

# Preservation of Cinema as Cultural Heritage of a Nation with Special Reference to India

Sanjukta Ray Pahari

## Abstract

*Much of what a man is pertains to his imagination. Indeed, imaginary are his hopes, his intentions, his ideas of himself. People dream of their lives and live on their dreams. The dividing line between living and dreaming is not always clear. Films are collective dream of society. They provide society with mythologies or patterns of behaviour. However, the mass appeal of the movies is a clear indication that most people today respond in one way or another to the dream like fantasies projected on the screen. It is necessary to grasp the significance of the preservation of movies in the life of the people. Preservation of cinema is no doubt the issue that haunts cinema preservationist, archivist librarians at the moment.*

**Keywords:** Communication, Preservation, Preservation-Cinema, Cultural Heritage

## 1. Introduction

Cinema is that particular language whereby the film-maker shares his dreams with the audience. Cinema has the unique power to lead the audience on in a sort of dream, leaving very little freedom in regard to the particulars of that dream. One studies poetry or drama through the works of great poets and dramatists. One comes to know whole passages by heart. The same method can be employed in the study of cinema. Cinema is an appearance of continuous motion created by motionless images which we have been arranged in an appropriate succession so as to produce fiction out of reality. In fact, cinema covers the range of all films taken collectively. If we point out the role played by cinema in the life of human being we find that the mental universe created in its mass audience by the film itself. This knowledge is necessary in order to grasp the significance of the movies in the life of the people.

## 2. The Essential Need of Man is Communication

Communication with others is so obviously a fact of life, it is not so obviously a fact of life, it is no exaggeration to say that hardly any one is without communication problems. The inability to communicate is felt when a person is deprived of the use of essential sense organs. The case of Helen Keller is striking in this respect. On the other hand, a person may enjoy full use of all sense organs and still be unable to communicate properly with others. For the core of a human person consists of its social relationships. Fundamentally, communication is direct or natural-it is achieved without the help of any instrument other than the human body. With writing indirect or technological communication appeared, because physical proximity between sender and receiver was no more necessary, and communication was established via a technological medium. Besides, indirect communication does not imply a specific social relationship between the sender and the receiver.



### **3. Social or Mass Communication**

The tremendous progress made by science and technology introduced newer and more efficient means of communication which gave back to the spoken word and to the image the importance that years of writing and printing had taken away. The first wireless patent is registered in the 1890s, the first cinema shows take place, the telegraph network and the underwater cables are set, the linotype makes fast newspaper composition possible, popular journalism reaches out to wider audiences thanks to photos and illustrations. In the 1920s the importance of the cinema as a mass entertainment, the role of the press in democratic societies becomes manifest. These new modes of communication did not emerge independently of the social structures which gave birth to what has been called a mass society. Mass communication is the essential part of a mass society; it is directed to the mass man.

### **4. Cinema and the Society**

Every person has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts. This is required in order to develop fully as a human being. Cinema as a medium of art can be a unique communication between the artist and his/her fellow-men. The artist raises about the barriers of language and nation when he/she expresses himself/herself in all sincerity and earnestness. What the artist says about life, death, love, joy, and suffering acquires universal significance, for he speaks of experiences that are familiar to all. Thus the artist helps his/her fellowmen to acknowledge one another as brothers sharing the same human existence. For instance, Satyajit Ray's *Aparajito* has gone a long way to make Europeans and Americans understand and love India. At the same time, foreign audiences recognize something of themselves in the characteristics of Apu, Harihar and Sarbajaya. Had

Apu, Harihar and Sarbajaya tried to be an All-India artist, or an international artist?

### **5. Impact of the Cinema in Society**

We can discuss the above topic in two distinct ways:-

**(i) Material aspect of life-** Impact of cinema on the material aspect of life implies the elements of impact, which can be perceived through sensory organs and/or more evident, which are explicit and visible. These are as follows-

**(a) Fashion, Dress and Personal Decoration-**

Fashions and dresses are said to have been greatly influenced by films in general and film-stars in particular. In recent years, the film heroes and heroines have acquired the great currently under the guise of being mod. People very often fell in lively discussion regarding the spread and day to day ongoing changes in fashions and dresses in society. In the late forties and early fifties, a number of popular film stars like Dilip Kumar, Dev Anand and Raj Kapoor became the trend-setters in personal decoration and styles.

**(b) Etiquette and manners-** Cinema in general, which also served as a vehicle of westernization and secularization especially in 1950s, led to gradual decline of tradition, etiquette and manners pertaining to either intra-family relations between parents and children, brother and brother or those elders, which in traditional societies were characterised by some amount of social distance, restraint and family decorum. Etiquettes and manners pertaining to the

relationship between boys and girls is another area of life, which seems to have been deeply affected through cinema.

(c) **Crime-** It is often said that one of the reasons of increasing crime in society is due to the influence of films, which, irrespective of their thematic requirements, in unending ways have shown tendencies to incorporate and as well as glamourize one or the other elements of crime. The incidents of crime happening in society, by and large, show somewhat similar use of different elements of crime like that of films.

(ii) **Non-Material aspect of life-** The impact of films on the non-material aspects of life relate to the realm of ideas viz. belief system, values and ideals, aspirations, knowledge and awareness to certain problems and evils in our society. These are as follows-

(a) **Belief Systems-** The religious, mythological and devotional films are well known to have been creating their significant impact on belief system of the people.

(b) **Values and Ideals** – Compare to the Western cinema, we find that most of the Indian cinema, barring those which are religious ones or especially those made after independence or even before that have been inculcating the values pertaining to modernity which implies within it secularization and equalitarian values.

(c) **Aspiration-** A number of entertaining and so-called commercial cinema depict that people born in poor circumstances, by dint of their perseverance or that of their guardians, rise to that of great social and economic heights though usually the means they adopt and their success in shorter span of time may not be rational and viable.

(d) **Knowledge, Education, Problems and probable solutions-** Cinema also adds to the knowledge of the people and educates the masses in different ways. In this regard we may see that the documentary and the ethnographic films remain supreme because of their direct and meaningful relevance to broaden our horizon of knowledge or to tell something about the people.

#### **6. Contribution of cinema to the national integration of a nation**

India is an example of multiple societies characterized by diversities of all types. The pre and post-independent India witnessed eruption of disintegrating forces in the name of

region, religion, caste and the like. There have been various religious riots at different points of time, instances of caste discrimination or caste riots in recent decades and assassination of Mrs. Gandhi and the like factors, operating in the country, very often created an atmosphere to emphasize on national integration. Debates are held and efforts are also being undertaken to reach the goal of national integration.

The national integration has been a much talked about subject in the cinema world. Indian cinema has also served “as an integrating force” and as well contributed to the “national unity”. While looking at Indian cinema from this point of view, we find that it has “contributed to national unity” and this impact works in two different ways. Firstly on the organizational level of cinema it presents an ideal model of unity and integration whereas secondly, it is the impact which the Indian cinema wields through its various films.

By its very nature, cinema is an integrating force. It reaches out to the people scattered all over the country and brings them closer by enabling them to share common experiences. We may describe the atmosphere of a cinema hall like- a person have no idea who is his next-seat neighbour – He may be Brahmin Hindu of orthodox of liberal views, orthodox of liberal Muslims, or a Harijan. You are all packed in this black-box which is the neighbourhood cinema theatre, air-conditioned or otherwise amidst a diversity of people. That means the atmosphere is conducive to National integration – as all sorts of people are intermingled together.

#### **7. Film Restoration/ Film Preservation for the Benefit of the Society**

Cinema captures cultural heritage of a country and present as a form of entertainment. They are vital in showcasing the history, art, culture, and lifestyles of many generations. Cinemas basically represent the culture and civilization unique to its people, varying from generation to generation. This is clearly reflected in the movies which are being restored to pristine condition. A number of classic films produced in 1930's and 1950's have been lost due to acts of nature and the rest are slowly degrading due to different factors on the environment like high humidity, moisture and poor storage conditions and neglect. We are also losing the quality of the negatives of such in part or as a whole and their maintenance as a library is becoming more difficult.

Since the establishment of the first national film archives, restoration, conservation and the preparation of copies for access has been carried out using current commercial film techniques and the currently available printing and duplicating film

stocks. Film Preservation includes the physical storage of the film in a climate-controlled vault, and to repair and copy the actual film element. Film preservation is slightly different from film restoration. Film restoration indicates the act of returning the film to a version most faithful to its initial release to the public and often involves combining various fragments of film elements.

#### **8. What is Film Preservation or Film Restoration?**

Many non-profit organizations, film historians, archivists, Film museums and filmmakers sensing the danger of losing their films in entirety are keen to see their cinemas have a rebirth. According to them film preservation or restoration is now an ongoing project to rescue decaying film stock and preserve the images which they contain. Conventional film preservation operates within the limits of the modern film stocks. Digital Film Preservation is the answer to their pestering problems of repairing old films. Film Restoration is the process of repairing damaged films, whether in celluloid film or video tape, both by physical and digital restoration processes and presenting a new pristine restored sequence of images in any media.

#### **9. Need of Film Preservation or Film Restoration**

Thousands of the old films made before the 80s were lost forever. Cinemas of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were filmed on cellulose nitrate film base and as we know cellulose nitrate are unstable and highly flammable. It requires careful storage to slow its inevitable process of decomposition over time. Most of the film stock made on cellulose nitrate was not properly preserved. As a result now,

all the negatives and prints of these films are crumbled into dust and they were recycled for their silver content, or destroyed in studios or vault fire. We may also pointed out about the intentional destruction. According to film preservationist Robert A.Harris, Most of the early films did not survive because of wholesale junking by the studios. There are3 no thought of ever saving these films. They simply needed vault space and materials were expensive to house.

On the other hand the film researchers and preservationist also found that not only the film made on cellulose nitrate but also the colour films are also decaying rapidly. Cellulose acetate films has been found to suffer from vinegar syndrome. Indeed the preservation of colour films has been found to involve a compromise, due to loe temperatures, which inhibit color fading, actually increase the effects of vinegar syndrome, while colour temperatures cause colour fading.

#### **10. Digital Restoration of Film Images**

Digital Restoration is the use of film scanners, to produce an “electronic intermediate” and film recorders to duplicate film. Potentially it can handle any fotrmat, any process, and almost any deterioration of the image, provided some image is still there, coping with serious image fading. It can disguise scratches and marks and reconstruct, within reason, missing images. Digital restoration can be considered as an image duplicating systems like any other film duplicating sequence:

ORIGINAL FILM [negative or positive] ->  
ELECTRONIC INTERMEDIATE -> FILM

The immediate image stage may be on tape, disc or frame store. The final film is usually a colour

negative from which prints can be made by conventional printing.

#### **11. Examples for Digital Restoration**

Modern restoration techniques for colour film use modern film materials designed to interface with other modern materials and were never designed to duplicate old film images. Few of the current modern film restoration routes resembles the original route. This is restorations would provide better, more accurate results.

- ◆ Tined and toned nitrate film is currently copied onto modern colour negative film and a modern graded colour print made, or a black and white duplicate negative is made from the original coloured projection print and this printed by various techniques onto modern colour print film.
- ◆ Unmasked colour negative film of 1950 is printed onto modern colour print film using black and white separation positives and a modern colour negative film as intermediate stages.
- ◆ A set of separation negatives is printed onto black and white film and the resulting positives printed in register using RGB filters onto modern colour intermediate film to make a colour negative. This is printed onto a modern colour print stock. This system is a procedure developed from the commercial protection master method still today.
- ◆ Scratches and dust can be removed by various film techniques but “copied in” scratches and dust images from earlier generations cannot. Digital restoration can remove or minimize

these effects and also “reconstruct” missing images, caused by film damage.

- ◆ Digital restoration can restore images that are difficult or impossible to restore any other way apart from dye fading and repair of image damage and dirt. This includes:

(i) 1920's to 1950 colour prints on 'duplited' two-colour film,

(ii) Very early tinted or toned that have faded in patches irregularly, and faded stenciled and hand coloured films where one dye is the worst. Photographic methods now exist for the restoration of most tinted and toned films.

## **12. Digital Film Restoration Technique**

In the direction of preventing the damage to the negatives and restoring their quality, Thinksmart is into the Digital Film restoration technique and has successfully carried out prestigious projects.

This technique includes thorough inspection of the film and the status of the negative; analyze the important

aspects like image resolution and vibration, granularity, colors and responses, Mould, Missing frames, Grain Reduction, Scene Touch-up, Noise and Density vibrations.

Secondly, the Film Restoration will be taken up to restore the original quality, effectively dealing with the damaged parts due to fungus and dust deposits. The films so restored will be recorded either on the negative or the DVD format depending upon the requirement of the client. We are very much aware about the historic value of the films. We are working and living with the film industry, speak its language

and attentive to its needs. This makes Thinksmart an inseparable part of the film world.

## **13. Problems of Digital Restoration**

- ◆ Digital equipment and software has not been designed for archive film restoration- Some software has been designed to cope with the lack of neutrality and 'cross contrast' as a result of faded dye images [eg Cineon] but the correction is carried out pragmatically with the aim of achieving a visually acceptable image. There is no software that aims to restore a faded image to the specific dyes, saturations and tonal response of a particular extinct colour print[eg Technicolour] and then permit the image to be graded within these limitations.
- ◆ It is difficult to define when an ethically acceptable result has been made.
- ◆ No consideration has yet been given to the restoration of two-colour films.
- ◆ Digital restoration is no better at restoring additive colour systems than film methods.

## **14. Initiatives - for Preservation of Cinema as a cultural heritage in different part of the world including India**

### **14.1 National Film Preservation Act of 1988**

The original National Film Preservation Act of 1988 (Public Law 100-446) was a appropriation bill for the United States of America.

#### **This Act includes-**

- (i) Directs the Librarian of Congress to establish a National Film Registry to register films which are culturally, historically, or aesthetically important.

(ii) Prohibits any person from knowingly distributing or exhibiting to the public a film that has been materially altered, or a black and white film that has been coloured and is included in the Registry, unless such films are labeled disclosing specified information.

(iii) Directs the Librarian to establish in the Library of Congress a National Film Preservation Board.

**14.2 The National Film Preservation Act of 1992** reauthorized the National Film Preservation Board (NFPB) for four years (Public Law 102-307) and added the requirement for the Librarian of Congress to “study and report to the Congress on the current state of film preservation and restoration activities, including the activities of the Library of Congress and other major film archives in the United States; and (2) establish a comprehensive national film preservation program for motion pictures, in conjunction with other film archivists and copyright owners.”

**14.3 The National Film Preservation Act of 1996** reauthorized the NFPB for an additional seven years (Public Law 104-285), and also created the National Film Preservation Foundation (NFPF) as a charitable organization, although the NFPF is not a government agency.<sup>[3]</sup> The NFPF in turn established the National Film Registry.

**14.4 The National Film Preservation Act of 2005** reauthorized both the NFPB and the NFPF (Public Law 109-009) for an additional four years.

**14.5 In Canada the Audio-Visual Preservation Trust** is non-profit organization

dedicated to promoting the preservation of Canada’s audio-visual heritage, and to facilitating access to regional and national collections through partnerships with members of Canada’s audio-visual community. In 2008, the Conservative government eliminated \$300,000 in funding for the Trust, leading to the cancellation of the program.

**14.6 The BFI National Archive** is a department of the British Film Institute, and one of the largest film archives in the world. Until 2006 it was known as the National Film and Television Archive. BFI collects, preserves, restores and then shares the films and television programmes which have helped to shape and record British life and times since cinema was invented in the late nineteenth century. The majority of the collection is British material but it also features internationally significant holdings from around the world. The Archive also collects films which feature key British actors and the work of British directors.

Film preservation is an ongoing project among filmmakers, historians, archivists, museums, and non-

profit organisations to rescue aging film stock and preserve recorded images. The collections held at the BFI National Archive were started in 1935 by Ernest Lindgren, the first curator of what was then called the National Film Library. It later changed its name to National Film Archive (1955-1992) and National Film and Television Archive (1992-2006). It now comprises over 275,000 feature, non-fiction and short films (dating from 1894) and

210,000 television programmes. In recent years the Conservation Centre has completed a number of much anticipated restorations of a diverse range of film titles. This has included the Mitchell and Kenyon collection, which consists almost entirely of actuality films commissioned by travelling fairground operators for showing at local fairgrounds or other venues across the U.K. in the early part of the twentieth century.

#### **15. Nation Film Archive of India(NFAI), Pune**

National Film Archive of India is the effort of Govt. of India, Ministry of Information of Broadcasting. The mission of the National Film Archive of India is to safeguard the heritage of Indian Cinema for posterity and act as a centre for dissemination of a healthy film culture in the country. Familiarising foreign audiences with Indian Cinema and to make it more visible across the globe is another declared objective of the NFAI. In the beginning, the NFAI film collection was stored in improvised film vaults in the premises of the Film & TV Institute of India. Since the

inauguration of its new building in 1994, NFAI has its own film vaults designed according to international film preservation standards. The films are stored in a controlled environment with temperature of about 15° C and relative humidity of 50% which is ideally suited to preserve black and white films. In future the archive will construct additional vaults for storage of colour films which require cooler and drier conditions. The small but invaluable nitrate collection has been transferred to safety base. Printing and duplication work is done in different laboratories in Pune, Bombay and

other centres. But in the long run, NFAI is planning to have its own restoration laboratory for specialized work on shrunk and decomposed material and to ensure superior quality control. The major thrust of work in this section is to take care of the film material by periodic checking. This helps to identify the decaying material which needs immediate attention.

This discussion is limited to the work of a very few countries of the world.

#### **16. Conclusion**

In the last few decades preservation of cinema has become an 'essential part of the growing art of collection management. Measures to preserve cinema cannot be avoided or postponed, since their life span is relatively short as we find see in our discussion. Many films may start losing quality after only a few years' time due to intrinsic processes. Developing preservation strategies for cinema requires specific expertise on storage, environment, package materials and restoration treatment. In respect of film preservation, one can find the most important criteria for selecting the film for preservation is public demand.

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**About Author**

**Ms. Sanjukta Ray Pahari**, Asst. Librarian, Satyajit Ray Film & Television Institute (Ministry of I & B, Govt of India), Kolkata - 700094.