Hindi Parallel Cinema

Hindi Parallel Cinema refers to Indian art cinema made in the Hindi-language. As with Indian Parallel Cinema, it is mostly defined through its ideological opposition to Popular Indian Cinema. More specifically, it refers to the ‘New Cinema Movement’ (roughly from 1969 to 1985), which might be described as a historical moment when the impact of this art cinema was both nationally and internationally at its height. Major figures include Shyam Benegal, Kumar Shahani, Mani Kaul, Govind Nihalani, Saeed Akhtar Mirza, Ketan Mehta, Kundan Shah, Vidhu Vinod Chopra, Sudhir Mishra, Kamal Swaroop, Rabindra Dharmaraj, Prakash Jha, Avtar Kaul, Ramesh Sharma, Aruna-Vikas and Sai Paranjpe (though not all of them work(ed) in Hindi exclusively).

With the origins of both the Parallel and New Cinema mainly in Bengal (with filmmaker Satyajit Ray as its key representative) and the establishment of institutions such as the International Film Festival of India (IFFI, 1952-), the Film Finance Corporation (FFC, 1960-; in 1975 renamed and restructured as the National Film Development Council, NFDC) and the Film Training Institute of India (FTII, 1960-; later renamed Film and Television Institute of India), Hindi-language art cinema emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s consolidating itself with the early successes of director Shyam Benegal (especially *Ankur* released in 1974). In the following years, its capital Bombay became one of the centres of Indian art filmmaking alongside Bengal, Kerala and Karnataka.

Maybe because of its proximity to the mainstream industry, the Hindi parallel films tend to be more open to generic and commercial elements than their counterparts from Bengal or Kerala. The so-called ‘Middle-of-the-road Cinema’ by filmmakers such as Basu Chatterjee (*Rajnigandha*, 1974) or Mahesh Bhatt (*Arth*, 1982), too, established itself most forcefully in the Hindi-language film industry because of this proximity. However, the early successes could not be sustained for long and a period of decline began in the mid-1980s, considerably reinforced by a string of commercial hits of a reinvigorated Popular Hindi Cinema in the late eighties. While both parallel and middle-of-the-road films continued (and continue) to be made in Hindi, they lost much of their cultural significance.

Facilitated by the corporatisation of the Bombay film industry, the early 2000s saw the emergence of what has been labelled as ‘Hindi indies’ or ‘Multiplex Cinema’. While, in Western contexts, “multiplex” stands mostly for Hollywood blockbusters, in India, it has become an exhibition platform where more variety and choice of product is possible. Seminal films include *Company* (2002, Ram Gopal Varma), *Black Friday* (2004, Anurag Kashyap), *Khosla Ka Ghosla* (2006, Dibakar Banerjee) and *Bheja Fry* (2007, Sagar Ballari) among others. Although these films are repeatedly referred to as Parallel Cinema, their inclusion is problematic. A rather vague term from the production angle, the multiplex film might be most productively defined by the specific audience it is targeting: a Westernised urban middle-class. Thus, the ‘Hindi indies’ are marked by very different aesthetic sensibilities and thematic concerns from the traditional parallel films, and mostly lack any form of oppositional stance so characteristic of Indian art cinema.

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