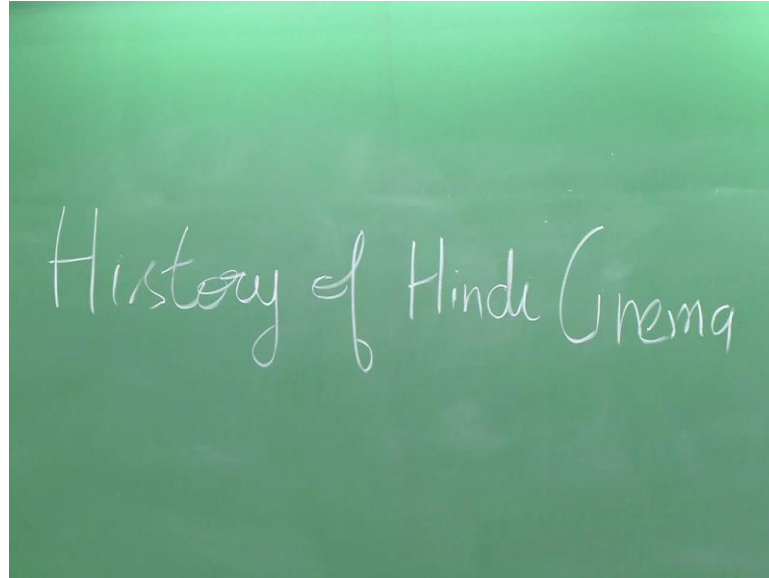


**Film Appreciation**  
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**Lecture - 26**  
**History of Hindi Cinema Part-1**

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Good morning. So, welcome to today's lecture and this is the first part of the history of Hindi cinema. So, as the title itself suggests, I am going to take you down a memory lane or down a history of the great tradition, Hindi cinema. We will be talking about the major the pioneers, the movements, the key figures, including actors, cinematographers, music makers, music directors and of course, the greatest Hindi films. So, I may not be able to cover; let me mourn you that I may not be able to cover each and every seminal films, but I would definitely try to summarize the key trends that have taken place; therefore, the kind of cinema that makes sense; that makes particularly that informs Hindi cinema today. So, as most of you may be aware of the first feature film made in India was Raja Harish Chandra, which was made in 1913. The film had a running time of approximately 40 minutes and it is one of the many mythological, that the great Dada Saheb Phalke created in his career. The film focuses on the noble and the great (refer time: 01:49) came Harish Chandra, who first sacrifices his kingdom and then, his family to keep his promise to the sage Vishwamithra; that is the plot, and greatly moved by his sense of ethics, the Gods give him back all he possessed and he is rewarded with more, much more than he had lost.

The film had an all male cast, as respectable women, those days wouldn't play, the female play a lead so, even men when played female leads here. Women were not available when Phalke was making this film. So, he had, it was an all male cast and he cast a particularly delicate looking boy, who used to work in a restaurant as a cook to play the role of queen Taramathi. Now, you should also know one thing that Dada Saheb Phalke was immensely influenced by the Raja Ravi Varma, the great painter; his style of painting. The film was processed in London, because in India, didn't have facilities for doing this kind of work and Phalke's wife Saraswathi Bai manually, perforated the reels in the night. So, it is that kind of work that had gone into the making the first ever film in India. The film was premiered on April 21st 1930, and as expected, was a grand success. This success paved the way for the growth of the Indian film industry. If you want to know more about what went into making this film; that struggle Dada Saheb Phalke had to put up with, you must watch a recent film.

It is a Marathi film; Harish Chandra Ji factory, which is directed by Paresh Mokshi, which you can take as a tribute to Dada Saheb Phalke. Some of the most well known silent films of this period are Keechaka Vadham, Lanka Gehan, Shakuntala, Bhakth Vidur, Villath Farathi, Pathi Bakthi, Devdoss and Prem Sanyas. So, you may guess the titles should be enough to tell you that most of these are mythological and then, soon we moved on to tackling love stories. So, we may not have mythological; the tradition has not been too successful or sustained at least, on screen, but on the smaller screen, we know the women's popularity of this genre. The first Indian sound film was Alam Ara, directed by Adeshar Kirani and was released in 1931. The film is a love story and was very uniquely advertised as in all living breathing 100 percent talking peak drama; essence of romance, brains and talents on hand under one banner; that was the advertisement. The film consisted of seven songs and the first ever song on the Indian screen was Dey [FL]; it was sung by actor Wazeer Mohammed Khan. Since, playback singing was still a novel concept in India, the song had to be recorded live with musical with minimal musical accompanying it. Alam Ara starred master Vittal and Zubaida and it also included two greats, that two future greats; Prithiv Raj Kapoor and LV. Prasanth. Prithiv Raj Kapoor, of course, you know the great, at the head of the great Kapoor dynasty.

LV. Prasanth, who went on to become one of the biggest film Mughals or film producers of south Indian cinema. Alam Ara was followed by (refer time: 06:11), which was

directed by JJ. Madhan of Madhan theatres. The (refer time: 06:15) is starred Jaha Aara Kanchan and master Nizar and had record 42 songs; so 42 songs in one film. The film, as expected, was a grand success and music played an important role in its success. As a significant result of Alam Ara and (refer time: 06:38) was that it spelled the doom and the careers of silent film stars. Master Vittal was one of the first to feel the blow. This was mainly because the lack of fluency in Hindustani language. Hindustani language, which I don't want get into too much of a debate on what is Hindustani language, but then, it is a mix of Hindi, but not the classic kind of a Hindi, but it is also mix of Urdu, Persian and Hindi words and that Hindi language; that is the syntax; that is the music and rhythm of Hindustani language and then, master Vittal and many like him, stars of great stars of the silent period; they also were not too well worth with history on this. The acting skills were not up to the mark and all these things prevented people like master Vittal and others from attaining greater heights as talking stars. Many shifted towards regional language films, and also, many just you know puzzled away many careers; is died out.

Another interesting phenomena related to sound was the decline of several females stars particularly, those with Anglo-Indian back ground. So, this is worth noting that many of female leading actresses; they were from Anglo-Indian background. They were proficient in dancing. They were relatively less invited, and therefore, this sparkled much more on screen, but again they suffered from the same drawback; that is lack of language; fluency in Hindustani language and due to the advent of the talking films, the discomfort with the language proved to a major hurdle, major obstacle. One of the key actors of this period was a lady called Ruby Mers, an Anglo-Indian lady, but for cinematic purpose, she changed her name to Sulochana.

She was one of the worst hits of the period. She was of Jewish origin and was particularly, known for her dancing abilities and glamorous looks. Her career suffered a setback but then, she was more tenacious of others and she made a comeback after learning the Hindustani language and did very successful films, such as Anarkali, Bombay Ki Billi and Indira Ammey. Well, coming back to Adishwar Irani; he also made two other significant films; one was Kissan Kanya and it has the distinction of being the first ever color film in 1937 and then, he also made a Persian film, a Parsi talkie film called Dukhtar Elar. This film is important because an Indian girl was cast in an Iranian film. For Kissan Kanya, Adishwar Irani bought the rights to use the cini color process

from an American company. The film was based on a novel by Saadat Hasan Manto and highlighted the plight of poor farmers.

The film was not a great success, all particularly, because of its grim theme, the serious content, because by then, the audiences had become more used to the song and dance elements and you know, mythology, the love stories. So, Kissan Kanya was more serious kind of a film and it didn't go down too well with audiences. Well, the first great film female star of Hindi cinema was Zubaida, who played the female lead in Alam Ara. She acted with great stars of that periods such as Prithiv Raj Kapoor, master Vittal and Jal Merchant. She played also the leading character or lead role in several mythologies, where she was mythological character films, where she played roles such as Subhadra, Uthara and Draupathi. She played a circus girl in Zarina and later, enacted several Cartesian rules in period films and also acted in an adaptation of Rabindranath Tagore's work, Balidan. The success of all these films; what did they do? They provided us with a template; musical love stories; so, that is something that works, and that has continued to work till date. The songs did found a permanent place in Hindi films. Now, this also let to increase or interest in playback singing.

Nitin Bose directed Bengali film, Bhagya Chakra, which was a 1935 film, which was the first Indian film to use playback singing. The singers were KC. Dev, Parul Ghosh and Suprabha Sarkar. The film was remade in Hindi as Doop Chaw, which became the first Hindi film to use play back singing. Another land mark film of this period was Devdass, starring the great singing star, KL. Sagle and also Jamuna and Raj Kumari. It is a 1936 film, directed by PC. Barua. Let us watch a clipping from Devdass with the great Sagle, singing a song, and here is the link to you tube.

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Another great film of this period and it is also an important film, because of the social theme that it touched upon is *Athoth Kanya*. It is one of the first films, earliest film to title the theme of untouchability in India, which is a very serious social problem in many parts of our country. The film starred the great Ashok Kumar and Devika Rani, and was directed by France Austin, a German film director and have the distinction of having the first female music composer, Saraswathi Devi. At this point, let me tell you we have had a very few examples of female music composers. Recently, of late perhaps, the few, we have numbers had increased, but for a very long time especially, on Hindi film seen; we had music directors that could be counted on fingers. So, Saraswathi Bai, the first have a female music composer.

Bombay talkies was an important, a very important film studio of that time and Ashok Kumar was an employee; that is the way things were those days. Actors were on the contract with certain major parts of studios. Bombay talkie's *Kismath* was one of the most successful films of those times. It made Ashok Kumar, the super star of Hindi films. I would go as far as calling him the first real super star of Hindi cinema and he served as a role model for the typical urban swore kind of a hero, and this is also template for our heroes. The film also started the lost and found formula, as well as the so called double role formula, which is still so popular, especially, if you look at the films of the 60s and the 70s and the 80s, every second film has the lost and found and the double role template. *Kismath* also had the great patriotic song, which was written by Pradeep that is [FL], *Hindustan Hamara Hai*. Now, the first Indian film to gain international recognition

was Chetan Anand's debut film *Neecha Nagar*, and it shared the grand three, the festival of the international, the film for the best picture.

The film was written by K. Abbas, the great social commentator writer with a very strong sense of social purpose, and he was another; it was one of the first attempts in social realism in Indian cinema, almost along the lines of, we have been talking about the Italian new realistic cinema. The *Neecha Nagar* is quiet metaphorical. It also uses expressionistic techniques. We have been talking about expressionism in length, in this course and *Neecha Nagar*, quite literally, is the lower city. So, on the upper sides, you have the very rich people and the lower side, you have the poor people. So, it is the binary between the two social classes. This film starred Uma Anand, Rafiq Ahmed and Zohra Sehgal and also introduced Kamini Goshan, who became a major Hindi film star. The film was also loosely inspired, was an inspired version of Maxim Gorky's work, *Lower Deaths*, and very significantly, it mark the debut of the sitar maestro Ravishankar; Pandit Ravishankar as the music composer. This was also the late 40's and early 50's, was also the time in India, started hosting the international film festivals.

The first international film festival of India was hosted in Bombay, Madras and Calcutta. It was called Madras those days. By the films division in 1952, Mehboob Khan's epic film, *Mother India* was nominated for the Oscar's in the category of best foreign language film in 1958. Some of the other great films of this time are *Mehal Andaz* and *Baiju Bawra*. I am going to end this lecture today at this point and would strongly urge you to watch *Mehal Andaz* and *Baiju Bawra* and then, in our next class, we will continue with the history of Hindi cinema; that will be the second part of this lecture.

Thank you very much.