalke has remained popular even to this day is that of his use of special effects in early Indian cinema. Phalke explored a vast range of techniques which also included animation. He also used colour tinting and toning to depict various moods in his black and white film.

He was equally adventurous while experimenting with his set designing. In his film *Lanka Dahan*, he not only used scenic models for a number of his sequences but also burned down two sets while shooting the scene of burning Lanka.[63] In the film *Kaliya Mardan,* Phalke uses special effects to superimpose the face of a child actor (Mandakini) as it dissolves into the face of Krishna. Much before Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* became popular to the Western Audience, Phalke has been using alienation/estrangement effect in his films to engage his audience. In the film *The Life of Krishna*, he uses special effects abundantly in a dream sequence of Krishna's uncle where Kamsa's head is disjointed from the body, but floats and rejoins again. The special effect was repeated several times in the film to achieve the desired impact on the audience.

For *The Light of Asia*, Rai skilfully pleaded and collaborated with Emelka Films and initiated an international co-production, in which Emelka films would not only provide technicians like directors, camera operators, and assistants but would also provide all kinds of equipment and technical support. Munich's highly advanced film laboratory would also be responsible for processing and editing the film. Similarly, for *Shiraz* and *A Throw of Dice*, UFA films were responsible for editing.

Rai made use of the British Government's interest in making Empire films. Aware of Harry Bruce Woolfe of BIF' keenness in making films on Indian themes, Rai collaborated with him in co-producing *Shiraz* (1928) and *A Throw of Dice* (1929). Himanshu Rai's venture complemented Empire film's objective of exploring new avenues of filmmaking with a particular focus on the 'Orient'. The

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62 Dharap 1985: 36.

63 Dharap 1985: 43.

new experiments of Empire films proved successful and helped in gathering new audiences. The primitiveness, mysticism and ornamental Orient appealed to the modern European and Western audience. The success of this collaboration once again established the presence of British films (Empire films) in a market dominated by Hollywood. BIF was inspired to open its studios in India for producing more films for the local market. Rai not only elevated his production value with the help of technical finesse but also raised the standard of Indian cinema so that it could be screened internationally. Rai also avoided the initial financial crisis that Phalke faced by wisely getting involved into Indo-British and Indo-German collaborations, and was able to make films of epic grandeur so early in his career with the money of investors.

Harping on the growing closeness between India and Europe and the popularity of Indian culture and spirituality in the West, both Phalke and Rai started adapting Indian classic and essential religious texts, myths, history, and legends for the global audience. At the same time keeping the Swadeshi movement in mind and the need for reinstilling cultural pride among local audience, Phalke chose to make films on Hindu mythology like *Mohini Bhasmasur* (1913), *Satyavan Savitri* (1914), *Shri Krishna Janma* (1918) and *Setu Bandhan* (1932). In contrast, Rai's creative imagination encompassed a broader thematic spectre: the life of Buddha in *The Light of Asia*, and the story of Taj Mahal and Mughal kings during the Muslim rule in *Shiraz*.

Since Phalke, unlike Rai, did not have the backing of big European production houses, he had to be much more innovative in his publicity to sell his films. Phalke knew that the cinema was a Western import for Indians. The length of the (Indian) films was unusually short (90 minutes) for an Indian audience used to watching stage plays for at least six hours. Therefore, for the first screening of *Raja Harishchandra* at the Coronation Cinema, Phalke incorporated a duet and dance performance by Miss Irene Del Mar, a comic skit by the McClements, a performance of jugglery by Alexander the Wonderful Foot Juggler and short advertisements by Tip-Top Comics. Being a shrewd publicist and being aware of the fact that the rural audiences pay merely two *anas* for a six-hour play, Phalke mechanised separate strategies for the small towns, *muffasils*, and villages. To advertise his films, for which he was charging three annas he used his innovation and play of words to attract the audience. 'Raja Harishchandra. A performance with 57,000 photographs. A picture two miles long. All for only three annas.'[64] As a result of the success of his first film, Phalke was not only able to regain his confidence but also to generate enough revenue to become financially stable. But most importantly, after years of subjugation and humiliation as

64 Pinto/Sippy 2008: 124.

Indians under foreign rule, this film had reinforced the faith of the audience in the indigineous mythology and set the stage and ambience for many future films.

6 Globalization of *Swadeshi* ideas

In this section, I will focus on ideas like nationhood, feminism, identity, etcetera, and examine the relationship between globalisation and local cinema. These concepts will highlight the cultural identities of the era and will concentrate on the relevance of gender and glocalization in this context. I will primarily focus on the portrayal of women on screen and argue how the idea of *Swadeshi* films impact the representation. Though the notion of a concrete nation is not clearly visible in the films of Rai and Phalke, a strong national character and a sense of active association with the motherland is visible. All of Phalke's features, from his first films *Raja Harishchandra* to his last film *Gangavataran,* have deep connections with cultural and religious practices. Most of Rai's films, especially *Jawani Ki Hawa* (1935), *Jeevan Naiya* (1936) and *Prem Kahani* (1937), demonstrate strong social and family ties as unique signs of attachments to the soil and the culture. While Phalke focussed on recreating the aura of indigenous mythology on screen by presenting gods and goddesses in the relatable *avatar*, Rai was playing to the Western gallery by creating Indian symbols and responding to the needs of the global and local audiences. Naturally, Rai's construction of the charmingness of visual India differs remarkably from the on-screen representation of Phalke.

Both Phalke and Rai observed the effect of feminism and the popularity of star actresses in the West. Inspired by European cinema, Phalke wanted to recreate the aura of goddesses on screen. It was relatively easy to cast men in the guise of women for the role of extras. However, for the central role of Taramati Phalke decided to cast a woman. After an extremely unsuccessful stint with auditions for the role of Taramati, which included unpleasant encounters with prostitutes from Bombay's red-light area and indecent proposals like marriage with Phalke in exchange of daughter's permission to act in films, Krishna Hari, alias Anna Salunke was finalised for the role. Salunke, a young effeminate cook with slender features and hands, portrayed the lead female role.[65] The film had an all-male cast. Phalke gave Salunke the rare feat of playing the role of both Lord Rama and Sita (male and female lead), and also

65 Summanwar 2012: 120–122.

established him as India's first big star. With time Phalke managed to introduce women in films. He made the first move by launching his daughter Mandakini as a child artist[66] when she was merely five years old. Casting for films was not easy, especially the female roles.

Rai introduced Renee Smith,[67] an Anglo-Indian actress, to represent three significant Indian women characters. Research shows that the abnormality of the representation of Indian women by Rai is not a stray incident.[68] Both Renee Smith and her sister Percy Smith[69] simultaneously portrayed Indian social, historical and mythological characters of Indian women on screen.[70] The embodiment of Indian female roles on screen with the Hindu name 'Seeta Devi' which started with Rai, proved successful for the Smith sisters as they essayed many more Indian characters in successful films like *Durgesh Nandini* (1927), *Kapal Kundala* (1929), *Loves of Moghul Prince/ Anarkali* (1928) etc. When Rai launched Devika Rani in *Achhut Kanya* (1936), he introduced a Western-educated woman from a highly influential background in the garb of a village girl. Rai encapsulates the co-existence of the local in the global and the global in the local through the casting of Sita Devi and Devika Rani.

Rai's representation of women can be viewed from two different points of view. On the one hand he casts Indian actresses like Devika Rani and Maya Devi to focalise on the subjugation of women and their battle against the male-dominated society through issues like rape (*Izzat*), ostracism of dancing girls (*Jeevan Naiya*), social stigma and suspicion against women (*Jeevan Prabhat*) and social position of Dalit girls. (*Achhut Kanya*). On the other hand, with his first three silent films where he casts Seeta Devi, (Euro-Asian actresses) he objectifies his actresses and presents them as aspects of voyeurism and fetishism of the male gaze,[71] what Jacques Lacan calls *scopophilia* and Sigmund Freud uses to elucidate the idea of *Schaulust*.[72] In Rai's films, the ideas of masculinity are symbolized by an over-representation of patriarchy and female sexuality represented from a male perspective. In all the three silent films and a few of the talkie films, the conflict between the male protagonist and the antagonist or the other male character is for the possession of the heroine. Naturally, aggression,

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66 Rangoonwala 2003: 31.
67 Ramamurthy 2008: 162.
68 Basu 2013: 141–143.
69 Rajadhyaksha/Willemen 1999: 88.
70 Priti Ramamurthy 2008: 162.
71 Mulvey 1989: 16–19.
72 Newman(2004): 9–10.

brute force, and physical strength represent the masculinity of Sohat and Ranjit in *Throw of Dice*, Devdatta in *The Light of Asia*, Babulal Vaid in *Achhut Kanya*, Zamindar in *Janmabhoo*mi, Balaji and Kanhaiya in *Izzat*.

Rai presents the *Swadeshi* rhetoric of the independence struggle in *Janmabhoomi*, where he not only glorifies his protagonist Dr. Ajay Kumar Ghosh but also highlights the role played by Protima Devi (Devika Rani) in supporting him. The film is iconic for being the first patriotic film of Indian cinema and also stands out for showing the conscious efforts of women in the Indian freedom struggle. *Janmabhoomi* overlaps with Bhabha's idea of a nation as a culture and nation as a state with its own laws, policies and regulations.[73] The film unravels the idea of national culture and demystifies the evils of contemporary society like blind faith, the caste system etc. The *Zamindar*, the moneylender, the priest, and Sanatan represent the political authority of the village and are metaphors for the nation's politics.

7 Conclusion

Phalke and Rai had very different styles of filmmaking. The time periods in which Phalke and Rai started their filmmaking activities were separated by more than a decade. By the time Rai was making films, both film technology, as well as the industry, had changed. Rai's films have a technical finesse which are apparently missing in Phalke's films. The actors in Phalke's films were unexposed to acting on screen. Rai's films are characterised by better on-screen acting. Technologically, Rai's film was much superior to Phalke's. However, this was because of Rai's collaboration with several international production houses and technicians.

Both Phalke and Rai had keenly observed the studio model of filmmaking in the West. Phalke had converted a bungalow in a Bombay suburb into a studio for his first film. After the humongous success of his first film, he shifted his base to Nasik, where he set up the studio model for his future films.[74] The studio occupied a large plot of land which had model woods, hills, fields, caves, etc. all developed keeping the diversity of scenes in mind. The studio was also a platform for actors and technicians to train themselves as it provided facilities for bodybuilding, fencing, fighting, riding, a library

73 Bhabha 1990: From the Introduction.

74 Dharap 1985: 40, 44.

and a miniature zoo as well. Most of the film producers followed the standard set by Phalke as the studio model slowly immersed in Indian films. Phalke developed his own production company with mostly members of his own family, which grew to more than a hundred employees. Like the European production houses, Phalke maintained strict discipline and schedule. Inspired by the film studios in Munich, when Rai established Bombay Talkies Limited in 1934 as a joint-stock company in Malad, he was creating history in more ways than one. Malad, the remote suburb of Bombay not only became the direction in which the city developed in the days to come but also became one of the most successful film studios in the history of Indian cinema.[75] Unlike Phalke, Rai's objective was not only to work with his family members but to search, promote and bring the most talented people in the industry under one roof. Rai was also quick in understanding the star system of Hollywood and Europe, and the system of creating and promoting film stars and giving them specific screen images. He not only launched Devika Rani and Ashok Kumar but made them India's first international female star and matinee idol respectively. However, the most significant contribution of Rai was in making Bombay the home of Indian cinema, by choosing to make Hindi films in an area where Hindi was not the most popular language.

Phalke and Rai not only made use of global ideas to impact local cinema, they were also successful in spreading the indigenous ideas globally. Phalke travelled to London to promote his films to Western audiences whereas Himanshu Rai travelled around Europe, promoting and screening his films. His films had great opening shows in several European cities such as Berlin, Vienna, and Brussels. He made personal appearances and met film personalities from around the world, taking feedback and looking for opportunities and collaborations. *The Light of Asia* was also invited for a Royal Command Performance in England before the royal family.

Though Phalke and Rai were both offered the opportunity of working with prestigious production houses in Europe, they turned them down. For them, exposure in global cinema was only a means of enriching local cinema and reaching it to the international audience. Finally, to conclude, both Rai and Phalke were able to extract the best from European cinema and rework them in the Indian context. Their cinema became the melting pot of Indo-European culture on screen.

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75 Bhattacharya 2013: 260.

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