Crisis and Struggle: the formation of the cinema in British India, 1913-1947

This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of Murdoch University.

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I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any university.

Brian Shoesmith
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THESIS ABSTRACT

The formative period of the Indian film industry occurred against a background of political turmoil that emerged from the Congress struggle to win independence from Britain. The political struggle induced a state of crisis for British rule that had economic, cultural and psychological dimensions. This crisis of hegemony was displaced by the British onto film. As a new medium of communication film presented the British authorities in India with a set of specific problems that transgressed their conscious desire for the maintenance of political and cultural hegemony. In order to control film, and through this their hegemony, the British sought to establish economic, social and political boundaries in which film could operate. Film, however, in India originated beyond the immediate culture sphere of dominance of the British. In the first place it originated in America and increasingly after the 1920s in the Indian cultural domain. Effectively the cinema was beyond the control of the British. Film production in India was located firmly in the Indian economic and cultural domains and British influence on its formation and development was marginal, which reflects the political situation of the period 1913-47.

In taking this view I contest the orthodox accounts of the formative years which implicitly accord the British a central role. The orthodox view sees the British role in film as reflecting the central political role of
the British in the events of 1913-1947. However, the British fought essentially rearguard actions against the inevitability of Indian political independence. Their role was similar in respect to controlling the cinema. Another dimension of the orthodoxy is to see the influence of the British as essentially malign. The view arises from the claims of the film industry itself which, through its professional organizations, sought legitimacy for the industry through a variety of means, including government financial support. When the Government of India investigated the problems of the Indian film industry in 1927-28 it found a thriving industry based on the indigenous money markets for its capital. Far from being negligible the industry had grown at a healthy rate from its shaky beginnings in 1913, its rate of production increasing rapidly through the 1920s. Consequently the Government could find no reason for providing financial support to the industry.

In constructing my account of the formative period of the Indian film industry I look closely at the complex political, economic, cultural and communal relationship surrounding the industry. In the first place I look at the crisis in British hegemony and show how it shaped the Anglo-Indian discourse of film. Then I go on to trace the development of the various Indian discourses on film, comparing them to the British, showing how it was Indian discourses that shaped the parameters of development. These are related to the influence of the Hollywood staple on both discourse formation and film practice which I show to be a finely measured and complex act of reciprocity. In order to substantiate my claims I examine in close detail the economic base of the film industry and relate it to the development of the Indian film as an indigenous cultural form. The complex set of relations between the form and the economic base, it will be shown, existed entirely in the Indian domain which was both
misunderstood and misrepresented by the British. To understand the depth of the disjunction I examine the various interventions on the part of the British into the Indian film discourse to show how marginal their influence really was. This view is augmented by a chapter that addresses the vexed topic of censorship which has hitherto dominated accounts of the British influence on the Indian film industry. Again, through an analysis of censorship data I show the marginalization of the British who found it impossible to constrain Indian film production because of its location within traditional cultural practices.

In conclusion I argue that the crises of the formative period of the Indian film industry were determined by Indian considerations: the lack of capital, the struggle to gain cultural legitimacy, the problem of political recognition. The struggle to achieve these represents the struggles within Indian formations more than a struggle against the domination of British control.
"Things are not yet perfect, of course" sighed the Collector. "All the same, I should go so far as to say that in the long run a superior civilization such as ours is irresistible. By combining our advances in science and in morality we have so obviously found the best way of doing things. Truth cannot be resisted! Er, that's to say, not successfully," the Collector added as a round shot struck the corner of the roof ....

J.G. Farrel, (1973)  
Siege of Krishnapur.  
Weidenfeld and Nicolson,  
London. p.171
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PREFACE

It has become commonplace to observe that India now has the largest film industry in the world. Each year a massive number of feature films are produced in the principal Indian film production centres: in 1985 the number produced exceeded 700 films. However, when this study began in the late 1970s, it was taken as a sign of eccentricity to express an interest in the Indian film industry. Apart from a limited number of books, the Indian film industry was not seen as a sufficiently important object of study to warrant a detailed scholarly examination of its origins and operations.

Fortunately this state of affairs has changed both within India and in the West, although much of the interest in the Indian cinema can be seen as merely journalistic or fashionable. Nevertheless a body of work has begun to emerge which provides some basis for understanding the complexities of one of the world's most important film industries, although its history remains "virtually uncharted territory" (Rajadhyaksha, 1986:24).

My venture into "the uncharted territory" had three sources. Firstly, my academic background until the late 1970s had been in the fields of history and literature. At a comparatively late stage I had been introduced to South Asian History which I found both fulfilling and truly fascinating. In order to maintain my links with South Asia at a post-graduate level, I sought an area of study that had hitherto been largely ignored in the field. I identified the history of the Indian cinema in the British era as an area that required investigation and reassessment. Secondly, I had become a lecturer in Media Studies at the tertiary level. This position arose out of my formal and informal studies in film and long commitment to
and involvement in the film society movement. At this point Media Studies was in its infancy as an academic discipline. It seemed to me that a history of the Indian cinema could combine the two interests at one stroke. In retrospect it was an excellent choice.

My third reason for approaching the Indian cinema as an object of study is the most complex and important. Standard histories of the cinema are distinctly biased towards America and Europe in their accounts, providing scant details of non-European cinemas such as Japan, China, India and Latin America, a situation which I found unsatisfactory. In the 1960s as part of the film society movement I had been exposed to representative films from each region. Like most film buffs of the era I had seen the films of Satyajit Ray which I enjoyed immensely. I had also seen some South Indian films which dazzled me with their excess of colour, sound and gesture and drew upon a different cultural tradition to the films of Ray. I decided I wanted to know more about a national cinema that could produce the neo-realistic and disciplined Euro-centric films of Ray and the non-realistic, chaotic and vital mythologicals of South India. My studies in South Asian history provided the background.

My search for more information led me to the standard books on the subject; Barnouw and Krishnaswamy's Indian Cinema (1963; 2nd rev'd ed. 1980); Shah's Indian Film (1950) and Rangoonwalla's 75 Years of Indian Cinema (1975). Other books have been published subsequently. What initially struck me was that all of the books, with varying degrees of success, covered the same issues, discussed the same topics, analysed the same films, and cited the same references. The only difference was the social and cultural context. It occurred to me that there must be more to the Indian cinema than these standard accounts. This view has been borne
out by the increased interest in Indian film history among both Indian and Western film scholars in recent years.

Added to this interest in Indian film as a suitable object of study was a perception that the orientation of the standard film histories distorted the realities of film history. Since the 1950s film production in the West has steadily declined and the audience for films has massively declined for a variety of sociological reasons. In the non-Western world quite the reverse has occurred. There has been a distinct shift. India has become the world's largest producer of films, which has generated massive audiences. Similar developments have occurred in China, South-East Asia and Africa. The standard histories ignore these developments and continue to provide yet another account of Hollywood or of Germany in the 1920s. There is little attempt to understand the significance of film as a medium of expression or mode of communication in a non-Western country. The assumption seems to be that we can understand the Indian cinema or the Thai cinema in the same terms as Hollywood. This thesis is an attempt to begin to redress that imbalance.

My thesis has had a long gestation and has incurred more than the usual debts. It began in the History Department of the University of Western Australia. I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the late Dr Hugh Owen who taught me more about India than I ever appreciated at the time. His love of Indian history and culture was infectious. Professor Peter Reeves, my first supervisor, continued the work of Hugh Owen, provoking me to avoid narrative and become more analytical, and has continued to give generously of his profound knowledge of India as well as make available his extensive resources. I must also thank the University of Western Australia for making available funds for me to conduct field research and
purchase microfilm and other resources that have been crucial to my research. The Librarians at the University of Western Australia have also been generous of their time in my search for additional materials.

I must also thank my institution in its various manifestations for the support it has provided in writing this thesis. Firstly, the West Australian Teachers' College provided funds for me and my family to spend six months in India and London. Without this support much of the initial research would have been impossible. In addition I must thank the Western Australian College of Advanced Education who awarded me a Sabbatical to write up my thesis. Again without this time and space the thesis would not have seen the light of day. I must also acknowledge the help of Miss Jenny Marshall, Senior Librarian, Nedlands Campus of the College, who has always found time to help me track down obscure references.

Writing a thesis always involved innumerable contributions from others. Like all other students who have haunted the Archives I must thank the Director and Staff of the India Office and Library, London who graciously hunted up and found the dusty and obscure files necessary for my research. Similarly, my thanks to the Director and Staff at the National Archives of India in New Delhi and the Director of the Nehru Memorial Library, New Delhi who assisted me willingly in the pursuit of materials.

A special debt of gratitude goes to all those people in India who, bemused by my passion for Indian film, guided me through the labyrinth. There are too many to cite individually, those who sat through viewings and translated for me and answered my naive questions, explained quite elementary points of etiquette and protocol, and taught me about India. However, it would be churlish of me not to acknowledge those who made the
greatest contribution to my education. Firstly, Sri Jagdish Murti, Director of the All India Film and Television School, Pune in 1978 and 1979 who made me welcome at the School and its resources available; Professor Satish Bahadur, then professor of Film Appreciation at the School, who listened patiently to my questions and gave generously of his encyclopaedic knowledge of Indian film. Associate Professor B S S Rao who took me under his wing and explained a great deal about Indian culture. Others to whom I am in debt are Pramod Kale, K P R Nair and S T Baskaran who likewise spent a good deal of their time listening to me. Finally, I must acknowledge the assistance of P K Nair, Curator of the All India Film Archives and his staff who always welcome scholars to their holdings and help in every conceivable way in smoothing the path of research.

In addition to the normal acknowledgements I must thank Sri and Srimati N Bhulerao who took me and my family into their home in Pune. Their friendship and assistance enriched our stay.

Dr Kenneth McPherson, Director of the Centre of Indian Ocean Studies, Curtin University of Technology, Perth read parts of my thesis. My thanks for his comments. Dr Vijay Mishra, School of Humanities, Murdoch University has also discussed the finer points of individual films in great depth. I wish to thank both of them for their time and help. Associate Professor Robert Hodge, School of Humanities, Murdoch University assumed the role of supervisor of this thesis when I transferred my studies from the University of Western Australia to Murdoch University. Bob has repeatedly pointed out the obvious to me, curbed my excesses, and provided invaluable assistance in structuring the narrative. His guidance and help has been invaluable. Margaret Frame initially translated my untidy scrawl into type. Deb Westerberg has had similar problems with the
revisions, additions and deletions. The assistance of both has been
immeasurable and I would like to thank them for their hard work and
assistance in producing the thesis.

There are two other people who contributed information and insight to my
thesis who must be acknowledged. Firstly, Miss Mary Thatcher, Curator,
Centre for South Asian Studies, Cambridge who not only made available to
me the vast visual holdings on Anglo-Indian life in India but also spent
time taking me through Films From the Raj at the Steinbeck editing desk.
Miss Thatcher also put me in touch with the late R Johnson, I.C.S. (R'td).
Mr Johnson made Truth Will Out during his career as District Officer in
the United Provinces. His many detailed and interesting letters were a
delight and enriched my understanding of Anglo-Indian life in India and
contributed to my reading of his film.

Finally, over the last decade two groups have to put up with my labouring
at the thesis. Firstly, I would like to thank my students who have
listened courteously as I have tried out my ideas on them despite the
groans which invariably greeted "Now in India ...."! But above all I
must acknowledge the support of my wife Vivien and children Francesca,
Patrick, Gavin and Briony for the duration. As a result of my work on the
Indian cinema they have grown to know and love India both at first hand
and vicariously. This fact alone has made it all worthwhile.
CHAPTER ONE

APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF INDIAN CINEMA

Approaches to the development of the Indian film industry have hitherto adopted one of two approaches. They have either followed a strictly historical approach that has been leavened with an acknowledgement of the economic dimension of the industry, or they have adopted an anthropological approach. The historical approach exemplified in the work of Dharap (1972-1978) and Rangoonwalla (1975; 1979; 1981) has established a chronological framework in which Indian films may be analysed. However, they have systematically ignored two other significant analytical methodologies in creating their frame of reference: the anthropological approach and discourse analysis. The reasons for this are obscure but possibly arise from the fact that the cultural aspects of Indian cinema were, for these writers, transparent and taken for granted. Barnouw and Krishnaswamy partially addressed this absence in their standard historical work *Indian Film* (1963; 2nd rev'd ed. 1980). Pfleiderer and Lutze in *The Hindi Film* (1985) have adopted an almost entirely anthropological approach to the subject and virtually ignored the history of the form they are exploring. My thesis in contrast is the first detailed and systematic attempt to continue the culturalist, discursive and historical methodologies in an extended and coherent form. Its central argument is quite simple: that Indian culture and discourse were always the central determining factors in the development of the Indian film industry, and that they were also massively there but occluded by an unwillingness to recognise them. Further, the Indian contribution to film practice in all its dimensions, production, exhibition, distribution and regulation, was
the single most critical element in the formation of the Indian film industry.

Others have noticed the lacunae and distortions in accounting for the development of the Indian film industry. In an important essay in the English film journal Framework (32/33, 1986, 20-67) Ashish Rajadhyaksha surveys the contemporary situation in respect to film scholarship and the Indian cinema. He establishes in a schematic fashion a theory of Indian film history that agrees with the one developed by me at a number of salient points.

Rajadhyaksha argues that there have been four approaches to the study of the Indian popular or commercial cinema which have emerged from a collaborative discourse between India and the West. These approaches are: that of "scornful amusement" (p.21); the populist approach; the diagnostic approach; and finally the culturalist approach. Rajadhyaksha also discerns the beginning of a fifth approach which combines both diagnostic and culturalist analytic techniques (pp.25-29) although there is no substantive body of writing yet on which to base this claim.

Of the first approach Rajadhyaksha is in turn rightly scornful. Its major characteristic is to view the commercial cinema as infantile eccentricities of an intellectually underdeveloped mass audience supplied with entertainment by a film industry that markets its quaintly simple-minded naivety. (p.21)

Indian proponents of this view subscribe to either colonial elitist views or have a classicist attitude to art which generally discusses film in terms of 'high art'. (p.21) Although diminishing in importance, these ideologies of art can still be found to be operative in the film journalism of the English language press in India and the English language
politico-cultural journals such as Link. At a crucial stage in the development of the Indian cinema in the 1920s and 1930s these views were dominant and were expressed freely, as I will show, in the contemporary press and the volumes of evidence given to the 1927-1928 Indian Cinematographic Committees of Inquiry.

For Rajadhyaksha the populist approach to Indian cinema is equally suspect because it is contradictory insofar as it has been unable to theorize pleasure in an adequate way, and because it is "trapped within incapacitatingly ethnocentric and bourgeois terms of reference" (p.22) being a "parodic inversion of Western intellectual arrogance". (p.24) Rajadhyaksha is correct to question the excesses of populist writings about Indian cinema such as that found in American journals like American Film, Film Comment and to a lesser extend Jump Cut and English journals such as Sight and Sound. However, the fact remains that Indian commercial films are enormously popular with huge audiences in the sub-continent. Indeed it was the popularity of the Indian films in the formative period that convinced financiers to invest in film, and attracted the freelancers to the industry which eventually led to the demise of the Indian studio system in the 1950s. Moreover, the audience response to films, both foreign and Indian, became a major determinant of policy formation in respect to the cinema under the British which has been continued by the Indian regimes. Consequently, to dismiss the popularity of the films because of the excesses of populist film writings, (an inversion of colonial elitism), is to throw the baby out with the bathwater. What is required is an adequate theoretical model that encompasses the issue of pleasure and the problems of audience formation at the same time.
The diagnostic approach is an historical approach that avoids the 'legitimisation exercise' (p.24) and provides a politically responsible analysis of India's current cinematic situation ... in the best possible understanding of (the) varied and various socio-cultural and economic dynamics that shaped it. (p.24)

Clearly for Rajadhyaskha the existing histories of the Indian cinema have failed to achieve this. Although he is unspecific I assume he is implicitly critiquing such works as Fazalbhoy (1930), Shah (1950), Jain (1960), Rangoonwalla (1975) and Vasudev (1978) which collectively tend to see the cinema as an autonomous institution divorced from the socio-cultural and economic dynamics of India at a given moment. I can only concur with this analysis, which constitutes one of the organizing themes of my argument. A partial exception to this critique is the standard work of Barnouw and Krishnaswamy (1963, r'vd 2nd Edition 1980) which is written in a liberal humanist tradition. Unfortunately Indian Film is in reality two books, a social history of the Indian cinema written by Barnouw and a series of film plots and criticisms written by Krishnaswamy. The former certainly attempts to link the film industry to the socio-cultural and economic, the latter veers towards viewing Indian film with a 'scornful amusement' insofar as it ignores the popular and commercial and seeks to establish a pantheon of Indian directors in the auteurist mode of the 1960s (1980; 220-292). Rajadhyaksha's approach seeks to avoid these pitfalls through the establishment of a diagnostic technique based on a historical analysis of the way economic, political and ideological power struggles are refracted in specific 'cultural' practices. (p.25)

Closely related to the diagnostic approach is the culturalist method of analysis which is based on the "need to understand the dynamics of a particular practice within a social formation." (p.24) For Rajadhyaskha, taken one suspects from his reading of Foucault, cultural practices are
conceptualized as intricate, dynamic processes implicated in strategies of containment, subjugation, accommodation, collusion or resistance, not to mention emancipation. (pp.24-25)

Out of this critique Rajadhyaksha has developed four hypotheses about the Indian cinema and its formation which have a direct relevance to the substance of my thesis. Similar focii have been arrived at quite independently by myself and inform the arguments developed hereinafter. Rajadhyaksha's hypotheses are -

1. Indian cinema has always sought to recast the traditional culture in an urban social context and this in turn, is re-informed by the form of mass communication that binds it. (p.29).

2. The history of generic forms in Indian cinema is linked both to the particular nature of urban development, and to the form of capitalism developed in the country. (pp.29-30)

3. Due to the pressures generated by a growth dominated mixed economy most of the generic culture, rooted in traditional forms, in the cinema between 1912 and 1945 were inherently prone to fragmentation. There was pressure from both outside and within the industry when, in 1948, the studio system broke down. (p.30)

4. The confusion concerning several layers of intention within the 'entry of the modern' into India is of significance to any consideration of the Indian cinema especially in respect to the perceptions of the film makers of themselves as artists. (pp.30-31)

Issues raised by Rajadyaksha in the first three hypotheses are examined in depth. In fulfilling the project schematically outlined by him, I have located surprising connections and alliances, which complicate all these specific propositions while illuminating some of the more complex and contradictory aspects of Indian film development and the role of the
British in it. For example I show that the film makers as individuals are exemplars of a particular cultural practice and can be taken to embody significant trends in their contribution to Indian film discourse. Rajadhyaksha sees the problematic of the modern, articulated in film as an intersection of art and technology, as a product of the 1950s. I argue, and show, that it was an ongoing concern for Indian film makers from Phalke in 1913 to the present, including heads of the major studios of the 1930s and 1940s.

My thesis situates the formation and development of the Indian film industry in a specific historical period, 1913-1947. In adopting this periodization I can detail the complex relationship between film and the broader socio-political events of the period and account for the role of the British and their interaction with Indian groups. Augmenting this traditional historical schema is the adoption of developments in the writing of film history that combine semiotics, psychoanalysis and Marxism to provide a more powerful explanatory schema for the crucial years of the Indian film industry.

The cinema was established in India at a time when the British ruled India, albeit in an increasingly precarious manner. Consequently the British have to be written into any account of the formative period. Thus the problem of the British has been a dominant theme in other histories but in a way that has systematically obscured their actual role and motives. Sir Phiroze Sethna, President of the Motion Picture Society of India in 1938, attributed the alleged retardation of growth in the cinema in India to the lack of encouragement from the Government, want of capital for investment, absence of electricity in the villages, difficulties of transportation in respect (to), metal roads
and railroads and lack of foresight on the part of industrialists. (Barucha, 1938: 9)

The complaint about lack of infrastructure was taken up by Y A Fazalbhoy in his summary of the 1939 All India Motion Picture Congress where he says categorically

The discussion at the Motion Picture Congress centred mainly round two points, namely, lack of Government help to the Industry and the want of support from bankers, financiers and the general investing public. (Fazalbhoy, 1939: 6)

In addition Fazalbhoy identifies a third major problem confronting the film industry: "internal organization" (p.7), a problem of fragmentation which is related to the other two structurally and ideologically as will be shown below. Again the role of the government for the development of the Indian film industry is seen as crucial. Discussions of the 1927-1928 Indian Cinematographic Committee (hereafter the I.C.C.) of Inquiry's recommendations mention "the lack of governmental interest in the recommendations" (Vasudev, 1978: 39); and "the Government of India completely ignored the recommendations". (Barnouw and Krishnaswamy, 2nd ed. 1980: 57). Implicit in these statements are assumptions that did not obtain at the time of the inquiry about the role of a government in the economic formation of a nation. The Government of India was not obliged to accept the I.C.C. recommendations. Moreover, it certainly did not ignore them. Various key departments spent up to five years considering the recommendations as I will show below. The recommendations were not implemented for political, economic and ideological reasons.

The claims of negligence towards the cinema on the part of the British stem from the commercial and cultural practices of the Indian film community, largely in Bombay through their industry organizations, who mounted considerable pressure on the Government of India to adopt some form of protectionism for the Indian film industry. Developments such as
this were common throughout the world and represent an almost universal reaction against the domination of Hollywood of the international film industry. Thus to view the British contribution to the development of the cinema in India in terms of neglect and containment is simplistic. Indeed as I will show British attitudes to the development of film discourse in India were deeply contradictory. In fact it is possible to view some of their most criticized contributions to the Indian film industry as positive and benign. Moreover, in discussing the British in these terms, in suggesting that the Government of India should have played a more interventionist role in the development of the film industry, is in itself a contradictory position given the attitudes towards censorship expressed by these same writers. It is to accord the British far too central a role in the evolutionary progress of the industry. Indeed what will become clear from the following narrative is the fact that the British played an increasingly marginal role in the development of the Indian film industry from the mid-1920s onwards.

Indian cinema and its development must be viewed in the broader socio-cultural environment, not as an autonomous industry operating beyond the convention of Indian culture. It is significant that the earliest Indian films were mythologicals drawing upon the rich and powerful culture that unified Hindu India. Thus film, for many Indians, was contextualized from its beginning. It was placed in a continuum of culture which provided the basis for its development. To see the cinema in this light is to open up the subject to a series of questions and possibilities about the substance of Indian cinema. Why did film generally and Indian films particularly, prove so popular with both urban and rural Indian audiences? Why did film attract so much opposition from both Anglophile and orthodox Indian elites? Why is there an historical sequence of types and genres of films?
Why did Indian film develop the specific formal techniques and qualities which characterize it? Why did Hindi become the most dominant linguistic form of film after the introduction of sound? Why did the studios fail? These questions are not exhaustive but indicative of the complexity of the Indian position vis-a-vis film.

In a political context film entered Indian society at a particular moment in Indian colonial history. World War I had unleashed powerful economic and political forces that challenged British rule in India. In short, after World War I it is clear the significant forces in Indian society anticipated changes in the British methods of rule in India. These were either not forthcoming, or too slow in implementation. British tardiness in adapting to the changed circumstances created conditions that invited massive opposition to their continued presence and political control. This opposition focussed on the personality of M.K. Gandhi and the period 1913-1947 can, and has been, presented in terms of Gandhi's ability to mobilize Indians in opposition to the British. These developments have been described and analysed in great detail but little attempt has been made to place the development of the film industry in this context.

In the economic sphere the British were confronted by quite different problems. In the 1930's the Indian economy underwent quite profound changes. However, on the economic front the British were essentially powerless. World War I created conditions whereby India was encouraged to establish the beginnings of modern industrial infrastructure (Tomlinson, 1979: 57-58), a factor that was to eventually invert the balance of economic relations between Britain and India that hitherto had been dominated by imperial rather than national concerns.
The crucial developments in the shift in economic relations can be detected in the struggle over protectionism for Indian cotton manufacturing, the establishment of an iron and steel industry in India and other heavy industries. The introduction of these industries into India was designed to support the imperial war effort but their introduction provided the opportunity for the formation of a capitalist class in India who would not relinquish their power after the war was over and who became significant power brokers in the political struggle between the British and the nationalists. (Gordon, 1978:2). Both sides sought the support of the capitalists in the political struggle. The British sought it through the provision of major changes to the structure of the Indian economy in directions hitherto unthought of such as tax concessions, export levies and so on. (Tomlinson, 1979:30-103); the Nationalists sought the support with the promise of a future in which the concerns of the capitalists would be paramount (Gadgil, 1971:264). The career of G D Birla, the founder of one of modern India's two great industrial enterprises, epitomises this paradox. Birla supported the Nationalist cause strongly with donations and the provision of other benefits but at the same time his enterprises benefitted from the changes the British adopted in their administration of the Indian economy and in reality Birla did little to rock the boat. Rather, like a large number of Indians he did his best to exploit the situation. Once exploitation of British good intentions became the dominant mode of Indian economic progress, it was clear that the British had lost whatever economic power they had in India. The provision of government funds for Indian industry dominated economic thinking in India in the period 1913-47, but as it contradicted the dominant economic ideology of the Anglo-Indian government there was a reluctance to provide economic support for any industry. Only those industries categorized as "nation building", qualified.
Few accepted the claim of the film industry that it was the nation building industry par excellence because of its ideological power to reach a disparate audience via a national language. (Barucha, 1938:125). Even so the I.C.C. gave some support to the notion through its recommendations. These therefore presented the British with a range of economic and political problems, not least of which was a recommended film infrastructure which flatly contradicted the hard won political structure of Dyarchy which neatly divided administrative responsibility between the centre and the provinces of India. The British, as I will show, could find no good reason to undo Dyarchy to benefit what they viewed as a politically and economically marginal area. Further, the class of Indian entrepreneur attracted to the film industry can best be characterized as marketeers (Gordon, 1978:4). They were not upper class, nor were they on the whole well educated, nor did they come from the established commercial and industrial groups who had forged close links with the British rulers (Gordon, 1978:5). Consequently the British tended to be suspicious of the film makers. These few factors above demonstrate the complexity of the situation in respect to the formative period of the Indian film industry. Moreover, to argue along orthodox lines is to ascribe too much power to the British in this field, and to ignore the deep seated contradictions at work in the British attitudes vis-a-vis film.

Film was inexorably caught up in these developments. As a cultural product its ideological power was partially recognized by both the British and Indians, hence the desire to control it through censorship. Full recognition of film's ideological power would have been acknowledged in a systematic programme of documentary production, but both the Anglo-Indians and the Indian nationalists backed away from this development, revealing
once again the contradictory nature of their understanding of film. Moreover film's role in the Nationalist political struggle was not as clear cut as somebody like Vasudev (1979) would have us believe. Initially British concern with the control of film was directed at the imported films from Hollywood which they saw as misrepresentations of English life and culture. In order to diminish the power of Hollywood they were quite prepared to countenance the building up of an indigenous film industry insofar as it was prepared to conform to their cultural policies for India. Immediately we are confronted with a paradox in the formation of the Indian film industry between the imperatives of ideological control and a desire to encourage a local industry, a paradox that has never been fully investigated.

British attitudes towards the cinema in India varied from individual to individual depending upon their status, gender and station in Anglo-Indian life. Collectively, however, they approached a state of near paranoia about cinema, especially in the private domain, but attempted to maintain a calm exterior in public. For the British, film represented a completely new situation that they found difficult to handle. In their social relations with the Indian the British had constructed and maintained a highly developed sense of private space from which they rigorously excluded most Indians other than servants. Privateness as a form of separation expressed itself in a number of ways: architecturally, linguistically, socially. Its major manifestation was the ubiquitous European club. Film was perceived to invade these spaces and showed sets of behaviour the British thought Indians should not witness. Furthermore, film originated outside of their relatively narrow cultural sphere and portrayed modern gender and sexual relationships in ways that were found to be deeply offensive. "Travesty" was the most common term used to
describe these perceptions of filmic narratives. Paradoxically these reactions to film discourse came not only from the British but also from significant sections of the Indian elites. Film then had the power to generate within a hierarchical colonial society deep and powerful feelings of paranoia that the ruling sections of the society found difficult to contain.

Clearly, in a variety of ways, film was powerfully representing the Other, the dark, uncontrollable realm of the collective male psyche that was constrained by civilized behaviour (Muecke, 1984:187). Film in India was quickly identified as American. British films had little impact on the Indian market. Film created and circulated images of women engaging in a public way in behaviour that Anglo-Indian society classified as private. Images of women dancing provocatively, becoming drunk, committing adultery, raised questions about the suitability of film as a form of entertainment in a colonial society whose mode of government was based upon an ideological system determined by race which took as its cornerstone the prestige of the Europeans.

Finally, film was seen to appeal to the Indian masses. What convinced the Anglo-Indians* that the cinema threatened the prestige of the Europeans in India was the behaviour of the Indian masses in the theatres. Films were seen as appealing to the Indian masses because the spectator did not have to be literate to understand and appreciate the narrative. Crucially, the element that contributed most significantly to the British perception arose out of the fact that Indian and Europeans shared the same social space in the theatre, separated into stalls and balcony by race, class and

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*I use the term here and throughout the thesis to designate the British who lived in and administered British India.
price, but nevertheless inhabiting the same space. The British did not appreciate what they experienced. The overt support for Indians against cowboys in the early Westerns; the lewd comments about white women; the cat calls; all contributed to an Anglo-Indian perception of film as being not quite up to the mark!

This constellation of factors raised serious doubts in the minds of the British that at times bordered on cultural panic. However, it was not film itself that was the subject of this panic but the changing conditions of the Anglo-Indians. In many respects film provided a convenient vehicle of displacement through which the Anglo-Indians could express their deepest fears about their changing status in India. Hence the disparity between public and private statements about film and its alleged effects upon the Indian masses.

In the private domain two things emerged of some significance. Firstly, the most persuasive arguments against film emerged among the Anglo-Indian women, the memsahibs. They perceived film as undermining their position and initially voiced their deepest fears within the private domain where they had greater authority. Once these expressions of fear spilled over into the public domain the status of their concerns diminished, although it was women who maintained the issue of filmic representation on the cultural agenda of Anglo-Indian society. Secondly, Anglo-Indian officials from the Viceroy down could, and frequently did, express in the private sphere their aversion to film. In the public domain however, different conditions prevailed. Here officials were constrained by their position. To deny the efficacy of their apparatus, carefully and thoughtfully set in place, would have denied their right to rule India. Therefore in the
public sphere, where the debate seemingly was conducted, a contradiction manifested itself. I have called this contradiction the crisis in hegemony.

The truly fascinating thing about this crisis is that it displaced itself on to an apparently trivial object, film, which was perceived dualistically; on the surface as pure entertainment, and on a deeper level as a potent ideological force, mirroring in a subtle way the private/public dichotomy on the issue of race that underpinned virtually all British thinking on India in the 1920s and 1930s. This displacement disguises the seriousness of the issue and discounts the amount of bureaucratic time and energy the issue of the cinema in India consumed. Between 1913 and 1947 various individuals and groupings raised serious questions about the perceived effects of film on the masses of Indians. Invariably the answers were the same: the matter was under control via the apparatus of government. In reality the questions were about the changing political, economic, and social conditions in India at the time and the answers marked the fissures these changing conditions heralded. In short, despite apparent action the British were ideologically paralysed by events in India. Hence arose the bitterness and despair expressed in the private sphere.

In contrast to the British we must consider the Indian position on film. It too is deeply contradictory at a number of levels. Indian perceptions of film ranged from the derisory to the enthusiastic. Gandhi saw film as a form of Western technology that had little to offer India. He replied to the I.C.C. questionnaire

Even if I was so minded, I should be unfit to answer your questionnaire as I have never been to the cinema. But even to an outsider, the evil that it has done and is doing is
patent. The good, if it has done any at all, remains to be proved.

(Evidence to the Indian Cinematographic Committee, Vol. 4, 1929:56) (Hereafter E, Volume number: page)

Others saw films in more political terms:

The art of the cinema is an extremely useful art from the point of view of the nation. You could use it a great deal in awakening the people. Make a movie on the massacre at the Jallianwallah Bargh ... for awakening the people the cinema is a means many more times more powerful than hundreds of our lectures or writing.

B G Tilak (Penharkar, Baburas quoted in Kale, 1979:10)

Yet others could see films as everything that is cheap and low, everything that is unworthy of our cultural traditions.

(Mody in Proceedings of Indian Motion Picture Congress, 1939:132)

Thus film as a social fact within Indian society and culture cannot be viewed as an unproblematic entity. Moreover, within the industry itself there were deep fissures. There were major divisions between the regions, e.g. Bombay and Calcutta; between those who saw film as an art and those who saw it as a vehicle to quick money; between the studios and the freelancers; between those who complied with the British system and those who sought to resist it; between the producers and the distributors; between film importers and the indigenous film makers. Thus there was no univocality within the Indian film industry from its earliest period. However, the fact that films were made in India does establish a possibility of some unifying link between the disparate elements outlined above.

This thesis is about the crisis in hegemony for the British and the parallel struggle of the Indians against this hegemony which at the same time was a struggle for hegemony within Indian society. Further, the
thesis examines how this crisis and struggle manifested itself in relation to the cinema: its production, its reception, its social placement, and its regulation. It is impossible to grasp the significance of film to the contemporary Indian social formation without this knowledge. The thesis traces the influence of the crisis in hegemony on all aspects of the film industry in India between 1913 and 1947 arguing that it is this period that provides the key to understanding the contemporary Indian "filmi" industry; its fragmentation into regional industries, the ideological and practical domination of the popular Bombay Hindi masala movie, the oppositional film practice of the intellectual film maker, and the ambiguous role of the government and its agencies in film.

In tracing these influences the thesis adopts a methodology that seeks to combine aspects from two major disciplinary perspectives: history and structuralism. Foremost it adopts the fundamental premises of historical discourse. A vast number of facts have been collected from a variety of sources but especially from the rich collection of empirical data housed in archives in Britain and India which have hitherto only been looked at superficially. For example all the standard accounts of the British period cite only four volumes of evidence for the 1927-28 Indian Cinemotographic Committee of Inquiry. My research reveals a fifth volume of evidence which includes crucial in-camera evidence before the Committee, and the Committee members' own responses to the cinema, which has been used extensively in the thesis.

The significance of this evidence lies in the fact that it reveals two important dimensions of the problem as perceived by the British and their appointees. Firstly much has been made of the fact that in the published Report of the I.C.C. (1928) there was a clear racial division on questions
of government financial sponsorship for the film industry. The Indians on the Committee supported the concept, the Europeans argued against. However, in the in-camera evidence in the crucial issues of reading film we find a conjunction of views where both Indian and European responded in similar ways to the codes and conventions of representation in film that were essentially foreign to them. In the I.C.C. we find a convergence of views in the cultural sphere, and a divergence in the economic sphere. That is, the same determinants that shaped the industry also contributed in no small way to the way in which the cinema was thought about at the official level. Secondly, the in-camera evidence demonstrates clearly lack of solidarity among the Indian film producers; the regional differences overrode any sense of national cohesiveness. The Bombay producers had exploited strenuously the allegation that the Calcutta based Madan organization had created a monopoly in the field of distribution which adversely affected their commercial viability. That the British took the allegations at all seriously indicates at least some desire to see an indigenous industry established and grow unimpeded by monopolistic practices. Furthermore, the fact that the Committee listened to the audience in-camera signifies a sensitivity to the commercial practices of the Indian industrial and commercial classes. The use of the evidence in Volume V provides these insights.

Modern historical writing on India is a vast and specialized enterprise. There is, however, no orthodoxy other than general historiographical principles pertaining to the collection and verification of facts and their incorporation in a narrative framework. In respect to film I think this approach on its own is inadequate because film is a cultural product that has a powerful ideological potential which cannot be analysed purely in terms of a set of 'facts' or a single consistent narrative. Its
circulation and consumption in a complex society cannot be understood from
a purely geographical and chronological perspective. Consequently
additional methodological tools are necessary if an adequate account of
the conditions of film in India under the British is to be arrived at.
These tools can be found in the theoretical enterprise of structuralism.
The practices of history and structuralism have been viewed as mutually
exclusive activities but as Sturrock points out history and structuralism
can only be viewed thus if we see history "as the past atomized into the
resounding exploits of Great Men and Great Institutions". (Sturrock,
1986:59) Structuralism can be compatible with history insofar as the two
take as their object "complex forms of knowledge, customs, beliefs and
institutions which order the lives of even the most pre-eminent
individuals and which also largely determine the evolution of
societies."(p.59)

Historical structuralism includes semiotics, psychoanalysis, Marxism and
discourse theory in its diagnostic armoury. The most adequate description
of how these apply to the writing of a film history is found in Nowell
Smith:

We may take it as a starting point that cinema (or film) is
immersed in a series of histories, prior to it assuming any
specific identity itself and therefore capable of having a
history of its own. These histories should be those of the
economy, of technology, of politics and of
ideology/representation - to which one might add the
unconscious, which is itself ahistorical but meshes into the
histories in determinate ways. Each of these represents a
level of determination which helps to fix the nature of the
object cinema, but it does so historically in the sense of
having its own temporal or diachronic development into which
the cinema fits at times. (1977: 11).

These ideas have consciously informed both the structuring and writing of
my thesis.
In addition I have foregrounded four other theoretical concepts that have sufficient power to enable us to make sense of the complex relationships governing the formative years of the Indian film industry. These are the concepts of hegemony, ideology and discourse, and to a lesser extent, bricolage.

Hegemony, in its crudest sense, is the set of ideological structures through which subordinate groups permit themselves to be ruled by the dominant group. Put another way, hegemony is characterised by Ideological struggle which attempts to forge unity between economic, political and intellectual objectives, "placing all the questions around the struggle which rages on a "universal", not corporate level, thereby creating the hegemony of a fundamental social group over a series of subordinate ones". (Mouffe, 1979: 180)

Thus, we can talk of a crisis in hegemony in the period of 1913-1947 because the ability of the British to forge a unity in India had foundered on the nationalist political campaigns. At the same time, however, it is clear that the Indians were in the process of forging a new hegemony through their struggle against the British. The struggle was two-edged and the new Indian hegemony was created as much out of internal struggles as the struggle against the British. The dialectic nature of the crisis/struggle impacted heavily on the development of the Indian cinema.

The British were always conscious of their numerical sparsity in a vast population of Indians. Inherent in this was the first major problem of hegemony: how to exercise power from an obviously numerically small base. Further, this base was internally heirarchized with the covenanted civil servants at the pinnacle of the Anglo-Indian social structure, followed in descending order by the officer class of the military, the provincial civil services, commerce, retail trade and finally the large number of
British Other Ranks, who in reality constituted the ultimate security of the British presence in India. Given the diversity it proved difficult to maintain a univocality of purpose. The internal divisions of the Anglo-Indian system were augmented by institutional and regional differences. The provincial civil service of Bombay had different perceptions of problems and their possible solutions to those of their counterparts in Bengal or Madras, and all perceived things differently to the centralized bureaucracy of New Delhi. Consequently the British constructed and disseminated a set of powerful ideologies to justify their rule of India. In short they sought to attribute their rule of the India to two things: a technological superiority and a cultural superiority which manifested themselves in a myth of prestige which became a mechanism to determine the patterns of European behaviour in India. The railway system introduced by the British is the classic example of the technological superiority. Cultural superiority was seen to be manifested in the provision of Westernized institutions such as the law, education and the bureaucracy. These institutions and their attendant ideologies were accepted by both the British and significant groups of Indians. In part this explains why these institutions had, and continue to have, such a massive impact on India and why Indians adopted British customs, rituals and traditions in such large numbers. However, this is not to suggest the ideology of prestige was not questioned or opposed. Indeed Gandhi's whole campaign of non-cooperation can be viewed as a clever play on the ideology, inverting it against its adherents. Moreover, there were Englishmen who saw it as essentially hollow -

it arises partly from government having been so long government by a mere handful of foreigners, who, feeling that their position depends 'largely' on bluff, don't dare to cast any doubts on their fallibility.

(Moon, 1944:96-97).
Thus the crisis in hegemony was also a crisis of identity for the rulers, who were increasingly marginalized by events between 1913-47.

In many respects ideology is a much simpler concept to employ. For the purposes of the thesis it has two major sets of characteristics: after Gramsci, it has a materiality expressed in all social formations, through its inscription in social practices and materialization in institutions. (Mouffe, 1979: 199). Further, after Kress and Hodge, ideology refers to a set of beliefs subscribed to by a group of people at a particular moment in time. (Kress and Hodge, 1979:6). By limiting the concept of ideology in this way we can avoid the unnecessary protracted definitional problems of what constitutes ideology but at the same time retain the concept as a powerful tool of analysis through emphasising its major analytic features.

Discourse is a more problematic term at this stage. At one level discourse can mean quite simply the way something is told, at another level discourse is always a social act, operating within a set of socially determined rules (Fiske, 1988:14-15). The two uses of the term are not synonymous but clearly interrelated and refer to a very precise set of relations. Throughout the thesis I try to adhere to this organizing principle. Thus filmic discourse refers to the way in which a story is told; the formal strategies and practices adopted to unfold the film narrative. Film discourse refers to the social and cultural relations that impinge upon, and in many respects determine, the way film is thought about at a particular moment in history.

Finally, bricolage: a term appropriated from the structural anthropology of Levi-Strauss used to describe the practices associated with "primitive man's" ability to construct sign systems from available natural phenomena.
(Harland, 1987: 30). Hebdige has extended its use to explain the practices of sub-cultural groups which are about subversion of and opposition to the dominant cultural orthodoxies of a time. (Hebdige, 1979:103-104). In my thesis I wish to make a further extension of the general notion of bricolage and argue that in a period of hegemonic crisis both the makers of a tradition and an orthodoxy and those who oppose the tradition behave as bricoleurs. The socio-political practices of both the British and the Congress in the period sought to construct alternative world views from existing ideological precepts and cast them in a new light which in part explains the difficulties in clearly demarcating the British from the Congress. Policy was formulated in the face of unrelenting social, political and economic pressure. This is precisely what happened in respect to film in British India.

In this manner I have sought to provide a more satisfactory account of the formative years of the Indian film industry in a political situation that involved a colonial power. My account is divided into seven further chapters. Chapter Two identifies the conditions of the crisis in hegemony and describes how they became displaced onto film through a detailed analysis of British responses to the cinema in both Britain and India. Chapter Three examines both the Indian response to the introduction of film into India and their response to British attitudes towards the cinema. Chapter Four analyses both the ideological and economic impact of the Hollywood staple on film discourse in India, because it was this product that shaped so much of the thinking about film in India among both the British and the emerging Indian film producers. Chapter Five goes on to consider the economic base of the Indian film industry in its formative period, with a special emphasis on the condition of capital formation within the Bombay industry. Chapter Six examines the types of films
produced in the period under discussion, identifying the major cycles of films linking them to the prevailing political and cultural developments in a hegemonic crisis. In Chapter Seven I analyse the major political, cultural and economic interventions made by the British into film discourse emphasising the significance of the 1927-28 Indian Cinematographic Committee of Inquiry to subsequent thinking about film in India.

Chapter Eight focuses very specifically on the one issue that links together all the parties involved in Indian film discourse: censorship. In this Chapter I look at the question from a number of perspectives, analysing the available material in such a way as to challenge a central tenet of Indian thinking about the British role in the Indian film industry. I argue that censorship by the British was not principally directed against Indian films, that it did not inhibit the growth of the Indian film industry, rather that Indian film makers were probably happier with the conditions of film censorship under the British than the British who were forced to recognize their inability to constrain film as an ideological tool, and through this recognition glimpsed their ultimate inability to constrain Indian political protest. Finally, in Chapter Nine, the conclusion, I tie together all the major arguments to demonstrate my major points. Firstly, the current Indian film industry cannot be understood without reference to its formative period. Secondly, the Indian film industry became successful because of a particular juncture of cultural and economic factors that generated specific Indian film forms that appealed enormously to the indigenous populations. Thirdly, the role of the British in this period is ambiguous. They did not hinder the industry's growth but tended to encourage it, albeit in an unsystematic fashion. Fourthly, in seeking to control indigenous cultural
production the British found themselves in all sorts of difficulties that were directly related to their declining position in India generally. In short, they found themselves in a crisis of hegemony that impinged on all aspects of the Raj. At the heart of this crisis was the changing economic situation that was developing in India. In the final analysis the British had lost control of the Indian economy. Their strictures were increasingly a mere irritant to those who were slowly but inexorably taking control: the industrialists and marketers. In most respects the Indian film industry is a microcosm of this situation. The burgeoning audience, linked to the increasing productive capacity, ensured that the real power in the film industry resided in the Indians and not the Anglo-Indian rulers. Hitherto historians of the Indian cinema have concentrated only on the surface features of this development rather than the substance. This account should redress the balance.
The introduction of the cinema into India coincided with the apogee of British rule. Politically, socially and ideologically the period 1896 to 1914 in British India is characterized by Anglo-Indian self-confidence, flexibility and a spirit of conciliation. Significant moves had been made in the political domain to convince major Indian groups that British rule was indeed benign and that British ideology, expressed in terms of parliamentary democracy and its attendant apparatuses, was sufficient and necessary for the development and modernization of India. Although socially separate from the Indian masses the British nevertheless had begun to relax some of the strongest codes governing their social interaction with Indians. So successful were the ideological apparatuses of this period that it appeared that British supremacy was complete, opposition marginalized as irrational. However, analysis of the events surrounding the introduction of the Morley-Minto reforms in 1909 suggests that in many respects the solidity of British rule in the period is an illusion, a glittering surface masking a complex and contradictory deeper structure that constituted the Indian social and political formation of the period. This situation becomes clearer when the relations surrounding the introduction and development of the cinema are subjected to critical analysis.

The introduction of the cinema into India in this period of Anglo-Indian ascendency marks a particular moment of opposition that went unnoticed for a period of time. Film was marginal to the over-all Anglo-Indian cultural scheme and was easily excluded from their discourse of culture. Indeed,
as I will show, the power of film to disrupt Anglo-Indian complacency was first recognized at the metropolitan centre of power and not in India where bureaucrats were reluctant to act in respect to film simply because they could not perceive it as representing any form of threat to the order of things. It took nearly a decade from 1913 to 1920 for the Government of India to act on the subject of film through the creation of a Cinematographic Act, which established an infrastructure of censorship which was to appear unsatisfactory to most levels of Anglo-Indian Society. During this decade of apparent inactivity fears about the alleged effects of the cinema on the minds of the untutored masses of India continued to be voiced on an increasing scale in the private sphere of Anglo-Indian life. These concerns occasionally seeped through into public discourse in the English press, the pulpit and in the House of Commons (Report of the I.C.C., 1929:3). In private virtually all sections of the Anglo-Indian community found the 1918-20 Cinematographic Acts inadequate, failing to address the principal concerns of the Anglo-Indian population which revolved mainly around issues of gender, race and sexual representation in film.

How can we account for these two things, the private fears and the public complacency? Conventional versions of the history of Indian film construct the British as a massive and efficient repressive colonial power who suppressed and retarded the development of the Indian film industry. (Vasudev, 1978; Shah, 1950; Jain, 1960; Barnouw and Krishnaswamy, 1980). I wish to suggest something different.

Anglo-Indian rule was based on a promise of cultural, political and economic superiority which was expressed ideologically in terms of prestige. Clearly recognizing their demographic weakness the Anglo-
Indians of necessity had to find some talisman that could explain, in part, the political domination of the Indian masses by so few. The concept of prestige supplied this. For the Anglo-Indian prestige had two major ingredients: thinking along "correct" lines about their role in India, and arising out of this, correct behaviour. That is, prestige was constituted as a discursive practice that delineated —

a field of objects, ... defined ... a legitimate perspective for the agent of knowledge, and ... fix [ed] the norms for the elaboration of concepts and theories. (Foucault, 1979:199).

The rules of behaviour for existing in a colonial situation are clearly linked to the exercise of power. Film initially existed beyond these implicit rules, which were in fact about to be challenged, and ultimately found wanting; for in the 1920s British rule of India was seen to be based on shifting grounds. Film's liminal position in relation to the Anglo-Indian social structure meant that it provided both narratives and images that went beyond the boundaries of "correct" behaviour. These narratives and images impacted upon both the private and public spheres of Anglo-Indian life. In the private sphere, I would suggest, it was easy to displace the paranoia about the breakdown of the rules onto an object that was seen as contributing to that breakdown, the cinema. To acknowledge this displacement in the public sphere would be tantamount to acknowledging the end of British hegemony in India. Consequently, as I will show in this chapter, the dialectic between the private and public utterances on the status of film in Anglo-Indian discourse represents a serious fissure in British ideology. Rather than seeing the Anglo-Indians as efficient and repressive we should see them as ambivalent, wishing to be efficient and not repressive but in the view of Indians at least, as inefficient and repressive. Thus the Anglo-Indian discourse on film reflects the self-marginalization of that group from the cinema in India which stemmed from a deeper and more pervasive contradiction in the
discourse of imperialism. The fissure emerged in a clash between the
firmly entrenched hegemonic beliefs expressed in views about their right
and capability to rule India in the best interests of the Indians and a
rising anxiety and paranoia about their position which was also expressed
ideologically in terms of extreme racism and bitterness.

We have lost our grip on India", Evelyn spoke suddenly and
angrily. "In my mother's day, no Khan would have dared to
keep a woman waiting.

(Farmer, 1934:86-87)
The paranoia and anxiety about British and Indian relationships initially
focused on the role of the Englishwoman in India. (Barr, 1976). The
Englishwoman's, or memsahib's, position within the ruling framework was
paradoxically central and marginal. They were central in the sense that
their presence and status could be invoked as both a major dimension of
prestige and at the same time a major reason for behaving in specific
ways.

If England loses India, one of the contributing causes will
be the behaviour of the white women in India. The time is
coming when we are going to refuse to serve a nation who has
lost the power of keeping even its womenfolk in check.

(Farmer, 1934:142-143)

In reality women were marginal to the exercise of power in British India.
Their sphere was the private where they could voice their concerns which
at times coincided with concerns in the public domain. When this
conjunction occurred the invocation of the woman inviolate had a powerful
ideological purchase on the Anglo-Indian mind. The paranoia and anxiety
about the status of European women which in many respects was a collective
metaphor of the precarious nature of British rule expressed in sexual
terms (Ballhatchet, 1979:5) was quite easily displaced onto film. Film
originated beyond the boundaries of Anglo-Indian society and its currency
was representations of women in a fashion that seemed to make manifest the
worst fears of the English. Moreover, the advent of film coincided with
significant shifts in the behaviours of the young Anglo-Indians who seemed
to either ignore the consensus of prestige or deliberately flout it. As Farmer observed in respect to some drunken behaviour by young women on Lahore station -

Even more than the noisy inebriation of the girls, what I could not forget was the expression on the faces of the watching Indians.

(Farmer, 1934:142-143)

Transgressions such as this mirrored the sorts of behaviour of women represented in American films from the 1920s on. It was not a difficult mental act to claim that one caused the other. Film became for the Anglo-Indian the most visible manifestation of hegemonic decay.

In the early period of film there is little or no evidence of Anglo-Indian concerns about its introduction into India. Film was viewed on one hand as an example of Western technological superiority, and on the other, a form of mere entertainment. Moreover the resources to produce films were by-and-large beyond the reach of Indians in the early period, 1913-1920. However, in contrast, the means of distribution and exhibition were very much within the reach of Indians. Theatres and cinemas were established in the urban centres, showing imported films, charging prices which clearly signify that cinema attendance in India in the early part of the twentieth century was a middle-class pursuit. Given the income of urban working class Indians cinema attendance was an unaffordable luxury.

(Rangoonwalla, 1975:11) Where Indian film production did occur it mirrored European practices. Short "topicals" or actuality films were produced in Bombay and Calcutta while fiction film production was delayed until 1912. (Barnouw and Krishnaswamy, 1980:10-11) The choice of topics covered in the few Indian-produced short, factual films reproduce middle-class interests and pursuits. In Bombay Save Dade (Harischandra Sakharam Bhatvedakar) produced short films on a variety of local subjects; in Calcutta Hiralal Sen produced brief excerpts of Bengali plays and, along
with others, scenes from the 1904 Darbar. These efforts, however, were individual and cannot be perceived as precursors of an industry, but as isolated incidents constructed within a hegemonic discourse which they both helped to produce and reflect. For example, Sen's work on the 1903 Darbar was sanctioned by Sir Francis Younghusband, an institutionally powerful figure, as a means of discrediting misleading propaganda about British rule in India on the Continent. (IOLR/P&J/6/1438/1916).

Film was not perceived by the British administrators and rulers in India as presenting any specific, or even general, problems to the smooth flow of rule. It is significant that concern about the possible effects of the cinema in India was first raised in Britain at the very end of this early period. The practice then was for the India Office, the metropolitan seat of power, to contact the Government of India by memorandum seeking clarification and information on a specific issue, topic or event. When the issue of film was raised in England the Government of India responded without haste or concern. From their position film was such a minor item on the socio-political agenda that it did not warrant precipitate action. Moreover, from their position there were a range of apparatuses extant and operational that could be activated to address any problem that may have arisen from the introduction of film. These will be examined in detail below: the point here is that the major characteristics of Anglo-Indian rule in the period immediately prior to the 1914-1918 war - self-confidence, based on a smooth, well-oiled bureaucracy organized hierarchically and underpinned

1. Darbar - a ceremony whereby the ruler expressed their sovereignty over the people who reciprocated in an expression of their obedience. Of Persian origin, the British adopted it as a primary hegemonic apparatus. (Moorhouse, 1984:154).
2. India Office Library and Records. Government of India Files, Political and Justice, file number and year.
by effective repressive apparatuses - are reproduced almost exactly in respect to film from its very inception. An examination of film as a social fact in India is a micro-study that has resonances beyond its immediate parameters. As I will show, film as a discourse and an institution interweaves with all aspects of British rule in India at all levels - the ideological, the political, the economic, the social. The study of film in the period 1913 to 1947 is a valid enterprise in itself, but it also illuminates issues in the broader context.

Anglo-Indian hegemony seemed to be unchallenged in 1914 but beneath the surface there existed individuals, groups and forces that if provided with a motor could coalesce and challenge the situation. World War One provided this motor. Indian elites supported the British war effort materially and ideologically but it is clear that they expected something in return. (Brown, 1978: 33-37) When this was not forthcoming significant numbers of the Anglophile Indian elite began to look around for alternatives to British rule, and this had serious ramifications for Anglo-Indian supremacy. That is, they actively sought a counter-hegemony that displaced British ideology and practices with a set of ideas and concepts equal to or more powerful than those so carefully constructed and maintained by the British. They found this in M.K. Gandhi and the Nationalist movement which had ideological, social and economic dimensions which, when taken as a whole, constituted a new discourse, existing in opposition to the hitherto dominant Anglo-Indian one. Gandhi constructed a counter-hegemony around Indian concepts such as satyagraha (non-violence) and the use of khadi (handspun and handwoven cloth) which confronted British economic hegemony directly. Anglo-Indian rule in India by the end of World War One entered a period of extended crisis that could only culminate in its eventual displacement. Film in India was part of
the new discursive formation. As an area of ideological, sociological and economic significance it became a site of struggle between contending groups. The examination of film and the struggle attending its development illuminates conditions at the macro-level. Nowhere is this clearer than in an examination of British attitudes towards film in the period 1913 to 1947.

To think of British attitudes to film as unitary is to misread the situation. There were a range of statements made about the cinema in India by the British which extended from outright condemnation of the cinema to lukewarm enthusiasm and finally total disinterest. Moreover, the statements emanated from Britain as well as India. Other factors in the construction of the British discourse on film, other than location and enthusiasm or lack of enthusiasm for the new medium, were the class of the utterer, their occupational position, the relationship of the speaker to official structure of governance as well as social hierarchy, and institutional and/or administrative position. Thus an agenda may be constructed in which statements about the cinema in British India by the British may be analysed. The conditions and relations that determined the constitution of the agenda provide the focus whereby we can begin to understand the significance of the discourse of cinema in Anglo-Indian culture. This is especially true if we wish to consider it in the broadest possible context, i.e. in relation to the major political, ideological and economic developments that constituted the crisis in British hegemony in India after 1913.

World War One marks a distinct shift in British-Indian relations. It was followed by a series of events which collectively signify the struggle for independence. While the struggle was continuous and unfolding it was
punctuated by a number of events that are generally taken as representing particularly significant moments in this struggle. The pattern can be expressed metaphorically as a wave formation: the peaks representing the significant Indian actions; the "troughs", the dormant periods representing the threefold success of British action in respect to Indian opposition to their practices. Objectively the "peaks" are: the opposition to the Rowlatt Acts, 1920-1922; the Non Co-operative Movement, 1919-1920; the opposition to the Simon Commission in 1927-1928; the move to parliamentary dominance in 1937; the Quit India Movement, 1942. The "troughs" are: the period 1922 to 1927; the early 1930's; the period immediately prior to the Quit India Movement, and finally the post-Quit India Movement period and immediate pre-Independence period. It is possible to map the statements of the British about the cinema on to this schema, linking the discourse on film to the wider discourse on imperialism, ending the hitherto dominant tendency to see the cinema in India as autonomous and thus providing the cinema-social nexus with greater depth and resonance. At the same time it permits us to identify precisely where the tensions and pressures are located in the political discourse of the era: where the challenge to hegemony is coming from. The responsive articulations in respect to film, in turn, show how the British handled the stresses and strains of the counter-hegemonic struggles, the strategies and tactics they employed in response to attacks on their hegemonic position. The practices of rule had to be constantly assessed and refined in response to the attacks. The British attitudes to film and the transformation of these attitudes into policy demonstrate the process with clarity.

Expressions of alarm about the cinema in India took a variety of forms in both Britain and India. These expressions of concern were voiced in a
contradictory manner. While the class base of the utterers of concern ensured a hearing by the ruling elite their relationship within that elite was marginal insofar as they occupied the domestic, religious, ideological and provincial social and political spheres. However, it was the common links of class and race that ensured that their concerns were placed on the socio-political agenda. Further, the ideology of prestige which played equally as important a part in the metropolitan thinking as the Anglo-Indian on the exercise of rule in India meant that at significant moments the slightly marginalised voices could transfer to the centre stage. In Britain, alarm about the alleged effects of the cinema in India surfaced in a number of places simultaneously, in parliament, in the press, and in the pulpit. This was a constellation of voices that the official and final arbiter in the ruling complex and hierarchy, the India Office, could not ignore, because, in the final analysis, the voices came from the same class as the principal officers in the administration; a fact which convinced the India Office of the necessity to act upon the receipt of the complaints. It was class attitudes which linked the metropolitan schema firmly to the Anglo-Indian complex, for all those who spoke publicly in Britain about film, no matter in what form, or in what place, ultimately belonged to the same class.

In India the utterances tended to be more strongly voiced in the provinces than in the centre (New Delhi) or major urban centres (Bombay, Calcutta, Madras); among the non-officials, i.e. British residents in India working in trade, commerce or education, for example, than the officials, i.e. the covenanted civil servants. The diversity of expression and whence they came is a crucial factor of the discourse on film.
Two other, related points, require elaboration. Firstly, in responding to pressures arising from the questions about film in India the India Office automatically inserted film into the wider discourse. Secondly, the India Office used a network of communicative processes available to it in articulating the discourse. This network preceded the debate about film and was crucial to the circulation of the discourse on film. The network has two fundamental axes of organization which operated in two ways: a private axis that was made up of letters, confidential memoranda and other written modes, conversation and dialogue (the old boy network that was significant in the Anglo-Indian method of government); and the public axis made up of communiques, official communications through letters and so on, parliamentary questions, legislative acts and the legislative debate. These axes interacted formally or informally depending upon the stage of negotiation or debate, the need for haste and other factors. Like class structure these axes and their operations link all levels of the ruling complex.

The first example of someone "speaking" about film in any sustained way illustrates this point nicely. In July 1914 Cecil Carr-Gomme, a Conservative Member of Parliament, asked a question in the House of Commons about the circulation of films in British India; whether there was any information about their possible effects on the Indian masses. Carr-Gomme's question was prompted by a letter he had received from one of his constituents which said in part:

The cinema shows took place in Madras itself - in January last. I have been reading through my mother's letter again and at the end of it she says "now Maude Allen they - the Indians - know is a professional dancer, they can in a way understand that; but it is their taking for granted that these pictures of French and American demi-monde life are the typical English home-life that is so horrible".

(IOLR P+J2843/1914)
This letter, for private circulation, was transformed into a public communication by Carr-Gomme’s action and subsequently by the actions of the India Office who contacted the Government of India in New Delhi seeking information about the topic in the preparation of the Parliamentary reply by the Secretary of State for India. In this context it should be remembered that the bureaucrats disliked intensely this process whereby the private and secret became transformed into the public by the parliamentary question. The process subjected their practices to public scrutiny, potentially making public things best left hidden. Over the next two decades a number of questions were to be asked in the British House of Commons on the subject of film in India. In each case the files in the India Office Library and Records and the National Archives of India reveal the agitation of the bureaucrats as they scrambled around seeking information that could either deflect or obfuscate the question.

(IOLR/PJ/1/1926).

Film, however, provided those bodies dissatisfied with the changes in the role in India with a heaven sent opportunity to berate the administration. Carr-Gomme’s question made film in India a significant socio-political document which was to retain its place on the political, cultural and social agenda for the next thirty-four years. The letter and its consequences not only initiated the discourse on film but it also provides us with information about two matters that are the heart of this investigation: the source of films in the early period, and British attitudes towards film and by extension, to Indians in the period under investigation.

Anglo-Indian attitudes towards the cinema in the earliest period are somewhat ambiguous. In the first place films were not perceived as
objects of cultural value because of their origins in the urban popular culture of Europe and North America. Anglo-Indian notions of culture were highly conventional, reflecting the metropolitan taste for literature and the theatre. Moreover, it was an exclusive view of culture that rigorously excluded any general interest in Indian culture and by extension any cultural forms that had an exteriority to their own cultural parameters. Added to this was a perception that film was an infant form, deficient in technique and simplistic in its narrative structures, lacking depth and subtlety. Its foreignness not only made it culturally suspect but also potentially dangerous. It was the potentiality of film rather than the actuality that aroused fear. Films that would not arouse any concerns at "home" could become subversive in India because the Indian allegedly lacked the cultural context in which to read the light domestic comedies and French farces. (IOLR/P+J/336/1925) What constituted light entertainment in the theatres of London had the potential to become an incitement to resistance in India. Film, then, was a problematic object for the Anglo-Indian mind, to be viewed ambiguously and cautiously. Their attitudes reproduced a deep seated contradiction that governed all their future actions in respect to film.

Arising from the contradiction are questions related to cultural hierarchy: what should or should not be seen, and concomitantly, what should or should not be represented? Maude Allen signifies a particular rupture in Anglo-Indian cultural hegemony; Allen was a music-hall "artiste" whose specialty was the Dance of the Seven Veils. In 1913 she announced a trip to India. The result was near cultural panic with letters and memoranda circulating freely in the British network. The major object of this activity was to prevent Allen from journeying to India. There were formal and informal appeals to Maude Allen requesting
her co-operation in not going to India (Baskaran, 1976:651). These actions were based on a long-standing practice. The police in Calcutta had prevented Firpos, a famous Anglo-Indian meeting place, from presenting cabarets for ten years because it was thought that the effect on the Indian public of the spectacle of European girls as professional dancers in a public restaurant would be unfortunate.

(Kincaid, 1933:308)

But as the letter points out, Indians could contextualize Allen, by relating her activity to that of the nautch girls, or Indian dancers. Thus, if Allen could engender cultural panic the implications of film were even more problematic for the Anglo-Indian establishment. For the correspondent they were "horrible" precisely because the representations were foreign, bringing to the surface sexual matters, foregrounding desire, an element consciously and assiduously suppressed in formal Anglo-Indian relations and systems of representation that were grounded in a Victorian ethos. Interestingly, Lord Hardinge, the Viceroy of the time, could say of Maude Allen and her dance; "even the Europeans considered [them] dull and uninteresting" and he added that "I gave Maude Allen full marks for her behaviour" (Hardinge, 1948:88). These comments confirm the correspondent's point about contextualization of Allen by Indians, the suppression of desire, and they underscore the concern about cinema that was welling up precisely because it could not be subjected to the old boy network which could guarantee the behaviour of the participants.

The language employed in the letter in regard to both film and its representations ("demimondes and English home life", a powerful set of oppositions achieving a major sense of the disjuncture film could and did achieve in Anglo-Indian cultural life and "they", interpolated as Indians possibly by the daughter, i.e. Carr-Gomm's correspondent and not the mother, the original correspondent) exemplifies the deep seated fears at
work in the Anglo-Indian society. Film was perceived as potentially so powerful that it could bring to the surface and make visible those things Anglo-Indian society had collectively chosen to suppress and hide; matters of sexuality and gender behaviour. Moreover, there is a clear implication in the letter that film also had the power to dissolve the social and cultural space that Anglo-Indians had constructed for themselves, a recurring theme that arose from the shocking experience of actually sitting in a theatre with Indians and seeing films together. Thus film's perceived potential to subvert an existing order was a major determinant of Anglo-Indian thinking on the cinema which influenced many of their subsequent actions in two major areas: in their efforts to establish an indigenous film industry, and in their efforts to establish a comprehensive and effective system of censorship.

The analysis of the letter above suggests three things. Firstly, that beneath the veneer of confidence associated with British rule in the first decade of the twentieth century there were forces at work that required constant vigilance if they were not to break out and swamp Anglo-Indian society. Secondly, there was a complex network operating in Anglo-Indian society that surveyed events and when sufficiently provoked could invoke class-based linkages to precipitate action. Thirdly, fissures in the carefully constructed and vigilantly maintained Anglo-Indian culture were displaced onto concrete events that masked the marginality of the British in India. Film was clearly perceived as possessing the power to illuminate these fissures, hence its ability to evoke such concern.

Vigilance remained a central concern of the India Office. The extensive files on the topic in the India Office Library and Records, London, show how closely the issue of film production, distribution and exhibition in
India was monitored from 1913 to the mid-1930s. There was a near continuous circulation of memoranda and other forms of administrative correspondence between London and New Delhi which, in turn, circulated among the other levels of government in India. Instrumental in maintaining this circulation were questions in the House of Commons and articles in the influential London newspapers. It is not accidental that the questions and articles coincided chronologically. For example, a Colonel Yates asked a series of questions in the House of Commons about the censorship of films in India between 1921 and 1925, (see Proceedings, House of Commons, 9/4/1921 for example). A series of articles about the alleged influence of foreign films in India also appeared in the early 1920s in the *Westminster Gazette, The Times, The Evening Standard* and *The Daily Mail.* (Report of the I.C.C., 1928:3-4) Each article took up aspects of the problem articulated in the Carr-Gomme letter: films as travesty, film as sexual stimulus, film as Other, and underpinning each account is an assumption about the decline of British prestige in India precipitated by the cinema. Film had become a scapegoat; it was positioned in a specific political fashion as having possible political dangers through the audiences' direct contact with the text. This view reached its apotheosis when the then Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, presented a speech in Leeds in 1926 in which he openly attributed the decline of European prestige in the East to the widespread introduction of the Hollywood film. The east here included India, Malaya and Indonesia, linking the British to the Dutch in the region and thus extending the paranoia. Baldwin endorsed a widely held view among his class in Britain. The source of Baldwin's position was an article published in full by *The Times* by a Special Correspondent who argued forcefully that the cinema in Asia not only undermined European prestige but also advanced the spread of communism throughout Asia. The Special Correspondent said
It is possible that this regrettable change of spirit [the decline of European prestige] may, in a large measure be due to the persistent propaganda of those organizations which are bent on upsetting our present social fabric. At the same time there can be no doubt that the way for communist influence has been greatly facilitated by a powerful and novel element which, in recent years, has entered into the lives of semi-civilized people in all parts of the tropical world. That element is the cinema.

[The Times, September 18, 1926. (IOLR/PJ/3141/1926)]

Baldwin took up this theme and amplified it.

In the same way, it is too early yet to say what the influence on invigilation of the moving pictures may be, but I confess there is one aspect of it upon which I look with the gravest apprehension, and that is the effect of the commoner type of film, as representing the white races, when presented to the coloured races. (Hear! Hear!) I need say no more on that subject, except this, that in my view the whole progress of civilization in this world is bound up with the capacity that the white races have, and will have to help the races of the world to advance, and if their power to do that is impeded by false ideas of what races stand for, it may well be that their efforts, will not only fail, but that the conception of the white races generated in the hearts of the coloured races throughout the world may be the initial step in the downfall of those white races.

(The Times, 17/12/1926.)

The tenor of both pieces is remarkably similar to a lecture given by A S W Hartoff, an ex-member of the Council of Netherlands Indies which was based on his Foreign Colonial Administration in the Far East (1928).

Hartoff saw films as a "pernicious influence on Oriental peoples" which could only be overcome by efficient censorship practices.

(IOLR/PJ/135/1934). The fact that the India Office collected information such as this indicates how widely they spread their net to monitor anti-film feeling. Further, it is clear that they concurred with the arguments of the Special Correspondent and Hartoff and they most likely supplied Baldwin with the information upon which he based his speech. However, in India things were never so clearly etched. An important memorandum (IOLR/PJ/1/1926) prepared by the Government of India for the then Secretary of State for India, Lord Birkenhead, which was signed by such important Anglo-Indian officials as Sir Alex Muddiman, could say
Further, we doubt whether the object of protecting European interest and prestige, which is undoubtedly the basis of a great deal of criticism directed against the existing censorship, would be secured to any greater extent than at present.

(IOLR/PJ/3191/1926)

The conjunction of film, communism, racism and imperialism is significant in this context for two reasons. In the first place, Lenin had made extravagant claims in respect to the efficacy of film for spreading communism's messages which seemed to have been translated into practice by the Soviet film-makers Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Kuleshov, whose works had just become known in Britain and had been banned from public exhibition. (Samson, 1986:310) Secondly, the first Communist Conspiracy case had just been conducted in India at Cawnpore in the United Provinces. (Sen Gupta, 1972:9-12) Thus in the minds of the ruling classes there was a clear link between subversion and the cinema, a link that was reinforced by the British success with filmic propaganda in World War One. (Haste, 1977:21-49)

Conscious links between the cinema and politics were also made at the unofficial Anglo-Indian level. A correspondent said in a letter circulated within the India Office for comment:

I myself have seen a film in which a perfectly impossible man - supposed to be an Englishman - offends an Indian by making love to his squaw, and the Indian finally gets him and ties him to a post, where he starves to death. This was greeted with applause by the Indians present. I saw another film where a drunken guest at a wedding knocks down a negro - the negro afterwards murders him. Again great applause from the natives. These are the very cheapest, commonest films, and are all we get to see in India, all American (their emphasis) - usually scenes of drinking saloons and sordid tragedies .... The Indians go more and more to the cinema and must be thinking the British a nation to despise.

[(IOLR P+J 1/510/1923) Letter from H. Rowan Walker, General Secretary, British National Film League]
In the Carr-Gomme letter the political connections are unconscious. Here they are clearly spelt out. What is significant, however, is direct evidence of an Anglo-Indian response to contact with Indians of the "lower classes" in a confined social and cultural space in India. The Anglo-Indian elite and the Indian "masses" are brought together in the cinema. The experience seemed to provide the British with direct evidence of the effect of cinema on the "masses" and convinced them that it was subversive, politically dangerous through its ability to undermine the cultural facade the Anglo-Indians had carefully constructed and maintained, and therefore should be rigorously controlled. The language used in the letter quoted above reveals the sense of outrage and shock the writer feels at the Indians applauding the death of the Europeans. The reasons for this shock are comparatively simple: most of the Indians with whom the Anglo-Indians came into contact were either of the servant classes or members of an Anglophile elite linked to the Anglo-Indians politically, and ideologically through work or education. Secondly, while the Anglo-Indians assiduously controlled the political climate in India, socially and culturally they tended to separate themselves off from the Indians. Thus, to inhabit the same physical and cultural space as Indians from working class sectors of society was a shock of some magnitude and became an important determinant of Anglo-Indian attitudes towards films, especially those produced outside of their cultural boundaries. There were several other reports of Indians reacting in a similar fashion to that outlined above.

A number of the Local or Provincial Governments in India responded to a Government of India memorandum (No. 593-603, 13/2/1915 Confidential) reporting incidents where film could allegedly affect audiences in undesirable ways. For example, the Government of Bengal remarked
Shortly after the outbreak of war ... films shown in Calcutta showed various incidents of war calculated to produce most undesirable effect upon ignorant classes. (Government of Bengal, No. 11330-P, 20/9/1915, Confidential)

Further, the Government of Bihar and Orissa reported the London Cinema Company exhibition in Cuttack of scenes of fighting in Tripoli between Turks and Italians "to an enthusiastic audience of Muhammadans". (Government of Bihar and Orissa, No. 1126-C, 29/5/1915). More alarmingly the Delhi administration reported that it had already experienced problems of a communal and religious nature where "Hindus had objected to a film of a bullfight, Muslims to a film containing portrayals of a relative of the Prophet". (Delhi, No. 1710 Home, 15/3/1915). However, in the context of Anglo-Indian anxieties the most telling instances came from the Calcutta branch of the European Association who claimed that their letters to the Government of India on the subject had been ignored. (European Association, No. 1555, 31/10/16). The Association could provide detailed information. In September 1916 the United Provinces chapter complained about The Serpentine Dancers to the provincial authorities who then promptly prevented any further screenings of the film. (ibid.) The European Association adopted a hard line on this topic precisely because they believed film to be undermining European prestige in India. They wanted films censored in England by experts with a knowledge of India so that 'no film that holds the European up to gross ridicule should be exhibited in India.' (Letter, 15/4/1916). (All of the above are to be found in IOLR/PJ/5256/1916). The point here is that these examples must be taken to represent the tip of the iceberg. Film had unlocked deeply held racial fears that were almost endemic among the Anglo-Indian community.
The circulation of private views about the cinema occurred in conjunction with the wider circulation of similar views in the public domain - newspapers and the legislature. Continuity between the two is striking; not only are similar ideas expressed, but also the language is at times virtually identical. One example is an article by Constance Bromley "India: Censorship and Propaganda: Influence by Foreign Films" which appeared in the Times in 1922. Bromley provides some interesting data about the ownership of theatres and distribution chains in India. She asserted that the cinema was growing in popularity among the "masses" and chastised the Governments in India on two accounts: firstly, for not having done enough in the way of censorship; and secondly, for not utilizing cinema as a means of positive propaganda on behalf of the Europeans in India. It is precisely this last topic that constitutes the real thrust of her article: the place of the Anglo-Indian in India and the perceived effects cinema was having on it. For Bromley there was no question that films, specifically American films, were destroying the status of the European in India and that this had both short-term and long-term ramifications: culture and politics were inextricably entwined.

She tells us that as the European owner of the Grand Opera House she would not:

allow ... considerations of financial gain to influence ...
... selection of their programmes .... they would ruthlessly censor any film which contains incidents likely to prove harmful and misleading.

and more powerfully

The racial difference between European and the Asiatic is fundamental and irreconcilable. The Asiatic matures early, and the development of his mentality does not keep pace with his physical growth. This is particularly true of the illiterate native, who forms nine-tenths of the population. At maturity he is still a child, and childlike he remains. .... Why do we allow foreigners to flood India with travesties of English life, sordid films, and serials based
on crime? Sown in such fertile soil, there can be but one harvest!

(Times, Cinema Supplement, 21/2/1922)

The racism embodied in this excerpt is obvious. At one level it can be taken as exemplary, expressing openly and without contradiction, deeply held feelings among Anglo-Indians and about Asians, taken here to be the Other, for underlying this polemic is a deeply held sexual fear: that Asian men wanted to have sexual relations with European women. However, there is another level to this piece. Like many of its predecessors the Bromley article acted as a catalyst, prompting another flurry of memoranda circulating between India and England on the topic of controlling the cinema in India. (IOLR, P+J 5101/1923) The Chief Bombay Film Censor rejected the Bromley article out of hand. Firstly, because he knew her family controlled the Grand Opera House in Calcutta. Secondly because he detected in the metropolitan anxiety about film a tendency to take at face value information

based in some measure on a very ill-informed leader printed by the London Times, and on statements contained in that journal written by one obviously influenced by trade considerations.

(IOLR, P+J I/1924)

The separation between India and Britain on this issue can be best understood by comparing the confidence of the Anglo-Indian practitioner with the attitude of the metropolitan bureaucracy. Sir Maurice Seton, Deputy Under Secretary of State for India, circulated a memorandum on the same topic within the India Office

My own view is that the position is mostly unsatisfactory, and that sensational films shown for the purposes of the American market are in most cases certainly unsuitable for Asia.

(Docket Paper 23/8 - 4/9 1923, IOLR/Pd/5101/1923)

The attempt to characterize the Bombay letter as a piece of industrial propaganda, part of an ongoing campaign of British film producers to
influence the metropolitan government to establish an Imperial preference scheme whereby British films would supplant the American productions in the British Empire contrasts starkly with the paranoia of Seton. From an Anglo-Indian point-of-view the invocation of a cultural and political apocalypse was little more than a shoddy trick, sensationalizing circumstances for ulterior motives, and in effect little better, or indeed worse than the object criticized. On the other hand in the India Office such extravagant claims were given much more credence. The division between India and London on this issue had to be resolved. The anxiety about film shared by the India Office and private opinion in India but contradicted directly by public officials in India was a fissure recognized by all parties. Consequently an act of rule was required to signify British resolve to maintain its cultural and political hegemony. This act was the establishment of the Indian Cinematographic Committee in 1927, which was to examine specifically, and in detail, all of the issues that film had opened up in Anglo-Indian discourse.

The official response to Bromley's claims also gestures towards an Anglo-Indian recognition that an Indian film industry was beginning to emerge. The metropolitan enquiries for information on the subject prompted the Anglo-Indian bureaucracy to collect data on the topic, something they did well. Even from the incomplete figures it was clear that the film industry was generating a considerable amount of economic activity, especially in the distribution and exhibition spheres, something Bromley does acknowledge with her snide references to ruthless censorship and economic gain, implying a ruthlessness on the part of the Indian exhibitors not found among the concerned and benign European exhibitors such as herself. However, given the shifts in official ideology on the question of Indian participation in the Indian economy it was unlikely
that the bureaucracy could be seen to be actively involved in supervising an area of strong indigenous economic activity that was modern and outward-looking.

Thus the discourse on film in India is enmeshed in the wider discourse of imperialism. Furthermore, the location of the piece in a special edition of The Times underscores the relationship between the cultural and the economic, a relationship the perceptive Bombay official immediately grasped despite the fact Bromley had sought to efface it.

Agitation in the press (Bromley claimed almost sole responsibility for the press reinserting film censorship on the political agenda in British India in the 1920s), the pulpit and the House of Commons also contributed to the establishment of the Indian Cinematograph Committee of Inquiry in 1927 which constitutes a significant marker within the discourse on film in India. One of the Committee's major briefs was to investigate precisely the sort of allegation Bromley made. It heard a wide diversity of opinions from most significant positions in the Indian formation of the time on the subject of film. The evidence runs to over three-thousand pages printed in five volumes. Four were published in 1929, and a fifth volume which contains the in-camera evidence was circulated within the bureaucracy. Its findings were in a sense unexpected insofar as it rejected the Bromley position, suggesting instead that Indians were able to "read" the filmic representations they saw in quite sophisticated ways. Thus, official discursive practices once again discounted notions of cultural panic. However, when preparing an answer to a parliamentary question in 1931 on the topic of representation of white women undermining British prestige in India Sir Maurice Seton, Under Secretary of State for India, could annotate a draft:
The Committee took a somewhat complacent view of the effect on natives of Western crime and sex films, but its report is the most important document on the subject, and I think that the proposed answer is suitable. (IOLR/PJ/755/1932)

In 1933 the Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, would also write in a private letter to Sir Samuel Hoare: (26/6/1933)

Stricter censorship is required of films disparaging Western morals. (IOLR/PJ/3842/1933)

despite the fact that in an earlier paragraph he would state that he accepted the report of the Local Governments that film censorship was effective. Hoare forwarded the letter to the India Office where it was dealt with in summary fashion. The Under Secretary of State for India, Peel, instructed his clerks to thank Willingdon, welcoming "any action that will stiffen up censorship." (Memo 2/8/33, IOLR/PJ/3842/1933).

Again, the threat of the Other is so great that it presented almost insuperable problems to Anglo-Indians and leads them to the adoption of a totally contradictory position in regard to the cinema. In public they had to endorse the apparatus they had created. In private they were unconvinced of its effectiveness. The tensions between the public and private spheres mark all level of operations with regard to cinema in British India and indeed becomes a major determinant in the formulation of strategies and tactics, and their manifestations into policy.

The tension within official discourse was mirrored in the non-official discourse. At a private level the major actants within official discourse shared the ideology articulated by the non-official voices, the journalists, the clergy, the Members of Parliament, a factor that could not have escaped their attention given the class relations linking them. Consequently it is not surprising to find the question of cinematic representation in India and its overtly political and cultural
ramifications, and covert economic dimension, being placed on the agenda at particularly sensitive moments. The Bromley article appeared at a time when a particular strategy to enhance film production in Britain was being deployed. The parliamentary questions on representation that elicited Seton's annotation were inserted into public discourse just as the Round Table Conferences were being set up in London and which mark an attempt to bring to an end the Non-Co-operation Movement in India. (Low, 1968: 307-308) The conjunction of film and the wider political sphere is achieved through the circulation of discourses in a specific ideological complex whose formation and governance in the final analysis were determined by a set of class relations that ultimately provided the mechanism whereby India and Britain could be held together.

An ideological complex has perforce a number of dimensions. To this point I have concentrated on the consumption aspect of film: that is, the part of the audience, Anglo-Indian, British and to a minor extent the official Indian class, in the determination of attitudes towards the cinema. This emphasis arises from two undeniable facts: virtually all of the administrators, parliamentarians, ideologues who commented on the role of film in the twentieth century political formation of British India did so from the perspective of consumers of film. They had little or no experience in the production of films. Secondly, the alleged recipient of the deleterious effects of film also constituted an audience: in this case a mass audience invariably characterized as illiterate, unformed, lacking in discriminatory power, immature. A notion of audience was at the very core of Anglo-Indian and British attitudes towards cinema in the 1920s and 1930s. It became a major determinant of strategies designed to ameliorate its power, and of the tactics developed to ensure that actions towards the cinema could rarely be interpreted in solely political terms,
because the conceptualization of the audience in perjorative terms was shared by the Anglo-Indians and the Indian elites. Nevertheless some attempts were made to appropriate film as an ideological weapon by the British in the period under discussion on both the public axis and, significantly, the private axis as well.

Britain had developed extensive propaganda apparatuses, including film, by the end of World War One which had as a matter of course impacted upon India. This is a complex area in its own right. For the purposes of this chapter I will argue that Britain had refined its propaganda output in World War I to four levels: the domestic market; the imperial market (India, Australia); the allied market (France); and the neutral market (up to 1917 the United States of America.) (IOLR/PJ/1547/1916; P+J/6/1544/1916). Specific versions, or specific films, and other materials were made for distribution to these markets. At times there was a cross-over between the intended audiences for the various films. Such movements caused extensive discussions among the bureaucracies established to service the specific market segments for the films. Thus a sophisticated approach to production and an understanding of the role of reception in creating a market, plus a careful monitoring of the distribution of their products, were significant features of British propaganda in World War I. The Anglo-Indian bureaucracy was urged to participate in this process but generally prevaricated for two principal reasons.

In the preparation of the propaganda in Britain for distribution in India, and in the production of material within India for internal distribution there arose questions of cost: who precisely would bear the cost of production and distribution? (IOLR/PJ/6/1557/1919) Although the Anglo-
Indian bureaucrats saw the value of preparing material for distribution in the U.S.A. to counter-act suspected Ghadr activity\(^1\), the question of cost persisted. Who was to be directly responsible for the costs incurred in the production of this material? From the Delhi point of view it was clearly a metropolitan matter, as foreign affairs was a clearly specified India Office responsibility. This in itself marks a significant shift in Anglo-Indian thinking on fiscal matters, as hitherto there had been little discussion or debate about the appropriation of Indian revenue in respect to British incurred expenditure. Indeed the classic economic critique of the Anglo-Indian political economy is that the Indian surplus was appropriated for British economic benefit. (Tomlinson, 1979:5-6) The shift, no matter how small, reflects the changing ideological position of key Anglo-Indian administrators like Sir Basil Blackett, Financial Secretary to the Government of India. He not only continued to maintain the classic Anglo-Indian economic and fiscal practices of austerity and parsimony in respect to government intervention in the market place, but also began to respond to the economic demands of the Indian industrialists. This significant political and social group in the key cities of Bombay and Calcutta had as a consequence of the war improved their economic position, with concomitant political results. (Gordon, 1979:passim) Moreover, these bureaucrats remained unconvinced from an early period about the ideological effects of government produced propaganda materials, despite the efforts of a number of enthusiasts to convince them to the contrary. (IOLR/PJ/3380/1916)

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1. The Ghadr Conspiracy was a Sikh proto-nationalist movement in the late teens and early 1920's in the Panjab. It was supported by Sikh expatriates in California who were rumoured to have used film in the U.S.A. as anti-British propaganda. Sikhs and the Panjab were central to the British war effort. (Pradhan, 1978:213-225)
Allied to this distrust on the part of the Anglo-Indian bureaucrats was a fear that overt Government propaganda would be counter-productive (IOLR/PJ/1260/18). It was felt that the forces of the emerging counter-hegemonic formation in the Post-War social and political society would have another mode of propaganda placed at its disposal. This observation is based, in part, on the Congress use of quintessentially British hegemonic practices of Committees or Commissions of Inquiry. Congress exploited this ideological mechanism brilliantly in their Report on the Jallianwallah Bagh\textsuperscript{1} incident, produced in direct opposition to the official British report which Indians, correctly, characterized as a whitewash. (Lapping, 1985:38-39)

The combination of fiscal restraint, a tentative response to Indian economic demands, and a sensitivity to the complexity of the Indian political scene and its shifting alliances all militated against the widespread use of film for propaganda purposes in British India. In contrast there was widespread private use of film in India among the Anglo-Indians in the inter-war period, 1926-1940.

The 16 mm camera was first marketed for home use in the United States in 1923. It was inordinately expensive and thus the preserve of the middle-classes. Home use of 16 mm movie cameras first appeared in India in 1925. Thereafter they were used widely by the Anglo-Indian ruling classes to record their passage through India. The Centre for South Asian Studies audio-visual archive has over two hundred examples of private 16 mm film

\textsuperscript{1} Jallianwallah Bagh - 1919. Brigadier General Reginald Dyer ordered his Gurkha troops to fire on an unarmed meeting of Indian demonstrators. The turning point, for many, in British-Indian relations. (Mason, 1985: 325-327)
in its collection. These films constitute a remarkable record of Anglo-India, providing both evidence of and insight into the lifestyle of an elite in contradictory circumstances. Many of these films have been used in the compilation film Films from the Raj made by Mary Thatcher, Victoria Wigge-Prosser and Michael Genicke in 1977.

An analysis of this film permits us to formulate some firm ideas about the codes of Anglo-Indian society between the 1920s and 1940s, and map these representations of the social codes onto the wider socio-political terrain then in place. None of the film used in Films From the Raj (hereinafter FFTR) signifies the remotest possibility that the Anglo-Indian hegemony was in any way under assault. The signifiers employed in this material suggest a society that is separate from Indian society, with certain exceptions such as the servants and the Indian aristocracy, but secure and even unassailable. This impression is created in two ways: through the aspects of Anglo-Indian life filmed, recorded and presented to us; and in the representation of this data in FFTR.

FFTR organizes two discourses, the filmic and the historical, through transformational professional practices. The compilers of this film have taken their raw data and organized it into four major categories: power relations, economic relations, social problems, and cultural relations and activities. Power relations deal with the administration and conventions of power, including the organization of the administrative tour, the supervision of work, and the conventions of military and civil ceremony, invoked and used to signify Britain's imperial power, and Anglo-Indian political supremacy and longevity of rule. The representations of

1. Personal Communication from Miss Mary Thatcher, Curator of the Collection at the Centre for South Asian Studies, Cambridge.
economic relations deal exclusively with two interrelated areas: public works such as irrigation, and communications, especially the railways. Social problems deal only with those confronting the Anglo-Indian family; those of housing, the rituals of child rearing and entertainment, and the problems of social relations with the native aristocracy and servants. The representation of social activities cover leisure, the club and sports, and health. Collectively these representations underline how separate the Anglo-Indians perceived themselves to be, and indeed were, in Indian society. Thus, the Anglo-Indian elite who manoeuvred to maintain political power are shown to be marginal and vulnerable through filmic discourse. The power of film as propaganda, as teacher, as a voice capable of reaching the "masses of illiterate" Indians had been suggested for a long period by both the official and non-official segments of the Anglo-Indian establishment. (National Archives of India (hereafter NAI)/Home Political/312/1925) But on the whole the Anglo-Indians remained extremely nervous precisely because they perceived that film could subvert already existing discourses and because there existed no authoritative point of reference against which they could "read" films in an hegemonic way. The attempts to establish a film propaganda department in India was always delayed on two grounds; its potential expense, and the fact that it could be counter-productive. FFTR underscores this view. Moreover, when individual officers attempted to put into practice the theory of affirmative propaganda their efforts were not favourably received within the official hierarchy.

One such officer was R.S. Johnson, an ex-army officer who joined the Indian Civil Service after World War One.¹ Johnson purchased a Bell and Howell 16 mm camera in 1925 whilst on leave in Britain. On his return to

¹. This section of the chapter is based upon personal correspondence between Mr Johnson and the author.
India he began to experiment with film for propaganda purposes amongst the peasants within his district. The culmination of this activity was a remarkable silent film entitled The Truth Will Out. The film is purportedly an anti-Congress tract. Its narrative demonstrates the opportunism of the city Congress-ite whose messages can only lead the unsophisticated peasants into trouble. In contrast the ICS officer has the true interests of the peasants at heart. This is ultimately recognized by the peasants who turn on the Congress-ite and help the District Officer capture and imprison him.

Cinematographically the film is competent. The dominant commercial codes of film making of the era were adopted to some effect. These included seamless editing, lighting codes, camera movements and camera angles. The successful deployment of these practical codes combined with the use of the villagers acting out the roles generates a sense of freshness and reality, but at the same time creates a set of ambiguous images. At the conclusion of the film the Congress-ite is shown in prison. The camera angle, the lighting, the mis-en-scene (the bars casting shadows on the prisoner's face) generate sympathy for the prisoner rather than the intended sense of satisfaction that true justice had occurred due to the benevolence and superior knowledge of the Anglo-Indian representative of paramountcy. This seems to have been recognized by Johnson's superiors who prevented him from screening the film.

The reasons provided for curtailing the circulation of Truth Will Out were twofold: the film was deemed to be an overt political intervention and ICS District Officers were by definition beyond politics according to the official ideology. Secondly, the film may have upset the United Provinces Congress organization then engaged in delicate negotiations with the
provincial government. As a consequence of this activity Johnson was deemed to be ideologically suspect by the superiors who had viewed the film prior to banning it. Johnson continued to use film in pursuance of his duties but realised that it was unwise to continue to produce didactic dramas. Consequently he moved into the documentary mode and covered such topics as The House Fly (c.1926) and Electricity Your Servant (c.1927). Moreover, Johnson was transferred from the United Provinces service to Bengal, probably, he felt, because he had blotted his copybook with Truth Will Out.

There were other dimensions to the Anglo-Indian experience of cinema in India apart from the anxiety and paranoia. The cinema became an important aspect of social life at many levels probably helping to break up the monotony and boredom of cultural and geographical isolation. As David Kincaid, the major chronicler of Anglo-Indian social life put it

Others would be off to the cinema. Bombay now (pre-World War One) boasted seven or eight cinemas devoted exclusively to American and English films. Most of them, it is true, were converted theatres, with the annoying result for those who had paid top prices for the best view, that they got the most uncomfortable seats, but films were often shown at the same time as the London premiere, or even earlier, so that one had the comforting feeling that one was not an exile. (Kincaid, 1973:320)

At other times the air-conditioned cinema could be a haven in the wet weather period (Rowntree, 1981:9) or a place of convalescence (Turner, 1942:1).

Anglo-Indian concerns about film represent the intersection of a number of different determinants: the economic, the political, the cultural, and consciousness. Further, there was a distinct separation between the concerns expressed in the private sphere and those expressed in the public domain although they were generated by the same fears. Privately nearly
all Anglo-Indians from the Viceroy down expressed deeply held fears about the alleged effects of the cinema on the Indian mind. In public, however, the official Anglo-Indians had to endorse their apparatus of control established effectively in 1920. To have done otherwise would have contradicted their mandate to rule. Nevertheless, severe reservations persisted at all levels of Anglo-Indian society about the role of film in India on both the practical and ideological strata. However, it should always be remembered that it was not Indian films and systems of representation that produced the Anglo-Indian concerns but American films. The small amount of Indian film production was initially hidden from the bureaucratic gaze, whose focus was the Hollywood staple. The anxiety and paranoia which dominated Anglo-Indian discourse on film arose out of the perceived threat the Hollywood system of representation posed for Anglo-Indian hegemony, with its emphasis on the criminal and the sexual. Official Anglo-Indian thinking on the subject was determined by this factor and the apparatuses they established, albeit in a fluid and changing political situation, were designed to contain this problem. It was later, when indigenous production began to outstrip imported film for complex cultural and economic reasons, that the censorship rules and regulations began to be applied extensively to Indian systems of representation. Herein lies the ambiguity in the British structures which were designed to combat foreign travesties of European culture. The Censorship rules remained almost exclusively directed towards controlling an imported system of cultural representation. However, the indigenous systems of representations came to dominate the Indian screen. The Anglo-Indians had little understanding of the indigenous product but they preferred it to the American as the main source of entertainment for the Indian masses. Consequently their ambivalence towards film remained at
least until the late 1930s, when the changing structures of governance in India shifted the anxiety about film from the Anglo-Indian to the Indian.
Film rapidly impinged upon all aspects of urban Indian life by the mid-1920s and had even begun to filter through to remote rural areas, or the mofussil. This widespread penetration of Indian social life by film gave rise to a range of discourses on film. Of these discourses two in particular stand out, marking a contradiction that was as profound as that found in Anglo-Indian discourses on film. Within Indian attitudes towards film there is an enormous gulf between the apparent hostility and indifference towards film which is epitomised by Gandhi and others and the actual vigorous growth of the industry and the widespread popularity of film with the Indian audiences. Arising from this disparity there emerged a post-Independence situation of both a flourishing and thoroughly indigenous film industry and an equally flourishing system of control inherited from the British but exercised with vigour by Indians. This chapter will explore the reasons for this through an examination of the available Indian discourses on film.

My examination of the Indian discourses of film will show that film production grew markedly throughout the 1920s and 1930s against a background that encompassed contradictory tendencies. These were between the apparent indifference to film of the major political elites and the massive acceptance of film as a form of entertainment by the Indian masses. In addition I will go on to look at the way opposing groups responded to the introduction of film into Indian society. In the first instance I will examine the response to film of the Anglophile and conservative Indians who were co-opted into the film system either through
bureaucratic function or political allegiances. In contrast I will go on to examine the Nationalist construction of film and the attempts of the film makers to co-opt the Nationalists into supporting film as a nationalist cause. Finally I will examine the attitudes and actions of five individual Indians in respect to film, each of whom played some part in the development of film in Indian in the broader socio-political context. The individuals are D G Phalke, Sir Ebraim Haroon Jaffer, Sir Phiroze Sethna, T G Rangacharia and S Satyamurthy. Each individual, it will be argued, represented a complex conjunction of attitudes which, when articulated, voiced the hitherto suppressed discourses for either change or control of film for the sectors of the population from which they came.

A number of factors must be considered when analysing the contradictions apparent in Indian attitudes towards film. These include: the tensions and struggle between the major communal or religious groupings, the Muslims and the Hindus, and to a lesser extent in respect to film, the Parsis; religious and political oppositions between the orthodox and the heterodox in all communities; regional oppositions which reflect different stages in political and economic development as well as different levels of accommodation with the British; political oppositions between the Anglophile Indian and the Nationalists; economic oppositions between the industrialists and the marketeers; and finally the opposition between the rural sector and the urban centres, for in many respects it was the mofussil (rural sector) which was the site of the most intense struggle between all the competing elements of filmic discourse in India.

Complicating this already complex set of relations is the political situation in India between 1919 and 1947 arising from the Nationalist struggle for independence. I have argued in Chapter One that the British responses to the introduction of film into India, both metropolitan and
colonial, are inextricably woven into the totality of events. The response to the cinema was determined by political events extraneous to the cinema because the cinema was viewed from a political point-of-view. Thus the Anglo-Indian discourse of film was part of wider political discourse. Indians were automatically swept up in the events and had to define themselves in relation to them. Indian attempts to construct counter discourses to establish a counter-hegemony, did so against that hegemonic discourse. In short, without an operative British hegemony underpinned by an ideological complex and its practices there could have been no Nationalist discourse. Film becomes enmeshed in this dialectic between British and Indian cultural and political discourses, through the strategies adopted within the Indian film complex at key moments in the development of the film industry. For example, after the introduction of sound in 1931, film producers in Bombay made a number of statements about the role of Hindi as the spoken language in their films as representing a significant step in the development of national consciousness. K A Abbas, Muslim journalist and filmmaker, made the point succinctly in a 1950 review of a Prabhat film of the 1930s Sant Duyaneshwar.

[T]ukaram spoke on the screen only in Marathi, Duyaneshwar speaks the national language (Hindi) ... While the appeal of Tukaram was strictly limited to Maharashtrians, Duyaneshwar will be seen and appreciated all over the country. (in Wavve, 1967: 33)

Film in India is always enmeshed in this wider context. A close analysis of the attitudes towards the cinema and opinions about its role among significant Indian groups demonstrates they represent almost competing tendencies. In the first place the attitudes and opinions reproduce the ideologies which held together the respective social groups. In other words they give voice to the complex sets of allegiances that dominated Indian social, political and cultural life. At the same time the articulated opinions represent attempts to define relationships in
opposition to other groups. This is a particularly significant factor in the formation of new social and commercial groups such as the film-makers. The introduction of the cinema in India and the development of an Indian film industry thus represents a significant intersection of cultural, political, and economic developments.

Another dimension to this complex area is the fact that the introduction of film represents a fissure at a number of levels of the Indian cultural formation. The attitudes towards film of the literate Indian Anglophile elite, which was composed of lawyers, educators, industrialists and other modernist elite groups, corresponded closely to the attitudes of the Anglo-Indian groups discussed in Chapter Two. The introduction of film created a fissure in the long established literary culture of this group which they had borrowed and adapted from their British rulers. The new form engendered responses among this group similar to those found among the Anglo-Indians and based on issues of cultural value and significance. The popularity of film arising from its combination of mythologizing and "tangibility" (Rajadyaska, 1987:38) presented the wider audience with an alternative to the hard won literary-based education. To justify their cultural accommodation and possibly to protect their status the literary educated elites needed to characterize film as culturally worthless. I K Yajnik, editor of the Bombay newspapers Hindustan and Praja Mitra said to the I.C.C. it was difficult for people of high literary education to appreciate film because it was

[the] lower taste that prevails among cinema goers. (E.I., 1928:217)

However, Neogy, the Calcutta member of the I.C.C., always remained sceptical of the European and Anglophile Indian concerns and anxieties about the alleged influence of films in disturbing the Indian perception of European civilization. In Peshawar he stated
after all they are only for entertainment.

(E.2, 1928:266)

The parallels between culture and the problems embodied in these responses will be explored below.

In contrast to the Anglophile and Anglophone elites the Indian masses, both rural and urban, saw no cultural fissure. The cinema presented no threat to their oral culture, and they formed enthusiastic audiences for both foreign and Indian films from the earliest period. (Rangoonwalla, 1975:27) The nature of this audience and its response to films alarmed not only the Anglo-Indian but also the Indian elites. As Yousuf Ali, a member of the Panjab Board of Film Censors and Principal of Islamia College, Lahore, said in regard to film

European civilization occupies a special place in India and if we cut the ground from under it, we shall be cutting the ground from under our own feet.

(E.2, 1928:172)

Audience response then became a major determinant of censorship in India. The Anglo-Indians rationalized censorship in terms of protecting the rural masses from the contamination of misrepresentation and urban sophistication. Paradoxically, the Indian elites shared this view because they viewed rural India as constituting a repository of Indian cultural authenticity. (E.1, 1928:536)

The whole topic of Indian responses to the introduction of the cinema then, is complex. We find a multiplicity of views, positions, strategies and tactics being adopted in regard to its introduction and dissemination. In essence then, we can see that Indian discourses on film developed a double form. These two aspects revolved around either a division between official and public discourse and private discourse, or they reflect a
particular problem of the inability to reconcile pleasure with a specific form of intellectual development. Hence Yajnik's (see p.62) dismissal of film through locating it in the realm of lower class and caste taste. Neogy's view expressed a suppressed puritanism that locates a particular, and lesser, form of pleasure in the ephemera of film, thus denying film any power to transform society. It is these views that encapsulate the contradictory position of the Indian intellectual. Their position, except among a very small fraction of the Indian population whose economic well-being was intimately concerned with the cinema, was largely reactive. Moreover, the locally produced cinema placed this group in something of a double bind. Intellectually they looked down upon Indian films, criticizing them for their poor acting, technique and scenarios. Yet they constituted quite a significant part of the city audience for Indian films, if the pricing structure and advertising strategies of the 1930s are any indication, suggesting that emotionally even the Anglophone elites were as strongly drawn to an Indian system of representation of the despised masses. This contradictory position vis-à-vis popular Indian films remains to this day among the intellectual elite. Professing to despise popular Bombay masālā films, they can nevertheless recall in great detail intricate plot details of many films as well as sing the songs that characterize the films. The dichotomy is rationalized as a division between art and entertainment. It is an attitude that is deep rooted and has its formation in the British period. More significantly it is probably responsible for the lack of serious attention concerning the popular Hindi cinema in Indian intellectual circles.

There are a number of major sources for the public expression of the views, positions and strategies being explored here: they are the press, including the film magazines, the legislatures, the evidence given to the
1927-28 Indian Cinematograph Committee, and in the 1930s a limited number of books. The oppositions outlined above - between Muslim/Hindu, traditionalist/heterodox, Anglophile/Nationalist, rural/urban - will be mapped onto this evidence in order to explore the contours of Indian reactions to the introduction of the cinema. In addition the role of the audience will be kept in mind in unravelling this complex set of relations.

As the apparent indifference and hostility to film developed among the Indian intellectuals from the 1920s on, the Indian film industry entered into a period of vigorous growth. During the 1920s Bombay and Calcutta in particular established themselves as the major production centres and by the 1930s each centre had developed strong studio-based industries. These are looked at in depth in Chapter Four. Both centres produced films for an expanding urban audiences which welcomed indigenous films. The spread of Indian films from the major centres to the more remote regions was a feature of the period which gave rise to the early distribution networks which eventually came to dominate film production in the 1950s. The vigour and expansion of the industry belied the hostility towards the industry from the elite and suggests that film in India linked into existing cultures in complex and intriguing ways. This is examined in detail in Chapter Five. At this point one way of signalling this process of enculturation is to look at the formation of the Indian film audience.

Recent film theory has recuperated the audience as an analytical category of major significance, correctly assigning the audience a crucial role in the construction of meaning. (Brunsdon and Morley, 1979; Morley, 1980;

1. See bibliography for details
An examination of audience responses towards the cinema in India combined with these theoretical developments is most revealing. While unable to "speak" for itself in the conventional sense we can construct an active audience in respect to film in India through an examination of written documentation within the administration and the evidence of other accounts such as police reports, newspaper and private letters. There are references to Indian audiences responding to films in a physical, vocal and empathetic manner which totally contradicted any notion of a passive audience. For example the Bihar and Orissa Local Government report in 1916 drew the attention of the Government of India to a Muslim audience that had cheered a film of the Turkish armies defeating Italian armies in North Africa in 1911. (IOLR/P&J5256/16: B&O No. 1126-C, 29/5/1916). Furthermore, Muslims reacted strongly to what they perceived to be misrepresentations of Islamic culture in Western films such as the representation of the Prophet or his relatives which they saw as directly contravening Koranic teachings. (Proceedings IL+L.A., 24/8/1927:3309 in IOLR P&J/2421/1927; Report of I.C.C., 1928:41). In Burma Buddhists protested against a film called the Life of Buddha (Report of the I.C.C., 1928:120) and in Delhi Hindus had reacted strongly against a film of a bullfight. (Delhi Home No. 1710/15/3/1915 in IOLR P&J/5256/16)

The net effect of these events was eventually to convince the British authorities that film, but in particular foreign films which had little knowledge of Indian conditions, required close control, because of its capacity to arouse or exacerbate conflicting views within the various Indian communities. The unrest, however, prompted initially an ambiguous reaction from the British. In the first place it was an important element contributing to the formulation of an ideology of control especially at the local and regional level. At this level the Indian mass audience was
constructed as "childlike" and in need of protection both from the representations it could not comprehend because of a lack of cultural knowledge and sophistication, and from its own immature reactions to these representations. At the same time the reported unrest generated by the films was used both to legitimate the move to control the cinema and as an ideological prop sustaining the desire to maintain the cultural hegemony of the British in India. Thus, it was the construction of the mass audience as volatile and susceptible to propaganda that gave form to the very act of maintaining cultural hegemony, and not the concept of the passive audience.

Film then was perceived as being able to interrupt the maintenance of public good order, a cornerstone of Anglo-Indian social behaviour, through its potential to exacerbate communal tensions and disorder by encouraging religious riots and Muslim/Hindu clashes. The latter was a very real fear based upon experience, particularly in the Panjab where Miles Irving, I.C.S., the Commissioner for Lahore and President of the Panjab Board of Film Censors, sought to explain the banning of the Indian film Sacrifice (1925) on the basis of its potential to cause civil unrest.

I can conceive of a large number of cases in which one Province may be affected which may not have the same effect elsewhere.

(E.2 1928:198)

In contrast Lala Lajpat Rai the noted Indian nationalist politician who had been harshly treated by the British saw film in a different light.

Western civilization is spreading all over the world. It has its good effects, and its bad effects, and we cannot have one without the other. I am sufficiently confident our people will be able to resist.

(E.2 1928:200)

Nevertheless, the fact remains that this construction of the mass Indian audience was designed more to protect the Anglo-Indian "image", that is,
its social, cultural and political position in a shifting political scene more than to protect the Indian masses.

However, the Indian mass audience continued to be perceived as a "problem". There were periodic but localized riots in cinemas that showed films which offended local communal sensibilities; (Filmland, 156, 1933:10) and reports of vocal interaction between the audience and the filmic representations in the cinema continued in the presence of Europeans, Indian male audiences continued to make lewd and sexual comments directed at white women on the screen which were found to be both culturally offensive and politically damaging up to and including the 1940s. (Shaw, 1942:272) The audience responses confirmed the British prejudices against the Hollywood system of representation and became a significant determinant of censorship, but more significantly showed that Indians of all classes were constructing their own discourses of film.

The mass audience not only generated cultural and political activity as a consequence of its responsiveness to the cinema but it also stimulated the economic sphere of the film complex as well. In the urban centres important groups of Indian entrepreneurs recognized the potential profitability of the cinema, at first at the level of exhibition, and then significantly, as the film complex developed, in the circulation of films which had led them to establish distribution networks; and ultimately in the production field as it also became apparent that Indian audiences preferred to see Indian films. (Report of the I.C.C., 1928:22) The parallel growth of the industry and of the audience was enhanced by the publication of over sixty film journals by 1938 (Barucha, 1938:505-509) in all the major Indian languages. The journals catered for the mass audience and dealt in gossip and producer-released public relations
materials. Their influence in establishing the cinema as a significant form of entertainment in modern India is immeasurable but little studied. Suffice to say that without the presence of the journals the power of the star as a cultural signifier would have been seriously diminished. The intertextual references between film, journal and star created the conditions whereby stars came to dominate popular film production. (Mishra, Shoesmith, Jeffrey, forthcoming). This development had its origins in the 1920s and was well established by the 1930s.

In the first instance the Indian groups attracted to the film industry in Bombay, the major film producing centre from the 1920s on, came primarily from two groups, the Parsis and the Gujerati mercantile classes. Both groups can be characterized as essentially urban and heterodox, which in this context means that they willingly entered into Western orientated social, cultural and economic practices. However, while both groups partook of the benefits imparted by the British rule, especially in Bombay, there are significant differences between each group. In general terms the Parsis were more Anglicized than the Gujeratis, and with notable exceptions, tended not to involve themselves in Nationalist politics. The Parsis dominated the early Indian film industry through the activities of Jamsetji Framji Madan (1856-1923), in Calcutta. Madan's background was in the Parsi travelling theatres of the nineteenth century that travelled throughout India presenting a mixture of traditional dramas and adapted Western dramas, especially Shakespeare, to a wide cross spectrum of audiences. (Gargi, 1962:130) He then moved on to the provisioning of cantonments, the separate urban settlements established by the Anglo-Indian military forces. Thus for Madan the exhibition of films became an extension of his other commercial activities, the profitable supply of commodities to the ruling elite. By 1916 Madan claimed to control 60 of
the 180 cinemas then functioning in India, all of them located in major urban centres in northern and western India. (IOLR/P&J4748/16: cablegram sent 9/6/1916) Madan later moved into the production of films as it became apparent that this was profitable, especially in Indian centres, although in line with his Eurocentric, heterodox tendencies, he imported Italian personnel to produce the films. (Rangoonwalla, 1975:49)

Another major group to have an impact on the development of the cinema in India were the bhadralok of Calcutta, who were high and middle caste groupings who had created a vital urban literary culture in Calcutta. (Broomfield, 1968:231-39) They expressed interest in film as an art, and developed a more culturally specific cinema which was produced almost exclusively for a Bengali-speaking audience, in contrast to the all-Indian products of Bombay. (Filmland, 157, 1933:14) In contrast the Gujerati film-makers of Bombay were much more ambitious. From the very beginning they conceived of an all-India cinema: films that drew upon easily recognized universal myths appropriated from the Mahabahratta and Ramayana, drawing upon the culture and ideology that cemented the disparate parts of Hinduism together. These films were to be circulated on an all-India basis, including the South. Moreover, these Gujerati film-makers had clear links with other members of their caste and class who became the economic mainstay of Nationalist politics. (Gordon, 1978:1)

In contrast to those attracted to the cinema as a form of enterprise and culture, who can be characterized as liberal, heteropractic and heterodox, we can discern a second group of Indians who reacted negatively to the presence of the cinema. These were the social and religious conservatives who saw the cinema in terms not very dissimilar to the Anglo-Indians. Gandhi expressed their position concisely. Both Rangachariar and Jaffer
represented conservative Indian views on the I.C.C. from the Hindu and Muslim perspectives respectively. Significantly communal affiliations in India did not determine an individual's position in respect to film. Other factors operated more powerfully in this sphere.

In the evidence presented to the I.C.C. the Bombay film-makers presented themselves as both nationalists and artists, who chose to work in film rather than another medium. (E.1, 1928:158-191) Their evidence to the I.C.C. was initially careful as they were suspicious of the intentions of the Committee. Because of their Nationalist allegiances they subscribed to the view expressed by Lala Lajpat Rai in the Imperial Legislature:¹ that the Committee's chief function was to find a means whereby British film could supplant American films on the Indian screen, as Rai put it, "entering by the back door". (E.2, 1928:205) However, as the proceedings of the I.C.C. evolved it became clear that though these fledgling film makers were Nationalists their political commitment was tempered by economic pragmatism. Their methods of financing films were so precarious and they had so much invested in individual films that they could not afford to offend the Anglo-Indian bureaucracy. Indeed the evidence suggests a degree of compliance on the part of the film makers towards the apparatus of control. Certainly in the formative years, after the actual introduction of regulations pertaining to film, the relationship between the film maker and the censor seems to have been quite relaxed. As Baskaran indicates, the censors sought an accommodation with all

¹. The bicameral representative system inaugurated by the British in 1920 consisted of an upper house, the Legislative Council or Council of State, and the lower house, the Legislative Assembly. The Council consisted of nominated members, i.e. appointed, and members elected on a very small franchise on either communal or regional basis and was much more conservative and compliant than the lower house. This distinction becomes crucial at a later stage.
elements of the film industry, producers, distributors and exhibitors, through a lenient application of censorship rules. (1977:652)

Nevertheless, within the trade press the political dimension of cinema was constantly stressed, particularly after the introduction of sound technologies when the dominance of Hindi as medium of expression became justified in nationalistic terms. (Filmland, IV, 156, 1933:14-18) In many respects these claims were an attempt to give film, and its practitioners, some weight within the cultural establishments.

Paradoxically both the Anglophile Indian and the Nationalist remained on the whole hostile to the cinema as means of artistic expression. The opposition was two-fold. Firstly the Anglophile Indian elite espoused similar attitudes towards the cinema to those found among the Anglo-Indians themselves. That is, they saw film as either mere entertainment or as thinly disguised forms of propaganda. Both of these categories are problematic in themselves, but what united them in the opposition's mind was a clear perception that neither would be regarded as art. In adopting the ruler's language Anglophile groups adopted a range of positions in regard to culture and cultural production that can be characterized as elitist and at the same time romantic, privileging literary production above all other forms of art and cultural production, and within this province there was a narrow focus on a rigidly prescribed canon of English literature that had Shakespeare as its centre-piece. This was the product of a specific educational system that emphasised literary practices over all others and led to a situation where the Western educated Indian could

better understand a Western film centring around the French Revolution or Cardinal Richelieu than he can some Indian episodes.

(Written evidence of Pherozeshah J Manzhan, Editor, Jami-e-Janshed, Bombay, E.1, 1928:473)
Critics of the system wanted an educational emphasis on the vernacular language rather than English, crafts and technology, focussing on the vocational rather than the literary. Film education was part of this thrust. Many significant people suggested that if Indian film was to improve its techniques it was necessary to provide an educational body prepared to import sufficient vocational training in the area. The I.C.C. did not take up the idea but did recommend that a system of travelling scholarships be established for "those who have some experience" in the industry. (Report of the I.C.C., 1928:145). However, in many respects the literary educational model introduced after the Macaulay reforms in the nineteenth century in education corresponded to the stratified Indian system where castes traditionally inhabited vocational spaces that paralleled their social space. The upper castes traditionally controlled the areas of intellectual labour. The British system opened up new areas of intellectual labour such as the legal system, education, and administration which the higher castes traditionally filled.

A consequence of this was that lower castes who sought upward social mobility had one of two avenues to follow. The first was through a process of sanskritization whereby a low caste adopted the practices of the higher castes, e.g. they gave up the consumption of meat and became vegetarians. Decisions like this could be individual, or more significantly collective, where a caste panchyat made a decision affecting the consciousness of its caste members. The other path was Westernized education. Frequently the two proceeded together. (Shoesmith, 1976:passim) Consequently the major elite groups had too much invested in the dominant Westernized education system for it to be successfully reformed. The consciousness engendered within this system militated
against the widespread acceptance of film as anything other than an entertainment. To claim more for the cinema was an act of futility. This was especially true of Indian produced films which employed cultural codes hitherto rejected by the literary oriented elite. Further, the films were often technically very poor and suffered in comparison to the imported Hollywood films. This view was expressed consistently to the I.C.C. George Mooser, the M.G.M. representative in India, saw Indian produced films as inferior in every way (E.1, 1923:449) citing their poor technical quality, production values, acting and scenarios as the main problems. (E.1, 454-55). Both the I.C.C. and the Bombay producers who attended the hearings of the I.C.C. took note of Mooser because of his extensive experience in the industry and his connections. Moreover, Mooser's critique of Indian films mirrored those made by the Indian elite, adding more weight because of his position and experience.

A consequence of the Anglophile elite's dislike and fear of the cinema was to lead them to join actively with the Anglo-Indians in establishing a state apparatus of control. This development made the Anglophile elites even more deeply complicit with British rule. It also brought them into the alignment with conservative Indian forces who had serious objections to the cinematic process, but for significantly different reasons. The reasons for this conjunction of seemingly disparate groups on the one issue requires closer elaboration. In the first place the ideological space of each group, heterodox and orthodox, needs to be articulated. Secondly, the political allegiances of each group need to be identified and traced. In taking six groups, three from either side as it were, we can construct a complex of overlapping concerns and attitudes that represent a degree of cultural uncertainty that arises from two sources.
First was the impact of British culture generally on a mature non-Western culture. Second was a sense of anomie arising from the uncertainty of the future that the Nationalist political struggle had unleashed. Put in another way, certain groups had just come to terms with the British and accepted one set of certainties when these were placed under assault and made uncertain again. Nowhere is this clearer than among the Western educators who had so much invested in the maintenance of a British-style ideological complex. Closely following the educators in their fear of the cinema were lawyers and certain groups of legislators who generally supported the British in the Indian Legislative Assembly and the Council. These groups and their ideologies will be explored in detail below through an examination of key individuals who are taken as representative of their positions, namely D.G. Phalke, Sir Phiroze Sethna, Sir Ebrahim Haroon Jaffer, S Satyamurthy, Shri Bahadur Khan T Rangachariar and Lala Lajput Rai.

D G Phalke (1870-1944) is generally called the "father of the Indian film industry". (Bharucha, 1938:19) A Brahmin, Phalke is an interesting example of those Indians attracted to the cinema as both an art form and a business. His life has become as mythologised as the topics of his early films, characterized as a never ending struggle against debt and lack of recognition; (Phalke, 1970:33-34) the parallels to D W Griffith (1875-1948) are marked. Both have been heroized, credited with virtually superhuman powers.

There is no doubt that Phalke is a key figure in the early development of the Indian cinema. However, two significant aspects of his career have usually been glossed over. In the first place Phalke's social origins are unusual for a film-maker in the early Indian context. As a Brahmin his
caste affiliations would normally have destined him for a religious or administrative career. However, he seems to have drifted into commerce and industry, having had a technical and artistic education instead of the usual literary curriculum of his class. (Rajadhyaksha; 1986:37-40) Before moving on to film Phalke worked in the printing industries, and as a commercial photographer. He also had entrepreneurial ambitions in both fields but they came to nothing. (Bharucha, 1988:19) Indeed all of Phalke's entrepreneurial schemes ended in failure, probably because of his personality. It appears that he was a perfectionist and somewhat unworldly. (Kale, 1978:5; Phalke in Shahane, 1970:26) Eventually he arrived at film-making. Here he was to prove innovative and obsessive, constantly exploring new film techniques and practices rather than following established and conventional financial strategies to consolidate his financial position. (Rajadhyaksha, 1986:37-40)

The second aspect of Phalke's career was the fact that he was not very astute financially, and had to rely on investors in his schemes who were not necessarily sympathetic to his procedures and methods of film making. (Phalke, 1970:27-28) He could only establish a satisfactory production base at Nasik, a small Hindu city to the north-east of Bombay, after he had received funds from members of the Gujarati mercantile group based in Bombay. (Bharucha, 1938:19) The result of this investment was the Hindustani Film Company. As Pramod Kale has pointed out this is a significant name. (Kale, 1978:6) The establishment of a studio to produce films signifies a certain confidence and maturity in the economic practices crucial to continuous and sustained film production. Naming it the Hindustani Film Company also signifies something else. Through this name film is seen as an Indian product for the widest possible circulation rather than a purely regional phenomena. As Phalke said "the sons of
India see Indian images on the screen". (Phalke, 1917:25) Even more significant was his use of Hindustani in the title to assert a degree of "Indian-ness", of cultural specificity not generally associated with film at this time because of a tendency to opt for more Anglophile names for companies. Early examples are British Dominion Film Company (1922) in Calcutta and Imperial Films (1923) in Bombay. These names, in contrast to the Hindustani Film Company, suggest an approach of internationalism rather than specifically Indian concerns which can be construed as suggesting more nationalistic orientations. Thus film production drew together disparate caste and class groupings, characterized by heterodox and heteropractic cultural and economic practices within what was essentially a emergent complex political context.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920) the great Indian nationalist politician and agitator was in many respects a social, cultural and religious conservative. However, his anti-British campaigns were tinged with radicalism especially as he recognised the value of appropriating indigenous semiotic systems to use against British cultural hegemonic practices in the late Nineteenth century. He revised the Ganpati festival as a statement of Indian-ness in the Nineteenth century, exploiting its political dimensions against the British to the full. (Owen, 1968:162) He established Kesari (Lion) a Marathi-language newspaper in Pune to disseminate his cultural ideas. (Shahane, 1970:4) Furthermore, the young Maharashtiran Brahmins who became Tilak's lieutenants in the Anti-British struggle were closely associated with the establishment of a thriving indigenous theatre movement focused on Pune. (Kale, 1978:6) Tilak's combination of culture and politics had a major impact on the development of the cinema, particularly in Western India. Tilak recognized the cinema as potentially a crucial element in the struggle against the British
The art of the cinema is an extremely useful art from the point-of-view of the nation. You could use it a great deal in awakening the people. Make a movie on the massacre at the Jalianwallah Bagh ... For awakening the people the cinema is a means many times more powerful than hundreds of our lectures or writing.  


Evidence suggests Phalke was sympathetic to Tilak's aims. (Kale, 1978:6-7) Consequently, the naming of his company, the choice of topics he filmed, which were derived largely from the classic Hindu myths, gave the cinema a political edge it was to retain thereafter. This fact has often been conveniently overlooked by many Indian commentators for complex and social reasons which will be explored below, but was never lost sight of by the British.

The cinema has always presented orthodox Muslims with problems because of the Koranic injunction against images. The British, it should be noted, took Muslim sensibilities on the question of misrepresentation of Islam and representation of the Prophet and his relatives very seriously, and proscribed a number of films such as Moon Over Israel (1926) in deference to this group's position. When the I.C.C. was established the British thought it was felt necessary that a Muslim representative be appointed to the Committee. Their choice was Sir Ebrahim Haroon Jaffer, (as the non-official representative on the 1927-28 Indian Cinematograph Committee.)

Jaffer was a Muslim who was religiously orthodox and thus saw film as a social and cultural evil because it employed and deployed images in cultural transmission, which transgressed Koranic teachings. At the same time he was completely Anglophile in his political allegiances, receiving a knighthood for services to the British Raj. Furthermore, he was culturally heteropractic insofar as he embraced Western economic practices, and developed an textile factory in Bombay, but he represented a rural Muslim electorate in the Westernized parliamentary system.
Jaffer impressed the Anglo-Indian administrators when he advocated stricter film censorship in the Legislative Council in order to address the problem of the "fundamental differences of outlook" of the segmented Indian audience. (Proceedings, 1925:40) In other words, Jaffer was arguing that Muslim interests be looked after. He became for the British the spokesman for Muslim attitudes towards film, which ensured his appointment to the I.C.C. (IOLR/P&J/479/25). This choice was no aberration, since among those most outspoken about the alleged impact of the cinema were the social and cultural conservatives from the Muslim and Hindu communities. In general terms these groups tended to reject all Western intrusions, cultural and technological, but the rejection of films goes beyond the general to a deeper, more fundamental level. The cinematic system of representation challenged deeply held beliefs about community, gender, familial, and racial relationships that underpinned conservative, orthopragmatic ideological systems. Consequently, when communal rioting broke out in the urban areas the cinema was always among the first locations to be attacked by conservative Muslim forces: a tendency that persists in fundamentalist areas to this day. (Naficy, 1981:345) Thus the appointment of Jaffer to the I.C.C. was seen by the British as a way of ensuring that Muslim orthodox opinion of an acceptable sort was represented on the Committee. At the same time they could anticipate that somebody like Jaffer would readily contribute to a report that conformed to British expectations.

The British were anxious to establish alliances with groups whom they could utilize in their carefully orchestrated campaign to maintain their hegemony. The concerns of the social conservative, culturally orthopractic Indian groups in relation to film viz the sumptuary codes of
women, or lack thereof, the sexual codes portrayed, and the social codes of law and order employed in films, coincided with the British ones. So did the Anglophile Indian concerns and attitudes, but the British chose to align themselves with the orthopragm for purely ideological reasons. These groupings fitted the preconceived notions the Anglo-Indians had constructed about the essential nature of India. The Anglophile groups did not, particularly in regard to film, for three principal reasons. Firstly, the urban middle class heteropragraphic Indian was viewed as superficial in their understanding of Western culture, as mimicking the codes and conventions of the West rather than having any firm grasp of that reality. Secondly, they were perceived as constituting the natural constituency of the nationalist politicians. Thirdly, the film censors and bureaucrats were drawn from this social fragment, and many of the problems pertaining to film censorship were perceived as arising from the Indian stipendary censor's superficial grasp of the cultures represented in film.

A draft reply to the Secretary of State's demand for information on the subject of film censorship in India argued that it was difficult to emulate the British system of censorship by personal criteria of men of taste, especially in the grey area where films were criticized for giving a misleading conception of the moral atmosphere, the behaviour and the standards of social life of a race different from that of the examiners.

(IOLR/P&J/1/26)

More bluntly a bureaucrat stated that he was

unwilling to accept the view that Inspectors ... (provided) an adequate system. British standards (should be) maintained by censors of taste ... (but) ill educated and poorly paid inspectors cannot be expected to emulate them.

(IOLR/Public 24/31/3/27)
In contrast the conservative groups were perceived as natural allies in a move meant to control the cinema through state censorship. Their utterances confirmed this view. Paradoxically, when the British first moved to establish the I.C.C. they turned to the Anglophile group in the first instance for leadership when they offered the chairmanship to Sir Phiroze Sethna. Sir Phiroze Sethna was a Parsi businessman, an Anglophile, a Liberal politician, who had connections in the Bombay film industry.\(^1\) He had been a member of the Council of State Finance Standing Committee Film Sub-Committee which, while it only met once, had considerable power over the thinking of the Anglo-Indians in the setting up of the I.C.C.

Sethna is a key figure in the Bombay film industry's desire to attain cultural, political and economic legitimisation in the 1930s. He had extensive political and financial links in Bombay. Politically he was associated with the Anglo-Indians and the major non-Congress Indian political parties who argued for a gradualist approach to independence. Financially Sethna was linked through directorships of virtually all the major Bombay commercial and industrial enterprises. (see below) Sethna, however, decided not to chair the I.C.C., which made him an ambiguous figure for the British. The decision, made he claimed on essentially financial grounds, (NML/SP/Letter to President of Sun Life Canada, 12/8/27) distanced Sethna from the British without entirely severing his links with them. It also brought him closer to the Bombay film making community. Sethna was a very attractive person to this community at a crucial stage in its development. He was the director of over thirty Bombay companies (NML/SP/Biographical sketch prepared Dec.1925) which made him a substantial figure in the modern financial sector.

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1. (The following is based on the Sethna Papers [Hereafter SP] lodged in the Nehru Memorial Library [Hereafter NML], New Delhi)
Moreover, he had links with the Tata financial empire. (NML/SP/2/3/1927) While it was never explicitly stated it is clear that the driving forces behind the Bombay film industry hoped that Sethna's presence on such bodies as the Motion Picture Society of India would confer some respectability on the industry in the eyes of the financial world. There is also a hint that it was felt that Sethna would also provide contacts whereby money could be raised from either Westernized banks or similar sources such as insurance companies. (NML/SP/Letter to Alex Hague 29/3/1924)

As a result of the British decision not to include any Indian representatives on the 1927 Simon Commission to review Indian constitutional advancement, Sethna shifted towards a Nationalist political position, and this can be seen as representing a shift of consciousness in a crucial figure. In his introduction to the Indian Cinematograph Yearbook (1938) Sethna claims to have had a long interest in the cinema, as not only a form of entertainment but also as an important agent of developing national consciousness. Thus by 1938 Sethna articulated the major ideological position of the Bombay film industry, and for industry to have a figure like Sethna articulate its ideology on the social relevance of film was a sign that the medium had achieved a degree of social legitimacy. In many respects Sethna was a lone figure, for few if any other men of his prominence involved themselves as deeply in the film industry's affairs. But, significantly, figures like Chunilall, Chandulal J Shah, Homi and J B H Wadia, Nanabhai Desai and A D Irani, all prominent film makers, became accepted in Bombay society in the mid-1930s. (IMPPA Jubilee Programme, 1962:23) Film had lost its marginal signification and figures like Sethna were important in this process.
When Sethna refused the chair of the I.C.C. the British turned to T G Rangachariar who had also served on the I.L.C. Film Sub-Committee.

Rangachariar was a liminal figure. Like many other Indian figures of the period Rangachariar straddled a number of positions. He was a social and political conservative deeply complicit in Anglo-Indian legal and legislative practices. At the same time he leaned towards a nationalist political position. (Sen, 1974:487-488) Throughout the massive collection of evidence assembled by the I.C.C. his distaste for the sexual and social relations portrayed in the Western cinema is made clear time and time again. For example when discussing the "evils of kissing and embracing"

he opined

When different civilizations with different traditions come in contact with each other they collide and produce such evils ...

(E.1, 1928:431)

In the in-camera evidence where the commissioners recorded their responses to the films they viewed, Rangachariar wrote a revealing critique of the German film Variety (or Vaudeville) which had been judged the best film of 1926 Cannes Festival and had been passed by the British Board of Film Censors. In his review Rangachariar said:

The first point which strikes one is that any actress could be found with any claim to decency to lend herself to be treated even for film purposes in the way in which Madam Lyn De Puiti allows herself to be shown. Yet she is a Film Star and Social Woman. I refer especially to the part which shows her as trying to bite the male on the chest in a fit of amorous passion and where also she is shown as enjoying the same man drawing up the stockings for her when a greater part of the leg is exposed in an alluring fashion and also the scene where Emil Jennings is shown kissing her in a most passionate way while she was on her bed, the man mounting over her in a suggestive way. (E.5, 1928:37)

Rangachariar's objections to these scenes were endorsed by Colonel J Crawford, (E.5, 1928:38) the European non-official representative on the I.C.C. and Secretary of the Calcutta branch of the European Association. which had been one of the most active voices in India against these sorts
of scenes. However, neither Rangachariar nor Crawford wanted to ban the film, or its genre, entirely, only to excise the offending parts. In contrast, Neogy thought it "an admirable production deserving certification subject to two or three excisions." (E.5, 1928:38) Rangachariar justified his more conservative position thus:

The Indian point of view (if it is to be accepted as a standard) is against women appearing in public and taking part on the stage and may be said to be prudish in many respects, much of what the Indian sees of Western habits, manners and dress of the Westerner especially of women in this country, in actual life does not understand and deprecates. (E.5, 1928:37)

The difference of opinion on this film between Rangachariar and Neogy exemplifies the range of attitudes towards the cinema that must have existed among Indian viewers. Rangachariar's conservative view, however, articulated the hegemonic position of most Anglo-Indians, while Neogy's could be construed as potentially radical. The division of Indian opinion in the I.C.C. over a text like Variety triggered alarm bells for John Coatman, the Director of Public Information, and an official member of the I.C.C.. Coatman agreed in principle with the Chairman and Crawford and warned against being dazzled by the "excellence of technique to blind us to the sheer indecency of much of this picture (Variety)". (E.5, 1928:37) which effectively put Neogy in his place.

This exchange encapsulates a range of competing ideas and positions that are at the heart of the overarching concern. Rangachariar articulated a conservative, patriarchal discourse that intersects at many levels with a parallel patriarchal discourse endorsed by Crawford, the European Association representative. After the initial cultural panic had
subsided, the British, Anglo-Indians and Indians all began to recognize the polysemic nature of film: that is, film was open to a number of competing or different readings determined by the cultural formation of the reader. Thus films judged to be innocuous or artistic in European discourse could, in the judgement of the "guardians" (Mason, 1985:XIV) such as Coatman, acquire a totally different, and potentially subversive, dynamic in India. Rangachariar had been judged "safe" because of his wealth of experience of European discourse, and also his commitment to a puritanical sexual code. Coatman, however, reminded both the Anglo-Indians and Indians that a strict adherence to this European discourse of art had its weaknesses: that artistic pretension is no excuse for toleration, especially if it had a political edge that could lead to the subversion of an established social and political order.

Complicating the Indian agenda were the Nationalists. Congress had a set of priorities that saw cultural autonomy as subordinate to political autonomy. There is no evidence to suggest that they had formulated a cultural policy which they could implement on gaining political control, let alone a policy towards film as such. (Bahadur, 1976:90) This is hardly surprising, as Indian culture was so dominant within the Indian context that Europeanized culture could be viewed as marginalised, limited to the major urban centres and to numerically small groups, so that a nationalist cultural policy seemed unnecessary. The advent of film could be seen to complicate the Nationalist position. Of all the indigenous cultural products it faced the strongest foreign competition, particularly in the silent era (1913-1932). Further, as a modern form of mass entertainment it was the most obvious manifestation of a changing cultural formation, generating in its major centres a new, modern cultural and political milieu. Consequently, Indian film-makers sought to emphasise
the nationalistic aspects of their films, seeking to evoke some alliance between themselves and the major nationalists through language at a symbolic level. (Barucha, 1938:125) The response of the nationalist politicians, with the exceptions of Lala Lajpat Rai and S Satyamurthy, was not encouraging.

One of the most important Nationalist politicians to possess a clear understanding of the social role of film in India was Lala Lajpat Rai (1865-1928). Rai was a Hindu from the Panjab whose commitment to Nationalist politics had brought him into conflict with the British. In his evidence to the I.C.C. (E.2, 1928:200-213) Rai expressed a clear sighted attitude towards film that fitted comfortably neither the orthodox nor the heterodox positions on film.

Rai initially saw the primary purpose of the I.C.C. as "a purely economic attempt to foist British films on India" (E.2:206). He was quickly disabused of the idea by Rangachariar, whose stand was supported by all Commissioners. (p.206) Interestingly Rai's view was adopted by the Bombay industry in the 1930s for ideological reasons and has been perpetuated by B V Dharap in a series of books written from the 1940s on. The perception came from an orthodox nationalist interpretation of the political economy of India. However, Rai did not really pursue the issue in his evidence. Instead he dwelt on the issue of cultural travesty, precisely the issue of primary concern to the Anglo-Indians. In doing so Rai sought to establish an equal position for India in the debate that surrounded film in India. Rai found the terms of the debate, which were defined in Anglo-Indian terms, entirely unsatisfactory. Rai added an overt and important political dimension to the debate about film in India and augmented the economic and cultural argument that had hitherto prevailed.
Rai had travelled in Europe and the United States of America where he had become concerned over how American films portrayed Asia as "the discreditable side, the dark side ... of life". (E.2:207) In other words, Rai injected a new dimension into the Committee's deliberations by inverting a major underlying reason for the establishment of the I.C.C. Rai in fact ensured that the I.C.C. also addressed issues of Indianness as well as purely Anglo-Indian concerns and this different emphasis is reflected in the findings of the I.C.C. By placing Hollywood's travesties of Indian culture before the Committee, Rai elicited the support of the Indian members. More surprisingly Green and Crawford also expressed support for Rai's idea, although Coatman remained sceptical (E.2:207-208). Given Rai's political position the exchange between him and the I.C.C. committee was remarkably civilized.

Rai expressed a number of opinions about film that forced the committee to think about film, in contrast to other witnesses who tended to voice already entrenched positions. In the first place Rai did not see film as having the potential to be any more or any less pernicious than novels or dramas. (E.2:201) Secondly, he did not think, based on his experiences, that the cinema affected European prestige in any way. Moreover, he argued that Indian youths should be permitted to see the sorts of scenes that worried Rangachariar, such as the semi-nude women, close-ups of kissing and cabaret scenes, so that they would be able to resist the worst excesses of Western culture. (E.2:201) However, he did agree that some censorship was necessary. (E.2:202 and 204) In addition Rai thought that the British took the cinema a little too seriously (E.2:208) because the industry in India was quite limited in its scope (E.2:211) and because Indians were quite capable of forming their own opinions about the
morality represented in the American films. (E.2:206,210,211)

Underpinning Rai's sophisticated analysis was a staunch anti-imperialism:

To be absolutely plain, as long as our political conditions exist as they are, I will not advocate or be a party to any preference being given to anything produced in the Empire. (E.2:211)

In contrast to Rai other Nationalists exhibited little interest in or understanding of film and its place in a changing society. Rai's breadth of experience and intelligence infused his evidence, providing a clarity of opinion lacking elsewhere.

Furthermore, Rai articulated a particular Indian intelligence that was not misled by the Anglo-Indian paranoia about film. His statements echo similar ones published in the Indian English-language press. The Calcutta based Forward stated

the censorship of film in India does not mean merely the prevention of the exhibition of obscene and indecent pictures, it means something more. It means a direct attempt to keep the public ignorant of life and customs in Western countries, the knowledge of which would destroy that respect, and the prestige of occidental civilization in the minds of the Indian public.

If Western civilization is such a splendid thing, surely there can be no fear or shame to expose it.
18/10/1925
(IOLR/P&J/3141/26)

As far as cinema was concerned, the conservative, yet heteropractic Gandhi was out of step with the people he spoke for. In the 1920s cinema audiences increased as the cinema complex spread throughout India. However, the Congress hierarchy implicitly adopted Gandhi's position towards the cinema through a "policy" of neglect, but with one exception. S Satyamurthy, the Madrasi Congress politician, recognized the political potential of a nationalist cinema at an early stage and aligned himself with the Bombay film producers, and became their champion. (Baskaran, 1976:664) Satyamurthy (1887-1943) came from a similar section of Madrasi
society as Rangachariar. A Brahmin and lawyer, he chose the Nationalist political path and established himself as a major national and regional Congress figure by the early 1930s. As part of his political development Satyamurthy forged close links with South Indian cultural groups, especially in music. His interest in film would seem to have been an extension of a wider, general interest in Indian culture which seems to have been quite atypical for a Congress politician of the time. (Baskaran, 1981:106) Satyamurthy argued on a number of occasions in Congress on behalf of the Indian film industry without any apparent success. (Baskaran, 1981:106) In an effort to demonstrate the benefit of film to the Nationalist cause Satyamurthy made an election film for his political campaign in 1936/37. The British promptly banned the film. (Baskaran, 1981:107) His film activities added to Satyamurthy's reputation as a publicist and led to an invitation to present the opening address at the 1939 All-India Film Conference in Bombay. (Proceedings of All India Motion Picture Congress, 1939:1-6) However, he seems to have achieved very little in changing Nationalist politicians' attitudes towards film as medium of either political or social propaganda. The British action in respect to his own film probably convinced the Nationalists that overtly political films were expensive failures so there was little subsequent action in the field of film propaganda. Indeed, Congress' attitudes towards film remained at best ambivalent, and at worst hostile.

Satyamurthy was an isolated individual in this period at the All-Indian political level and he had little impact in respect to film on the policy making apparatus of Congress. However, at the regional level film had made greater inroads into the political sphere. In Madras the anti-Brahmin political movement established links with the film industry and other popular culture forms in the 1930s, establishing the dominance of
the film industry in Tamil politics that remains to this day. (Hardgrave, 1973:288-305) In Bombay K Munshi, lawyer and literary historian, became the Congress Party's first Home Minister in Bombay Province in 1937. (Nagarkar, 1978:16) Munshi had written several film scripts for the Sagar Film Company (Bombay), a Gujerati financed and controlled production studio in the 1920s. (Ibid.) One of Munshi's first actions in 1937 was to modify the censorship laws in accordance with the industry's demands, in particular by removing censorship injunctions against a number of pro-Nationalist films and by appointing an industry representative to the Bombay Board of Film Censors. (I.M.P.P.A. Jubilee, 1962:52) However, he left the censorship system basically intact, and significantly nobody in the industry sought any major changes to the censorship system. The apparent inertia, however, masked a significant shift of emphasis in the discourse of film in India. By 1937 Indian control of the cinema in India was virtually complete. They dominated the economic sphere and at the same time Indian culture had become paramount in textual production. The political control of film had also shifted and British control was titular rather than substantive.

In the complex of intersections of attitudes and interests among the Indian groups with some degree of influence over the film industry two groups are of more significance than others. The first group is the audiences whose enthusiasm for film created the markets for the indigenous text and whose behaviours determined Anglo-Indian thinking on the topic. The second group is the film makers themselves, who recognized the political and national significance of their film but who, on the whole, acted on commercial lines rather than political ones. The disparity between aspiration and practice caused problems for the film makers with
both the British and Congress, and embodies the major contradiction that underpins the Indian film industry to this day.

The complex economic, cultural and political relationships that surrounded film impinged directly on the discursive practices of the film makers who had to negotiate a complex field in order to make films. In the first place they were caught in a political bind in their desire to affiliate with the nationalist cause while the British ostensibly controlled their industry through censorship laws. Then they had a problem in defining their audience. In Bombay the film producers aspired to attract a solid upper middle class audience. To achieve this they had to produce films within a traditional definition of culture. Instead they produced films which, in Indian terms, were culturally heteropratic and polysemous and appealed to a heterogenous audience dominated in the urban centres by the masses. Finally, the film makers had to raise money in the indigenous money markets which placed enormous pressures on their ability to establish a continuity of production. The tensions that arose between the film makers at each of these intersections between film makers and politicians, cultural brokers and financiers produced the specifically Indian discourses of film that shaped the Indian film industry from the 1930s on.
In this chapter I wish to investigate the influence of the Hollywood staple on the Indian film industry focusing principally on the 1920s and 1930s. The relationship that has evolved between Hollywood and the Indian film industry is a complex one. On the one hand, mainstream Eurocentric film history takes for granted the universal dominance of Hollywood, while on the other, Indian film histories have barely acknowledged the nature and extent of Hollywood's influence. Even Barnouw and Krishnaswamy (2nd Rev.Ed., 1930) discuss the issue in a partial manner. Indeed they have tended to suppress the extent of the influence. In both cases they have neglected to explore the considerable but complex role Hollywood played in the formation of a distinctive Indian film industry and in policy decisions made throughout the latter period of British rule. I will show that on the one hand the Hollywood staple exercised a strong hold on the Indian film maker. The power of Hollywood arose from its command of technique and its economic organization. Both elements influenced Indian film makers especially in Bombay in their desire to firstly improve their film techniques and narrative capacity and secondly to organize their industry on a sound economic basis. However, as I will show, the desire to emulate Hollywood was not merely an example of unconscious cultural mimicry. Rather it was conscious decision to appropriate a proven model driven by a powerful set of economic determinants and apply it to specifically Indian conditions. Thus Indian commercial cinema acquired an industrial set of practices amelioriated to contain Indian themes, narratives and ideological constructs. The relations arising out of this complex intersection of cultural and economic determinants will be
explored in two ways; firstly through a recuperation of the history of the influence of the Hollywood staple on Indian film practice and secondly through the analysis of a film whose influences can be catalogued. The film is Douglas Fairbank's *The Thief of Baghdad* (1924).

The cinema, technologically and institutionally, is a Western invention that has developed out of two mutually complementary matrixes: ideologically within a concept of entertainment, economically within the mature stages of capitalism. Indeed, the formation of the Hollywood complex can be seen as a precursor of the modern transnational corporations. It was a vertically and horizontally economically integrated industry ensuring an economy of scale in production, determining the relations of production. It had an international distribution network, supported by a government agency, ensuring maximum circulation of its product. Moreover, it was massively profitable. These factors combined to ensure not only the dominance of Hollywood on a worldwide scale between 1920 and 1950, but also established Hollywood as the proposed model for the development of other commercial national cinemas. This fact has been largely instrumental in constructing the "dominant discourse" model of film history which has been outlined succinctly by Ed Buscombe in a number of places (1979: 11-15; 1980: 141-154). There is an appeal to this argument that on the surface seems difficult to dislodge. However, we should note that film history as a discipline has tended to focus almost exclusively on accounts of Western national film industries - Britain (Curran and Parker, 1983), France (Abel, 1986), Germany (Sandford, 1980), Australia (Collins, 1987) - or synchronic accounts of crucial developments in film discourse - deep focus photography and narrative development (Bordwell, 1985) or governmental interventions in aspects of the filmic process (Bertrand and Collins, 1981) - and the relationship of
these discourses or events to Hollywood. This is not surprising at periods when objectively film production throughout most of the world for economic and social reasons was dominated by the Hollywood. But there are two major exceptions to this general pattern which need to be examined more closely: Japan and India.

The role of Hollywood has become a crucial issue in the competing historical accounts of the Japanese cinema. Noel Birch in To The Distant Observer (1979) argues that Hollywood had little effect on early Japanese film production which was culturally specific, exploring Japanese systems of signification. In contrast David Bordwell has argued that Hollywood was a major determinant of Japanese film practice in two crucial areas. Firstly, in terms of film stylistics, and secondly in the economic practice of studio formation to regularize and maintain production. (1979: 45-62) The same level of debate has yet to crystallize around the impact of Hollywood on the Indian film industry and yet it is clear that Hollywood has influenced the Indian industry from its inception and equally clear that India has developed a distinctive form of cinema with its own strong national characteristics.

In this chapter I will trace the development of the relationship between Hollywood and the Indian film industry, looking at the complex and changing role of Hollywood in the exhibition, distribution and production of films in India. As Barnouw and Krishnaswamy (2nd ed. 1980:58) point out

The story of film in India ... (was) a story of American and Indian films.

Hollywood, I will show, had a double influence on the Indian film industry. Economically its impact was both complex and extensive because the integrated studios of Hollywood provided the model for production
aspired to by the major Indian film producers. Culturally the Hollywood staple provided models for textual production and textual practice in the form of cinematic techniques. In both cases the Hollywood model stimulated and influenced the Indian film industry but did not at any stage threaten its existence. The Hollywood model was easily assimilable into a specific stage of capital formation (explored in detail in Chapter Five) and at the same time its textual strategies were appropriated with reference to Indian models and traditions. At the centre of this relationship were two factors that contributed powerfully to the transformative indigenous cinematic practices. In the first place the Indian mass audience constituted a different context for reception of the Hollywood staple film compared to the American or European audience. As I will show in analysis of The Thief of Baghdad Indian audiences enjoyed such films immensely, but the evidence shows compellingly that given a choice Indian audiences preferred Indian films to American films. This fact is overwhelmingly borne out in both the written and oral evidence provided to the I.C.C. The reasons for this are not difficult to discern and are articulated precisely by Mr A Soares, principal of the Antonio De Souza High School, Bombay who said of the films

Their subjects appeal strongly to the new sense of pride in India's past which is a feature of Indian nationalism. (E.1, 1929:378)

However, it should be noted that in Muslim areas Indian films could be rejected because they were "too Hinduized". (E.2, 1929:292)

Indian film makers could, however, transpose the characteristics of the types of American films enjoyed by Indian audiences to Indian cultural contexts. The Wadia Brothers did precisely this with a genre of successful stunt/adventure films through the 1920s and 1930s that starred Anthony Cara and Nadia. (Rangoonwalla, 1975:93) The second factor was the
appropriation of the 'star' system into the Indian industry. Initially controlled by the studio bosses, the stars of Indian cinema gradually assumed a significance that has become almost God-like. (Mishra, 1988: passim) The Indian appropriation of foreign practices has transformed them to the extent where the indigenous becomes the dominant.

Nevertheless Hollywood, as a system, a complex, an abstraction and concrete manifestation, is an important economic determinant of Indian cinema. It was of major importance in the construction of the Indian audience, in its composition, its fragments, and their competing tastes. Furthermore, it provided a model for the organization and structure of the India film industry in at least four areas: through film practices in production, distribution and exhibition; through the adoption of the Hollywood ideology of entertainment as a major purpose of film; through the adoption of the "star" system as a major vehicle of circulation of the film product; and through the mimicking of Hollywood film style and the appropriation and transformation of Hollywood forms and genres. In the last area certain types of Hollywood products, such as the serial adventures of Eddie Polo, proved more popular with major segments of the audience than others. (Rangoonwala, 1975:62) They were copied and Indianized by the Bombay producers in a type of film known as "stunts". (Anon, 1956:81) It is this appropriation and transformation, however, that remains of crucial importance in thinking about the influence of Hollywood upon the Indian film industry. While Hollywood remained the economic exemplar the act of adaptation to Indian culture always implied that out of the process a new, Indian system of representation would always emerge.
One further dimension needs to be explored. Hollywood was a precursor of the transnational corporation, and thus represented a distinct shift in the economic forces at work within the capitalist world. Economic power in global terms swung away from Britain to America. In becoming part of the international market for Hollywood films India was incorporated into a wider market system. In an attempt to combat this development the British created the Imperial Preference System in the 1920s. It was designed specifically to reverse the economic trends developing at the time. Film was incorporated into this counter-system in 1926 (Dispatch, P&J/Po1/1/26) and became one of the points for investigation put to the 1927-28 Indian Cinematograph Committee brief. (Report of the I.C.C., 1929: XII) In short, India, through film, entered a different economic world; one basically beyond the control of the British. The British sought to adopt strategies to circumvent this situation. Firstly, they endorsed the tactic whereby the Indian economy became less dependent on British and more autonomous, especially in respect to 'nation-building' industries. Secondly, they sought to establish an imperial preference system which was intended to link Britain, the Colonies and the Dominions in a rational form of counter-economic hegemony to that being established by the Americans. The former was to succeed; the latter to fail. The cinema in India was inextricably associated with both, and the Hollywood staple played no small part in establishing this linkage.

In this chapter I will explore the economic influence of Hollywood in three ways: through an analysis of empirical data relating to the Hollywood product in India between 1926 and 1947 to show the extent to which Hollywood films dominated the Indian screens for most of the first three decades of the Indian film industry; an analysis of various public and private statements about the impact of Hollywood on India by officials
and non-officials, Indians and Anglo-Indians in both specific instances and in general terms; and, finally, an analysis of a classic example of the Hollywood staple to explore the economic and ideological aspects of these films which acted as a catalyst for the Indian cinema and at the same time exerted such a powerful influence upon all fractions of the total audience in the Indian context. In addition I will show how the indigenous culture transcended the superficial elements of copying by linking the appropriations to Indian cultural models and traditions.

D G Phalke recounted how a Western film The Life of Christ inspired him to make Raja Harischandra which proved to be a remarkable box-office success throughout India. (Phalke, in Shahane, 1970: 25) From its very inception the Indian film industry, it could be argued, took its inspiration from outside of India. If we accept that film is a heteropractic cultural practice this is hardly surprising. In pure economic terms it was impossible for a fully-formed local industry to spring phoenix-like from the economic and cultural conditions that existed in India at the beginning of the twentieth century because the necessary infrastructure was missing. All over the world the cinema had proved to be an enormously popular form of entertainment and India was no exception. Significantly, no one country dominated film production in the period 1900-1914. Britain, Denmark, the United States, France and Italy were all major forces in film production and distribution and films from these sources competed for exhibition on the Indian screens, although it must be emphasised that the number of exhibition outlets in India prior to the 1920s was very limited. (Report of I.C.C., 1928:179)

During this period, various individuals in India were experimenting with the cinema as a means of expression and a form of entertainment. It is
interesting to note that regional differences were already apparent. In Bengal, D G Ganguly's first film England Returned (1920) was a social satire. In Bombay the mythological film genre begun by Phalke in 1913 was dominant. But even in the 1920s output of Indian films was limited and the size of audiences small. However, in no sense could Hollywood be seen as either stifling a local industry or dominating exhibition at the earliest stages of the industry. On the contrary, without the availability of the Hollywood product a number of key figures in the development of the industry, such as J F Madan in Calcutta and Alex Hague in Bombay, would not have gained entry into the industry, which they initially entered as importers of and exhibitors of films, later moving on to become producers. While the few Indian films available proved very popular with Indian audiences they were insufficient to sustain a distribution and exhibition network, let alone an industry. Thus Hollywood was an essential ingredient in the establishment of the Indian film industry because the steady flow of films permitted the establishment of the distribution and exhibition network which underpinned the formation of the Indian industry, and which in many respects, later became the dominant segment of the industry. The relationship between the three major branches of the industry, their conflicts and tensions, will be analysed in full in Chapter Six. It should be recognized that the part that Hollywood played in establishing these relationships is crucial.

Members of the Indian film industry from the earliest stages adopted contradictory positions in respect to Hollywood. For a variety of reasons many sought to efface the contribution it had made to the formation of the Indian film industry. On the one hand the producers feared Hollywood and sought protection from it through government intervention and regulation. The in-camera evidence of J J Madan dealt specifically with this problem
(EV, 1928: 15-18) He managed to convince the Committee that Madan had
neither created a monopoly in distribution and exhibition (Report of the
I.C.C., 1928:43-45) nor opened the way for American productions in India
(EV, 1929:16). Indian producers continued to agitate for protection from
overseas film production well into the 1930s and beyond, but the
government remained unsympathetic and dismissed the industry's claims as
'a "try on" of the worst description' (National Archives of India,
Department of Industry and Labour [hereafter NAI/IL] /I-296 151/33) In
the mid-1920s the Madan exhibition and distribution network began to
disintegrate. It was rumoured that MGM would take the enterprise over as
an Indian base for production. Indian film producers reacted strongly and
petitioned the Government of India to prevent the possible transaction
without ever receiving any evidence that the rumour was based on fact.
George Mooser, the MGM representative in India, admitted that he had
discussed the possibility of the take over of Madan with Sir Victor
Sassoon, a prominent Jewish businessman in Bombay, but the discussions
never reached fruition because of technical problems. In Mooser's view
there was "not a chance in the world" of a major Hollywood producer
setting up in India. (E.1, 1929:456) In fact the Madan denied the rumours
and sought an assurance from the I.C.C. that no "foreign concerns enter
exhibition, or production in India". (E.V, 1929:16) On the other hand,
these same producers frequently looked to Hollywood as an exemplary system
of film production which they should emulate. This contradiction did not
escape the attention of the Anglo-Indian administration who perceived that
a possibility had been created whereby Indian film could develop. Thus
Hollywood always had an ambiguous position within Indian film discourse.

Those who have written about the early situation of Indian cinema, and
specifically of the role of Hollywood and its impact on the Indian
industry, have complained about either the paucity of statistical data relating to its development or about the unreliability of these figures, or both. (Shah, 1950: XII) There is certainly no reliable data prior to the statistical tables published in the Report of the Indian Cinematograph Committee (1928) compiled by A M Green, I.C.S.. Green was Collector of Bombay, and an official government representative on the I.C.C. and was in short an establishment figure of some importance. Green had access to the government data collection system and his figures can be regarded as fairly reliable.

Green's detailed explanations on how he arrived at his figures contained in the Report's statistical appendices are appended to each table. They show a sophisticated statistician at work. He attempted to recognise all variables and in the light of the uncertainty of much of the data to arrive at a balanced summary. Green took as his base the actual number of films examined by the various regional censorship boards. This permitted him to construct a profile of the Indian film industry in both aggregate and comparative terms. Table 1 shows the annual importation of cinema films into India.

<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(to 29/2/28)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>4,711,370</td>
<td>4,256,630</td>
<td>5,791,319</td>
<td>8,343,550</td>
<td>11,237,434</td>
<td>11,775,022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sind</td>
<td>49,529</td>
<td>156,778</td>
<td>137,491</td>
<td>109,205</td>
<td>154,553</td>
<td>244,571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td>962,159</td>
<td>1,342,019</td>
<td>2,485,852</td>
<td>4,651,468</td>
<td>5,004,294</td>
<td>5,443,278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>59,940</td>
<td>264,652</td>
<td>445,711</td>
<td>273,828</td>
<td>309,732</td>
<td>578,517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burma</td>
<td>1,527,431</td>
<td>1,181,576</td>
<td>584,387</td>
<td>539,148</td>
<td>776,651</td>
<td>1,627,260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>7,310,429</td>
<td>7,201,655</td>
<td>9,444,760</td>
<td>13,917,199</td>
<td>17,482,664</td>
<td>19,668,648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rs</td>
<td>Rs</td>
<td>Rs</td>
<td>Rs</td>
<td>Rs</td>
<td>Rs</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
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<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total value to nearest thousand</td>
<td>13,24,000</td>
<td>14,11,000</td>
<td>15,03,000</td>
<td>21,06,000</td>
<td>23,22,000</td>
<td>23,26,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Custom duty at 15%</td>
<td>2,55,935</td>
<td>2,25,407</td>
<td>2,60,709</td>
<td>3,54,265</td>
<td>4,22,854</td>
<td>4,01,705</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Report of I.C.C. (1928), Table 13, p.190

These figures reveal a number of significant trends. Firstly, the rate of importation of films increased dramatically in the period 1922-1928. Secondly, that Bombay and Calcutta dominated the film importation business as well as film production. Thirdly, that film importing became a significant, and one suspects profitable, business in the period which in turn meant it generated a considerable amount of revenue for the government. However, the figures in Table 1 do not distinguish between feature films and news reels, neither do they reveal the actual number of films imported, nor do they indicate the countries of origin for the films.

Table 2 provides the approximate number, footage, and percentage of Indian feature films examined by the boards (excluding Burma) in each year, with averages.
Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Indian Feature Films</th>
<th>Imported Feature Films</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1921-22</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>615</td>
<td>678</td>
<td>9.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922-23</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>652</td>
<td>722</td>
<td>9.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923-24</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>580</td>
<td>643</td>
<td>9.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924-25</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>685</td>
<td>755</td>
<td>9.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925-26</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>626</td>
<td>737</td>
<td>14.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926-27</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>775</td>
<td>883</td>
<td>12.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927-28</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>* 612</td>
<td>* 693</td>
<td>11.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(11 months)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>4,545</td>
<td>5,111</td>
<td>11.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Yearly Average

80.85 649.2 730.1

* The figures are approximate as the Bengal Board did not give the number of imported feature films.


Again, the figures are revealing. Table 1 suggested a massive increase in the number of films available in India that is contradicted in Table 2. The reasons for the discrepancy can be explained quite easily and reflect the improvement in the exhibition networks being established in India. The imported footage of Table 1 includes multiple copies of individual titles which were distributed throughout India. This fact does not detract from the profitability and revenue earning capacity of imported films pointed out above. What it does is provide a caution. The figures reveal that the actual number of titles imported into India remained steady throughout the 1920s. Similarly, from the figures supplied we can
see that the 1920s were a period of growth and consolidation for the local production industry. However, the overwhelming impression is of the degree of dominance of the imported films. Over the period 1922–28 there were on average ten imported films available to every one Indian film. Finally, the problem of the origination of the film still remains. Table 3 shows conclusively that Hollywood was the dominant factor in the 1920s.

### Table 3

Percentage of British and other non-American footage to total imported footage examined by the Boards.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1925–26</th>
<th>1926–27</th>
<th>1927–28 (11 months)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total imported footage examined by all Boards</td>
<td>4,149,328</td>
<td>5,218,643</td>
<td>4,957,244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total American footage examined by all Boards</td>
<td>3,227,806</td>
<td>4,159,548</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-American</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British footage examined by all Boards</td>
<td>310,142</td>
<td>387,624</td>
<td>434,186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other footage examined by all Boards</td>
<td>611,380</td>
<td>671,471</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of British to total imported footage examined</td>
<td>7.47</td>
<td>7.42</td>
<td>8.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of other non-American to total imported footage examined</td>
<td>14.73</td>
<td>12.86</td>
<td>..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of American to total imported footage examined</td>
<td>77.90</td>
<td>79.72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Analysis of British footage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1925-26</th>
<th>1926-27</th>
<th>1927-28 (11 months)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>News and Topics</td>
<td>153,784</td>
<td>175,436</td>
<td>241,851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature</td>
<td>156,358</td>
<td>212,188</td>
<td>192,335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>310,142</td>
<td>357,624</td>
<td>434,186</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Table 4

<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exposed film imported in feet</td>
<td>9,382,685</td>
<td>9,767,032</td>
<td>7,661,000</td>
<td>6,250,000</td>
<td>5,750,000</td>
<td>6,790,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duty on exposed film, Rs</td>
<td>3,27,720</td>
<td>3,66,263</td>
<td>2,87,287</td>
<td>2,34,375</td>
<td>2,15,625</td>
<td>2,54,625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raw film imported, in feet</td>
<td>10,285,963</td>
<td>7,715,632</td>
<td>6,258,199</td>
<td>3,194,760</td>
<td>1,451,655</td>
<td>520,429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duty on raw film, Rs</td>
<td>73,985</td>
<td>56,591</td>
<td>66,978</td>
<td>26,334</td>
<td>9,782</td>
<td>1,310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total imports in feet</td>
<td>19,668,648</td>
<td>17,482,664</td>
<td>13,917,199</td>
<td>9,444,760</td>
<td>7,201,655</td>
<td>7,310,429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total duty collected, Rs</td>
<td>4,01,705</td>
<td>4,22,854</td>
<td>3,54,265</td>
<td>2,60,709</td>
<td>2,25,407</td>
<td>2,55,935</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Report of The Indian Cinematograph Committee 1927-28*, page 212
Green's statistics demonstrate beyond any doubt that it was the Hollywood staple that dominated the Indian screens. The progress of the Indian film industry at this stage was really the development and expansion of the distribution and exhibition branches of the industry based on the availability of the Hollywood staple. The production of Indian films developed in tandem with the Hollywood staple, in many cases drawing on the Hollywood staple for its inspiration in terms of technique and actual content but at the same time offered the local audiences an alternative firmly grounded in their own culture. The growth in the production capacity of Indian film industry alongside a still expanding non-Indian (Hollywood) sector was vigorous. But the dominance of the Hollywood staple is even more sharply etched if we examine Table 5 in a comparative manner.

Firstly, the figures for imported feature and news films in 1921–22 are swollen because of a backlog of films submitted for certification after the introduction of the Cinematograph Act in 1920.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Bombay</th>
<th>Bengal</th>
<th>Madras</th>
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<th>Year</th>
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<td>1925–26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Imported News Films</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td></td>
<td>53</td>
<td>1926–27</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>125</td>
<td>580</td>
<td></td>
<td>705</td>
<td>1921–22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>201</td>
<td>360</td>
<td></td>
<td>561</td>
<td>1922–23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Indian Feature Films</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Indian Feature Films</td>
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<tr>
<td>1923-24</td>
<td>161 331</td>
<td>1924-25</td>
<td>177 242</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1925-26</td>
<td>176 476</td>
<td>1926-27</td>
<td>218 436</td>
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<tr>
<td>1921-22</td>
<td>45 16</td>
<td>1922-23</td>
<td>46 20</td>
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<td>1925-26</td>
<td>94 14</td>
<td>1926-27</td>
<td>96 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>1921-22</td>
<td>438 160</td>
<td>1922-23</td>
<td>537 111</td>
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<tr>
<td>1923-24</td>
<td>405 171</td>
<td>1924-25</td>
<td>546 138</td>
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<td>1925-26</td>
<td>444 181</td>
<td>1926-27</td>
<td>564 205</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>654</td>
<td></td>
<td>775</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Abstracted from Table 9, pp.18-185, Report of I.C.C. (1928)

The foreign domination of the Indian exhibition circuits was maintained up to and including the 1940s as Table 5 clearly shows.
### Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>Dramas</th>
<th>Topicals and Side Reels</th>
<th>Dramas</th>
<th>Topicals and Side Reels</th>
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<td>60</td>
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<td>126</td>
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<td>389</td>
<td>598</td>
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<td>1930</td>
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<td>433</td>
<td>676</td>
<td>1298</td>
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<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>663</td>
<td>1198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>548</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>718</td>
<td>1103</td>
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<td>1934</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>731</td>
<td>1156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>188</td>
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<td>1936</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>849</td>
<td>1244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>714</td>
<td>1114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>798</td>
<td>1190</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Source: Y A Fazalbhoy (1939), *The Indian Film: A Review*, p.108.

Fazalbhoy's figures are for Bombay exclusively and can be regarded as quite reliable. Y A Fazalbhoy was a member of a family with strong connections in the Bombay film industry through their membership of the various industrial and professional associations which emerged in Bombay in the 1930s. These organizations such as the Indian Motion Pictures Producers Association (I.M.P.P.A.) sought to emulate Hollywood. Fazalbhoy is, in many respects, the ideologue for the "Hollywoodization" of the Bombay film industry. In his book, *The Indian Film*, he argued that the Indian industry could only become secure if the Hollywood model was adopted and thus would ensure the economy of scale necessary to avoid the problems of fragmentation confronting the industry in the late 1930s.
Organisations like the Indian Motion Pictures Producers Association founded in Bombay in 1935, were established to create an aura of professionalism which was then used for public relations purposes in the industry's dealings with the government. (Filmland, iv, 4/3/33:5) One of the means whereby this was achieved was through the collection and publication of data about the industry. The Cinematographic Yearbook (1938) is a classic example of this strategy. In addition the organization conducted conferences for the industry which were intended to address the problems that were perceived to confront the industry. The All India Motion Picture Conference held in Bombay in 1939 is an example of this tendency. The overall strategy behind these developments was the "Hollywoodization" of the popular commercial Indian cinema leased in Bombay.

Fazalbhoy's statistics confirm trends that had emerged in the previous data. The Indian film producer in Bombay did not consider the production of newsreels (topicals) to be a profitable line. (1939:75) Consequently the need for newsreels, created by the adoption of the Western programming strategy of having a tripartite film programme which consisted of a newsreel, a "B" feature, and the main feature, was addressed almost exclusively by the main overseas producers of newsreel, Movietone News and Fox from America and Gaumont British News. This was to have ramifications in the censorship area. The figures provided by Fazalbhoy show that there was a brief hiccup in the importation and production of films in 1932 which signifies the problems associated with the introduction of sound technology for film production and exhibition in India. Thereafter a stable situation is indicated, characterized by the growth of the local industry and a decline in the importation of foreign feature films. The figures for 1938 go against the grain. The causes and repercussions for
this will be discussed below (Chapter Seven). However, despite the growth of the Indian film industry there were still more imported films circulating in India at any one time than Indian films throughout the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. Their presence was continuous and important.

The imported films from Hollywood undoubtedly influenced the indigenous industry. They also contributed to the construction of the film audience in India. However, from another point of view this picture can be seen to be misleading. The Hollywood staple was imported in huge numbers throughout the 1930s and 1940s but its audience increasingly became the Anglo-Indian civilians, British Other Ranks, Anglophile Indians and Eurasians. Further the Hollywood staple dominated the first release cinemas of the major urban centres (Fazalbhoy, 1939:63-64). However, the Indian audiences began to express a desire to see almost exclusively Indian produced films (E.2, 1928:286-296). Consequently the Hollywood staple became less influential as a determining factor by the late 1930s although it remained an important factor in shaping Indian film practice long after it had been replaced on the Indian screen by locally produced films. (Hirlekar, 1947:4-5)

As the films emerged from Bombay in sufficient quantity there was a strengthening of the early distribution circuits and an expansion of exhibition outlets, for Indian films which penetrated the Indian countryside where only foreign films had been before. (E.2, 1929: 286-296) By the mid-1920s there were sufficient Indian films available for cinemas to begin to specialize. In effect this meant that cinemas showing exclusively Indian films were initially located in the city areas, or "native quarters" of Indian cities whilst those exhibiting mixed programmes, that is a combination of Western and Indian films, either on
the one night or concurrently were located in the civil line areas; the areas where the Anglo-Indian civilians and Indian professional classes lived. However, some cinemas in the civil lines continued to exhibit exclusively Hollywood movies well into the 1930s (Patel, 1938:321) This was, however, a function of the size of the respective urban centres more than anything else. Cantonment cinemas on the other hand exhibited exclusively Western films: the military discovered that the cinema was a cheap, efficient and entertaining way of filling in the massive amounts of spare time "enjoyed" by the large numbers of British Other Ranks. Films quickly replaced reading, sport and amateur theatricals as the main form of entertainment for this important but neglected Anglo-Indian group. (Richards, 1936: 139-40, 245-46) The Madan New Theatres Company established itself servicing this component of the Indian film audience. (E.V., 1929:14) Thus the Indian film audience was fragmented, its segments determined by class, race and social position. Film exhibition reproduced the social and political relations in British India. While the imported films continued to outnumber the Indian films, (see Tables 4 and 5) these films were increasingly destined for exhibition to non-Indian audiences. Collectively the Indian film industry responded in a positive manner to the segmented market. Indian film producers recognized that the expansion of the exhibition chains provided an increasingly secure market for their films. At the same time the distributors were happy with this development. It meant increasingly a specialization in either imported films or indigenous films (Barucha, 1938:301-318) and in either case more profit. Throughout the 1930s the distributor became increasingly the most important figure in the industry which was to produce internal tensions within the industry (Proceedings, 1939:18) which were not resolved until at least the 1960s.
The overwhelming majority of the witnesses who gave evidence before the
I.C.C. belonged to the class of audience the Indian producers aspired to
reach, as they came from the educated, Anglo-phone class of Indians. With
few exceptions they attended the cinema and articulated a clear preference
for foreign films. Their criticisms of Indian films focussed on three
main areas: poor technique, poor scenarios, and poor acting. (E.I., 1929:
263, 429) These judgements arose from comparing the Indian film to the
imported Hollywood product. A similar litany of complaints can be found
in the film magazines of the period. (Filmland, IV, 152, 6/5/33:1) Indian
film producers were acutely aware of the situation. The criticisms of
Indian films were based on an assessment of the facts. Comparatively
speaking Hollywood films were superior to Indian films in all the areas
mentioned above because Hollywood had the superior human and economic
resources to produce high quality films. The technical superiority of the
Hollywood staple provided the impetus for Indian producers to develop an
argument which said that if, relatively speaking, similar sums of money
were available for the production of films in India then an equal standard
of technique would be achieved. (E.V., 1929: 17-18) Nevertheless the fact
remains even those Indians who were critical of the Indian films attended
the cinemas showing them. Again the ambivalent nature of the relationship
between the Hollywood staple and the Indian film becomes apparent. The
producers aspired to emulate Hollywood practices, the audience expressed
their preference for Indian films even if they were judged to be inferior.

In examining the relationship between Hollywood and the Indian cinema it
is necessary to look critically at the techniques Hollywood adopted to
market its films. Hollywood was an aggressive international marketer of
its products. The United States Department of Commerce established a Film
Intelligence unit which collected data through an extensive diplomatic
network which was freely supplied to the American film industry. (Thompson, 1985:111-118) The data was used by the Hollywood film industry to penetrate foreign markets. In addition each of the five major Hollywood production houses maintained its own distribution office and regional manager in India. George Mooser, the M.G.M. representative for Asia, was based in India and he provided evidence to the I.C.C. (E.I., 1929: 448-463) Mooser was questioned widely and closely by the Committee and he exhibited a detailed knowledge of the Bombay and Indian film making practices in general. He quickly quashed the rumour that an American concern was going to take over Madans in Calcutta and enter film production in India. (E.I., 1929: 451) As he pointed out India contributed a negligible amount to the annual profits of Metro Goldwyn Mayer: the whole Eastern Circuit including Japan, China, Strait Settlements, Java, Sumatra and India realised 5% to 7½% of gross returns. (E.I., 1929: 453) M.G.M. gained more revenue in a year from Cleveland, Ohio, than it did from the entire Eastern market. (E.I., 1929: 454) In other words Mooser disabused the Committee of the more chauvinistic ideas they had garnered from the representatives of the Bombay industry. In one sense it was the father casting out the putative child. India, according to Mooser at least, played very little part in Hollywood's global thinking. He made it clear that the Indian film industry was not under threat from the Americans. The I.C.C. was interested in Mooser's critique of the Indian film industry, which contributed to the European members' thinking on the future of the industry expressed in the Minute of Dissent, which is discussed in detail in Chapter Seven.

Mooser amplified the main criticisms made by others: Indian films were technically poor, signifying a disregard for normal production values including continuity: they were poorly cast and acted; and they were
outmoded in their orientation, (E.I., 1929: 454) By this he meant they remained locked into a cycle of mythologicals and were not exploring social issues in the Hollywood mode. Nevertheless he foresaw that the indigenous film industry would expand given the size of its potential market and the special problems arising out of linguistic and cultural diversity. Moreover, Mooser did not see Hollywood as threatening the expansion of the Indian film industry in any way. (E.I., 1929: 455)

Mooser’s recipe for the expansion of an Indian film industry was interesting. He advocated the centralization and consolidation of the industry to one centre, the attraction of investment capital, the training of personnel to improve technique, better casting using two types (the more martial figures from the Panjab and North West Frontier Province), and for the Indian industry to remain parochial and not compete with Hollywood in world markets. (E.I., 1929: 452-453) In short, Mooser advocated that Indian film production be organized along the lines of Hollywood, that its production techniques mirror those of Hollywood but the content of its films draw upon the codes and conventions of the established culture. Mooser’s comments are significant for two reasons. Firstly, both the representatives of the industry in Bombay and the members of the I.C.C. listened carefully to Mooser, precisely because of his authoritative position as M.G.M. Asian representative and his acknowledged expertise; he claimed over twenty years of experience in the industry. (E.I., 1929: 448) Secondly, and more significantly, Mooser represents one of the first contacts between Hollywood and Indian and Anglo-Indian administrators, and his critique of the Indian film product remained influential throughout the 1930s with both the industry and the officials. His ideas were taken up and amplified at the 1939 All Indian
Film Congress in Bombay by such influential figures as Chandulal Shah, Principal of Ranjit Film Company.

From 1928 to 1947 the energies of a number of major figures in the Bombay industry were geared towards achieving the sort of industry suggested by Mooser. Major studios like Bombay Talkies, Imperial Films, Ranjit Film Company and Sharda Films were all established in the period after the I.C.C. had left Bombay. The leading figures in these companies, Chunilal Mohtii (Bombay Talkies), Ardeshir M Irani (Imperial Film Company), Chandulal Shah (Ranjit Film Company) and N B Desai (Shardar Films) respectively became pillars of the Bombay film industry. They were strong supporters of the Motion Picture Society of India and the Indian Motion Pictures Producers Association and its activities, which included representation to the local and central governments on behalf of film. (NAI/IL/I-296(51)/35; Filmland, 4/3/33:5-6) They also encouraged the publication of information about the industry. In 1939 the All India Motion Picture Congress was organized under the aegis of the Motion Picture Society of India. Its major strategy was to ensure that the Indian film industry moved towards a form of organization similar to that of Hollywood. There was, however, opposition within the industry to these moves, largely of a regional nature. In Bengal the M.P.S.I. was seen as the most successful of the organizations. However, according to an editorial in the Calcutta journal Filmland it was perceived as "tied to the tail of a certain Bombay dealer for relieving certain tariff inequities for their own purpose". This view characterized "the lack of mutual trust and confidence among the constituents of the Indian film industry" (Filmland, IV, 157, 10/6/33: 12, 13) However, in 1946 when a representative committee of the Indian film industry was sent to Hollywood to examine modern techniques of production, all regions of India including
Madras and Calcutta as well as north India were eager to be represented. (Hirlekar, 1947:5) Hollywood exercised a strong hold on the imagination of the major Indian film producers in all regions.

Table 7
Imported Films By Country

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Source: Dharap, B V, Motion Picture Yearbook 1942, p.65

Indians who went overseas and gained training and experience in the film industry were welcomed back into the industry with open arms. The 1946 delegation, which had wide industry and government support (Hirlekar, 1947: 3-4) was charged with investigating the latest overseas developments and assess how they could be applied to India. The delegation recommended that the Government of India take the initiative and help stabilize the Indian film industry through the production of raw film stock and equipment, establish a film council, a film institute and a film academy, and use film as a pro-Indian propaganda throughout the world: (Hirlekar, 1947: 59-60). In other words the I.C.C. recommendations were recycled and updated. In addition there was a suggestion that the delegation went overseas in 1948 to gain access to Hollywood story lines and scripts for
recycling in India: Bombay had a time-honoured tradition of borrowing stories and concepts extensively from Hollywood! At the same as Indians went overseas to gain experience it is important to remember that there was a cadre of European and American technicians and directors working in the Indian industry from the 1920s on. The most notable were Franz Osten in Bombay and Ellis R Dungan, who worked at one time or another in Madras, Bombay and Calcutta. (Barucha, 1938: 61, 597)

In addition to the improvements in Indian film practice arising from international experience was the improvement in the technology of the Indian cinema which had a direct bearing on the films. Initially Indian film-makers worked with outmoded equipment and had to improvise. After 1931 and the introduction of sound and the emergence of the studios, more sophisticated equipment was imported into India. There was an increase in capital investment in the industry. This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Seven. In short, the introduction of arc lights, sound stages, better laboratory facilities, and modern cinematography cameras enabled the film-makers to improve the look of their films in line with international trends. (See Buyer's Guide, Barucha, 1938: 535-551) The films became more like Hollywood stylistically and thus much more appealing to the segment of the audience the producers had set out to capture for Indian films: the educated middle classes. Moreover, it should be noted that the introduction of sound technology in 1931 ensured that film discourse would be secured as Indian, as this technological development brought an end to "Hollywood's dominance". (Mitra, 1941:118)

In Chapter Two I have discussed how the introduction of the cinema into India created among significant sections of the dominant Anglo-Indian population a situation which amounted to cultural panic. Hollywood and
its representations of social, sexual and family relations were deeply offensive to this group. It was this fact above all else that generated the enormous debate about the necessity of censorship and embroiled the various levels of government in a seemingly ceaseless controversy. This in conjunction with the other elements outlined above makes the concept of Hollywood a particularly significant factor in the historical formation of the Indian cinema, influencing in one way or another the control apparatus pertaining to film and the organization and structure of film discourse in India. To understand the complex events surrounding the Hollywood staple in India it is necessary to concretize discussions through a detailed analysis of a film which may be considered as representative. In this way we can see more precisely what it was about these films that captured the imagination of the Indian film-makers, appealed to a diverse, heterogenous audience, and provoked the extensive and lasting hostility that necessitated state intervention. The film chosen for this analysis is The Thief of Bagdad (hereafter The Thief) (1924) which starred Douglas Fairbanks Snr and was enormously popular in India and exercised considerable influence over the Bombay popular Hindi film throughout the 1920s and 1930s and even into the 1950s. The popularity of the film with the Indian audience was widely acknowledged by both Anglo-Indian and Indian observers. In his evidence to the I.C.C. H.B. Clayton, Municipal Commissioner for Bombay observed

with the illiterate classes, undoubtedly, the most popular type of film is one of adventure with a hero who arrives in the nick of time to rescue the heroine and punish the evil-doer. I should think that the film Thief of Baghdad was the most popular film exhibited in Bombay.

(E.4, 1929:3)

So popular was the film that in the late 1930s the Wadia Brothers who had specialized in stunt films, re-made the film with an Hindi soundtrack and re-released it as Sulemani Shetranji (Rangoonwalla, 1975:99)
Douglas Fairbanks Snr was among the first truly international stars produced by Hollywood. In 1920 he visited Europe with his wife Mary Pickford and the authorities were alarmed and perplexed by the crowd hysteria their presence generated: receiving "such a welcome as has rarely been given Kings." (Wagenknecht, 1962:184) Fairbanks' popularity emanated from a series of films made in the early 1920s that featured adventure, spectacle and glamour augmented by a level of athletic performance on the part of Fairbanks hitherto unparalleled in the cinema. These were The Mark of Zorro (1920), The Three Musketeers (1921) and Robin Hood (1922). Fairbanks became power broker within Hollywood and in 1919 formed United Artists in partnership with his wife Mary Pickford, Charlie Chaplin, another enormously popular Hollywood star in India and the director D W Griffiths. (Balio, 1976: 12-14)

The Thief was in one sense the apogee of Fairbanks' career, and in another sense, little more than a superior example of an already established type of film; the adventure movie set in an exotic location. What distinguishes it from other examples of the Hollywood staple is the presence of Fairbanks and the amount of money spent in its production. The film had a $2 million budget, an unparalleled sum at the time. The Thief epitomises an ideology of production based on massive expenditure to create a fictional world. All aspects of The Thief signify a plenitude that can only be achieved via large expenditure. In this aspect alone the film can be seen as an exemplary text as it eschewed all of the alleged failures of the Indian film – poor technique, poor sets, poor acting, inferior scenario.

The references to the popularity of The Thief in India are numerous. (see Rangoonwala, 1975; 1979; Shah, 1950; Barnouw and Krishnaswamy, 1980,
Commentary on the film is, however, sparse. It seems that the popularity of the film was judged to stem from three aspects: the narrative, the formal techniques and the performance of Fairbanks. I will now look at each of these in some detail in an attempt to both trace and at the same time demonstrate the influence of The Thief and its genre on subsequent Indian film practice.

As a fairy tale the features of plot and character of The Thief conform closely to V Propp's (1979) set of functions. Propp suggests that all folk tales, of which The Thief is a variation, have a set of a number of characters who fulfil an identifiable number of functions. (1979: 25-65). Thus all folk tales have a hero, a heroine, a donor, a villain, false heroes, the father figure. Each of these figures are central to the narrative of The Thief.

- the hero - Ahmet, the thief
- the heroine - Princess
- the donor - the thief's assistant
- the villain - Jam Shang, the Mongol chieftan
- the false heroes - the other princes competing for the hand of the princess
- the father - the Caliph

Propp's functions outline a finite set of options available to a hero in a set of known circumstances. These functions include the absention of the hero (p.26), the designation (pp.26-27), the violation (pp.27-28), the reconnaissance (p.28), the delivery (p.28), trickery (pp.29-30), complicity (p.30), villainy (pp.30-35), lack (p.35-36), mediation (pp.36-38), the departure (p.39), the first function of the donor (pp.39-42), the hero's reaction (pp.42-43), the provision or receipt of a magical agent
(pp.43-50), guidance (pp.50-51), the struggle (pp.51-52), the branding (p.52), the victory (p.53) and the liquidation of the lack (p.53) and others. These are abstract categories which can be applied fruitfully to the narrative structure of a film like The Thief. My purpose in invoking the model is not to conduct a Proppian analysis of the film but to suggest that its narrative structure was familiar to the Indian audience. The Thief is in many respects a re-statement of the indigenous folk tale. Indeed The Thief can be viewed as a transformation of a transformation as its origins lie in the Arabian Nights fantasies popular in Victorian England and can be seen as anglicized versions of the mathnari, an early Persian proto-novelistic form of wide-spread popularity in India. The mathnari and the Rajput romances revolved around heroes who invoked magic and the supernatural to battle villainy. (Mishra, 1988) Consequently, The Thief could quite easily be re-incorporated back into the Indian aesthetic as it had a source common to much Indian popular literature.

The story of The Thief is based on a well known story taken from the Arabian Nights. Briefly it concerns the rise of a member of the dispossessed, a young thief in the Baghdad bazaar, from obscurity to a princely position through good luck, intelligence, work, cunning and supernatural intervention, to achieve the hand of the Princess of Baghdad in marriage. As the opening inter-title says "Happiness must be earned say the stars". In other words The Thief is a moral tale of upward social mobility displaced onto the fantastic, an allegory of success in a land of plentitude, America itself disguised as Baghdad; the thief a metonym for all the Fairbanks and would-be Fairbanks. This was not an obscure message for the Indian urban masses. The Indian audience was capable of making a sophisticated reading of a film like The Thief. (See the evidence of Lala Lajput Rai, E.2, 1928:200-213). As a visual medium film was available to
a multiplicity of readings. Indian audiences made this film a key text in the relationship between Hollywood and Indian film because it appealed to such a wide cross section of the audience.

Central to the filmic narrative is a competition between the princes and the thief, masquerading as a prince, for the hand of the princess. The film indicates that there is only one serious competitor, the evil Khan, whose real prize is not the princess but Baghdad itself. The competition revolves around the desire of the Khan (Jam Shang) to unmask the imposter. The princess provokes each of the princes to seek a rare treasure and return on the seventh moon and then the one with "the rarest treasure I will wed" (Intertitle). The narrative is then set up to exploit a range of sequences in which special effects play a crucial part and cover such marvels as flying carpets, winged horses, resurrection and eternal life, underwater battles with a giant squid and the culmination, a battle scene between the Mongol hordes of Jam Shang who had besieged Baghdad and the phantom forces controlled by Ahmet, the thief. These have been judged among "the finest special effects ever created". (Douglas, 1988:202)

Each sequence is a model of its kind, representing the apogee of Hollywood spectacular of the period. To establish the influence of The Thief on Indian popular films I will look critically at the first sequence of the film and the final battle, arguing that they are exemplary moments in the text which influenced Indian film practices.

The first sequence begins with a prologue which frames the narrative action through an intertitle which says "Happiness must be earned say the stars". The epilogue is identical to the prologue providing both a justification of the action and a narrative coherence. The first
narrative sequence proper is set in an imagined version of the Baghdad bazaar and is characterized by excess - of content, form and performance. Briefly the opening sequence is used to establish the wealth and power of Baghdad in the Arabian Nights mode, fantastic, sumptuous, exotic and bizarre. Moreover, the sequence sets out the social stratification of the society portrayed - the merchants, the military, the petite bourgeoisie, the aristocracy and the lumpen proletariat or dispossessed. In addition the sequence is used to establish the character of Ahmet, the thief, as a vehicle for the performance of Fairbanks which is central to the whole film. Fairbanks is dressed in such a way as to emphasise his body, its muscularty and agility. His upper body is bare, and coated in oil so that the lighting can emphasise the muscles. Matching this particular feature is the general mis-en-scene of the sequence: the bazaar is presented as splendid pot pourri of architectural types of a vaguely eastern mode on a grand scale. The scale of the set is purposeful. It permits the film makers to present humanity on a grand scale. The bazaar is a metonym of the imagined world of the exotic east where all nationalities and types can come together, signifying a particular conception of the non-European world that is powerful and pervasive. The scale of the set of the bazaar also permits some bravura camera work that is used effectively to create a sense of being and place. Finally the scale of the set establishes a space in which Fairbanks can demonstrate the style of performance that had made him famous. Fairbanks can move from the fountain where he picks pockets through the main concourse to the backstreet homes in a whirl of leaps, runs, jumps and acrobatics that is breathtaking. It is precisely this constellation of factors that made The Thief so popular with audiences in India, and influential on film practice.
Further aspects of the narrative worth considering are its episodic structure and its narrative scope. Briefly *The Thief* is neatly divided into three major episodes encased in a prologue and epilogue. The first episode is set in Baghdad where the terms of the enigma are established. The second episode is the search for the treasures which is unravelled via parallel editing and cross cutting between Jam Shang's, Ahmet's and the other princes' ventures. The third and final episode is the magnificent battle sequence in which Ahmet saves Baghdad from the Mongol hordes of Jam Shang. Each episode is relatively self-contained, although linked by the Proppian structure. Each episode, moreover, provides a scope for an interplay of magic, in which cinematic special effects are given full reign, and realism, signified in the technical codes of filming. This interplay between magic and realism links the film to both the Indian classical dramatic traditions and the spectacle of the Parsi popular theatre, both of which are explored in Chapter Six. This structure provides the film with a breadth of options that are distinct from the theatrical traditions of much early cinema. *The Thief* explored and pushed narrative scope in film to its then limits. Not only did it deal with a known (imagined) world but also with an imagined imaginary world. Again the interplay of forces here conform to the conventions of Indian drama. Consequently it can be argued that the narrative structure, given its epic scope, appealed to the Indian audiences precisely because its relationship to their indigenous culture could be imagined with relative ease. In other words, its narrative world could be appropriated and played with both imaginatively by the audiences, and materially by the film makers. As Rangoonwalla says (1979:24):

pure fantasy itself has been rare, but its more popular forms like *Alibaba, Aladdin, Sinbad the Sailor, Thief of Baghdad*, etc, have been made by the dozen.
One example of direct influence is Baghdad (1950) which starred Ranjan, a very popular South Indian star who specialized in adventure roles. Baghdad has distinct links with The Thief in terms of its narrative, its mis-en-scene and performance – twenty six years after the film was first made. The Thief was also to influence the formation of costume drama as a major type or genre of film in India in the 1930s. Costume drama is not a generic category in the Western sense because its constituent parts are too broad in their scope. It is not its content that defines the costume drama but its formal elements. Costume dramas encompass elements of the historicals, melodramas, romances and fantasy, each of which could constitute a separate genre in Western classification systems. However, in Indian film these apparently disparate elements are linked together through the formal elements of mis-en-scene, special effects, costume, setting and performance. As such they are continuous with the mathnari and Rajput romances. It is through these formal qualities that the fantastic and magical can be explored, blurring the distinction between the Western concept of reality and unreality in a time-honoured and specifically Indian way. The Thief showed how this could be done through its narrative strategies in an attractive and exciting fashion.

One of the major distinguishing features of The Thief is its sets. They are, by any standards, enormous and attractive. In the early Hollywood era they were only matched by the sets of D.W. Griffith's Intolerance (1917). Their scale meant that they were not just a backdrop against which the action could unfold but also an active ingredient of the action. Nowhere is this clearer than in the final episode of The Thief where Baghdad is defended against the Mongol hordes. The effect of an enormous beleaguered city is created through set and special effects (matte shots in

1. Dr Vijay Mishra, Murdoch University, drew this parallel to my attention.
particular) that add enormously to the spectacle. All of this was not far removed from the classic tenets of Sanskrit drama, and clearly mirrors much of the action in the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. Consequently, as the costume drama emerged as a dominant form in the late 1920s and early 1930s the set became a vital and significant component of the film. Not only did it establish and underpin the grandeur of the themes but also provided the film maker with the scope to explore his form through special effects, lighting and camera work. Even a cursory glance at costume dramas, historicals and myth legends such as *Lament of Danghari* (1931), Sikander (1941) or *Chandrelekha* (1948) demonstrate the significance the Indian film maker attributes to the set as a signifier. The sumptuousness and grandeur of the sets of *The Thief* struck a chord in India that continues to this day.

Few would claim that Fairbanks was a great actor. His style was broad, probably derived from the conventions of the Victorian stage where he began his career. (Wagenknecht, 1962:181) Nevertheless he had a cinematic presence that was recognized internationally. The major elements of this presence were Fairbank's musculature and acrobatic ability which he exploited to the full in his films including *The Mark of Zorro* and *The Thief*. The combination of musculature and acrobatics created a clear persona of masculinity that Indian men in particular found attractive. All of this added up to sense of performance that was easily read by the Indian audience and greatly appreciated. The performance mode adopted by Fairbanks, including his broad style of acting, and his moustache which is a social signifier of male maturity in India, led to an identification by Indians with Fairbanks. By 1926 Master Vilhal was billed as the Indian Fairbanks in a number of adventure stunt films. (Rangoonwalla, 1975:62) Vilhal went on to star in the first Indian talk *Alam Ara* (1931). (Shah,
Other Indian stars who were likened to Fairbanks included Dinshaw Billimoria (Barucha, 1938:580) who affected costumes similar to those worn by Fairbanks in *The Thief*. Moreover, he starred in adventure/stunt or costume drama films that encouraged an acting style based on action and acrobatics similar to that used by Fairbanks.

The tendency to emulate Fairbanks should not be viewed as a form of unthinking cultural mimicry. On the contrary it was a highly conscious form of appropriation that had two principal dimensions. Firstly, for the film maker it was a way of retrieving profit in a competitive market by exploiting established conventions. Secondly, the appropriations always involved transformational elements. In transforming Fairbanks into Master Vithal Indians were saying something important about their own sense of masculinity, which contrasted sharply to another form of masculinity propagated in India and derived from the British public school image. Thus the appropriation of Fairbank's persona and performance by Indians acquired a political edge. In other words, for Indians to assert their masculinity through language and nomenclature was a message not lost on the Indian audience, one which has continued to the present in such stars as Raj Kapoor, Dilip Kumar and Amitabh Bachchan.

My analysis of *The Thief of Baghdad* is intended to be not exhaustive but suggestive. What I have tried to do is demonstrate, through a particular example, how Hollywood as an exemplar could influence Indian film making and practice without compromising the Indian contribution. *The Thief* is taken to be an exemplary text linked to Indian culture through its narrative origins which is augmented by its mis-en-scene and style of performance. *The Thief* was an influential film in both style and content. It should be realised that even in such a clear case as this the influence
is complex and subtle. Other Hollywood films influenced Indian film practice. This influence can be categorised under three headings. Firstly, there are many films that are indirectly influenced by Hollywood genres. A modern example is Sholay (1978), a so-called "curry Western", which can also be seen as a powerful representation of the problems emerging in a modernizing culture in an Indian context. (Roberge, 1978: 67-71) Secondly, there are the films derived from Hollywood production modes and genres: for instance the adventure stunts of the Wadia Brothers such as Hunterwali (1934) which starred Nadia. Thirdly, there are films consciously based on Western text but transposed to Indian conditions: Phir Subaha Hogi (1958) or Crime and Punishment, the von Sternberg film of the Russian classic novel. (Rangoonwalla, 1975:145) In all three cases the degree of influence is complex and subtle and never simple. Consequently to discuss the relationship between Hollywood and the Indian cinema is to engage with two extraordinarily powerful cultural systems.

In this chapter I have explored the considerable but complex role Hollywood played in the formation of a distinctive Indian film industry from two perspectives. Firstly I have shown from an economic perspective that the Hollywood staple generated an infrastructure via distribution and exhibition networks that created the essential space for an indigenous industry to fill. I have then gone on to show that the Hollywood staple influenced both the film practices adopted within the Indian film industry including acting and mis-en-scene and the content of the Indian films. This is not a casual argument but rather a nuanced one. Hitherto the relationship between the two has been taken as given and as such suppressed because the relationship has been perceived in terms of borrowing rather than transformations. This argument is developed more fully in Chapter Six where I trace the formation of the Indian film as an
indigenous cultural product. In this chapter I have argued the case that the Hollywood staple was an essential ingredient in that process.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE ECONOMIC BASE

In 1942 it was claimed that India had the third largest film production industry in the world. (Dharap, 1942:vii) By 1965 the industry would also claim that it was the second largest industry in terms of investment and the generation of capital in India (Indian Film Directory, 1965:1). Even if we discount these claims as unreliable there remains no doubt that between the 1930s and the 1950s the Indian film industry underwent a remarkable period of growth and development. Therefore it is interesting to note that for much of this period Indian discourses on film expressed concern at the shortage of funds available to the film industry for expansion, the general financial insecurity within the industry and the general disinterest of the governments in providing support for the industry. All of these factors contributed to the general assumption that the Indian film industry was not a vigorous economic form. At the same time not one of the major economic histories of India mentions the Indian film industry.¹ This lack stems from the fact that the terms of economic discourse were determined by the British who defined the essential items of the Indian national economy. Subsequent economic writings have followed this path, concentrating on the 'nation building' industries such as heavy industry, cotton manufacturing and agricultural production. In classical economic terms film was marginalised from the discourse of the modern Indian economy. However, even the most cursory look at the film industry reveals two things: vast sums of money have been associated with the film industry since at least the 1920s and the industry has played a

¹ The footnotes in Tomlinson, (1979), The Political Economy of the Raj, 1914-1947, cite all major references on the economic history of India. I have checked these references and can find no mention of the Indian film industry.
significant role in the regional economies of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras, especially as economic multipliers.

To understand how such a major economic development could occur in a way that is invisible to economic theory, we need to recognize some characteristic features of Indian economic organization over this period.

After World War I a new economic order began to emerge in India. Both Indian capitalists and Anglo-Indian administrators subscribed to a model which emphasised Indian economic issues and which often put them in conflict with the economic dictates and needs of the metropolitan power. (Gordon, 1978; Tomlinson, 1979; Gadgil, 1972) The arguments about imperial preferences after 1926 reflect this development and have a particular bearing on the Indian film industry. (Tomlinson, 1979:119-120)

It was manifest to all concerned that if economic autarky was to be the preferred model the Government of India would have to intervene in the economy. Tactically this was more difficult to do in practice than in theory, as it contradicted the immediate past dominant ideology. In an attempt to reconcile themselves to this contradiction the economic administrators developed the strategy of categorizing industries under two major headings, as either "nation-building" and "others". "Nation building" industries were the iron and steel industry, cement industry and other forms of manufacturing and heavy industries that had begun to emerge in the changed economic conditions of post-World War I, developing not only an economic infrastructure but also a new capitalist class whose base was in industrial production and not in manufacturing, agriculture, the extractive or service sectors of the economy.
There were a number of important consequences of the decision to categorize industries within the ideology of a "nationalism" determined by an imperialist administration. In the first place it created the conditions whereby significant alliances could be forged by the British with Indian groups. The maintenance of these alliances became a major determinant of British political and economic practices. Secondly, by the 1930s it was permissible to encourage the industries specified as "nation building" in a number of ways: through Government purchasing policies, through effective tariff control, and forms of quotas. (Tomlinson, 1979:88-89) Consequently emerging industries often sought recognition as "nation builders". Members of the Indian film industry were among the groups who sought the recognition of the appellation because of the perceived benefits for the film industry. However, film was never specified as a "nation building" industry.

Closely associated with these developments is the type of capital available to achieve economic self-sufficiency. Economic theory has a tendency to label types of capital as though they were discrete and autonomous entities. Thus we have mature capital, monopoly capital, investment capital and so on. The assignation of these labels to the operations of a capitalist economy in India is not very satisfactory, hiding as much as it reveals. Following Braudel (1973:xiii) I would rather talk in terms of ensembles of capital operating in the Indian context. For example, the industrialist had at their disposal capital from a number of sources representing different stages in capital formation. They could, and did, borrow on the London market, and at the same time invested there, establishing links with mature capitalism. (Gordon, 1978:107) Further they had established a capitalist infrastructure in India based on the Western model, employing the same
institutions, strategies and techniques of capital formation as those employed in London. This development was condoned, even encouraged, by the Anglo-Indian bureaucracy who supported it materially with an infrastructure of institutions that both legitimated its practices and regulated its operations. (Tomlinson, 1979:36) Thus the Indian industrialists were, in effect, incorporated into international capital.

Co-existing with the international capital was an indigenous capitalist system. In essence its objectives were the same as international capital: the maximisation of profit. What distinguished it from that form was its institutions and practices. The industrialists and the capitalist system maintained a modern banking system based on the joint stock company and its attendant regulatory underpinnings. (Gordon, 1978:104) On the other hand the marketeers, or national capitalists, operated in an economic system dominated by indigenous money lenders or shroffs and mahajaris whose economic practices were determined by custom and an indigenous legal contractual system. (Tomlinson, 1979:10-12) The indigenous system was quite different to the modern banking system and operated in parallel fashion. The indigenous economic system was not incorporated into the British economic structures and those elements of the economy that have always been located in this sphere have been little studied because of a lack of data. The significant point here is that film has inhabited the indigenous realm of capital formation from its inception for two fundamental reasons. Firstly, film producers initially had difficulty in conforming to the conventions of Western capital formation lacking collateral to secure loans for film production. Secondly, interest rates in the indigenous capitalist system tended to be lower than in the Westernized sector in the 1930s although the I.C.C. suggests the opposite. (Report of the I.C.C., 1928:61)
All of the major accounts of the industry comment on the difficulty of assembling objective information in respect to the economics of film production in India.\(^1\) This has been compounded by post-British developments where the financial relations of film production have been clearly located in the black market economy (or Number 2 money system) (Anon, 1977:4) which makes the systematic study of the economy of the film industry in the private capital sector very difficult.

In this chapter I will discuss the economic development of the Indian film industry, focussing principally on Bombay, in the light of the above factors. At the same time I will analyse this development in three chronological stages: the cottage industry period (1913-1931); the studio era (1931-1942) and the commodity fetish stage (1942-to the present). Each of these stages is related to the other, and indeed they co-existed in each period. Each stage also represents the dominance of a different and competing form of economic practice over others. Between each stage there are moments of transition which provoke a series of complaints from film makers, especially from the losers of the battle for dominance in the industry. The vehemence of these complaints has contributed to the distorted view that the Indian film industry found progress difficult in the inter-war years. The immediate post-World War II period is a particular example of this problem where the Bombay Studio heads were about to be displaced as the major force in the industry. They were strong in their criticisms of the evils of freelancing in the industry. (Chandulal Shah, 1956:33) The reaction of the studio figures to the changes in the economic structure of the industry should be interpreted in this light. Finally, it should be recognised that each of

\(^1\) See especially Shah (1950) p.xii-xiii who sums up a problem that still has not been resolved.
the approximate time spans represents a dominant economic mode of production, each with its own characteristics, arising from the relations and conditions of production operating during the period.

My exploration of these three stages draws upon a film history model proposed by the American film historians Staiger and Gomery. (1979:35-44) In short, Staiger and Gomery argue that both the neo-classical economic model and a neo-marxist economic model must be used in order to answer specific questions about the operations of a film industry. (p.37) In seeking to understand the relationship between Hollywood and India a neo-classical model is inappropriate as it ignores international trade patterns and the emergence of trans-national corporations and their role in those patterns. In contrast the neo-marxist model addresses precisely the issues embodied in that relationship. However, for analysing a domestic market the neo-classical model provides a set of tools that, when utilized perceptively, can provide a penetrating analysis. (p.36)

The history of the political economy of India under British rule is a sensitive and controversial subject with diametrically opposed positions adopted: the nationalists who have characterized British rule as entirely harmful to Indian economic development and those who would argue that a more liberal view must be taken of the role of the British in the economic development of India. (Tomlinson, 1979: 165-166) Significantly this controversy focuses exclusively on the modern Westernized sector of the Indian economy. In most respects the indigenous economic system, wherein the economic roots of the Indian film industry lie, remains virtually invisible, with the exception of agriculture. However, all agree that in 1913, that is immediately before the outbreak of World War I, India's economy can be characterized as fulfilling two principal functions that
are the immediate product of her relationship with the Britain within an imperialist framework. The two functions were: firstly, to supply raw materials for the metropolitan power's industries, and secondly, to act as a market for finished products produced by the metropolitan power and distributed and circulated in a protected, captive market. (Tomlinson, 1979:165) Thereafter interpretations differ quite markedly. However, I think there is a case to argue that during World War I economic conditions in India changed significantly due to circumstances beyond the control of the Anglo-Indian administration. In short, economic forces were set in motion which fundamentally changed the base of the Indian economy and the relations emerging from that base not least of which was the relationship between the British and the Indians. These fundamental changes were neither immediate nor uniform. On the contrary they were uneven in their emergence, and there were significant regional differences.

Most of the changes within the Indian economy are associated with the emergence of industrial capital in India. While India remained a predominantly agricultural nation during World War I there was a rapid increase in the manufacturing and industrial sectors of the economy which was sustained in the inter-war period with regional variations. The outcome of these developments was the advent of a great deal of surplus capital, especially in the immediate post World War 1 years, (Tomlinson, 1979:30-31) the emergence of a strong, urban-based middle-class whose economic interests were represented by burgeoning industry-based associations, (Gordon, 1978:60-61) an industrial infrastructure of some significance, and an awareness on the part of some segments of the capitalist classes that industrial self-sufficiency had distinct links with the move to political autonomy; (Gordon, 1978:174-175) that is, there
is a direct and important link between the changing economic base and political developments.

The economic forces outlined above created a situation whereby the British could not avoid intervention in the Indian economy. In the first place, they were under considerable pressure from major economic groups in India to engage in protective practices. In the second place economic forces of a global nature required government intervention and regulation of the economy. (Tomlinson, 1979:30-56)\(^1\). The Anglo-Indian administration began to sympathise with Indian aspirations for autarky. However, it was not only subjected to pressure by Indian groups but also by the metropolitan Government who did not sympathise with Indian capitalists but represented British capitalist interests. The Government of India could not break with the dictates of Whitehall but it could stall and avoid issues. Inertia could be an attractive strategy for a beleaguered administration as it could be employed to demonstrate to the Indians the degree of sympathy Anglo-Indians felt for the Indian causes, but at the same time provided an escape route for the bureaucrats if British interests could not be avoided. In essence the Government of India had forced upon it a mediating role in the political economy of India between 1913 and 1947. As such it compromised itself and frequently adopted contradictory positions on issues. No where is this clearer than in its fiscal policy. Attempts to control the amount of money available in India and at the same time control the exchange rate saw the Indian currency seriously overvalued resulting in export difficulties and internal financial problems. Internally there was a contraction of credit in the modernized industrial sector (p.36) which led to a reliance on the indigenous money market for credit throughout the 1920s (p.39) which was to have a direct bearing on the financial situation of the Indian film industry.
At another level the Government of India found it difficult to shed its neo-classical economic ideology which emphasised "high interest rates, currency contraction and holding the rupee exchange" rate (p.125) and nearly always refused to accede to Indian requests for the implementation of quotas on imported goods. This had a serious bearing on the recommendations of the I.C.C. in 1928. Rather, the Anglo-Indian administration tended to adopt a tariff strategy whereby tariffs on imported goods were raised to increasingly higher levels in the 1920s and 1930s. As Tomlinson points out in 1931

[Knowing the strength of Indian opinion on this issue, Irwin (the Viceroy) pointed out that Indian tariff policy had to be justified in terms of India's interests alone and warned that imposing imperial preference would only increase the effectiveness of the boycott of British goods. (p.123)]

In other words in the economic sphere Indian considerations, as in other areas, were dominant in the formulation of Government of India policy. Tariff determinations were to play an increasingly important role in serving Indian economic interests throughout the 1930s which had a direct bearing on the Indian film industry.

All of these factors impacted on the economic development of the cinema in India. Indeed the economic basis of the industry reflects accurately the changing economic base of India as a whole. The film industry was in many respects the product of the changing economic forces made manifest. It was an urban phenomenon, the product of excess capital invested for quick returns, it was a new and heteropRACTic industry appropriating Western technology to Indian conditions, developed on a regional basis ensuring a diverse and uneven development in response to specific regional economic, social and cultural factors. The personnel attracted to the cinema

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complex came from the urbanized westernized middle-classes who were responsible for the establishment of the new industries. In Calcutta they tended to come from the upper echelons of the bhadralok (Broomfield, 1968:232) who decided to enter commerce rather than government service or the legal system. As representatives of this class they constituted part of a large and informal network that had enormous influence on the cultural formation of Bengal. Satyajit Ray, admittedly of a later generation, exemplifies this position but his predecessors such as Nitin Bose, for example, and B.N. Sircar also belonged to the same class and caste formations.

In Bombay different social and economic relations prevailed. Early members of the Bombay film industry belonged overwhelmingly to Parsi or Gujarati groups. For example, the Indian Cinematographic Year Book (Barucha, 1938)\(^1\) seeks to hierarchize the contributions of individuals to the film industry in the categories of Founders (pp.19-20), Builders (pp.25-32), Promoters (pp.35-81) and Members (pp.560-700). In the Founder category there are one Brahmin (D.G. Phalke), one Parsi (J.F. Madan), one Iranian (A.M. Irani) and three Gujeratis. Of the Builders in Western India, (Bombay), six are Gujeratis, three are Brahmins, one a Muslim, one a non-Brahmin (Baburao Painter who worked in Kolhapur, a satellite production centre of Bombay, whose cultural affiliation was specifically Mahratti rather than pan-Indian) and one Iranian. Of two hundred and nineteen Promoters, who are not organized territorially, at least forty-eight are Gujeratis and twenty-five Parsis. These groups dominated the Bombay industry because they owned the studios, controlled the distribution networks in South India as well as West and North India, but most significantly because they supplied the finance for film production.

\(^1\) The page numbers in brackets on pp.142-143 refer to Barucha, B.D. ed (1935), Indian Cinematograph Year Book.
One of the Founders, Mayashankar Mulshankar Bhatt, a "Landlord, Industrialist, Business Magnate, Financier, Textile Authority, Producer and Distributor of Films" (p.20) underwrote Phalke's Hindustan Cinema Film Company along with Vaman Shridhar Apte (a Promoter) between 1917-1921. Bhatt had extensive business interests in commodity production, including cotton spinning and weaving, petroleum and dyes from coal and general engineering. He was also an importer of raw film and cinematographic technology. (p.20) Bhatt is representative of a major block within the Bombay capitalist classes identified by Gordon as the marketeers as distinct from the industrialists. (1978:102) Marketeers worked principally within an indigenous money system and engaged in commerce rather than heavy industry which was the base of the industrialists. Consequently they suffered more from British fiscal and monetary policies manifested in the fiscal stringency of Sir Basil Blackett, Finance Secretary to the Government of India. (Gordon, 1978:239) These factors combined to cause the Bombay economy to decline in relation to other centres and regions within India in the 1920s (Tomlinson, 1979:73). In many respects it was the economic problems of the late 1920s which affected the marketeers position and turned them to support the political counter-hegemony of the Nationalist movement as an attractive political alternative. Moreover, the desire to affiliate with the Nationalists can be perceived as a fulfilment of caste, regional and cultural loyalties on the part of this group. (Gordon, 1978:239)

There is another dimension to the economic relations in Bombay. Marketeers worked on the margins of modern commercial development and often deliberately chose to enter new fields for profit. Most of the new commercial fields were associated with new and burgeoning technologies introduced from the West: automobiles, radio and cinema. Bhatt invested
in a process to extract oil from coal. (Barucha, 1938: 20) The Fazalbhoys, an Ismaili Muslim family began their commercial careers with a franchise to distribute the retailing of automobiles, moved on to radios, thence to cinema after the introduction of sound in 1931. (pp.46-47)

Augmenting the normal commercial practices of the group was a willingness to enter into trade, industry and professional associations to protect their interests. The organizations were organized along caste, industry, and regional lines. It is significant that the trade and professional organizations emerged at times of competition and growth and not decline. For example the Motion Picture Society of India (hereinafter the M.P.S.I.), a supra-organization, was inaugurated in 1932, immediately after the introduction of sound which had given the local industry an enormous boost. (p.9) The Indian Motion Pictures Producers' Association (hereafter the I.M.P.P.A.) was inaugurated in 1937 during the period when the major Bombay Studios were seeking to consolidate their position after a period of sustained growth. (p.108) The chief functions of M.P.S.I. were two-fold to represent the industry to the various levels of government; and to inaugurate some form of self-regulation. The I.M.P.P.A. was established to look after the interests of the producers in the face of mounting competition from the film distributors for the control of the industry. In other words the professional associations were agents of the vested interests, designed to protect the studios that were seeking to dominate the Bombay film industry and ultimately the Indian scene. Essentially this was a response to the volatile economic base of the industry. Despite the economic depression of the 1930s in Bombay aspiring film producers flocked to the industry. The thirties saw a massive increase in the number of producing concerns, in Bombay for the most part (Table I).
Table 1:

Percentage of New Producing Concerns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% of New Producing Concerns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistical Department: MPSI quoted in Jain (1960: 77)

The influx of producers was a consequence of the rapid development of the industry due to the consolidation of distribution networks and the increase of exhibition outlets especially in the urban centres. (pp. 311-319; 325-395) Moreover, massive profits could be made from a successful film which in itself was sufficient motive for many.

The established film personnel like the Fazalbhoy, Irani and at a significant juncture, Chandulal J. Shah, opposed what they perceived as the entropy reflected in the figures for Table 1. In the first place the constant change of film producers was seen to have a destabilizing effect on the industry insofar as it encouraged moneylenders to increase interest rates as the producers competed for limited financial resources. (Fazalbhoy, 1939:35) Secondly, it destabilized the labour market insofar as the neophyte producers tended to induce trained personnel and actors away from the studios with increased salaries in order to make their films. Thirdly, the economic practices of the new producers were
perceived to be outside the economic conventions of the Westernized financial markets and very clearly linked to the indigenous markets (p.9) It was precisely this association the Shahs, the Iranis and the Fazalbhoyas were trying to sever through the establishment of organisations like the I.M.P.P.A.

As in other countries Indian film producers aspired to cultural acceptance. Established producers such as Shah saw the volatile film production scene as subverting the possibility of economic and cultural respectability. To curtail this development the associations promulgated codes of ethics for film production, established watch-dog committees to oversee the industry and more significantly, organized All-India Congresses: the first in 1935 and the second in 1937, and the major Congress, in 1939. (Handbook, 1949:xxvii) As the neophyte producers did not belong to the same networks or organizations as the established producers they could ignore the code of ethics and the watchdog committees. The Congresses, however, could not be ignored.

M.A. Fazalbhoy had been largely instrumental in bringing about the 1935 Congress. In many respects it was a logical outcome of his other commercial, cultural and political activities. At one time or another he was Secretary of the Indian Motion Picture Producers' Association; Secretary of the All-India Radio Merchants' Association; Treasurer, Amateur Cine Society; Member, Executive Committee of the Indian Merchant Chamber of Commerce; Member, Board of Directors of the Bombay Fire Insurance Company Ltd; Bandra Talkies Ltd; Mercantile Finance Co. Ltd; General Films Ltd; New Citizens Bank of India Ltd; Member, Aga Khan's School Board of Bombay and Suburbs; and the Aga Khan Vocation Advisory Board. (Barucha, 1938:46) In short, Fazalbhoy inhabited an impeccable
discursive position, synthesising a number of divergent strands into one. His colleagues in the M.P.S.I. and I.M.P.P.A. inhabited similar spaces. Their influence was to be dominant in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, although opposition was always present. Fazalbhoy thus exemplified the class background and more significantly the aspirations of the industry with his economic interests located securely in the modern sector of the Indian economy. However, this position was never entirely secure. The competition from the freelancers which emerged in the 1930s and was contained during the transitional war years was to be triumphant by the late 1950s. Indian film discourse reflects the competitive economic situation that was the core of the Indian film industry in the late formative period.

The economic base of the Indian film industry was a complex one determined by a diverse range of factors which include British fiscal and monetary policy in the Indian context, and its relations to imperial dictates and policy; the regional nature of the Indian economy with its uneven development and basically agrarian base; the emergence of new classes of capitalists who adopted different positions towards a number of key issues which can be directly related to their production base and can be characterized as either industrialists or marketeers; the professional and industry organizations and associations established to protect the economic interests of these classes. Finally, individuals with clear regional, caste and class affiliations operated within these determinants. Their skill and practices largely shaped the film industry in the period under discussion. Consequently to see the cinema in India in isolation is to distort the economic realities. Moreover, all of these factors impacted upon and shaped the economic development of the Indian film industry.
I have identified the three principal stages of the development of the Indian film industry in the period 1913-1947 as the Cottage Industry stage, the Studio Era, and the Commodity Fetish stage. I will now analyse each of these stages, establishing the distinguishing characteristics of each period. In doing this I intend to make concrete the more general economic determinants outlined above. Moreover, I will establish that the development of the cinema in India is not an isolated event, but one clearly and irrevocably enmeshed in the economy of the time. Its economic base is a reflection of economic practices of the period. Finally, I will show that in periodizing the development in this fashion, and in isolating the characteristics of each period, the Indian film industry in the British era underwent significant development, establishing an infrastructure whereby the distribution side of the cinema complex became dominant. That is, the economic forces at work diminished the role of the producer in the Indian film industry, and by-passed British fiscal policies precisely because it had a large and captive indigenous audience for its product.

The Cottage Industry Stage: 1913-1931

The Cottage Industry stage is characterized by its reliance upon individual entrepreneurship, funding through indigenous moneylenders, a lack of production facilities and any form of production infrastructure, lack of specialist division of labour within the emerging industry, a primitive system of distribution and exhibition for the films, primitive film technique and a limited range of themes and genres in film.
The Cottage Industry stage lasted from approximately 1913 to 1931 when the introduction of sound forced the major Bombay studios to consolidate. At the same time it must be acknowledged that the desire to establish studios as the central component of the industry was present from the industry's inception. D G Phalke established a studio at Nasik, a satellite production centre of Bombay, in which he reproduced the production techniques of the studios he had visited in Britain. There was a clear division of function and labour within Phalke's organization, the Hindustan Film Company Ltd, with the studio divided into various departments, each with a distinct function, such as the cinematographic department and the laboratory. However, his pool of skilled technical labour was small so that if an injury occurred to one of his key technicians, as sometimes happened, he was confronted with a serious production problem. (Phalke in Shahane, 1970:25-31)\textsuperscript{1}. Therefore, it was extremely difficult to sustain a specialized division of labour. Personnel had to be adept at turning their hand to a number of tasks. Compounding this situation was the personality of Phalke.

There is no argument that Phalke has a central and crucial role in the early development of the Indian cinema. However, his position is an isolated and contradictory one. As a Brahmin his conventional social role could have been government service under the British or an academic position like that of his father. However, he broke with tradition and entered the field of the 'practical arts' and commerce. (p.18) Prior to entering film-making Phalke had a career of failed commercial enterprises with a technological bases. His training in graphic arts and his

\textsuperscript{1} The following discussion of Phalke's early career is based on Miss Namada Shahane's translations of Phalke's 1917 articles in Studio in Film History: a compilation of Research Papers devoted to D G Phalke (1870-1944) (1970). Page numbers used hereafter refer to this publication.
background in photography were unusual for a Brahmin of the period. Moreover, he broke with custom and convention when he travelled to Britain, not once but four times, and had to undergo ritual purification on his return so as not to lose his caste status. That is, in cultural terms Phalke was a classic heteropractic.

The evidence shows Phalke to have been a genuinely talented visual communicator with skills in all aspects of film production, cinematography, editing, development, animation, (pp.64-66) so much so that he dominated production within the Hindustan Film Company. It was very much a one-man band despite Phalke's references to his loyal and supportive wife, family and crew. Phalke's discursive position was that of the Hindu patriarch: his studio operated as an extended Hindu joint family. It was only thus that it could survive, given its precarious economic position.

In adopting the role of the Hindu patriarch controlling a joint family, and employing traditional economic strategies, Phalke placed himself at a serious economic disadvantage. When he established his enterprise Phalke used all of his available capital, then pawned his wife's jewellery, and finally entered into financial agreements with moneylenders, (p.35) always a dangerous relationship in India. When the individualistic approach to film making could no longer sustain production of the scale envisaged by Phalke he had to enter into financial arrangements of a more Westernized type. Bhatt and Apte provided Phalke with funds to produce films but he found it difficult to operate within legal financial constraints and the Hindustan Film Company folded in 1921 (Kale, 1978:6)¹. thus maintaining

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¹ Pramod Kale's article on the Marathi Cinema has been published in the Economic and Political Weekly in India. I have worked from a typescript of the manuscript the author kindly lent me during my stay in India.
Phalke's poor commercial record, despite his "profit making mentality". (p.5).

While Phalke's personality and temperament were crucial factors in this development other significant factors were also at work. Phalke's first three films Raja Harishchandra (1913)\(^1\), Mohini Bhasmasur (1913) and Satyavan Savitri (1914) were all financially successful (p.30) which stimulated others to enter film production. Phalke's films, all mythologicals, were greeted with great enthusiasm and attracted considerable press and commercial attention. (pp.15-17; pp.46-48) However, the success masked a fact of great significance for the development of the Indian film industry: there was no underlying distribution and exhibition network to sustain an industry. Phalke himself had negotiated the distribution and exhibition of his films like the other producers emerging at the time. (p.44) The chief advantage of this practice was that producer's profits were maximized. However, from the early 1920s as production increased they came up against two factors that made this mode of distribution less practicable.

The Cottage industry phase is marked by a number of limiting factors. In the first place there were very few cinemas, theatres or other outlets available for exhibition in India. Figures before 1927 are unreliable but it seems that there were no more than 309 permanent cinemas plus a few touring cinemas by the early 1920s. (Report of the I.C.C., 1928:179) Between half and two-thirds of the cinemas that existed in the early 1920s were controlled by Madans of Calcutta (Despatch, IOLR/PJ/1/26), who either purchased outright the exhibition rights for films for South and South-

\(^1\) The film was made in 1912. The convention is to signify its origins not by the date of production, but the date of the first public screening.
East Asia, or rented film direct from European and American companies.
Their cinemas were located in urban centres, principally in the civil
lines and cantonments. These were Anglophile and Anglocphone centres, so
that the audience was composed mainly of Anglo-Indian civilians, the
British soldier or the modernized middle class professional Indian; not
the audience for whom Phalke's films were principally created. Secondly,
the European and American production houses had by the early 1920s their
own distribution agencies in India. The normal commercial practice was to
secure their exhibition outlets, although they denied engaging in "block"
booking practices. (Moosier, in E.1, 1928:450) Both factors generated
considerable hostility amongst the Indian film producers. Madan's were
accused of establishing a monopoly and this was investigated at length by
the I.C.C. who showed the allegations to be baseless. (Report of the
I.C.C., 1928:43-45) Competition from the foreign sources was less easily
resolved, but it must be remembered that the possible influence of foreign
films on the Indian market was the leitmotiv of Anglo-Indian concerns
about the cinema in the period. Consequently, the British were up to a
point sympathetic with Indian dissatisfaction at the state of distribution
and exhibition in the early 1920s.

Within the industry there was a perception that the lack of distribution
and exhibition networks for films suggested a limited future for the
industry. This was not a perception outside the industry. The amount of
capital made available, much of it probably "black", for investment was
considerable in Bombay between 1918 and 1921. The cinema was perceived as
good a place as any to invest: indeed possibly better than most others.
But again there was no organised infrastructure to ensure rational
investment and development. On the contrary an extremely volatile
situation emerged in which there was intense competition for the limited
film production resources available. The number of film producers working in the industry had risen to 63 (45 in Bombay) by 1922. (Shah: 1951:28) Few of the newcomers survived, but in 1927 the number of producers had increased yet again to 108 (96 in Bombay). (Shah, 1951:28) In the Indian context this meant that there was a considerable circulation of people with no discernible skills through the film industry. This had an impact on the films produced and the reception the films received. Moreover, few of the new entrants into the industry in the 1920s seemed to remain within the industry after their first film. Thus the transition from the cottage industry to the studio era is marked by two things: an excess of capital and a large number of people seeking to enter the industry. This situation was to be repeated in the transitional period after World War II.

A major consequence of this situation was destabilization which in turn had cultural consequences: as the Report of the I.C.C. pointed out film producers generally could not "be described as men of high culture" (1928:31). In the Indian context the lack of cultural credibility definitely worked against Indian producers and their attempts to gain social legitimation. It took some time for the industry to recover from this stigma and thus must be viewed as a major ideological determinant in the establishment of the film associations as dominant factors in the Bombay film industry, which in turn is a major register of the shift from a small scale Cottage based industry to a more rational integrated industry.

On the other hand it must be quickly established that the situation in the film industry was a reflection of similar developments within the Indian
economy. There was a massive increase in the number of indigenous companies established in India between 1913-14 and 1921-22 (Table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Companies</th>
<th>Approximate Aggregate Authorised capital</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1913-14</td>
<td>2,681</td>
<td>Rs 76 crores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918-19</td>
<td>2,713</td>
<td>Rs 106 crores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921-22</td>
<td>4,781</td>
<td>Rs 223 crores</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gadgil (1971: 253)

In 1919-20 905 new companies were established with an authorized aggregate capital of Rs 275 crores (Gadgil, 1971:254). In this context the film industry can be seen as typical rather than atypical of Indian capitalist experience in a period of economic change.

Associated with the availability of capital, the influx of personnel and the general economic conditions is the question of technology. All cinematic apparatus had to be imported into India and was subject to tariffs which made it expensive. Moreover, there were few Indians trained to use the technology. Indians who had overseas experience of the film industry were quickly absorbed into the industry but most Indian film technicians were self-trained. (Report of the I.C.C., 1928:77) However, there was a wide circulation within India of overseas technical journals relating to the cinema. (Barucha, 1938:509-523) The availability of the necessary film technology was minimal for the first stage of development. Most producers had one camera, and sophisticated lighting was not available. The first artificial lighting was used in 1920. (Shah, 1951:28) Considering the conditions existing in India at the time it could hardly have been otherwise. While high profits were possible with a
minimum of outlay on technology investors and financiers were not likely to spend large sums of money on film equipment. Technological sophistication was a desire of the committed film people who became firmly positioned within Indian film discourse in the mid-1920s and were the major shapers of the studio era.

The Cottage Industry stage then can be characterized by the effort and enterprise of individual film makers, a reliance on traditional forms of organization and commercial practice, reproduced with a reliance on traditional narrative forms in the content of the films. More significantly, the period of development can be characterized by a series of lacks; a lack of secure capital, a lack of distribution and exhibition networks, a lack of trained personnel, and a lack of sophisticated technology. All of these factors contributed to the major complaints levelled against Indian films in comparison to imported films: their poor technique, acting and formulaic stories. (Mooser in Report of the I.C.C., 1928:454)

There is no sharp break between the Cottage Industry stage of development and the studio era, rather it is a shift of emphasis and of discursive practices manifested in a more professional and sophisticated approach to film making combined with underlying economic shifts such as the tapping of different financial sources. At the same time many of the characteristics of the Cottage Industry phase persisted. Even when the studios were most dominant in the late 1930s and during the war years the number of producers entering and leaving the industry remained high. (See Table 2) In an industry that required massive capital outlay to create a studio base for production this meant that an individual could only enter the industry by initially adopting the practices of the Cottage Industry.
This remains true, to a certain extent, to this day, although the frequent
circulation of personnel in and out of the contemporary cinema complex
remains both a feature of the Bombay industry and a continuous factor of
the industry. However, the discontinuities between the two eras are much
more significant.

The Studio Era

The second stage in the development of the Indian film industry in both
Calcutta and Bombay is marked by significant changes, realised through the
desire for capital of a different form, the emergence of a different set
of production conditions through the creation of an organized
infrastructure underpinned by a new set of relations of production
characterized by the establishment of craft associations within the
industry. There was also the rational organization of the market place
into distribution circuits or zones of influence which exploited already
existing networks. This form of organization drew upon significant
traditional cultural factors. Finally the introduction of new
sophisticated technology principally as a result of the introduction of
synchronized sound into film discourse influenced the formation of the
studio era. In short, these changes in the relations and conditions of
production required a major re-structuring of the productive base of the
Indian film industry. This re-structuring I will call the studio era,
which lasted approximately from the mid-1920s to the early 1950s and for
many represents the "golden era" of film production. (Lent, 1983: 467-474)

The conditions of development of the studios in Bombay, and to a lesser
extent in Calcutta, parallel the general economic conditions in India of
the period. British policy making decisions in respect to the economy in
general impinged upon the film economy. It is also important to remember
that, from the Indian point-of-view, these economic policies were inextricably entangled with the political situation. No matter how many times the British pointed out that their policies were designed to aid Indian needs, they could not escape the fact that Indians continued to see the arguments as flawed. From the Indian perspective British policies throughout the 1920s and 1930s were treated with suspicion because they were seen as attempting to maintain British economic imperialism by devious means. Lala Lajput Rai's characterization of the 1927-28 I.C.C. as an attempt to capture the Indian screens for British films reflects this view accurately. (Report of the I.C.C., 1928:206) Furthermore, Indian capitalists recognized the fact India had been drawn into the world economy which unleashed economic forces that the British policies could not contain. Consequently Indian dissatisfaction with British economic policy became stronger throughout the 1930s and was translated into closer links between the capitalist classes and the Nationalist politicians. (Gordon, 1978:174) Moreover, the Indian attitude towards British economic policy is reflected in the actions of the Bombay film producing associations, who continually demanded government protection for the industry in the 1930s. The development of the studio era must be viewed in this context.

Towards the end of the silent era studios as organized economic units, horizontally integrated insofar as they undertook all stages of film production in one location, had begun to emerge. This restructuring demanded different forms of capital for it to succeed. The traditional form of financing was perceived as inadequate by the major film producers. From the late 1920s on the studios were in search of modern capital. The establishment of the industry associations were a key to this desire.
By 1936 Sir Phiroze Sethna, a Parsi businessman and politician had become the President of the Indian Motion Picture Society although his involvement in the industry had been marginal. (Barucha, 1938:9-11) Sethna's financial and social credentials were impeccable. He represented the Sun Life Insurance Company in India for over twenty years, he was also part of a major group of Bombay businessmen who controlled much of the economic development of the region through a system of interlocking directorships of companies. Sethna was a director of thirty-two companies (Kulke, 1978:126), a figure exceeded by only three other Indians of the period. Moreover, he had community, racial and economic links with the Tata family (NML Sethna Papers), one of India's major industrial and commercial organizations. The film producers sought investment from the likes of Tata to both stabilize the industry and legitimize its economic and social functions. The House of Tata generally seem to have resisted the pressure to invest in the film industry despite the presence of people like Sethna although there is one reference to the Tata group investing in the Bombay film industry: in the formation of the National Film Studio, a Fazalbhoy initiative in 1936. (Film Show Annual, 1941:39) Nevertheless, the recurrent complaint of the industry remained "capital was shy". The Western joint-stock banks generally refused to invest in film production for a number of reasons. Firstly, it was seen as a hazardous business that produced little of material value that could be used as collateral to secure loans. Secondly, the film industry's economic practices were seen as a hangover from the Cottage Industry stage and were viewed with suspicion. (Fazalbhoy, 1939:3-7) Furthermore, the continued influx of new producers (in the 1930s) tended to be seen as indicating a lack of stability in the industry. (See Table 2).
The majority of these producers made one or two films and then left the industry. The established producers saw this as a fundamental problem in the task of capital attraction, hence the moves towards self-regulation through industry associations.

Related to this was the undeniable fact that the industry remained linked to an extensive and efficient indigenous capitalist tradition that was not constrained by the same formal regulations as the Westernized sector of the economy. Therefore it is difficult to assert anything in respect to the capital accumulation, capital organization and capital circulation in the Indian film industry. While the modernist producers of Bombay complained consistently about the consequences of this linkage there were distinct advantages in remaining in this economic sphere. Interest rates may have been higher than in the modern capital sector, but more significantly, money could be raised quickly and with fewer legalistic impediments.

Another reason for the lack of investment of Westernized capital in the film industry arose out of the cultural and social status of the cinema industry. The cinema was still considered not to be an acceptable cultural area by significant cultural brokers. The Western perceptions of the cinema as a mere form of entertainment in comparison with other cultural forms were prevalent among the Indian elites and were but amplified by Indian cultural conventions. Phalke struck these problems from the very first with the informal prohibition against women appearing upon the screen. It was also alleged that even prostitutes would not consider acting in films. Furthermore, many of the men who acted in the films had little dramatic experience. (Phalke in Shahane, 1970:75-86)

Early casting practices were amateurish and ad hoc. In India the
repercussions were deep and long lasting. The desire for capital was linked to the desire of the film producers to become socially and culturally respectable, integrated into the upper strata of modern Indian society. Two strategies were adopted to bring about the incorporation of the economic into the cultural. Firstly, the stories that were told on the screen drew heavily on the traditional Indian cultural discourse which is discussed in detail below. Secondly, there was a strong push to attract young women of "the right castes and classes" to all aspects of the cinema throughout the 1930s especially in the area of acting to replace the Anglo-Indian stars of the 1920s. *(Filmland, 21/1/33:2)*

The cultural conventions surrounding the dramatic in India were to have considerable impact on the cinema complex. Firstly they acted as an inhibitor until at least the 1940s. Nevertheless, in the 1930s, precisely because film production could be achieved relatively cheaply and return massive profits the industry did begin to change its profile: it did attract young men and women of the higher castes. Initially this occurred in the satellite production centres. Great capital was made of the young Brahmin woman Durga Khote's presence in the Prabhat Studio's production of *Ayodhyecha Raja* (1933). *(Barnouw and Krishnaswamy, 1980:83-84)* However, Bombay had become the dominant Indian production centre, analogous to Hollywood, and regional talent soon drifted to Bombay, or they were actively recruited by the producers there. *(Lent, 1983:472)* Thus, the social and cultural base changed in conjunction with the economic conditions. As more money was generated through an expanding exhibition network, so the mechanisms for this realignment occurred.

Finally, the studio's demands for a rationalization of the economic base of the cinema began to be more widely accepted. The role of the industry
associations and the film congresses were crucial in this development. Calls for the establishment of a Film Industry Bank were made in the 1920s, and they continued throughout the 1930s and 1940s. (Fazalbhoy, 1962:41) That is, if the private capital would not meet the needs of the industry then Government finance would be mobilised to fill the gap. Arguments along these lines were put to the I.C.C. in 1927-28 to some effect, for a major recommendation of the Committee was the establishment of a Cinema Bureau which was to have an economic function similar to that of a bank. (Report of the I.C.C., 1928:143) The failure of the Government of India to implement the recommendations will be discussed at length in Chapter Seven. Suffice to say this failure was perceived within the industry as confirmation of a general tendency towards ignoring Indian desires and aspirations in industry and commerce generally on the part of the British; and as anti-cinema specifically. In defence the British argued two things: firstly the policy of tariff protection applied to films; the rates had risen in the 1930s from 5% ad valorem per pound of exposed film to 15% ad valorem per one hundred feet of exposed feet. (Memo, NAI/Commerce 195-T(3) June 1929) This was seen as an entirely beneficial to the local industry. Secondly, the evidence gathered by the I.C.C. and other data collecting agencies within the administration clearly suggested to the bureaucracy that the film industry did not require protection.

Despite all of these difficulties the Indian film industry expanded and by 1929 was in a position of some strength especially in Bombay. Although the development was uneven at times the actual number of films produced increased by 515 per cent over the decade. (See Table 4)
TABLE 3
Films Produced in India 1920 – 1929

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Films</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>64</td>
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<td>52</td>
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<td>1925</td>
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<td>1926</td>
<td>94</td>
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<td>1927</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Dharap, n.d., mimeograph.

However, the single most important factor contributing to the viability of the Indian film industry was the introduction of synchronised sound technology in 1930. The first sound movie, Melody of Love, was imported by Madan Theatres in 1929. (Barnouw and Krishnaswamy, 1980:58) The first Indian produced sound film was Alam Ara (1931) made by Ardesh Irani at the Imperial Film Company in Bombay. (1980:67-69) The introduction of sound gave the Bombay industry in particular a massive boost and led to a significant increase in production in the five years (1931-1935) (Table 4).

TABLE 4
Film Production and the Introduction of Sound

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Films</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Dharap, 1942:40

It was the studios who were best able to take advantage of these developments. Although individuals still sought entry into the industry in large numbers throughout the 1930s the studios dominated production. In Bombay a number of studio producing concerns achieved considerable production records throughout the 1930s. (Table 6)
The Minute of Dissent in the Report of the I.C.C. (1928:161-175) predicted this turn of events as a consequence of the introduction of sound. In predicting that "at least 50 per cent of India's screen time will be occupied by Indian films" (1928:175) they come very close to the actual figure. Between 1931 and 1940 1,515 sound features were produced in thirteen Indian languages. In the period 1928-1940 3,889 talkies were imported into India. (Dharap, 1942:vii)

The accuracy of the British projection about the growth of the Indian film industry can be examined critically and in depth by reference to the operations of two Bombay film producing concerns of the 1920s and 1930s. The first, Ranjit Film Company, represents the upper reaches of the Bombay studio formation. The second, Young India Pictures, represents a marginal enterprise, its production practices shifting between the Cottage Industry phase and the Studio Era.

Chandulal J. Shah was a Jain. This religious group had become a major force in Bombay capitalism in the inter-war year period. (Gordon, 1978:50) Shah had all of the desired credentials for entry into the film industry including the right education, caste and class affiliations and political associations. Shah began at Laxmi Pictures in 1925, as a scenario writer,
moved on to a major studio Kohinoor Film Company in 1926, where he produced and directed a number of very successful films including *Telephone Girl* (1926). He then moved on to Jagdish Film Company in 1927, and finally established Ranjit in 1929. (Dharap, 1980:32) Clearly the organizational side of the industry was still volatile at this stage, and the much sought after stability not yet in place. However, once Shah had created Ranjit in conjunction with Miss Gohar, an established star of the era, he settled down to a remarkably productive career. He rose from a director in a minor production house, Laxmi Pictures, in 1925, to a position of dominance within the industry by the late 1930s via executive positions in the industrial associations, and an excellent production track record with Ranjit, making thirty-six silent films between 1929 and 1932 and fifty “talkies” between 1937 and 1954. (p.33) Shah exemplifies the change in the social formation of the film industry personnel of the period and it is his education and economic position that links him to Fazalbhoy and Sethna.

The Ranjit studio began with a loan of RS 50,000 from Master Vithaldas, (Karnad, 1980:76) another star of the period. The first two films produced and directed by Shah under his own banner, *Pate-Patni* (Husband - Wife) [1929] and *Bhikharan* (Beggar Girl) [1929], were both box-office and critical successes. The loan was repaid and the studio developed. *Pate-Patni* had been shot on location with only two days of studio shooting to save on costs. (p.76) As a result of its success sufficient money was available to build one stage at the Ranjit studio in 1927. The number increased to four stages for film making in 1931 by which time the studio was employing 600 people across the full range of occupations associated with integrated film production - on-camera personnel, technicians, management staff and laboratory technicians. (p.76) Films were budgetted
for between Rs 35,000 and Rs 60,00 (p.76) according to type and production values, which was considerably higher than in the Cottage Industry stage and for the smaller studios. The costs involved in Shah's productions demonstrate the ideology of production values adopted from Hollywood at work. Although the production costs were significantly lower in India than in any other major film producing country the efforts of Shah and his contemporaries had a profound effect on Indian film production. They showed that expenditure on film production basics improved the quality of the films which was reflected in an improvement in the box office returns. It was this simple formula that contributed to the dominance of the studios from the mid-1930s on.

Another reason for the Bombay industry developing as swiftly from the late 1920s was the extremely low cost of labour. An established star like Miss Gohar was contracted to the Kohinoor Film Company in the mid 1920s for Rs 300 per month. Lesser stars such as Jairag who made films for Young India Pictures received a salary of Rs 35 per month. Technicians in the major studios earnt approximately the same amount as Jairag per month. A super star like Soluchana (Ruby Meyers) moved from one major studio, Kohinoor, to another Imperial Film Company, for a salary of Rs 2,000 per month in 1926. (E.5, 1928:5) In the Indian context it was a very high salary, comparing more than favourably with the rates paid to Indians in the higher reaches of the Anglo-Indian administration, but by international standards it was very low. Moreover, at no other time in the Indian film industry were the salary differentials between the various divisions of labour in the industry as small. The move from the studio era to the commodification stage is marked by the massive disruption of this equilibrium. Freelancing meant that the stars could sell themselves on the open market to neophyte producers for extremely large sums.
Technicians could not, and the disparity between the various salary levels was at the heart of the labour unrest that plagued the industry from the 1930s on. This was addressed in the 1939 All-India Motion Picture Congress without success. (Proceedings, 1939:103-126) It was to contribute to the demise of Ranjit Film Company in 1954. (Karnad, 1980:78)

In its heyday Ranjit managed to have three of its four stages working at any one time. During the silent period it managed to produce between six and eight films per annum; in the sound era between four and six films per annum. (p.77) The other major Bombay studios Imperial, Kohinoor, Sagar, Bombay Talkies in Bombay had similar production profiles. (Dharap, 1942:4-5) In contrast the smaller studios, like Young India Pictures, while subscribing to the ideology of the larger studios insofar as they attempted full horizontal integration of production, worked according to much tighter schedules, and with far fewer technical and financial resources. Young India Pictures had a staff of thirty. (da Cunha, 1980:82) Its film budgets were between Rs 5,000 and Rs 7,000 per film. A film had to be produced on an eleven to twenty day schedule. (p.82) Personnel were paid at a much lower rate than at Ranjit. If Jairag, their leading male star was paid Rs 35 per month, we can infer that the technicians and other personnel were paid at proportionately lower scales. The film budgets cited above bear this out. The problem is whether the production values of Young India films were significantly less than Ranjit's. One suspects that this is the case - Fazalbhoy claims that most Bombay production houses continued to use one-camera set ups into the 1930s because of a lack of technical and financial resources. It was precisely this sort of enterprise that the professional associations wished to regulate against, claiming that their poor production values brought the industry into disrepute. The industry could only be viable if
a significant economy of scale could be achieved. The major studio was to be the principal mechanism for this economy. Ranjit exemplified the trend: Young India Pictures did not, although through its structuration it is apparent that it was categorically in tune with the desire to make Bombay a mirror of Hollywood: a major characteristic of the period.

One problem common to both studios was the relationship between the producers, distributors and the exhibitors at this time. Shah recognized the value of using the various professional and industrial associations to overcome problems confronting the industry to ensure its cultural acceptance and economic security. He used two tactics to organize the industry. Firstly there should be exhibitions of Indian films overseas, (adopting a European tactic for the enhancement of film) at Cannes and Venice film festivals. (Vasudev, 1978:61) The 1938 Indian Film Exhibition at Venice was the culmination of this trend. The second tactic was to organize a series of film congresses, in 1935, 1937 and 1939 on an all-India basis, whose organization and procedures affected the strategies and tactics of the Nationalists. In many respects this development represented a clear redirection for the film industry. The film Congresses were designed to sort out the problems seen to exist between the various sectors of the film industry. The 1939 Congress, the major one, was opened by S Satyamurthy, a leading South Indian Congress Politician.

The studio period marks the ascendancy of the producers in the film industry. The Ranjit Film Company could exert considerable pressure on a distributor in respect to their products. In contrast Young India could not. This was another reason why the dominant group of producers wished to self-regulate the small concerns out of business. They saw that the
small production houses provided the point whereby control of the industry could shift from the producers to the distributors. This was another problem which was canvassed unsatisfactorily at the 1939 All India Motion Picture Congress. (Proceedings, 1939:79-99)

In some respects the 1930s is the period when the film distributors began to assert a hold on the film industry. The film producers, in reality the major studio bosses, made all of the running in the 1930s through their films and the domination of the industry associations. However, increasingly the money for film production came from the distributors who sought to secure the products necessary to maintain their distribution networks and exhibition chains. As the Cinematographic Year Book (1938) shows, by that year a comprehensive all-India system of film distribution was in place and all major urban centres possessed at least one cinema (Barucha, 1938:325-384).

The increasing strength of the distributors is marked by the number of film distribution companies throughout India. For example, Karachi which had no film production base had twenty-two film distributors in 1940 (Film Show Annual, 1941:132). The scale of expansion for Karachi is matched by other regional centres. (See Table 7). In all there were 290 film distributors in India broken down in six circuits, plus Burma.

**TABLE 6**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Circuit</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangalore</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calcutta</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karachi</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lahore</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rangoon</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 290

*Source: Dharap, 1942:103*
The majority of these distributors dealt exclusively in Indian produced films. By 1940 the number of distributors specializing in imported films had reduced to nine, of whom only one was Indian, the other eight being regional branches of the major Hollywood producers. (Dharap, 1942:209-210). In other words the film industry was thoroughly Indianized by 1940. Finally, between 1938 and 1948 there was a 400% increase in distribution businesses in India. (Patil, 1951:115) The figures underscore the transition of power from the production side to the distribution side in the latter part of the period under review and indicates the instability inherent in the industry. Further, the conditions for the shift from a studio-based industry to a service based industry which took film as a commodity are located in this period.

The distribution and exhibition of films did not involve the same risks as production, and profits were relatively secure because either Indian or American films could be screened depending upon availability. Distributors used the profits to gain control of the industry. In the first place they lent money to established producers and secondly they advanced money to the free lancers. It was in the distributor's interests to destabilize the studio producers' control of the industry.

The data collected by the I.C.C. indicates a steady expansion in the exhibition side of the film industry. This trend continued throughout the 1930s and 1940s. (Dharap, 1942:215) To meet the needs of the exhibitor, distribution networks were also established. The relationship between distributor and exhibitor was much closer than the relationship between producer and distributor, while the relationship between the producer and exhibitor had become tenuous by the 1930s. (Fazalbhoy, 1938:62-70)
distributor became the pivotal figure in the organization and operation of the cinema complex in India. Unlike America the Bombay producers were unable to achieve the vertical integration of the industry, that is the integrated production, distribution and exhibition of films. The Bombay producers certainly desired this, but they did not have sufficient resources, nor did the commercial formation of India with its segmentation and structuration of commerce along caste and class lines permit such a development. Consequently there was an uneasy relationship between producers and distributors in the studio era.

At the heart of the unease was a fundamental problem of the basis of the economic relationship between the two sectors: how were the profits from film making to be apportioned? Fazalbhoy is instructive on this matter. (1939:34-41) Although he articulates the producer's point-of-view he provides crucial information. He argues that because of the nature of the Indian film industry and its residual Cottage Industry ideology producers were always short of money. There were two options through which they could resolve the problem: they could sell a film outright to a distributor, thereby foregoing any real profits, or they could enter into a negotiated agreement with a distributor based on a system of royalties and minimum guarantees. However, if a studio could not guarantee its production the distributor had to protect its interests by insisting on what amounted to coercive tactics. The distributor would take 50% of any sum over and above the minimum guaranteed return. That is, if a distributor agreed to return the producer Rs 100,000 from the distribution of his film but the film was a great success and returned Rs 1,000,000, the distributor would retain Rs 450,000 plus expenses. The economic insecurity of a large number of producers and the prevailing financial system made the distributors powerful figures. The outcome was
that distributors established the situation whereby they began to finance producers directly and thus became major determiners of the shape of the Indian film industry and the major rivals of the established producers in the 1930s. (Jain, 1960: 94-95) The tensions arose from the changing relationship between the producer and the distributor. These tensions generated the changes in the organization of production from the studio era to the period of commodification.

Another commercial group, with links to the distributors, were the importers of film technology. As the industry expanded the importation of up-to-date technology also became profitable. In 1938 Ranjit had two Vinten, one Debrée, one Eyemo and two Bell and Howell cameras, and a Film Recorder's Sound System. (Barucha, 1938:272). Bombay Talkies, another major commercial estudio in Bombay, had a Debrée Super Parvo and Camerachair cameras and a Visatone sound system plus an automatic film developing plant. (p.271) The more sophisticated equipment demanded better trained technicians and better designed and operating studios. It also had a significant impact on the content of the films produced, particularly in the field of technique, or process of signification. Indian directors became proficient in the manipulation of light and shadow, and brilliant at editing, especially the song and dance sequences which became central formal characteristics of the commercial Hindi film after the introduction of sound. These ideas will be explored more fully in Chapter Six. The point here is, the major studios like Ranjit, Bombay Talkies, Sagar and Imperial could afford the equipment. In contrast the smaller studios could not: even in the 1930s young film makers were using Pathe cameras from the silent era that had been abandoned by the major studios. (da Cunha, 1980:83) The lack of sophisticated equipment was reflected in their films.
The studios mentioned above were an elite group. In 1938 there were seventeen studios in Bombay servicing thirty-four production units. (Barucha, 1938:271-274) In Calcutta there were eight studios servicing eighteen production units. (pp.274-275) The discrepancy between the number of studios and the number of production units in both cities indicates that the conditions for a destabilized industry were always there. Film remained a remarkably attractive way to make quick and substantial profits, a condition that ensured intense competition for limited resources. Thus the position of the distributors became crucial. They could maximize profits without any real capital investment. By the mid-1930s the Marwaris, a major commercial competitor of the Gujeratis from Rajputana, had gained control of film financing and distribution in Bombay (Jain, 1960:94) the conditions were set for a significant change in the economic relations of production within the Indian film industry.

An additional source of income for the Indian film industry was the growth of the export market to cater for expatriate Indians, mainly in the British Empire. By 1941 Indian films were exported to twenty-four countries grouped together in three main distribution circuits: the Middle East, South East Asia, Fiji and the British West Indies, and South and East Africa which included Mauritius and Ceylon. (Dharap, 1942:116). Again this market was dominated by the major distributors rather than the producers. The additional income from this source strengthened the position of the distributors throughout the 1930s and 1940s. (Dharap, 1942:116-117).

The studios, however, remained in a position of some strength, having acquired sufficient capital not to capitulate immediately to the changing
conditions. The studio system and the next stage of production and economic organization of the industry co-existed at least until the mid-1950s. Furthermore the position of the studio producers like Shah and the Wadia Brothers of Wadia Movietone was bolstered by the economic conditions of the Second World War. In short the World War II created considerable affluence in the urban centres thus generating an even larger audience for films. Moreover, the British, under war time regulations, intervened directly in the Indian film industry for the first time. The position of the studios ensured that they were represented on the Film Advisory Committee established to oversee the industry in 1941 (see Chapter Seven) although membership on the Committee presented members of the film community with a moral dilemma. The industry had clearly hitched its banner to the Nationalist cause in the late 1930s and by 1942 the Quit India Movement was being cruelly repressed by the British. (Brecher, 1961:110-114) The dilemma revolved around whether to condemn the British or acquiesce to their demands so that celluloid remained available to the industry. It is clear that if the established industry chose to adhere to the nationalist cause the independents would have accepted the British conditions to gain access to the limited stocks of celluloid. Consequently the major studios produced films which supported the war effort in return for access to the controlled distribution of celluloid. Bombay Talkies produced eleven such films by 1940, and Wadia Movietone thirteen. (Dharap, 1942: 126-29). Further J.B.H. Wadia, a Parsis and Anglophile producer became the studio's representative on the Film Advisory Committee. Evidence suggests that the studios were well served by this arrangement. The number of films produced increased, as did audiences and profits despite wartime restrictions. (I.M.P.P.A. Silver Jubilee, 1962:57) However, in 1944 the British succumbed to pressure from
the freelance producers and insisted that they also be allocated film stock for the purposes of film production.

The British clearly recognized an opportunity for playing one group off against another and could justify their decision to open up the distribution of celluloid to freelancers as well as the studios on financial and political grounds. The decision would encourage competition and at the same time remove the suspicion that they favoured one group over another. The era of attempting to organize the studios along the American model had effectively come to an end as a result of the war period, although they continued to function in a diminished form for another decade. However, as the Patel Commission (1951) reported the industry was

[1]ll equipped and unprepared for a change of its fortunes, torn by jealousies and discussions, converted from a business enterprise to a sort of gamble, it grievously suffered from organizational maladjustment. Within three years of the end of the war, the leadership of the industry had changed hands from established producers to a variety of successors. Leading 'stars', exacting financiers and calculating distributors and exhibitors forged ahead. Freelancing became the rule among the artistes ...

(pp.13-14)

The Commodity Fetish Stage, 1948 - to the present

The Commodity Fetish Stage is a development that falls outside the strict time-frame of my thesis. However, it is necessary to make sense of the developments that emerged in the late 1930s. These developments revolve around the conflicts between the studio based producers and the freelancers over who should dominate the commercial film industry. The studios fought a strong rear guard action throughout the 1930s and 1940s through their control of the industry based organisation such as the M.P.S.I. and the I.M.P.P.A., the All India film congresses which they organized and their input into the Film Advisory Committee during World
War II. The move to the commodity phase in the 1950s represents the triumph of the freelancers. The change in the method and organisation of the production of film also represents a major change in the method and organization of financing films. From the late 1930s on distributors played an increasingly important role in film financing. The dominance of the freelancers meant that the distributors had effectively captured control of the commercial cinema. Their tendency was to treat it like any other commodity. However, their means of production was determined by the presence and availability of stars, the fetishized component of the system. The finance for this stage came initially from the black market sector of the economy, the product of the changing wartime economic conditions. (Gaur, 1973:123) Film became a conduit whereby excessive and unaccounted for profits could be laundered. The studio heads resisted the development and fought a stiff rear-guard action but they were swamped by the influx of funds. Film production in India was thus radically re-shaped after World War Two. The means and relations of production became what they are today - the studios lost their pre-eminence, becoming little more than service centres, the professional and craft associations lost their ability to self-regulate the industry, publicity and distribution became the dominant elements of Indian film discourse, and the star became the single most important determining factor of production. The evolution of this model will be traced below.

The process of commodification is based around economic relations clearly based on the market value of film stars. The films are vehicles for the stars. This change had a profound impact on the content of the films. The shift from studio domination to star domination of the industry is marked by a change of content in films. In the studio era there were cycles or genres of films such as mythologicals, historicals,
adventure/stunt films, "fantasticals", and social dramas. In the star era there has been a move towards what can only be described in theoretical terms, as a film system characterized by an excess; where a formula of adventure-song-dance-romance is held together by the star presence. Such films have been labelled as masala, or "spicy", films. Irrespective of the theme the elements remain constant. These ideas will be explored more fully in Chapter Six. The point is, that this development, like so many other developments in the film industry had its origins in the early British period of the Indian cinema complex, and it has clear associations with economic sphere of film production.

Stars had existed in the industry from the early 1920s but they had always been contracted to the studio on a fixed salary. (See above) In the late 1930s, but especially after World War II the independent producers, or non-studio based freelancers adopted the specific strategy of encouraging the already established stars to break their contractual links with the studios by offering them enormous sums of money. (Desai, 1962:30) The economic consequences of this were momentous. The dominance of the studios was again successfully challenged. The major consequence of the challenge was that the studios ultimately ceased to be producing units in their own right and became the servicing units of the independents. Stars demanded and received large sums of money leading to a situation whereby the film industry has been characterized as a major conduit for the laundering of "black" money. A consequence of this was that the financial organization of the industry became highly suspect with claims of financial malpractice, becoming a standard feature of much criticism of the Indian film industry. The practice of making under the counter payments to stars established a scenario for corruption and discontent. The disparity between the payments of the stars and the other personnel in
the industry became enormous. (Jain, 1960:127) Many of these are later developments and characterize the Bombay film industry of the 1960s and 1970s but their genesis is in the period immediately prior to and immediately after World War II and arise out of the tensions between the established producers and the distributors. Moreover, they also arise out of the changing composition of the film community. The established producers were largely Gujeratis from specific commercial classes or Parsis, the independent producers in the post war era were largely Panjabis.

In exploring the relations and conditions of the economic bases of film production in India between 1913 and 1947 I have tried to show that there is a progression towards ever more complex conditions. Moreover, these conditions occur in the context of overall Indian economic relations. On close analysis the British presence proved ineffectual in controlling the economic aspects of the Indian film industry. Their decisions and policies were always contradictory insofar as they were geared to balancing external, imperial demands against internal Indian demands. Nevertheless, the British were sympathetic to the establishment of an Indian film industry, but for their own ends: it would cushion the Indian masses from the perceived excesses of the American film complex. However, they were not prepared ideologically to enter into any form of direct support of the industry. For the British, film belonged in the market place. Moreover, they perceived, correctly I think, that Indian film really did not require the sort of support the Indian film establishment wanted. The British saw that the introduction of sound technology ensured the viability of the Indian film industry. Hollywood was not in a position to compete with Bombay or Calcutta given the linguistic and cultural specificity of the regions manifested in sound films. In short,
the Indian film industry, given the scope and volume of its audience, was always in the position of potential economic strength. In the period 1913-1947 the Indian film industry oscillated between an essentially indigenous economic model and a modernized Western one. The proponents of the Western world operated in a climate finely attuned to developments in Hollywood and elsewhere, and yet despite their best efforts this model did not prevail. Rather, in the last developmental stage of the industry where the star is virtually the final arbitor of production we find that the indigenous economic model is dominant. In the star system we have a remarkable convergence of the indigenous where the text and the mode of production both reside firmly in the Indian rather than other cultural systems.
Satyajit Ray, India's best known film director in the West, has characterized the popular Indian film as formulaic where a film maker has three familiar and well trodden paths open to him. He can make mythological films, or he can make 'devotional' ones, or he can make 'socials' - preferably melodramas - which must have the adornment of the latest star team. All three must have the usual concomitant of songs and dances and must not be below two and a half hours in length. The last proviso is so rigid, and so firm in the Exhibitor's faith in it that a film which dares to disregard it may never see the light of day.

(Ray, 1976:40)

Ray later attributes this situation to "the vast conglomerate mass that makes up the Indian public" (p.72) who constitute the basis for formula in terms of tired untutored minds with undeveloped tastes needing an occasional escape through relaxation ... the best prescription [for] a well-mixed pot-pourri of popular entertainment. (p.73)

To give Ray his due he does perceive that through the application of the formula Indian film makers working in the popular mode have developed something unique but in the final analysis immutable. (p.73)

Ray's views are a variation of Rajadhayaksha's category of "scornful amusement" (see p.2) the position which sees the Indian popular film as eccentric, naive and intellectually undeveloped, reflecting a view of India determined by a Eurocentric education. Other critics such as Vasudev (1977) Barnouw and Krishnaswamy (Rev'd 2nd Ed. 1980) and Abbas (1977:469) have articulated similar views. As a group they wish to privilege the alternative film structures based on European models of film making epitomized by Satyajit Ray who in his own account has been influenced by Renoir, Vittoria de Sica and Dovzhenko (1979).
To understand the vitality and power of the indigenous film it is necessary to go beyond formula as an analytical category and see the popular films as comprising both a continuity of indigenous cultural forms and as transformations of those forms. As Lothar Lutze suggests:

The coming of film was not a process of destruction of indigenous culture by something alien, as some critics would have it: on the contrary, the transition from the Parsi-financed theatre to the Bombay film in the 1930s was a change in continuity ... the Hindi film may well appear like a tree rooted deeply in Indian tradition and reaching out, fumbling perhaps, into the space age. (1985:7)

Films as cultural products determined by an expensive technology in a rich and powerful traditional culture required a form that permitted both the continuity and transformation. Indian film makers quickly appropriated the Hollywood genre as the principal film form. At the same time it is important to remember that Hollywood did not invent the genre principle. The appropriation of film genres, and their marriage to indigenous forms, afforded film makers with a powerful mode of discursive control. In the Indian context this control manifested itself in a product that acquired early recognizable characteristics, especially after the introduction of sound, that marked the popular Indian film off from other national film products. Song, dance, gesture, situation and relationships in Indian popular films are applied to genre and formula in ways that draw heavily on atisayokti (exaggeration) a 'central figure of speech in traditional Indian poetics'. (Lutze, 1985:7). In turn this has led to an over distinctiveness pervading the different sign systems of the Hindi film ... a binary black-and-white dramaturgy ... with sharp contrasts and few attempts to create shades in between.

(Lutze, 1985:7)

It is these characteristics, rather than the Western notions of genre and formula, that determine the form of Indian popular film. Indian film makers explored them from the outset. Their inventions, appropriations
and transformations of existing forms gave shape to the trajectory of the Indian film industry. In this chapter I will explore this trajectory in three parts: the pre-history of the cinema; the onset of genres and the formation of the masala film.

The argument that the commercial Indian cinema is an indigenous cultural form was recognized by Indian filmmakers from the beginning. However, as a critical concept it has a recent history. Lutze (1985), Rajadyaksha (1986) and Mishra (1985) have all provided compelling arguments that require us to look at the commercial Indian cinema from the perspectives of cultural continuity. Contemporary films such as Zanjeer have their roots in classic Indian cultural formations. (Mishra, 1985:142-145) The problem with this argument is that it can present an extremely conservative view of Indian culture, providing no mechanism whereby the changes in India society can be taken into account. Rather than see the Indian film as a continuation of a complex, heterogenous culture I will argue that they are transformations of that culture. Theories of continuity cannot adequately account for the dynamics of cultural change. A theory of transformation does.

To chart the path of transformations it is necessary to have three ingredients: a pre-text, a text and a post-text. (Hodge, 1980:72). Adopting this model allows us to see the formula film as a contemporary metagenre that represents a transformation of traditional cultural materials and an incorporation of new cultural aspects. Further, the otherwise confusing pattern of generic progression that emerged in the late 1920s and continued into the 1930s and beyond can be seen as a series of transformations: of traditional forms and conventions and of introduced forms and conventions. In addition these formal conventions, including
those that have hitherto been regarded as defects can be explained as a sequence of transformations. Finally, in the British period certain aspects of Indian cultural remained invisible to the British. The political dimensions of mythological stories had to be explained to them. A similar thing occurred with the social genre, where Indian film makers invoked Indian symbols of resistance in their films. I would argue that a similar claim can be made for the costume drama film which emerged in the late 1920s and must be regarded as the forerunner of the masala film. Certain stars of the 1920s and 1930s such as Master Vithal, Raja Sandow and Sohrib Mody became associated with costume dramas. Their representation of active masculinity in a colonised society had political connotations that were easily available to the indigenous audience. Each of the genres mentioned has a different set of indigenous pre-texts that are combined with different non-indigenous pre-texts each of which has a different set of implications. In this chapter the relationship and conditions existing between the various parts of the transformational process will be examined in detail.

The Pre History of Indian Cinema

If we apply the transformational model to the content of the Indian film text and keep in mind the processes involved in the transformational stages we can gain some insight into the reasons for the popularity of the texts. The model can provide insight into the cultural specificity involved in the textual production of Indian films. What follows is neither exhaustive nor complete but is contextualized within a specific cultural and aesthetic system that is made explicit by the model.

I will focus on the theatre as an immediate precursor of film, because theatre, like film discourse, is a product of synthesis. Further, it
raises very specific problems of textual production in India because it
has great similarities to film in the way in which it dealt with the
problems of Indian history and culture.

In the 1870s and 1880s the theatre in India developed a social role not
dissimilar to that of film in the 1920s and 1930s. In Bengal and Bombay
nationalist groups in India had taken theatre as a means of critiquing
British rule on a broad front. In Bengal the Jatras, (a form of religious
drama) had been used to spread anti-British messages among the Bengali
masses. (Gargi, 1962:109-110) The British response was to implement the
Dramatic Performances Act of 1876 which was designed specifically to ban
anti-British dramatic performances. Consequently, I will argue that
Indian dramatic texts and their relations to society generally and film
texts specifically can be viewed as constituting a transformational system
which can be expressed as:

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-text</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Post-text</th>
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<tr>
<td>Classic theatre</td>
<td>Popular Theatre</td>
<td>Film</td>
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The relationship between film and theatre was recognized in the 1930s when
adaptation from the regional stage was seen as one of the principal
sources of film texts, especially in Maharashtra and Bengal. It is
significant that the regional stage is specified because classical
Sanskrit drama had ceased to have much purchase on the Indian imagination
except in an academic sense, whereas a strong regional theatre had emerged
in the second half of the nineteenth century and flourished until at least
the advent of sound in the cinema. However despite their regional
characteristics these theatres drew heavily upon Sanskrit drama, which can
be taken as the pre-text.
The conventions of Sanskrit drama were set out in the Natyasastra which codified dramatic traditions as a semiotic system and determined not only the categories of drama, (Gargi, 1962:5) but also their emotional tone, (p.12) the time of performance, (p.13) synthesis of music and drama, (p.10) theatre design (pp.15-16) and location, (pp.98-100) and the body as a signifier. (p.9) The spatio-temporal conventions of Sanskrit drama were predicated upon an ideology that foregrounded a concept of pervasive harmony that was perceived to exist existed beneath contradictions. This harmony was disguised or contained in myth and ritual. As O'Flaherty says:

The Hindu acceptance of contradiction may be facilitated by the fact that Hinduism is orthoprax rather than orthodox; if one believes correctly it does not matter what one believes. (O'Flaherty,1980: 7)

In other words, within Hindu culture transformations of content as against practice may be effected more swiftly than in other cultures, although they are always overdetermined and their accessibility clouded. Consequently, the actual conditions of the transformation from classical drama to popular drama remain problematic. However, the surface features of the regional popular theatre can be described with some certainty and linked to the deeper structures inerentially.

The regions of India are defined by geographic and linguistic characteristics, with a fundamental division between the Aryan North and the Dravidian South. Regional differences have been exploited for a range of political and religious reasons and while each region has a different language and concomitant cultural differences including music, dance forms, songs, dress and food, culturally they remained linked by the "seminal influence" of the Ramayana, Mahabharata and the puranas. (Gargi:21-22) Each region had its specific regional folk or popular theatrical forms that drew heavily on the dominant myths and regionally
determined transformations of classical drama: for example, the jatra of West Bengal, (Gargi: 86) the tamasha of Maharashtra (Ranganath, 1981:85), the Bhavai of Gujerat (Rhagavan, 1981: 11-20), and the nantanki of Uttar Pradesh. What distinguishes them from classical drama is their emphasis on the prakarana, the common, with a play on earthiness and the here-and-now, with the Gods and humans mixing freely. Popular theatre was fixed clearly by its opposition to the dominant aesthetic of classical theatre. It foregrounded the orgiastic in contrast to asceticism, Kali the witchwife in contrast to Sita, the selfless wife, heating foods as opposed to cooling foods. (Lannoy, 1971:113-115) Popular theatre deliberately mixed its formal elements to cater for a specific audience formation - the rural peasantry whose knowledge of the classical basis of Indian culture was heavily transformed by isolation and restrictions determined by the Hindu caste system. Popular and folk forms of theatre reiterated and reaffirmed the cultural synthesis of Hinduism in known paradigms. Music was employed along with dance, dramatic incident, satire, humour, juggling and narration to amuse and instruct. The precedent for the emergence of a particular Indian film discourse directed at a particular audience formation was well entrenched by the time film became an important mass medium in India.

Three specific regional popular theatrical forms were important influences on film discourse: the jatra of Bengal, the bhavai of Gujerat and the tamasha of Maharashtra. Each was to play a significant role in the formation of the regional theatres in Bombay and Calcutta, the principal film production centres. Applying the transformational model outlined above we can construct an explanatory schema which indicates the relationship thus:

Popular forms \(\rightarrow\) Regional Theatre \(\rightarrow\) Film Text
Jatras began in Bengal as a devotional form that portrayed the incidents in the life of Krishna (Mitra, 1981: 92) but over time secular concerns began to dominate. By the 1890s the English considered employing the Dramatic Performances Act of 1876 against them despite their religious base and the fact that they were played in private houses because they were perceived as ideological agents of nationalism. (Gargi:110) Formally the jatra was organized operatically, with song interspersed with recitatives and improvisations. The devotional nature of the jatra, its emphasis on Krishna, and its later move from the home to the proscenium stage had a pronounced Indian influence on acting styles (Mitra, 1981:118) which in turn influenced Bengali film discourse from the earliest period. The Bengali cinema had always distinguished itself from the Bombay industry by its introspective, emotionally complex thematic treatments exemplified in the films of Prince Barua in the 1930s and by one particular film, Nitin Bose's Devadas (1935). The discursive features of the Bengali cinema can be attributed to the influence of the jatras, which provided most of the actors in Bengali films with their earliest acting experience (Mitra:118-119) Furthermore jatras and films were shown in conjunction with one another at an early stage in Bengali film history, and jatras constituted the subject of some of the earliest Bengali films. (Mitra:118) The relationship between the jatra and Bengali films and popular theatre had become an entirely symbiotic one by the 1920s with the jatras later adopting the representational styles of film to maintain their popularity. (ibid.)

The tamasha influenced the Marathi films more than the Bombay film industry in the first instance. A form of folk theatre, it was noted for its blend of dance and music, robust language, and humour. (Raganath,
A tamasha has three distinct movements: the Gana, the invocation of Ganesha the Hindu God of plenitude venerated in Maharashtra and a powerful ideological agent in Tilak's form of Hindu nationalism; the Krishna and gopalis (milkmaid) episode from the Ramayana characterized by rich music, colourful dancing and witty dialogue that permitted the inclusion of contemporary references; and sequences derived from the traditional stories of kings and queens invariably made unique and contemporaneous through dialogue which exploited shared, local knowledge. (Raganath, 1981:128)

The bhavai of Gujerat was another heterogenous theatrical form employing dialogue, music, dance, song, mime, acrobatics, magic and improvisations. Its content was socially orientated, exploring historical and contemporary themes through satire and protest. (Shroff, 1981:111-112) Traditionally rural, the bhavai used no stage or properties and relied entirely upon the actor to enact transformations from character to character, gender to gender through voice and costume. The form was also characterized by the length of its performances. (Rthagavan, 1981: 11-20)

The troupes responsible for the presentation of the folk theatres had clear caste affiliations, and their functions and roles were hereditary, (Gargi:174) so that their social role was determined by social custom and tradition located in the rural culture. The creation of major urban centres in British India produced a class of urban citizens not entirely divorced from this rural culture but certainly standing in a different relationship to it. Beginning in the 1860s entertainment for this class was provided by entrepreneurs who adapted British theatrical traditions to Indian conditions, building theatres in the major centres and sending travelling groups to the lesser urban centres. The first professional
theatre company using Hindustani as its language was established by Parsis
in 1870. (Gargi:155) Parsis played a significant role in the
establishment of the film industry in both Bombay and Calcutta. The links
between Parsi theatre and film discourse have been alluded to but never
fully explored in most accounts of the Indian film industry.

The cultural status of the Parsis in India was always ambiguous. They
lived in India but their desire to remain an autonomous social and
religious group with its own customs and rituals meant they could not be
viewed as belonging. Indeed their status by virtue of their ambiguous
social position became that of mediator, as standing between the West and
India. It is said that Bombay as an urban phenomenon is the creation of
the Parsis. (Tindall, 1982:93-104) Its local government became their
preserve and they were a dominant group in the Westernized economic
structure of the city which was predicated upon manufacturing, banking and
insurance (Kulke, 1978:120-132) which gave the city its economic
significance. Moreover, they dominated its urban culture with
philanthropists such as Sir Jeejeebhoy Jamsetji providing an intellectual
and social infrastructure of hospitals, libraries, schools and galleries
which contributed to making Bombay one of the great Victorian metropolitan
centres of the British Empire. (Tindall, 1982)

According to Gargi the Parsi theatre joined European theatre techniques to
indigenous types of theatre. Its sets were late nineteenth century
Western versions of oriental exotica. Its major characteristics were a
lavish use of painted backdrops combined with magical occurrences in which
mythical kings clashed, devils soared through the air and daggers were
thrown: (Gargi:156) in short, spectacle was its major characteristic. The
similarity of major characteristics between Indian film discourse and
Parsi theatre becomes even more evident when subjected to close analysis. Each Parsi theatre company had its own playwright but his position was not the dominant one of the English actor/manager/dramatist. Rather the plays produced were co-operative texts, the product of the work of the dramatist, producer, director, and possibly, actor. (pp.160-161) Like cinema, the Parsi theatre was a collaborative venture. The author was not privileged but an integral component of textual production. Indian film discourse has largely been characterized by its emphasis on the producer and the star and not the director as the principle determiner of the text, a tradition which emanated from the Parsi theatre.

The Gujarati theatre which drew upon the bhavai for many of its formal elements was also dominated by Parsi businessmen. (p.130) Like the Parsi theatre it was formulaic, combining Western theatrical themes and traditions, in particular Shakespeare, with indigenous forms and content. (p.131) The plot structure of the Gujarati play bears a striking resemblance to the plot structure of Bombay film: its major elements comprised of the main plot, a comedic sub-plot, together with spectacle, song, dance and tableaux. (p.132) Moreover, at the turn of the century Gujarati theatre companies changed from using Gujarati as their language of performance to Hindi, thus taking theatre to the "remotest towns of North India", (p.130) establishing a tradition that films produced in Bombay followed after the introduction of sound in 1931.

I established in Chapter Five that the Bombay film industry was dominated from the 1920s to the 1950s by men from the major Gujarati trading castes. They belonged to complex economic and cultural networks that had political and religious affiliations. Consequently it is not difficult to infer connections between the theatre and cinema either through caste relations,
or economic relations or even filial relations. Certainly K M Munshi, the Congress politician, novelist, and literary historian, linked together Bombay film and Gujarati literature through his activities in both areas and Mohanlal Dave, a well-known Gujarati playwright, also wrote for the Bombay stage as well as the cinema. In Calcutta the links are similar, inferential rather than documentary. However, in Pune, the Maratha intellectual heartland, the link between theatre and film is more specific.

The foundation of the Marathi theatre is attributed to Vishundas Bhave (Gargi:125) who consciously located the Marathi theatre in Indian mythic discourse. His first play was Raj Harishchandra, precisely the same title and theme as Phalke's first film. Tilak perceived the political potential of an indigenous theatre discourse and his associates became prominent in the establishment of a Marathi theatre. Its politicization gave it immense cultural prestige: over 150 plays were banned by the British. (p.126)

Another feature of the regional theatres was its professionalization. The Parsi theatre led the way and by the 1930s even the remotest regions had professional theatre companies. (p.145) The move to professionalization reinforced the tendency in Indian culture to theatre people as being 'apart from the normal society, not constrained by rigid caste lines' (p.13-14). Both tendencies flowed on to cinema. Indeed as Gargi points out in the 1920s there was little to separate the professional regional theatres and cinema in terms of content, form, genres and audience responses. (pp.3-4) In the 1930s the introduction of the sound film 'devastated the regional professional theatre companies'. The cinema took over the actors and plays almost intact. The acting styles, types of
music, the frequent song and dance sequences were adopted into film discourse and developed extensively. (p.219). These elements have become the major distinguishing features of contemporary Indian commercial cinema.

**Genre Transformations**

Indians have discussed their films in a number of categories from an early stage of its development. For example, Phalke was talking about his films being mythologicals from at least 1913. As other types of film were developed labels were applied to them, especially in the film journals. Films based on modern social issues became "socials" and so on. In the period 1920-1947 we can detect the emergence of a number of types or genres. These were the socials, historicals, adventures/stunt films, Arabian Night fantasies and "fantasticals", while the mythologicals remained an important genre. Each of these genres had specific features that separates it from the other types of film. For example, socials dealt with tensions within Indian society arising out of the problems associated with the impact of Western technological society on traditional mores. They were also associated with specific studios in Bombay and Calcutta such as the Ranjit Film Company (Chandulal J Shah) in Bombay and New Theatres Ltd (B.N. Sircar) in Calcutta who both specialized in socials. The films were also directed at a very specific audience; the educated, urbanized, Westernized, commercial and professional Indian classes. Contemporary genre theory provides a basis for the systematic study of the Indian popular film. Genres are determined by the relationship between the text, the producer (including institutions and individuals) and the audience (Cook, 1985:58-64). This view avoids the tendency to undervalue two crucial dimensions of textual production, namely the historical conditions prevalent at a specific juncture, and the
underlying cultural codes that permeate the texts. Therefore it becomes necessary to analyse the texts as both manifestations of sets of relations and as transformations of those relations, and in a specific cultural context, as transformations of a set of pre-existing texts.

It is here that the concept of genre transformation must be elucidated. Classic semiotics had a crucial gap in its explanatory system insofar as it could not provide an adequate account of transformations even at the most fundamental level of explaining the relationship between the signifier and signified, denotation and connotation. (Hodge, 1980:72) The relationship was implicit and assumed. The problems of this gap had been recognized but not resolved. In an important paper Hodge confronted the issue directly by constructing a theory of the transformation in visual semiotics. Briefly, Hodge constructed a model thus:

\[
\text{pre-text} \rightarrow \text{text} \rightarrow \text{post-text}
\]

in which each element stands in transformational relationship to the other. In this model it is work that brings about the transformation from one element to the other. For example, in film the script (the pre-text) is transformed into a film (the text) by a specific set of practices required by the industry to achieve that development. The practices involve determinant labour and skills such as cinematography and editing. What is produced is the text, the film. The post-text can consist of my analysis of the text, or any other reading for that matter. Another significant feature of the model is its flexibility. There can be a constant play between the elements, so the example provided above can be transformed by making the film the pre-text, my analysis of the film the text, and a critique of that reading the post-text. On the other hand we can slide back the other way and make an already existing text the pre-text, the script the text, and the film the post-text.
From this model we can posit that any popular Indian film text is a transformation of some of the elements specified, and in some instances all. A further aspect of the model is that the transformations do not occur in an historical void. On the contrary, the transformations occur at specific conjunctures where economic, cultural, technological and cultural factors intersect.

Unlike Hollywood genres, Indian film genres have always been spoken of in the most unproblematic way. According to Shah (1950) the major categories applied to Indian films had been adopted from the work of the American sociologist Edgar Dale, *The Contents of Motion Picture and Attendance at Motion Pictures* (1935). Dale's method of content analysis led him to classify films according to their dominant themes. Shah adopted this approach but transformed it to construct the following classifications which are thematically determined:

1. Love Stories — including filial devotion;
2. Social — films that tackled "some Indian social problem such as untouchability, dowry system, other marriage problems of child widows, polygamy, divorce". The term is used to "describe all types of films which are in modern dress and setting distinct from mythological and historical";
3. Mythological and Folklore — stories and legends from Hindu mythology;
4. Devotional and Religious — films based on historical figures but transformed by emphasis on metaphysics and faith;
5. Historical and Biographical — including historical romances and historical figures;
6. Stunt and Adventure — action dramas, thrillers, jungle thrillers and fantasies;
7. Crime — blackmailing, bribery, etc.;
8. Melodrama - "romantic and sensational dramas with more or less equal proportions of love, crime, murder, revenge, or other sensational elements";

9. Comedy - including satires and farces; musical comedies;

10. War - spies, saboteurs, enemy agents, scenes of warfare;

11. Mystery and Horror - eerie atmosphere - "in which the weird and mysterious element predominates";

12. Children - "pictures in which juvenile and child stars play the leading role". (1950:116-120)

In his attempts to quantify the number of films produced in India since 1913 Dharap has reduced the number of genres to eight. (see Table 1) I have further collapsed this number to seven on the basis that all biographic films in the period nominated deal with saintly figures, the subject of the devotionals. The figures in Table 1 show that three genres dominated film production in the 1920s. These are the mythological, the socials and the costume drama.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mythological</th>
<th>Costume Drama</th>
<th>Folk Devotional</th>
<th>Social Historical</th>
<th>Historical</th>
<th>Fantasy</th>
<th>Uncategorised</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>25</td>
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<td>247</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>12</td>
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</table>


There are economic and cultural reasons for these genres achieving pre-eminence. In economic terms when a film proves to be enormously popular at the box office and thus profitable, it will spawn a series of imitations or related types of films. The creation of a core of works encourages the establishment of a set of codes and conventions specific to the cycle of films, which are in most respects the defining characteristics of the genre. This model provides a useful starting point to examine the surface features of Indian textual production, looking at the evolution of the formula film from a set of ill-defined and shifting types of texts into something that resembles a textual system. In cultural terms each genre represents a transformation of different sets of pre-texts that will be explored below. (p.194)

The genre shifts did not just involve improvement in the technical and formal dimensions of film discourse but also in the themes and topics portrayed in the films. The dominance of mythologicals of film genres until at least 1923 proved profitable for the film makers but by the early 1920s the market appeared to be saturated. Hence the shift to socials in the mid-1920s. Indeed, for some commentators the dominance of genre production by the socials represents a golden age of Indian cinema, and a large number of socials continued to be made in the 1930s and the 1940s when other producers had shifted their production schedules towards the
costume dramas. (See Table 1) Chief among the studios that concentrated on the social genre were Bombay Talkies, Ranjit Film Company and to a lesser extent Wadia Movietone in Bombay; Prabhat Studios in Pune; United Pictures Corporation in Kirkee (a suburb in Pune); and New Theatres in Calcutta. In the pantheon of inter-war studios constructed by Indian cultural and film critics these studios are always ranked highest. (Lent, 1983:467) The topics explored in their films dealt with social issues that denoted a degree of social maturity important to the educated middle-classes and locked a certain element of film discourse into the wider discourse of social reform. The issues of child marriage, widow re-marriage, and untouchability had a purchase on intellectual consciousness that the film makers exploited. The decision to explore these topics, however, was not solely determined by the desire to capture the middle-class audience. The significant film producers like Shah, Wadia and Rai in Bombay, Kale in Pune, and Sircar in Calcutta had progressive political beliefs that linked them to nationalist intellectuals: to make films in the social "realist" mode was an affirmation of these beliefs. (Wadia, 1980:96)

Paradoxically, as the upper-classes became entrenched in film discourse Indian film became established as the cultural domain of the illiterate classes or masses. In many respects this was the logical outcome of the industrial and business practices of the Indian film producers discussed in Chapter Five. However, the desire to improve Indian film discourse, to make it profitable and competitive in relation to Hollywood, not only involved changing the class base of the acting and writing groups but also involved changes in the film texts themselves.
In the 1930s the costume drama became completely entrenched as the
dominant genre. Its elements include melodrama, romance, sensation,
crime, murder and revenge (1950:126) which are all, at least as expressed,
derivative Westernized categories which probably reflect the impact of
Hollywood on Indian film discourse. In addition to these concepts costume
dramas, according to Dharap, include elements of fantasy, history,
thrillers, stunts and adventure and Rajput romances or folk culture.
(n.d.: Mimeograph) Of these elements two (thrillers and stunts) are
clearly derived from Hollywood concepts. The stunt film was openly
acknowledged as a cultural borrowing by its leading exponents, the Wadia
Brothers. Moreover, they worked a transformation in their films by making
their major figure of the stunt films a woman; Nadia an Australian actress
originally from Perth. (Barucha, 1938:645) Thrillers are a classic
Hollywood genre. Of the other elements only one, the Rajput romances, is
a specifically Indian form. The Rajput romances emphasised military
prowess, chivalry and romance. The other categories are ambiguous.
Fantasy and history are western concepts, but clearly the history and
forms of fantasy referred to are Indian. In other words, costume dramas
represent an amalgam of Western and Indian cultural traditions and are the
precursors of the contemporary formula film.

Formula can be seen as a particular way of exercising discursive control
(Cuvelitis, 1976:2) and has many links to the genre mode of production.
What separates the contemporary popular Indian formula film from genre
films of the earlier period is their excess. Ray observes that the
contemporary Hindi film comprises
colour (Eastman preferred); song (six or seven?); in voices
one knows and trusts; dance - solo and ensemble - the more
frenzied the better; bad girl, good girl, bad guy, good guy,
romance (but no kisses); tears, guffaws, fights, chases,
 melodrama; characters who exist in a social vacuum;
dwellings which do not exist outside the studio floor.
Locations in Kulin, Manali, Ooty, Kashmir, London, Paris, Hong Kong, Tokyo ... who needs to be told? See any three Hindi films, and two will have the ingredients listed above. (1976:90-91)

At one level the incredibly rich brew Ray is describing defies the notion of formula because its ingredients are too diverse and entropic. At another level, the fact that the overwhelming majority of popular films conform to this pattern suggests a formula at work. However, the way in which the various elements can be combined also indicates that a powerful transformative agent is involved. The roots of this powerful agent are to be found in the syncretic nature of Indian aesthetic theory (Saari, 1985:16-23) that can easily reconcile contradiction (O'Flaherty, 1980:4-7). The combinatory power of these two tendencies makes the Hindi popular movie an exceptional form of post-modernist text that plays with Western notions of film form in a most extraordinary way.

The advent of sound in 1931 confirmed the trend towards a synthesis in Indian film form, adding the essential ingredients of music, song and dance to the cultural mixture of the costume drama. The resultant narratives acquired great popularity with the Indian audience and consequently proved enormously profitable. The introduction of a star system in the 1930s accelerated the shift from the genre film towards the masihala film. Ray's comments about the masihala film exemplify the Westernized intellectual's attitudes towards this type of film: its emergence and cultural location are little understood even in India. Despite its over-determination it is a specifically Indian form, bearing traces and markers of Indian culture in a technological mode which represent transformations of pre-existing texts.

Indian film discourse, then, did not exist in a social, cultural or political vacuum. On the contrary the conditions in which the texts were
produced individually and collectively impinged consciously and unconsciously on that process of production. The popular texts (the mythological, social and costume drama films) in this schema represent the surface text of a deep structure based on the classical Sanskrit texts, the Mahabharata, Ramayana and puranas which are immensely powerful, procrustean mythologies that constitute the epistemological bedrock of Indian culture. (Gargi, 1962:21-22)

**Forms and Conventions**

The inaccessibility of specific transformations to specific reading practices is both culturally and ideologically determined. Accessibility to a text can only be gained through work and learning in a Gramscian sense is crucial here. (Entwhistle, 1979: 53-55) In India culture the signification preconditon for patterns of transformation were an integral part of the learned culture fixed firmly to a number of anchorage points that contributed clear cultural and ideological boundaries. Film texts were produced in India within those markers, making them transformations of a set of known and pre-existing texts. Films produced outside of those conditions had an ambiguous status, being read primarily as fantasy and not reality.

The chief anchor point for Indian systems of representation is Sanskrit drama which specifies ten types of drama although two in particular were dominant: the nataka which are principally concerned with myth and history and characters such as gods and kings who have superhuman power and qualities; and prakarana which is the drama whose plot is concerned with the common man (Gargi, 1962:12). The similarity between these categories of drama and the genres of mythological and social films is striking and clearly indicative of the significance of Hindu culture for the Indian
film. It also explains the audience acceptance of Indian films despite their poor formal qualities. Indian audiences were being presented with a sign system that they could recognize and understand and which clearly evoked a sense of cultural continuity not found in the imported cinema.

As a pre-text Sanskrit dramatic theory is strictly codified. Costume and make-up are specified. Gods and heavenly nymphs are depicted by the colour orange. (p.12) Further, caste, social status, birth place and historic period could also be signified by colour codes. Brahmans and Ksatriyas (the highest castes) wore red and the sudras (peasants) wore deep blue. (pp.10-11) The mythological films drew directly upon this tradition. The socials drew on the prakarana form, emphasising plots and the affairs of the common man. (p.12) However, the semiosis of Sanskrit drama determined a different spatio-temporal scale of theatre to that of the West. (pp.98-100) At its most extreme the theatre could cover an area of seven square miles like that of Ramnager in Benares, or the drama could take over a month to perform as with Krishnada. (p.12) Technology prevented film discourse adopting such luxurious spatio-temporal standards but the length of Indian films in comparison to Western film has always been a distinguishing characteristic that clearly has its roots in the indigenous culture.

The costume drama genre follows a convention of combining both the nataka and prakarana which it over encodes from other sources, principally from the Hollywood staple and the regional Indian theatres. In theoretical terms the costume drama genre is overdetermined.

By transforming different sets of pre-texts it still drew upon classic Hindu aesthetic theory to set up its range of emotion (bhara) and
sentiment (rasa). (pp.11-12) In the 1930s the costume drama established a
tradition of erotic encounters that are a feature of contemporary masala
films. Romantic encounters between the hero and heroine occurred in
gardens among flowers in the moonlight which in classic rasa terms are
excitants. They are followed by 'sweet words, smiles, coquettish
movements and amorous glances' (pp.11-12); the mode of presentation that
characterizes gender relations in contemporary films. Again the
information is available to the Indian audiences. The popularity these
genres is partially explained by their ability to transform the readily
available and clearly understood pre-texts.

The question of representation in film in cultural discourse is as
problematic as any other condition of textual production. Two issues of
representation that concerned both Indian and Anglo-Indian alike were
history and sexuality. In the 1910s the Bengali popular theatre had been
dominated by historical plays at a particular juncture where Indian
history was open to contestation: (Gargi:111-112) Bengal had been divided
and then re-united politically by the British and the capital of British
India shifted from Calcutta to Delhi. Bengal had become a centre of
disaffection with British rule. But the problem of history and historical
representation was not just a question of Indian and British relations, it
was also a question of British/Hindu relations, British/Muslim relations
but most significantly of all Hindu/Muslim relations. In contrast sexual
relations appeared almost unproblematic!

Anglo-Indian attitudes towards sexual representation have been elaborated
in detail elsewhere. (Ballhatchet, 1979) Indian attitudes towards the
issue, were a major determinant of textual production. Hindu theories of
sexuality originated in a belief system that regards the Goddess as the
mother of all and as incarnate in every woman. It has been argued that from a psychoanalytic point of view that this creates sexual problems for men in Indian society which are reproduced in symbolic ways in cultural texts. (Kakar, 1981:5) Classical Hindu myths deal with a number of oedipal encounters which make the mature woman sexually threatening to men and which "produces men who fear the sexuality of mature women". (ibid.) Consequently younger women are preferred as sexual partners which maintains a surface rendition of the power/authority relations. In the theory of Indian social relations power is subordinate to authority, i.e. empire Kings (power) subordinate to the Brahmins (authority), men (power) to women (authority). The tension between power and authority is the tension between private and social interactions and is manifested continuously in cultural relations, which are characterized by four recurring sexual motifs: the retention of semen; an avoidance of orgasm; symbolic coitus interruptus; and the magico-religious potency of semen conserved in the body. (O'Flaherty, 1981:17-64) These cultural motifs are expressed symbolically in film. An example is the role of dance in Indian film. Drawing upon the classic canons of Sanskrit drama and narrative Indian film makers included dance sequences in the early films. Initially the dance sequences adhered to classic modes of dance but by the 1930s a hybrid form of dance which was initially denigrated by the purists emerged which was specific to film emerged. (Shankar, 1955:221-227) After the introduction of sound in 1931 songs combined with dance became a major feature of films to the extent where they have been viewed as the major distinguishing feature of popular film, the element that specifies uniquely Indian cinematic film form. (Mishra, 1988)

The conventions of the popular stage and theatre had men playing women's roles except in the Parsi theatre where women played significant parts.
Muslim social custom had women placed in purdah (in isolation) for complex cultural and economic reasons. Hindu India adopted, in part, this custom which reflected the Hindu ideology of women; the convention of men playing women on the stage manifested the ideology, which in a context of continuity became a significant issue in the pre-history of the Indian cinema. But representations of sexuality are not confined to women: sexuality of men was also an issue. Men are usually portrayed as heroic beings, the generators of history. Classic Indian cultural convention assigns the hero one of two roles. He is either the Renouncer or the Man-of-the-world. (Mishra, 1985:139) Commercial cinema has played endlessly on this opposition. In the 1920s the devotional/biographical genre foregrounded the renunciative aspects of Hindu culture. The historical emphasised the Indian man of action. Costume dramas combined both nivritti ('renunciation') and pravritti ('worldliness') in a similar manner creating a text that drew on a plurality of traditions.

The plurality of origins, or pre-texts in the costume drama, or its successor the masala film opens them up to a multiplicity of possible readings. By emphasising the cultural continuity of the texts it is possible to see the films as essentially conservative documents. On the other hand in emphasising their transformational qualities it is possible to see the films in a progressive light. Mythological, Costume Dramas and Socials could all be read as allegories that commented sharply on the present and act as rallying points for political nationalism. They contained political messages that were either invisible or partially glimpsed by the British.
Political Transformations

In the latter part of the eighteenth century Indian nationalists appropriated the regional theatres for anti-British propaganda. In Bengal the National Theatre performed plays about contemporary social problems throughout Northern India. One play, Neeldapana (Mirrors of Indigo Plantations) outraged Europeans in its depiction of exploitation. (Gargi, 1962:109-110) In Bombay Tilak's followers performed plays based on well known myths. The outcome of this activity was the introduction of the Dramatic Performances Act XIX of 1876. Even after the introduction of the D.P.A. the British had problems decoding the plays.

An example of this tendency is found in the way the play Giriye Kallyan was prohibited in Bombay Presidency in 1913 under Section 3 of the Dramatic Performances Act XIX of 1876. (Maharashtra Archives (hereafter MA), Bombay/JD/1735/1913) Ostensibly the play was about the:

marriage of the Goddess Giriya and the God Shiva but only 14 of 149 pages are on this topic ... the greater part devoted to the demon Tarakasur ... description likely to convey seditious meaning to the audience. (MA/JD/4991/13)

Tarakasur was alleged to represent the British Government. As such the whole thing fits so well with doctrines and ideas of extremists that the play cannot be regarded as innocent. It would be very dangerous to allow people to become familiar with this play, for once it is done preachers of sedition have only to compare the British Government to Tilak. (ibid.)

An example of the seditious nature of the play was given in an excerpt of dialogue, allegedly inserted in the script after the play had been passed for performance, by the demon Tarakasur.

I have killed cows and inoculated their blood in the blood of Brahmacharyas (Brahmins); I have murdered many jewel-like women, and many children; I have confined the Gods of the (eight) directions and caught the Gods Brahma, Vishnu, and Radra; I have come for these purposes; carefully prepare my chariot. (p.3 of the play: MA/Memo/JD/922/1913)
The point about this whole episode is that the significance of the play, its deep psychological and symbolic resonances seem to have escaped the British until the play was drawn to the attention of an Assistant Collector in a district by the "Acting Mamlatdar of Parasgad, Belgaum", (ibid.) a minor Indian functionary in the Anglo-Indian administrative system. The claim that the play had been tampered with after endorsement seems hollow considering that the text had been printed. In fact the allegory had been missed by the British but the dense cultural signification had been read "correctly" by the Indian audience.

Interpretations of Indian history acquired even greater political significance in the 1920s. Historical films became a site of contestation not only between the Indians and British but more importantly between groups within the Indian social formation. In many respects historicals draw upon a different set of pre-texts to the other genres. In drawing upon known historical events historicals entered the terrain of communal conflict between the Muslims and Hindus. Each community had a different interpretation of the events that was racially and ideologically determined. For the most part of the early film makers were Hindus and their interpretations of historical events were suspect in the eyes of the Muslims. In a province like the Panjab interpretations of history through film had far reaching implications.

In an exchange between the I.C.C. Committee and members of the Panjab Board of Film Censors the question of history was foregrounded:

Q. Of course in the province [Panjab] history requires very careful handling.
A. Oh, yes.
Q. Modern history will perhaps have to be avoided?
A. It will have to be for the present.
Q. With the present communal tensions?

A. If you want Indian history more modern than 1000 AD, it would be difficult to handle this subject. (E.2:2)

According to the Panjab Board of Film Censors, nine hundred years of history would have to be suppressed because of the Hindu/Muslim tensions which existed in the province at that time. In the 1920s Hindu nationalism had created problems of historical representation for complex social, cultural and economic reasons. In extreme forms nothing short of total effacement of Muslim and British political domination of India was acceptable for some Hindus. Muslim reaction was predictable. In the Panjab a delicate political balance had been achieved between the major religious groups which film tended to disrupt especially in the areas of representation dealing with communal social, and religious customs and history. Consequently the British and the ruling Indian elite exerted great pressure to maintain stability in the province. A similar state existed in Bihar where popular films purporting to show Muslim episodes of Indian history were physically attacked in cinemas. In other regions prominent Muslim individuals lodged official complaints about the representation of Islamic history with the authorities, who reacted swiftly with the proscription of offending films. (E.5, 1928:22)

Censorship records show that a tendency to be "offensive to Muslim opinion" was a prominent justification for the excision or banning of a film. (See Chapter Eight) The communal tensions over historical representation in film discourse reproduced the wider conflict over history embedded in the nationalist political struggle between the British, the Hindus and the Muslims. The question of history, or more precisely whose history, was a crucial political question. One witness before the I.C.C., when pressed on the topic, retorted that India had no history it could call its own because its history had been suppressed by
the British. Orientalism, speaking of the East in Western terms, had become the historical discourse, for this witness, a fact that made the authentic expression of India more critical than ever for many Indians.

The British inability to control this dimension of film despite an elaborate censorship system arose out of a fundamental problem of cultural dissonance. An example which illustrates precisely the problematic nature of historical representation was an attempt by the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, to gauge the depth of Muslim feelings on the topic when he screened the film Loves of a Mogul Prince (1929) for a selected audience of Muslims from the Panjab. Irwin thought the film to be "entirely harmless" but the Muslims:

condemned it bitterly on the ground that with them monarchy is divine and that this by revealing the weaker side of the human monarch, brought it into contempt, and was a deliberate plan, by predominantly Hindu producers, to discredit the Moslem religion both in that way and also by having included in one scene a photograph of the Koran.

Irwin commented:

It was incidentally a great revelation to me.  
(NAI/Home Poll.8/1/1929)

The historical genre in the 1920s and 1930s carried complex messages that were not always available to the British but always accessible to the Indian audience. Their decoding of the messages was determined by community and actual history. The potential for disruption of the social formation via historicals was ever present. The response of the British was to subject historicals to close censorship under the guise of protecting Muslim feelings, an excuse of overt political bias for the Hindus. The film makers, recognising the genres potential for disruption turned increasingly to the costume drama as their major expressive form incorporating history into a formula that included romance, fantasy and melodrama. This strategy in effect created a pseudo-tradition that persists in the contemporary cinema. The major determinants of this
development was the tension that arose from a complex social relationship that film had forged between its audience and the producers.

The Material Determinants of Transformations

In arguing that different Indian genres are transformations of different sets of pre-texts I located Indian film production security within an Indian cultural context. The cultural location of the films was an important component in the construction of their audiences. Indian films were tremendously popular with Indian audiences throughout the sub-continent despite the stiff competition from the Hollywood staple. (Report of the I.C.C., 1928:23) This popularity had to be earned through the films' negotiation of Indian cultural forms and conventions with the audience.

Classic accounts of the popularity of genres posit a relationship between the text, the producer and the audience that can be expressed diagrammatically.

```
  Text

  Audience           Producer (Cook, 1985:58-59)
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Films are always produced in a cultural context that is shared by both members of the audience and the producers of the text.

In this tripartite relationship the producer represents the economic interests, the audience the cultural elements and the text a combination of the two factors. On balance the dominant element is the audience because if it does not respond to the film via the box office then the film fails and the producer loses his investment. The audience in this schema is the convergent element because through its expressions of
preference for genres it constantly pulled the producers back to established generic patterns.

In contrast the producers represent the divergent element through their practice of constantly seeking new forms of expression, of stretching genre boundaries, incorporating new elements into tried formulae. In short by seeing film making as a transformational practice. However, in the Indian context the producers confronted a multiplicity of audiences that were determined by regional and religious differences. The Report of the I.C.C. (1928) points out that

Bombay films are shown in Peshawar, Lahore, Lucknow, Calcutta, Madras, Nagpur, Rangoon and Mandalay. Some of them are of general appeal, e.g. mythologica or from the "Arabian Nights", but films of Bombay social are also being shown in many places. It is in fact not true to say that a film depicting life on the Bombay side has no appeal elsewhere. It does draw audiences but too much smaller extent. (p.40)

In the view of the I.C.C. the question of audience was linked to the other problems confronting film in the 1920s. It saw the Muslim issue, the question of historicals and the issue of language all linked to the composition of the audience. (pp.40-41) The Committee stated quite explicitly

the producer as yet has not been successful in producing a type of film which has much appeal to the educated classes . . He has to cater more for the task and intelligence of uneducated audiences; and stories, subject and treatment have been adapted to that end. (p.41)

Thus for the I.C.C. it was the audience that was the divergent force and the producers the convergent one. However, my argument is that the relationship was reversed as the industry evolved and the costume drama developed as the dominant genre. One way of looking at this complex reversal is to look briefly at the regional production figures in the early 1920s.
Table 2
Films Produced in 1922 by Company

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Production Company</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Number of Films Produced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hindustan Film Coy</td>
<td>Nasik</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kohinoor Film Coy</td>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taj Mahal Film Coy</td>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madan Theatres Ltd</td>
<td>Calcutta</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lotus Film Co.</td>
<td>Hyderabad</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharashtra Film Coy</td>
<td>Kolhapur</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Film Co.</td>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Star Film Ltd</td>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aurara Film Co.</td>
<td>Calcutta</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bharat Cinema Film Co.</td>
<td>Calcutta</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indo-British Film Coy</td>
<td>Calcutta</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pioneer Film Corp.</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>64</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Dharap, n.d., Mimeograph)

The regional nature of film production is apparent: in Western India five production houses are located in Bombay, one in Nasik, and one in Kolhapur; in Eastern India three of the studios are located in Calcutta and one in Hyderabad. The other three, Pioneer Film Company, Bharat Cinema Film Co. and Tajmahal Film Company can not be located precisely. However, the evidence suggests that the first two are Calcutta based concerns, and the latter was located in Bombay. Secondly, there is the disparity in the scale of production: Madan Theatres of Calcutta produced seventeen films in 1922, whereas Indo-British Film Company produced only one. Furthermore, the larger producers, Madans, Kohinoor, Hindustan, National, adopted a rational production strategy in making genre films, but at the same time exploited the dominant form of the period, the
mythologicals. (Dharap, n.d.: Mimeograph) Of the sixty-four films produced in 1922 thirty-eight were mythologicals and all but two of those were produced by the major producers: the proto-studios. Clearly, the dominant genre was the product of the best organized sector of the nascent film industry; the segment most able to generate and benefit from the profits.

Another factor to be considered is the personnel involved in film production. Phalke at the Hindustan Cinema Film Company continued to make mythologicals (seven in 1922). (Dharap, 1942: 40) In Calcutta Dhiren Ghangully who belonged to the bhadralok, the dominant fraction of the Bengali society, made England Returned (1921), a satire about the pretensions of young Indians returned from England. In the film he reflected upon the tendency of his class to mimic Englishness with a subtle and witty nationalism. By 1922 we find the cinema complex populated by diverse groups in terms of region, caste and class. Phalke, the Chitpavan Brahmin, remained a major figure in Bombay Province. In Kolhapur, Baburao Painter, from the craftsmen's castes of Western India, also exercised some authority. At a later date V Damle and S Fattelal and V Shantaram established Prabhat Studios in Poona. (Wattve, 1985: 1-4) Damle was a Brahmin, Fattelal a Muslim and Shantaram was from a low, artisan caste. This cultural and communal mix was reflected in the subjects they chose to explore in their films. It also indicates the heteropractic nature of film discourse in India insofar as it could transcend caste and religion in a positive fashion, which is one of the principal reasons why the conservative elements of Indian society opposed both the films and the industry that produced them. The social basis of the industry remained relatively open in Bombay throughout the early 1920s, although the Gujarati trading castes were beginning to establish some form of economic
hegemony over the popular Hindi cinema and by 1927 this tendency was confirmed.

The regional nature of film production initially set up the conditions whereby a non-unitary, even non-indigenous form may have been constructed. The divergence in the regions reflects the general cultural divergence of India into regions. More specifically in regard to film it also reflects the difference in production practices then operating in India. Table 2 shows that Madans were clearly the largest film producers in India. From the beginning Madans adopted a dual system of production by producing films for an all India market and the regional market in Bengal. Their first production strategy foreshadowed the later tendency of Bombay who always had pan-Indian ambitions but the combination of regional and Indian markets especially after the introduction of sound stretched their resources and by the early 1930s the company folded. (Filmland, 6/5/33:1) The path for All-India domination was left open for the Bombay studios who wisely left regional production in the Marathi language to the studios in Pune and Kolhapur. Thus, in the final analysis, it was economic factors that underwrote the convergent tendencies of Indian film.

Accounting for the cyclical nature of film production in India in terms of audience response demands that we consider two factors; the composition of the Indian film audience in the period, and the dominant production ideology that was firmly in place by 1927, and fully operational by 1932. The latter has been dealt with fully in Chapter Five: suffice to say here that in Bombay Gujarati interests were firmly in control of the film industry by 1927. Their position in the film industry was underpinned by their structural position in the broader Bombay social formation and their strategy of recruiting film personnel from the higher castes, especially
women; through linkages with major cultural, social and political forces in Indian society; and by appropriating and transforming indigenous culture through the specific signifying practices of film discourse. It took some time to master the latter, which proved to be, in the long run, the most successful strategy adopted and involved a special relationship with the Indian audience.

* * * * * * *

The looseness of both Shah's and Dharap's genre classifications has prevented previous accounts of the Indian commercial cinema focussing on their defects. From the earliest period the poor standard of acting, the bad scenarios and the lack of sophisticated formal elements were identified as major problems in Indian films. Yet these films were extremely popular with Indian audiences. (Report of the I.C.C., 1928:23) Clearly the Indian audiences in all regions recognized the affinity between the film text and their cultural traditions. From an economic point of view it made sense for Indian producers to exploit the relationship between the text and the audience. Other recent accounts of Indian film have recognized this relationship and have sought to explain its significance in terms of cultural continuity. Such a view is essentially conservative, underpinned by a view that little has changed in Indian culture and consequently closes off a number of other possible readings of the importance of the indigenous lease of Indian film production. I have argued that the Indian commercial film should be viewed as transformations of already existing pretexts which can be either indigenous or alien, or traditional or modern. By adopting this powerful methodology the singificance of film as an indigenous form becomes clearer. We can begin to provide an adequate account of not only the
traditional cultural roots of the filmic texts but also their political function. By emphasising their Indianness Indian film genres from the 1920s on made powerful statements about the past which were inflected onto the present by the audience. As Milton Singer said 'transformations paradoxically reaffirm the Indianness of Indian culture, they modernize without detracting from Indianness'. (1972:270)
CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCURSIVE INTERVENTIONS

In this chapter I will examine four moments where the British sought to control the discursive formation of the Indian cinema. Their actions in regard to cinema had two aims. Firstly to control the medium itself and secondly, to control the discursive construction of film in a context of hegemonic crisis. The first aim was achieved relatively early by the introduction of the Cinematograph Act of 1918 (II). The second aim was more difficult to attain. However, the 1927-28 Indian Cinematograph Committee of Inquiry established in many respects a legitimacy of British supremacy in the field albeit with Indian complicity. In achieving their aims the British created a legacy of containment that their Indian successors embraced enthusiastically and applied rigorously. In discussing official control of the cinema in India I have chosen to examine in this chapter four crucial moments that underpin the establishment of an extensive official apparatus and devote the following chapter to the actual process and procedures of censorship.

The moments I will analyse in detail below are the events surrounding the implementation of the Cinematographic Act of 1918 (Act II); the conduct of the W.M. Evans Report of 1921; the Indian Cinematographic Committee Report of 1927-28; and the establishment of the Film Advisory Committee in 1941. Each of these moments represents a specific response to a particular set of problems that emerged in respect to film in India. At the same time they represent an affirmation of the Anglo-Indian legitimacy to make decisions about Indian conditions in a changing political situation. In short they were indexes of power where it is -
exercised rather than possessed; it is not the "privilege", acquired or deserved, of the dominant class, but the overall effect of its strategic position - an effect that is manifested and sometimes extended by those who are dominated. Furthermore, the power is not exercised simply as an obligation or prohibition on those who "do not have it", it invests them, is transmitted by them and through them; it exerts pressure upon them, just as they themselves, in their struggle against it, resist the grip it has on them. (Foucault, 1979:16-17)

In other words these interventions were Anglo-Indian attempts to maintain British hegemony via the apparatuses they controlled, but at all times Indians were deeply and profoundly implicated in the processes of rule. In setting out to intervene in the evolution of a cinema the Anglo-Indians revealed the conditions of their continued marginalization in the Indian socio-political domain.

Of the four moments two are of major significance while the other two illuminate the alternatives available to the British. The two major interventions are the introduction of the Cinematographic Acts and the I.C.C. Both represent a significant development in the process of control. The I.C.C. has attracted considerable critical attention while the Cinematograph Acts have been largely overlooked. My argument will be that the Acts covering the operations of the cinema in British India were the bedrock from which all other developments emerged and as such demand closer critical attention. In analysing the Acts I show both their historical importance and discursive power. The Acts were introduced initially in 1918 but amended in 1919, 1920 and 1935 in accord with the political developments in India known as Dyarchy, the sharing of power between Indians and Anglo-Indians. After Independence the Act was further modified but its primary functions, those of safety and censorship, remained in tact. The Act's longevity attests to its power. The
conditions surrounding its formulation and implementation will be analysed below. (A copy of the Cinematograph Act is provided in Appendix I).

In contrast to the Cinematograph Act the I.C.C. has attracted considerable attention. The standard account in Barnouw and Krishnaswamy (1980) states the Government of India completely ignored the recommendations of the Indian Cinematographic Committee. Not one of them was enacted into law. This was not surprising, since the Committee had rejected the very premises on which its existence had been based. (p.57)

I wish to contest this influential misreading of the I.C.C. In the first place Barnouw and Krishnaswamy are not clear as to what they mean by "premises". My interpretation is that they see that the primary function of the Committee was to oversee the introduction of an Empire Preference Scheme for film with censorship and the Indian film industry as barely intended side effects. Such a view conforms to a nationalist political view first expressed in 1927 by Lala Lajpat Rai (see p.86). I will argue that this is not the case. Rather, for the Anglo-Indians censorship was always the primary issue and the Empire Preference Scheme the side issue. In other words the I.C.C. was a discursive intervention, intended to be such, and designed to legitimate the recommendations and mechanisms of the Cinematograph Act which were essentially to establish an effective censorship apparatus in an Indianized context. For Barnouw and Krishnaswamy the stumbling block in regard to the I.C.C. was the Government of India's failure to formally implement any of the I.C.C.'s recommendations. This is taken as evidence that the Government rejected it for the reasons given by Barnouw and Krishnaswamy. I will show that this is not the case. The important things were the non-recommendations which were effectively: do not dismantle censorship: do not introduce Imperial preferences. The shifts of emphasis in the Government's actions after the I.C.C. can be re-interpreted as a form of implementation.
Rather than ignore the I.C.C. the Government of India took it seriously and considered its recommendations at length. As I will show, it found the evidence supplied by the Committee the basis upon which the status quo could be maintained.

The two lesser interventions contrast directly with the Cinematograph Acts and the I.C.C. Both have been largely ignored. The Evans Report of 1921 recommended draconian measures in respect to film that were totally out of touch with the political realities of India in the 1920s. Evans argued for a system based on strict pre-censorship and the licensing of production. Both could have been considered as attractive in different circumstances but in the event the only practical recommendation offered by Evans was that the Government allow the cinema to develop in a free enterprise mode.

In contrast the war time conditions permitted the Government to intervene directly in film production in an unequivocal fashion.

Nevertheless the British found themselves in a situation where the compromise so carefully wrought by the discursive interventions and which provided the competing Indian interests with an economic framework could not be dismantled. Consequently the British maintained their bricolage in respect to film by creating a Film Advisory Committee in which Indians took a leading part. The conduct of the World War II Film Advisory Committee will be contrasted to the I.C.C. to show the success of its strategy in establishing the conditions of accommodation between Indians and Anglo-Indians in the discourse of film.
The Cinematographic Act (II) of 1918

The Cinematographic Act was finally enacted in 1920 after undergoing a number of changes that were determined by the changes brought about in the Indian political fabric by the introduction of the Devolution Act (XXXVIII of 1920). In modified form the Cinematograph Act remains the bedrock of regulation for Indian film to this day. The continuity the Act established between one hegemonic system and another demand that the conditions surrounding its formation, implementation and operation be subjected to close scrutiny.

In Chapter Two I have referred to the condition of near cultural panic that the advent of film caused among significant sections of the British ruling class in India. The panic arose from a recognition that the West could be represented in semiotic systems not formulated within and controlled by the discursive practices associated with the dominant literary culture of Victorian and Edwardian England transposed to India. Both the spatial and temporal axes of rule ensured that Anglo-Indian society was a profoundly conservative society. Its public mores valorized social conventions and protocols that had been dispensed with by the metropolitan middle classes at an earlier stage. Consequently, the themes and topics represented in Hollywood narrative were perceived as quite literally shocking. The world was turned upside down. Film was perceived as contradicting the very foundations of Anglo-Indian life. There were demands in both England and India that film should be controlled.

The creation of an apparatus of control posed a number of questions for the ruling class. Its administrative ethos was a desire for stasis but the circumstances surrounding the cinema precluded this. Consequently a policy was required that at least gave the illusion of stasis, of
magisterial calm and control which film had disrupted. There were no traditions whereby it could be administratively controlled. A study of the policy decisions surrounding the introduction of the Cinematographic Act reveals the policy-makers to be little more than bricoleurs, that is, people who appropriate what is available and what is known in an attempt to explain or harness the unexplained and new. However, developing an acceptable policy for film in India proved to be a very difficult experience for the British. Once it had been devised, its spatial and temporal parameters defined, and its conventions and protocols cemented into place the policy acquired all the signs of stasis. That is, the movement is from a controversial beginning characterized by a set of nervous administrative decisions and procedures to a mature period where decisions in respect to censoring films and other matters were routinized. This is precisely what the British sought to do by formulating and implementing the Cinematographic Act. The trajectory of the policy in regard to film could best be interrogated through a set of questions that examine a series of major opposing positions within the Anglo-Indian formation and Indian generally.

It is not without some irony that the first actions towards establishing some semblance of control over the cinema complex in India originated in Britain (see Chapter Two). The parliamentary questions of Carr Gomm (15 July 1914 and 28 July 1914) in reference to precautionary action taken in respect to the 'exhibition of objectionable films in India' led to a protracted exchange of correspondence between London and New Delhi on the subject. (IOLR/PJ/5256/1916) There was also the widespread canvassing of official and non-official Anglo-Indian opinion throughout the Indian Empire, including Burma on the subject which culminated in the formulation of the Cinematographic Act II of 1918. The lapse of four years between
initiation of the topic and its completion in a legislative act illustrates the temporal and spatial determinants of policy.

The original 1918 Act provided for a centralized system of censorship (Section 5) which was never enacted because the cinema complex became enmeshed in the dominant political ideology of the period - the need to recognize the legitimate political aspirations and claims of Indian politicians and elites as a reward for loyal service in World War I. This took the form of Dyarchy, or government on two levels. At the central level, the Government of India, retained responsibility for a specified set of portfolios of government. At the provincial or local level government was made responsible for another, sometimes intersecting set of portfolios. This cumbersome political compromise was made even more complex by the reluctance of the British to entrust certain areas such as Defence into the care of Indian politicians. Consequently subjects were designated as either reserved, meaning under the control of an Anglo-Indian administrators or transferred, meaning potentially under the control of an Indian politician. The cinema became a Provincial reserved subject under Dyarchy. Its control was devolved upon the provinces but remained firmly in the hands of the administrators. The move to Dyarchy entailed changes to the 1918 Act which were enacted under The Cinematograph (Amendment) Act of 1919. Surprisingly the amendments were passed in the Legislative Assembly on 24 September 1919 without any discussion taking place. (Minute Paper, IOLR/PJ/6450/1919) As the Local Governments had to set up the local certifying boards, or Boards of Film Censors, under the amended Act it was effectively some six years since the matter of film censorship in India was first raised that the systematic control of the cinema began. This delay was neither accidental nor
coincidental. Rather, it reveals a fissure in government which became
displaced onto film.

On the topic of film there was only one universal agreement between all
levels of government which was: films should be censored in some form.
This view was augmented by widespread agreement among Anglo-Indians and
the major sections of the Indian population in favour of censorship. The
problem was that unanimity on the subject did not carry over into the area
of policy formulation and implementation. Instead we find contradictory
positions in respect to film emerging between the levels of government
within the ruling elite and society as a whole which took a long time to
suppress.

In the first place it took the India Office some time to convince the
Government of India that a specific apparatus was necessary to control the
cinema in India. The India Office in contrast was never in any doubt, and
the India Office judged the Government of India to prevaricate on the
topic but it was also clear they could not understand why the Government
was so recalcitrant. One India Office clerk annotated an official reply
from the Government of India that the delays "made one wonder whether the
Government of India wanted to control the display of films in India".
(Confidential Memo, IOLR/PJ/4748/1916) As the documents were to be
circulated only within the hierarchy of the India Office it is clear that
this crude ideological argument was meant for the eyes of the policy-
makers only. It is also significant that nobody registered any
disagreement with the ideology expressed by the India office clerk.
Indeed the silence is eloquent.
By 1916 the question of film censorship had become an official matter with a formal letter from the Secretary of State for India to the Viceroy in New Delhi requesting that the Government of India investigate the problem of the exhibition of objectionable films in India and take urgent action on the matter. (Letter, 20/12/1916/IOLR/PJ/4748/1916) Instead the Government of India took precisely the opposite step. It simply followed normal procedures and circulated all the local governments seeking their views on the subject. This was not an innocent act but a deliberate ploy, a strategy whereby the Government of India demonstrated to the metropolitan arm of government that it alone was responsible for the formulation of policy on social issues in India. Moreover, there was scant evidence to support the view of the India Office that the control of the cinema in India was a matter of urgency. On the contrary, it was the view of the Government of India that there were adequate apparatuses at their command to control the cinema if the need arose. (Minute Paper, IOLR/PJ/4748/1916)

The reasons for the India Office adopting a different position from that of the Government of India are not difficult to discern. In the first place, as a consequence of the war, the British had become sophisticated and effective producers of propaganda. (IOLR/PJ/3042/1917) British propaganda had developed four major strands: materials produced for the troops on the front; materials produced for the home front; materials produced for the Empire; and materials produced for the neutrals and allies such as the United States of America. (Kaste, 1977:38-39) Film was an integral component of this propaganda. Furthermore, the India Office was implicated in the production of propaganda in three ways: by advising the Department of Information on the inclusion of filmic material relating to India in films destined for the various markets; by advising the
Department of Information on the suitability of materials for exhibition to Indian troops at the various war fronts and generally for exhibition in India; and thirdly, by actively engaging in the production of propaganda material for inclusion in any of the above through the provision of funds and personnel. (IOLR/PJ/2678/1916) An example of the latter was the appointment of E H Raymond by the India Office, through the good offices of the Department of Information, to go to India to film scenes suitable for propaganda purposes. Furthermore, the Government of India was requested to provide facilities to expedite Raymond's work. (IOLR/PJ/2742/1916)

Most of Raymond's films were lost when the ship carrying them back to England was torpedoed and sunk by a German submarine. However, the lists of scenes shot by Raymond still exists. (IOLR/PJ/5135/1916) The films had a definite ideological function. There were films dealing with military matters - the ritual and ceremonial of investing medals for bravery; the care and attention paid to the Indian wounded, filmed for exhibition to allay the fears that existed in India on this matter at the time. There are also scenes of material progress under the British regime - the development of the lines of communication, hydraulic engineering and the prosperity arising from this shown by scenes of the prosperous farms of the Panjab. Lastly, there was the category of exotica - palm trees on tropical beaches, the burning ghats at Benares.

Raymond was given explicit instructions on what he was to film in India. This is confirmed by the itinerary that was mapped out for him and by the instructions issued to the Government of India on how they were to assist Raymond. Through their involvement in the production of propaganda for the war effort the India Office had become attuned to the place of film in
society. Their views were also class bound. Film was manipulative, aimed at the masses. It followed, at least in their minds, that if film was an effective tool for propaganda in the West, this also had to be the case for India. Moreover, it also followed, that for this reason, if for no other, it was necessary to establish an apparatus of control.

The second reason for the India Office treating the question of controlling the film discourse of India as a matter of urgency arose from events in Egypt. The various British government institutions circulated memoranda among themselves on matters they saw as significant or potentially important for the areas under their control. In 1916 it was drawn to the attention of the India Office that the Germans had successfully smuggled an anti-British film into Egypt bit by bit and then reassembled it there for exhibition. (Draft, Confidential, IOLR/PJ/4748/1916) This caused alarm. A similar tactic had been employed by the Ghadrites, the dissident anti-British Sikh group in the Panjab with links in California who had circulated still photographs of alleged British atrocities towards Indians taken from a German film called "Mutiny". (ibid.) Control was a matter of specific, urgent action as the Panjab was the major recruiting ground for Indian troops in the First World War (Pradhan, 1978:58). It was grasped that the Germans could achieve a similar propaganda coup in India given the physical properties of film, which was to be avoided at all costs. The sense of urgency in the India Office arose from a perception that the Government of India was behaving in a fashion commensurate with an earlier method of control. However, the Government remained confident that its repressive apparatuses would contain any potential dissension as they had in the past.
In the end the India Office virtually demanded that the "leisurely process of legislation" be dispensed with and that film censorship be promulgated under an ordinance which placed its control in the hands of the Criminal Investigation Division. (Docket, IOLR/PJ/5256/1916) The Government of India remained adamant that its approach to the issue was the correct one and ignored the India Office's demands.

The Government of India decided upon its course of action for two major reasons. Although they had little objective data on the subject they assessed that the problem was minimal because there was in fact very little circulation of films in India at the time. It is difficult to know the total number of cinemas for India in the period 1914-1916. However in 1912 Bombay had about twenty (MA/J D Home/118/1913) and by 1921 it was estimated that 148 cinemas existed in India. (Report of the I.C.C., 1928:179) Moreover, these cinemas were essentially an urban phenomena. The audience was principally European or middle-class India, as the price of tickets demonstrates. Finally, there was no sign that any sustained, active indigenous film production had begun. Consequently the Anglo-Indian administration interpreted this as indicating that the cinema in India, unlike Britain where different conditions prevailed, was not a matter of great urgency. On the contrary, given the paucity of exhibition theatres, their location, and the owners of the theatres, the advent of cinema to India did not appear to be problematic for the government.

The second reason for the legislative approach was a conviction that the government possessed sufficient apparatuses to control the cinema. In the first letter sent to the various local governments which sought their comments, the Government of India specified five apparatuses that could be invoked if necessary to control the exhibition of objectionable films.
These were the various Police Acts of the Presidencies of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras, and the major provinces such as Burma; the Naval and Military Ordinances; Section 292 of the Indian Penal Code "which renders punishable the wilful exhibition to public view of any obscene publication" and Section 298 designed to protect religious feelings; Section 19 of the Seas Customs Act which had been used to prohibit the importation of the Johnson-Jeffries world heavyweight boxing title fight in 1910; and the Criminal Procedure Code. In addition the Bombay District Police Act (Bombay Act IV of 1890, as amended by Section 6 (2) of Bombay Act IV of 1912) empowered:

a District Magistrate with the previous sanction of the Governor in Council, from time to time to make rules for licensing and controlling theatres (IOLR/PJ/18/1916)

The clause was included in the 1918 Act and ultimately became a key feature of censorship under the British. Finally, there was the Dramatic Performances Act (Act XIX of 1876) (hereinafter the D.P.A.) which was enacted to control the use of the theatre by nationalist forces to disseminate anti-British propaganda. A significant aspect of the Act was the provision for pre-censorship of the text. The central bureaucracy was very keen on amending the D.P.A. to include film, retaining and employing the pre-censorship clause. (NAI/Hom. Pol./82/110/1917) In the light of the limited extent of cinema in India at the time this was an impressive battery of repressive apparatuses and it is not surprising that bricolage was regarded as both economical and expedient.

In seeking to define their role in the area of the control of the cinema, the Government of India asked the local governments three questions:

firstly whether a stricter control over cinematographic exhibitions is required, second, whether the provisions of the Dramatic Performances Act of 1876, are suitable to modern conditions, and if not in what respects experience has shown them to be defective, in what manner should the existing law be amended? (NAI/Hom.Pol./82/110/1917)
It was the local government's response to these questions rather than the pressure from the India Office that convinced the Government of India that decisive action was necessary, reinforcing the ideological differences that existed between the metropolitan centre and the Government of India.

The Indian regions were, and are, extremely diverse culturally, economically and socially. The Anglo-Indian political systems that were over-encoded on to the indigenous cultural and social systems exploited this diversity. The Bengal service saw itself as separate from and different to the Bombay service, and vice versa. The mechanisms of Anglo-Indian rule encouraged this ideology. Therefore it is not surprising to find a lack of coherence in the responses from the local governments to the three questions. Nevertheless, there was near unanimity on the first question: despite the fact that there are only six instances on record where the powers embodied in the various acts had to be invoked in respect to film all the local governments wanted stricter control of the cinema. The six instances were the banning of the Johnson-Jeffries fight in 1910 already cited; the prohibition of the American film Adventures of Kathlyn in Calcutta and Rangoon; the banning of The Relief of Lucknow in the North-West Frontier Province; a law suit brought by prominent Muslims in Karachi against the film Azim as a libel against the Prophet; the activities of a District Magistrate against a travelling cinema in Bihar showing scenes of the Turkish defeat of the Italians in North Africa, which had been greeted with applause by Muslim sections of the audience; and another localized instance when a film showing scenes from the Mutiny, possibly The Relief of Lucknow, had similarly been greeted with approval by an Indian audience. (Confidential Memo, IOLR/PJ/603/1915)
The smallness of the sample nevertheless revealed the issues that concerned the regional Governments in India. The bannings dealt with specific issues of race, sexuality and Muslim sensitivities. In the Indian context each had an undeniable political edge. The Adventures of Kathlyn which prompted the letter received by Carr Gomme and initiated the whole process of intervention into film discourse by the Anglo-Indians was banned because it was "likely by its general treatment to provoke undesirable racial animosity". (Confidential Memo, IOLR/PJ/593/1915)

Moreover, the Police Commissioners of both Calcutta and Rangoon proscribed the film without seeing it on the basis of the film's accompanying resumé. It is precisely at this point that Nowell-Smith's injunction about the unconscious as a determinant of the historical process becomes significant. The Anglo-Indians almost appear to have welcomed the advent of the cinema as psychic mechanism upon which to project their racial and sexual fears that the ideology of prestige had worked to suppress. In claiming evidence and real experience as a basis of strengthening the official control of the cinema, the local governments were giving credence to these fears, making them manifest and introjecting the unconscious into film discourse in India.

In the various provinces there were opposing views about amending the D.P.A... Assam, for example, was prepared to go along with whatever the Government of India decided. Delhi recommended that the D.P.A. be amended to provide for the inclusion of film within its purview. Bombay on the other hand wanted a new Act specifically designed to deal with the cinema. (Docket, IOLR/PJ/5256/1916) The responses of the provinces were carefully analysed and it was deemed that on balance there was a need for a separate Act. The Secretary of State was duly informed, and phase two of the legislative process began - a Bill was introduced into the Indian
Legislative Council for debate and discussion. The India Office could barely suppress its exasperation in 1918. What the India Office failed to understand was that conditions in India had changed significantly over the War period. Within the Anglo-Indian hierarchy there had been those who wished to adopt the India Office line - swift, direct action that took little account of Indian sensibilities. However, wiser counsel prevailed. Sir Alex Muddiman, the Legal Secretary to the Government of India at the time of the discussions, and later Governor of the United Provinces, recognized the changing conditions and advocated strongly that the legislation adopt a pronounced social basis. (NAI/Hom.Poll./82+110/1917)

The naked political thrust of the India Office would have been counter-productive because it would have alienated the middle classes further, and thus provide another focal point for discontent. The Bill that went before the Assembly reflected this advice.

The Indian Cinematograph Act of 1918 is a brief and relatively simple Act considering the conditions associated with its formulation. It consists of nine sections (see Appendix I). It was introduced by Sir James Du Boulay, the new Legal Secretary of the Government of India, on the 6th February, 1918 as 'a very small act' (Docket, IOLR/PJ/1456/1918) indicating quite clearly the Central Government's attitude towards the problem. With additions and amendments it has remained the bedrock upon which official control of film in India is based to this day. It was subsequently amended in 1919 and again in 1920 so that it conformed to the Devolution Rules of 1920. In effect this meant that the issue ceased to be a central issue and became a matter for provincial control although as a Provincial Reserved subject it remained under Anglo-Indian control.
Sections 1 to 3 (see Appendix I) define the terms used within the Act. Sections 4 and 5 deal with the licensing of cinemas. Section 6 deals with penalties incurred on contraventions of the Act. Sections 7, 8 and 9 deal with the powers of the local government under the Act which reflects the changes in the political reality under Dyarchy. The most significant of the powers allocated to the local governments was the establishment and maintenance of Boards of Censors. Censorship was to become a local government affair. Herein lay the single most important aspect of the intervention. Effectively the desire to localize and seemingly share power with Indians caused the Anglo-Indians to exercise what for many was a serious error of judgement. The localization of censorship diminished the power of the British to act on a pan-Indian basis. The subsequent interventions were designed to find ways of overcoming this problem generated by the British themselves because the Act effectively devolved power in regard to censorship downwards away from the centre to the District Magistrate level. This became increasingly important at a later date when, under the Government of India Act of 1935, provincial autonomy was established under nationalist governments and censorship effectively came under the control of the Indians. The Act then worked to the advantage of the British as District Magistrates became the significant factor in maintaining Anglo-Indian ideological control of the film discourse. If a District Magistrate proscribed a film in his district after 1935 it meant effectively that his proscription became an all-India ban on the film in question. (Baskaran, 1981:137) What appears, then, to be a document designed to secure public safety and moral order had in fact considerable discursive power. Furthermore, the local government had the power of appointment to the local certifying boards. The disguised nature of the Act and the prerequisites associated with appointment to the Boards of Film Censors appeared to give the local governments considerable power
in determining the development of film in the various regions. (Report of the I.C.C., 1928: 105-108)

The overall effect of the Cinematograph Act appeared to be beneficial to British rule. Power seemed to be devolved and shared between Indian and Anglo-Indian; social rather than political conditions appeared to determine the structure of control. Consequently it was not difficult to find groups of Indians to participate in the administration of the apparatus of control as either censors, a largely honorary position, or as functionaries. The time and care taken in formulating the strategy in respect to film seemed to have succeeded. The hierarchy was convinced that it had constructed a sufficiently powerful mechanism to deflect any further criticism on the subject; the contradiction appeared to have been removed. In fact in the eyes of many it had barely been papered over. Criticisms about the lack of control over films in India increased rather than decreased after the introduction of the 1920 amended Act. The criticisms came from the highest quarters of the Anglo-Indian society. Montgomery Hyde, Private Secretary to the Viceroy wrote a personal letter to Crerar, Home Secretary, recounting the Viceroy's experience of an American film Fair and White which depicted in great detail a white woman getting intoxicated and after a good deal of disgusting detail getting into the bed of someone who was not her husband. The Viceroy and Governor (and families) left the theatre - media vel!

(29/5/1924, NAI, Home Jails/85/1925)

Such criticisms arose because of the increasing number of films available in India which, coupled with an increasing number of theatres, contributed to the growth of the Indian audiences. The criticisms, however, were essentially directed at the Cinematographic Act, which was perceived by significant sections of the Anglo-Indian public as having failed to achieve its intended purposes.
In order to demonstrate their confidence in the Cinematograph Act the Government of India agreed to have the India Office mount its own investigation into film discourse in India. The India Office remained convinced that film censorship did not work in India. At the same time they became interested in the question of a local film industry in India. Both questions also interested the Government of India, hence their agreement to the India Office proposal. In 1921 a Mr W M Evans was sent to India by the India Office to advise the Government of India on film policy.

The W.M. Evans Report, 1922
The standard references on the English film industry in the 1920s provide no information on Evans. (Low, 1979) Therefore it is difficult to establish his credentials as an expert on film as the India Office claimed. The internal evidence within the report he wrote in 1922 suggests that he had connections with William Jury, a prominent figure in the English industry who represented the British film industry on the War Office Cinematograph Committee (Haste, 1977:46) and formed part of the post-war network that linked together members of the British bureaucracy, film producers and film exhibitors as a powerful lobby group. Moreover, the tenor of the report suggests that his background was in the distribution and exhibition side of the industry. After a relatively short period in India Evans formulated his report. In it he advocated, in strong terms, that a policy be established whereby the Government of India take absolute control of the industry, regulate the distribution and exhibition of film programmes, and encourage indigenous film making. (IOLR/PJ/592/1921)\(^1\).

1. The following account is based on this file which contains the full report.
Absolute control of the cinema could be obtained in either of two ways. The government could either establish a monopoly by purchasing all films entering India and then renting them out or it could second a 'large English renting house' to purchase and distribute films in India. Evans supplied considerable detail on how such a company could be constituted and operate. Its transparent support of the English distributors was not commented upon.

The regulation of programmes was necessary because censorship in India was lax. The committees were inexperienced and weak and the Board Officers apathetic. For Evans the most effective way of regulating films in India was to establish central censorship in London with outposts in India. He could justify this proposal on the grounds that most of the films for the Indian market were purchased in London.

Indian film making could be encouraged by the provision of financial aid to selected producers. Aid would be conditional upon both the pre-censorship of the script and the examination of the finished film. All of this would be achieved through the formation of a small Cinematograph Department within the Department of Public Information whose function would be to actually programme films for India on a systematic basis through its film distribution section. Moreover the department would also assume responsibility for all titling and subtitling of films for India. In addition it would produce films for distribution in India. These would include an Indian News Gazette and other forms of propaganda.

Evans concluded his report with

[I]t is vital in my judgement that the Government of India should take every step to control, and utilize in the
interests of Indian nationhood, the vast potentialities of the cinema.

(ibid.)

The Evans Report was widely circulated in the India Office and related government departments. Lord Beaverbrook rejected the concept of a government monopoly as 'quite impractical. One only requires to know a little about Government to see this'. (Letter from Beaverbrook to E Montagu, 21/6/21. IOLR/PJ/592/1921) Others agreed with the analysis. Consequently Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, wrote to the Viceroy

You may think it impossible or inadvisable to adopt Evans' proposals as they stand ... consider the desirability of giving more encouragement to private enterprise to develop on the right lines ...

(Letter, 12/7/21 in IOLR/PJ/592/1921)

The Viceroy, Lord Reading, took up the idea of free enterprise and annotated the letter suggesting that the Government of India

at least consider the desirability of giving more encouragement to private enterprise to develop on the right lines.

(26/9/1921, ibid.)

In other words the draconian measures were glossed over and the notion of free enterprise pounced upon in an attempt to save face within the India Office. Hereafter "along the right lines" became a code for discussing the directions the Indian film industry took. By right lines one can only assume that Beaverbrook, Montagu and Lytton meant compliant and self-interested.

In any event the report was not acted upon by the Government of India despite the fact it was brief and clear because the recommendations it makes are on very broad lines and involve great expense. It may be appreciated that the Government of India will find great difficulty in adopting them. (I heard privately some days ago that the idea had been wildly received in some depts concerned.)

(Annotated Minute, 22/4/21, ibid.)
In other words the tensions between the India Office and the Government of India on film which had emerged in the debates about the Cinematograph Acts remained. From the above comments it is clear that although the Government of India by rejected the Evans Report on essentially economic grounds it remained determined to maintain control over the discursive construction of film.

The Evans Report coincided with the first major spurt in film production in India, especially in Bombay, and with the political turmoil of the first Gandhi-led Non Co-operation Movement. The Government of India found its comments on all aspects of film discourse in India instructive; its insensitive, draconian ideological underpinnings, undoubtedly attractive at one level, ensured that it could not be accepted in the light of the political situation. Evans totally misread the situation in respect to Indian responses to repressive British legislation. The Rowlatt Acts, which had been about censorship and control, had precipitated the first major nationalist struggle. Recommendations such as those proposed by Evans would have precisely elicited opposition.

The Evans Report is in no way a major document or intervention in the cinema complex in a real sense because it was so impractical. On the other hand it is a crucial document insofar as it provides an opportunity to see how fissures in the administration operated in respect to film, providing insight into why certain decisions and not others were made in respect to film, illuminating the ideological path of hegemonic practice.

In looking at the various government files on the Evans Report we find unconscious fears made manifest. It was agreed that it was prudent for the Government of India to consider the licensing of a production system
for several reasons. Firstly, opinion in England and America seemed to be crystallizing in favour of a careful control of film production. (Memo, Advisory Publicity Committee to Home Dept., N.D., IOLR/PJ/4766/1921)

Secondly, exhibition was easily controlled but the "evil" of cinema could not "be obviated merely by the control of exhibition". Flowing on from this was the view that:

It does not seem unduly fantastic to suppose that as soon as film production in India becomes better organized, we may see spring up companies of a less reputable sort which in conjunction with the production of harmless drama films may also put on to the market films of a highly undesirable type. (ibid., 2/11/1921)

The reference here is to films of an undesirable sexual rather than political type, although the ambiguity of the language suggests that similar views would have applied to political issues. Thus, control of the production of films in India was not only prudent but desirable, because India was ideal for the making of indecent films (ibid.) because one-third of India was beyond immediate British control which facilitated smuggling.

The Evans Report and the response to it foreshadowed some of the directions the Government of India was to consider in its desire to be seen to be doing something in respect to film exhibition and production. The Report provided a potential model for minimising the fears then current about the alleged effects of the cinema on the Indian masses but the crucial factor is that the administration, one senses reluctantly, chose not to follow the Evans' recommendations.

The rejection of the Evans Report as a blueprint for action and planning for the Indian film industry was determined by political, economic and cultural reasons. The problem of film, however, would not disappear. In rejecting recommendations of the India Office appointee to create an
apparatus for the suppression of film, the administration left itself open
to criticism. From the India Office point of view film discourse had not
been contained by the Government of India's policies and practices. The
mounting criticism between 1921 and 1927 about the alleged effects of film
on the Indian audiences reinforced the India Office position.

The failure of the Evans Report to address the emerging problems of film
production in India appeared to leave the administration little option but
to refine the structure they had established under the Cinematograph Act.
However, even this approach presented the Government with further
problems. At one level matters seemed to be running smoothly, especially
in Bombay where a Board of Censors had been established and staffed.
Contacts had been made with the various branches of the industry along
amicable lines. Indeed once the operation was underway it became apparent
that there was very little the certifying board could do except make
cosmetic changes to films. Very few films were censored or excised in any
way in the period 1921-1926. At the same time, however, criticism of the
Board about its failure to control film continued in a number of the
traditional, conservative places in England and India; in the pulpit, the
Times and other newspapers, and the House of Commons. In addition,
criticism about film was very strong among the non-official Europeans in
India, the businessmen and others, and at the margins of Anglo-Indian
society, in the mofussil where Bombay and Calcutta were viewed with
suspicion. In reality the problem was not the films themselves but the
volume of films available in India to hitherto untouched audiences. There
was a real perception that films produced in Hollywood were suitable for
European and middle class Indian audiences but entirely unsuitable for the
young and the working class Indian audience because
every day films are put on the screens here [India] which are calculated to lead astray thousands...
(Speech of V Ramada Pantulu, Council of State Debates, 21/3/27:630)

In an effort to stiffen censorship procedures and thus deflect the criticism from both Indian and British, the British Board of Censors' guidelines were imported in toto into India by the Government of India and issued to the Boards of Censors in Bombay and Calcutta. The India Office approved of the measure but as the move was not widely publicized it did little to assuage the crescendo of complaints. (IOLR/PJ/3332/1922)

At the same time as film was subjected to wide criticism in India there was a concerted drive in Britain on the part of British film producers to extend an Empire preferential scheme to the cinema. In effect this meant that films produced by countries within the Empire could circulate among Empire nations and not incur tariffs at the same rate as American produced films. The British industry thus advocated a strategy adopted throughout Europe in an attempt to stem the flow of Hollywood films but extended beyond discrete national boundaries to the largest political entity then extant. In many respects the British were betrayed by their own ignorance. The bait was that the benefits would be reciprocal but in reality the British industry saw itself as filling the gap created by the commercial exclusion of Hollywood films. In other words they were trying to capture for film a similar position to that enjoyed within the Empire by other British products prior to World War One. (Minute Paper on Imperial Conference, IOLR/PJ/306/1926) This retrogressive view of the Indian economy and its perceived reliance on British goods indicates quite sharply the rupture between the centre and the margins of the Empire. However, British films were not as popular as Hollywood films with the bulk of the population throughout the Empire. Moreover the British industry did not appreciate the opposition the proposal would elicit
within the emerging national economies, of which the cinema was as increasingly significant part, not only in India but also Australia. Nevertheless, the British administration took the advocacy of the British producers seriously enough to place the concept on the agenda of the 1926 Imperial Conference in Ottawa, Canada, where it was accepted. (IOLR/PJ/306/1926) Thereafter the individual national administrations within the British Empire were required to consider and make recommendations as to the efficacy of the concept. The proposal was to rebound on the British. Indian politicians and businessmen, ever alert to British moves to extend their economic hegemony of India, pounced on the proposal when it was included in the brief of the I.C.C. and used it to dismiss the enquiry as a subterfuge.

The Indian Cinematographic Committee of Inquiry, 1927-28

The conjunction of criticism within the community and pressure from the India Office presented the Government of India with the opportunity to settle the problem of film in India once and for all. It adopted a specific tempero-spatial strategy widespread in the British system of government by appointing a Committee of Inquiry which then provided the illusion that the matter was under control. At the same time the strategy gave the administration time and space in which to regroup and devise tactics to resolve the problem. On the 6 October 1927 the Government of India formally announced the formation of the Indian Cinematograph Committee of Inquiry whose brief, under the Chairmanship of Rao Bahadur T Rangachariar, M.L.C., was to examine and report on the system of censorship of cinematograph films in India and to consider whether it is desirable that any steps should be taken to encourage the exhibition of films produced within the British Empire generally and the production and exhibition of Indian films in particular. (Debate, ILA, 14/9/27, IOLR/PJ/2299/1927)
The problems and issues which had received close attention in both the private and secretive discourse of administration and the public domain were now placed firmly at the centre of the political agenda in British India.

A number of general things need to be said about the formation of the I.C.C. before any specific analysis occurs. Firstly, its composition was considered carefully within the administration. Secondly, the order in which the problems were to be considered is important. For the Anglo-Indians the most significant issue was censorship. The Empire preference scheme was included to assuage London. The clause about Indian films was almost an afterthought. Evans had alerted the Anglo-Indians to the fact that an indigenous industry was beginning to emerge. Given the administration's sensitivity to the problem of film and the widespread concern in the Anglo-Indian elite about American films, it followed that the administration would avail itself of the opportunity to collect data on the topic of an emerging industry. Thirdly, the I.C.C. was just one of a number of government enquiries conducted throughout the world in 1927. Hollywood's dominance of the international screen by the mid 1920s was apparent and governments in Japan, France and Australia (Report of the I.C.C., 1928:15)\(^1\). in addition to India looked at the problem of protecting a local industry against the power of Hollywood. The I.C.C. is part of an early phase of reaction to modern media imperialism; the irony being that it occurred in a colonial setting, its activities initiated by imperialists.

By the standards of the time the I.C.C. was a major undertaking that was both expensive and controversial. The I.C.C. visited major centres in

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1. All page numbers hereafter refer directly to the Report of the Indian Cinematograph Committee, 1928.
India and Burma, travelling approximately 9,400 miles. It examined some 353 witnesses of whom "114 were Europeans, Anglo-Indians and Americans" (16 of whom were "ladies" (sic)), "239 Indians of whom 157 were Hindu, 38 Muslims, 25 Parsis, 16 Burmese, 2 Sikhs and 1 Christian" (19 of whom were "ladies"). (pp.13-4) It also issued 4,325 copies of a detailed questionnaire (see Appendix Two) and received in return 320 replies of varying degrees of sophistication and detail. (p.13) The Inquiry’s overall cost was Rs 1,93,900. The I.C.C. also compiled the first set of reliable statistics available on all aspects of the Indian film industry. Its members visited thirteen production houses, forty-five cinemas and saw fifty-seven feature length films, of which twenty-one were Indian or Burmese productions. It published a Report which summarized its investigations, listed a comprehensive set of recommendations, and provided valuable statistical appendices. The Report was supplemented by four published volumes of evidence which provide a comprehensive and detailed account of the various responses from the witnesses in both oral and written forms. A fifth volume, hitherto unrecorded by other scholars, was not published but circulated within the administration. It covered both the in-camera evidence of the witnesses and provided the comments by the individual committee members on the various films seen and the studios visited. The I.C.C. documents provide one of the most complete synchronic accounts extant of the conditions prevailing at a specific juncture of a national cinema.

While it remains a rich source of information about a specific discursive formation the Inquiry also provides a powerful insight into the broader conditions prevailing in India at that moment. These can be seen most clearly in the four controversies associated with the I.C.C. Report. They concerned its composition, the nature of its brief, the Minute of Dissent
recorded in the published report, and the fact that its recommendations were not adopted by the Government of India. Considering the political, cultural and social sensitivity of film discourse, the comprehensive nature of the inquiry, its reasonable solutions to specific problems and its cost, it is surprising that the recommendations were not implemented in some form or other by the British. This inaction has been largely misinterpreted by previous historians as I will demonstrate.

In deciding to establish a committee of inquiry into the cinema the Anglo-Indian administration took a conscious decision to engage directly with a controversial matter. Negotiating the terrain of controversy required prudent tactics. There is no doubt that the administration wished to use the I.C.C. for its own ends, signifying a benevolence and sensitivity in cultural matters without declaring the clear cut political implications of the inquiry. This is reflected in the leadership of the I.C.C. and its membership.

A great deal of thought was given to the composition of the committee. The amended 1918 Cinematograph Act specified that the Boards of Film Censors should be dominated by non-officials, Europeans or Indians who did not work for the government in some capacity. This ideology was continued into the composition of the membership of the I.C.C. In the first instance a Chairman had to be appointed. The first person considered was Sir Pheroz Sethna, the Parsi businessman and Liberal politician. (See Chapter Six). However, Sethna declined the invitation to Chair the I.C.C., he claimed, due to the pressure of business. (Letter, 12/8/27/ NML, SP) The second person considered and subsequently invited to lead the committee was T. Rangachariar, a Madras lawyer and Member of the Legislative Council. Like Sethna he had a strong record of compliance
with the British system: he had been the Government of India's representative at the inauguration of Canberra as the capital city of Australia in 1926. He had also been a member of the Council's Standing Committee on Cinema. (Sen, 1974:487)

The appointment of an Indian to lead a committee of the magnitude and significance of the I.C.C. was an important event. The only other major official government inquiry to be led by an Indian in this period was the Sardar Committee of Inquiry into the marriage age of women\(^1\), a deeply sensitive social issue in India. The fact that Rangachariar was appointed to lead the I.C.C. indicates the degree of seriousness attached to the cinema by the British and their recognition that, the volume of Anglo-Indian complaints notwithstanding, the issue was essentially an Indian one. In some quarters Rangachariar has been made out to be nationalist. (Sen, 1974:488) However, the internal evidence of the Report shows him to be a much more ambiguous figure. Rangachariar certainly espoused Indian causes, but only to a degree. Whenever discussions before the Committee about the role of film became too political or pointed in their criticism of the British he would always intervene and suppress the exchange, usually in a formal legal manner.

Further, in areas of social concern, Rangachariar showed himself to be a very conservative figure.

Rangachariar took a leading role in the operations of the Committee. He was by far the leading questioner of witnesses and he pursued in depth questions about the extent of the Indian film industry, its organization

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1. I am grateful to Associate Professor Jim Masselos, Department of History, University of Sydney, for drawing my attention to this point.
and prospects. He also clashed with Mr John Coatman, Director of Public
Information, Government of India, and one of the two official appointees
on the Committee, both in public and private. However, if the British had
not considered him "safe" there is little likelihood that he would have
been appointed Chairman. Equally important to his appointment was his
standing as a Hindu social conservative. Rangachariar was ideologically
attuned to the misgivings of the Anglo-Indian community in respect to
film. His comments in the evidence signify his repugnance of the sexual
excesses of Hollywood. This factor alone guaranteed that the British
anticipated, if not expected, certain recommendations in respect to
censorship from a Committee headed by Rangachariar.

With a Chairman in place the rest of the committee had to be selected. A
conscious decision was made to create a committee that reflected and
balanced the competing racial, communal, political and religious group
within India. Colonel John Crawford, a European elected member of the
Legislative Assembly and Secretary of the Calcutta Branch of the European
Association was appointed to represent European non-official interests.
The European Association had been among the first critics of film and film
policy in India and Crawford's appointment must be viewed in that light.
The Honourable Khan Bahadur Sir Ebraim Haroon Jaffer, M.L.A., was
appointed to represent Muslim and commercial interests. Sethna was not
impressed by Jaffer but Muslim interests had to be seen to be represented
and Jaffer had asked a series of questions in the Assembly on the subject
of cinema. It is clear that he was perceived as having an interest in the
topic by the British. Moreover his questions in the Legislative Assembly
indicated he was socially conservative in respect to the cinema. Mr K.C.
Neogy, M.L.A., a Hindu, Bengali lawyer completed the complement of Indian
members. Neogy was a more problematic figure than either Rangachariar or
Jaffer. His social attitudes were more liberal than the other Indians and he was clearly more nationalistic in his political orientation. His appointment was based on his acknowledged forensic ability but at the same time as a balance to the two other Indians. Moreover, his appointment also balances that of Crawford as a Bengali representative. Mr A.M. Green, I.C.S., Collector of Customs, Bombay and Mr John Coatman represented official interests and completed the committee. Thus the committee was an exercise in checks and balances; there were three Indians and three Europeans, two Hindus to one Muslim, four non-officials to two officials, two representing Bombay interests (Green and Jaffer) two representing Calcutta (Crawford and Neogy), one from south India (Rangachariar) and one from north India (Coatman). These permutations were carefully thought out and invoked to defend the committee from any potential criticism. The fact that no member of the film industry was invited to join the Committee was no oversight. It reflected their ignorance of the film industry and its personnel and was to cause offence, especially in Bombay. (E.I, 1928:110) In constituting the committee thus it was hoped that it would not be seen as a mouthpiece of the government. However, the appointment of Coatman overshadowed these intentions.

John Coatman had a controversial career in both India and later in Britain where he became a prominent figure in the BBC. (Briggs, 1965:147) After graduating with a First from Manchester University, Coatman entered the Indian Police Service and served in the Panjab. He became a protege of Sir Alex Muddiman who considered him far too intelligent for the Police Service! Coatman was given leave to study at Oxford by the Government of India in irregular circumstances and then re-employed after graduation. On his return he was seconded by the central government in the Department of Public Information where he was eventually to succeed Professor L.
Rushbrook Williams as the Director of Public Information in 1925. This occurred at the expense of B.J. Pai, a long serving Indian Deputy Director of the Department. (NAI, Home.Poll./311/1925 + KW; Home Poll., 12/IX/1927) Coatman's appointment provoked a furious debate in the Legislative Assembly. In short Coatman with his police background in the troubled province of the Panjab was seen by the Nationalists as an unsuitable candidate for the sensitive position of Director of Public Information. His appointment was characterized as an attempt to ensure that only a pro-British, repressive and univocal form of public information would be forthcoming. (NAI, Home Poll/2/V/1926) Coatman, however, did have some credentials for inclusion on the committee, not least of which was his enthusiastic advocacy of film as a form of propaganda and public information. (See NAI, Home Poll/311/1925 + KW Memo, 5/2/1926) Nevertheless, one feels that his appointment had the undertones of a watching brief. On more than one occasion Rangachariar complained to the Home Secretary about Coatman's behaviour and attitude during the conduct of the inquiry. (NAI, Letter to H. Haig, Home Secretary, G. of I., 13/1/28, Home Poll/80/II/1928)

The second part of the I.C.C.'s brief was to investigate the prospects of establishing an Empire preferential scheme for film. Prominent nationalists like Lala Lajpat Rai pounced on this proposal. It was taken to demonstrate that the committee was little more than a cynical exercise in the provision of a mechanism whereby British films would displace American films, entering India by the "back door". (E.2, 1928:201) Others agreed with him and the view has been perpetuated in the writings of B.V. Dharap. (1942; 1970-1978) Furthermore, it coloured the attitudes of members of the industry who went before the committee and who were most reluctant to provide information. The Report commented on this and was
adamant that the suspicions were misplaced. (pp.99-104) The evidence supports this view. Further, there was little enthusiasm for an imperial preference scheme in the Anglo-Indian administration. In a changing political and economic climate proposals such as the Empire Preferences system cut little ice in India. The Indian industrialists and businessmen entertained such proposals only insofar as they benefited their interests and they were supported in this line by the economic bureaucrats (see Chapter Five). Seeing that a great deal of effort had been put into establishing some semblance of fiscal and monetary autonomy in conjunction with a slow but perceptible move towards economic autonomy it was unlikely that a policy such as the Empire Preference Scheme could be adopted in India. When the recommendations of the I.C.C. were considered there was no hint that the senior members of the administration disagreed with the recommendation not to proceed with the British proposal. The ideological shift to supporting some form of economic self-sufficiency in India had become more pronounced.

The committee is quite explicit as to why it did not recommend "special preference or encouragement to films produced within the Empire". (p.99) Firstly there was a racial issue. "The British social drama is as much an enigma to the average Indian audience as the American." (p.99) Films from both sources were equally foreign to the Indian audience. Secondly, the local industry needed to be "protected, guided and encouraged" (p.100) and the Empire Preference Scheme would not achieve this because of the economic condition in India and the "competitive inferiority" of India (p.100). India in fact was judged to be a poor market for Empire films for essentially cultural reasons. More significantly the Committee held the view that the only body competent to decide on the issue was the Central Legislature, which was increasingly dominated by Indian
politicians who, as a matter of course, could be relied upon to reject the proposal. (p.101) Further, the Committee argued that India was already subjected to a wide range of British ideas. (p.103) Significantly the European members of the I.C.C. also supported this view. The I.C.C. thus neatly side-stepped the issue. It also pointed out that if the imperial scheme had been implemented Indian films would have been disadvantaged within the Empire for cultural and economic reasons. (p.104) The committee was unanimous on these points as they were on all recommendations bar two. In the event, these, in the eyes of many Indians were the two most important areas to be considered: the question of the establishment of a modified quota for Indian films, and the provision of state aid to encourage the production of Indian films. The division in the Committee on racial lines over these two issues provoked the Minute of Dissent signed by Green, Coatman and Crawford who specified their reasons for disagreeing with the proposals. (pp.161-175) which is discussed in more detail below.

Recommendations of the I.C.C. covered a range of areas in film discourse, from financial aid for the producers, to the necessity for building more cinemas, (p.65) modifying the tariff on imported raw and exposed film stock, (p.72) the granting of training scholarships to young Indians (p.77) and dealing with the piracy of films. (p.85) The principal recommendations, however, were the creation of a Central Cinema Department (pp.49-57), a centralized censorship system "with provincial auxiliary agencies" (pp.105-130) and the introduction of a modified quota system to encourage the production of Indian films. (pp.70-71) The Cinema was to be part of the Commerce Department of the Government of India and "consist of an Advisory Committee with a Cinema Bureau as its Executive Branch". (p.52) The Advisory Committee was to have fourteen members, of whom eight
including the Chairman were to be non-officials, representing the different communal groups and interests. The six officials were to comprise three representatives of the Departments of the Government of India and three representatives of the Provincial Governments. (p.52) The significant dimension of this configuration was the recommendation that the Chairman and the majority of the Advisory Committee be Indians. Responsibility for developing Indian film discourse was to be devolved upon Indians. All members of the I.C.C. unanimously agreed to these recommendations. (p.52)

The Cinema Department was to have a set of general objectives relating to the development of the film industry such as the provision of advice and guidance to the industry. However, the strength of the Department was in the Cinema Bureau which was to be located in Bombay and staffed by experts in production, cinematography, laboratory work including printing and developing and an electrician. The Bureau had a number of specific, vocationally orientated objectives. In summary these were

(a) the maintenance of relevant and current statistics on all aspects of the industry (it was to be obligatory for those engaged in the industry to provide data);
(b) keep relevant and current information on the international scene, making the information available to the trade;
(c) train Indians in technical matters;
(d) to produce films if the Advisory Committee deemed it necessary;
(e) maintain a library of educational films for circulation in India;
(f) conduct an annual competition of best Indian productions and award medals and certificates for merit;
(g) conduct a competition for scenarios with a substantial cash prize. The winning scenarios become the property of the Bureau for disposal to the trade;
(h) the Bureau could examine and comment on submitted scripts for a nominal fee. (pp.56-57)

It was clear that an apparatus of this magnitude would be expensive. The I.C.C. sought to circumvent the conventions governing Indian economic policy in the 1920s by suggesting a complex funding structure for the Cinema Department which was to be funded from four sources. Various
Departments of the Government of India should be directed, and Provincial Governments invited, to contribute towards the maintenance of the Department. The trade would pay an extra 5% tax on all imported films, collected by the Customs Department and disbursed to the Cinema Department. A surplus on censoring fees after defraying costs incurred by the Board of Film Censors and the provincial auxiliaries would be allotted to the Cinema Department. Finally, the Government of India would meet any deficiencies. (pp.55-56)

The Committee had created a sophisticated blueprint for a state apparatus designed to support a national film industry. Indeed, it is the model that was appropriated and modified by the Indians in the post-independence era and remains the basic structure of the extensive film bureaucracy operating in India today. The Patil Commission (1951) covered much of the same terrain as the I.C.C.. It looked at all aspects of the Indian film industry including production, (pp.63-101) distribution (pp.115-110) and exhibition (pp.130-132). It found that little had changed in respect to the organization of the industry. Although more nationalistic in its orientation than the I.C.C. it refused to recommend Reserve Bank investment in the film industry (p.99) and concluded that

[T]he industry ... (was) allowed more or less to its fortune and eke out its own existence and like many other soldiers of fortune in history, the industry became privy to diverse influences and lent itself to exploitation by many contradictory forces. (p.172)

In other words the discursive position of film within Indian society had changed little with the transfer of power from the British to the Indians. The appeal of the Report of the I.C.C. to the emerging Indian film industry is obvious and their chagrin at its non-implementation in the 1930s is not difficult to appreciate. However, its sophistication and comprehensiveness were factors that contributed to its non-acceptance by
the Anglo-Indian administration. Despite the attempts to circumvent the financial rules through a novel method of funding it was abundantly clear that such an edifice would be expensive, thus opening itself up to close scrutiny. Consequently, one feels a sense of absolute delight in the records of the Financial Department, who as a matter of course had to consider the Committee's recommendations, when they found discrepancies in the costings for the venture. They demonstrated that the I.C.C., who had taken the Canadian film apparatus as their model, had not only misread the costs of the Canadian enterprise but had also seriously underestimated the costs of establishing a similar body in India. Instead of the whole Department costing the estimated Rs 4,000,000 per annum, the Finance Department demonstrated that the Cinema Bureau alone would cost Rs 4,000,000 per annum. The Industry Department agreed with the Financial Department's analysis. (NAI/I+L/I-296/1929) The expense involved ensured that the establishment of the Cinema Bureau was doomed from the start. Moreover, the Government of India had made it abundantly clear that the implementation of the proposals of the I.C.C. were dependent upon the establishment of the Cinema Bureau. (Letter to all Local Governments, 2/2/1929, IOLR/PJ/4946/1932) Accordingly, the financial dimensions of the recommendations worked against proposals being implemented.

The second major recommendation of the I.C.C. related to changes in the machinery for film censorship. (1928:105-130) The Committee's findings on the subject will be discussed in detail in Chapter Eight. Here it is sufficient to say that after considering in depth the vexed topic from all perspectives the I.C.C. endorsed the practices of the devolved system then current but went on to recommend that it should be changed back to a centralized system of censorship with a Central Film Board located in
Bombay. In making this recommendation the Committee was aware of the problem of regionalism but discounted it arguing that

A Central Board would have the further advantage of stronger finances, and could therefore afford to employ more highly paid and better qualified stipendaries than the existing Boards. (p.122)

Thus the centralized system would disarm both the regional and metropolitan critics. The Board was to consist of seven to nine members with a majority of non-official Indian members with a non-official Indian Chairman. (p.122) With certain modifications this represents a return to the proposals on censorship embodied in the original 1918 Act which is precisely what the administration desired. Moreover, the industry was attracted to a centralized system because it was seen as being a more rational and efficient system which would put an end to the situation whereby a provincial board could censor and prescribe films that had already been passed in other Provinces. The only real opposition to the proposal came from the Provincial Governments, who opposed any diminution of their powers as a matter of course and on the whole refused to contribute money to a centralized system. Further regional jealousies influenced the procedures. Calcutta opposed any privileging of Bombay by the Government of India as a matter of course on economic, political and cultural grounds. (Action Taken, Report of the I.C.C., IOLR/P3/4946/1932)

The recommendations of the I.C.C. pertaining to censorship were, however, sympathetically received by the Government of India because they did two things. Firstly, they reviewed all of the major criticisms of film censorship and showed them to be baseless. Secondly, it advocated a return to the centralized mode of censorship which was perceived as more effective in a volatile political situation. However in many respects the I.C.C. foresaw the bases for its careful work not coming to fruition. The move back to a centralized system of censorship would remove a power away
from the provincial governments. The Committee commented on the lack of enthusiasm for the inquiry among the provincial governments and went to great lengths to demonstrate how the new system would be more efficient and effective and at the same time protect the local government's rights. (pp.126-127) In other words the Committee recognized that its recommendations went against the grain.

The Legal Department agreed with the view that the implementation of the I.C.C. recommendations would have caused the Government of India to undertake wide ranging changes to the rules governing devolution. The question then arose as to whether the Government considered the cinema important enough to radically change a carefully nurtured and essentially precarious system of governance.

In political terms the changes offered very little as the Provincial Governments would fight to retain their powers. Moreover, the changes to the system could have been misinterpreted and appropriated by the Nationalists to demonstrate the repressive nature of British rule despite the widespread support in nearly all sections of the Indian society for a visibly stronger system of film censorship. There is more than a little irony in the fact that when presented with the opportunity to implement a centralized system of censorship that had been on their agenda since 1920 the administration fudged the issue. Pragmatic political considerations prevailed over ideological ones. However, the decision to retain the devolution machinery could be rationalized by the Report itself. The I.C.C. looked scrupulously at all of the allegations and complaints about film censorship and its social impact. Their major conclusion was that all complaints were misplaced, without substance, essentially ideologically and racially determined. (pp.109-120) They also concluded
that the censors were effective. (p.121) These conclusions represent the major achievement of the I.C.C. They were achieved in such a way as to be almost invisible, hidden under the weight of the controversies associated with the Imperial Preference Scheme and the recommendation on limited quotes and financial aid for the industry. In making those decisions the I.C.C. effectively created the conditions of an historical compromise whereby the competing Indian interests could develop. Its thoroughness educated these interests into recognizing the strength of the status quo the Cinematograph Act had established. For these reasons there have been few attempts in the post-Independence era to change significantly any aspects of the discursive formation of the Indian film industry by the administration. The Government of India invoked these findings to justify its actions in respect to the I.C.C. Indeed after the inquiry, concern about the possible alleged effects of the cinema in India was displaced or removed from the administration's agenda. It was satisfied that the system was working effectively and it also came to the realization that the devolved system with its residual powers at the District Magistrate level could be utilized in British interests more quickly than a centralized system dominated by Indian politicians. Other more significant developments also pre-occupied the Government of India in 1927-28 such as the impact of the Simon Commission on the political scene. In contrast, the film producers had a text that embodied and expressed their desires in respect to the development of the film industry. They were to take up the cause and hammer away at the Government over two issues contained within the Report: the question of quotas for Indian films and the provision of government funds to encourage Indian filmmaking. In other words the source of pressure on the Government of India to do something about film shifted from Anglo-Indian society to the Indian film industry itself.
Another area of controversy was the recommendation that the Government provide financial and economic assistance to the Indian film industry. These recommendations covered quite minor aspects of the industry from a scholarship system (p.77) to the granting of licences for travelling cinemas (p.86) and major considerations that ran directly against the prevailing economic orthodoxy of the time. At the heart of the matter was a view among the Indian members of the Committee that "Indian interest(s) should predominate" (p.147) and that this could only be achieved through "liberal treatment from the government." (p.147) The European members of the Committee had no argument with the first sentiment but objected strenuously to the second. For the Indian members the "liberal treatment" entailed two things. Firstly

that loans be given favourable terms to producers by Government on the security of produced films approved by the Central Bureau. (p.143)

Secondly that a modified quota system be introduced "for a period of ten years" (p.144) to encourage the industry by compelling cinemas, where possible (sic), to screen Indian films. (p.144) It was envisaged that this scheme would ensure that "within ten years 50 percent of films shown in India will be Indian." (p.144) It was this recommendation that elicited the Minority Minute of Dissent from the European members of the Committee.

The disagreement between the Anglo-Indian and Indian members of the I.C.C. over the issues of quotas and government financial support for the film industry represents a fissure in the otherwise univocal text. The reasons for the rupture are deep seated and instructive. On the surface two of the members of the I.C.C. (Green and Coatman) were officers of the Government and they could not endorse a recommendation that could be seen
as explicitly contrary to official policy. Protectionism in a number of forms and guises had been advocated by Indians for Indian industrial enterprises with some success. As discussed above, the British used tariffs as a means of protecting Indian industries when they faced competition from regions outside of the Empire, such as Japan and America, and indeed to support competition against British goods after the 1920s in such areas as cotton manufacturing. (Tomlinson, 1979:15-16) However, stringent conditions were introduced to minimize Government intervention in the market place. The protected industries were called 'nation building' industries, and film as a form of entertainment despite its industrial base could not be accepted as a 'nation building' industry. On the contrary it seemed ideally placed economically and ideologically to operate in the market place. These reasons could be marshalled by the officials to dissent from both contentious recommendations but I think there were other, deeper reasons, which can be deduced from the language in the Minute of Dissent, which compelled Crawford, the non-official European, to adopt the same position as Green and Coatman on the issues.

The Minute of Dissent exemplifies precisely the attitude of the ruling Anglo-Indian elite towards the Indian. It is more than a document about film discourse, it is a polemic that articulates clearly why the British should rule India and Indians should remain subservient.

In effect it is a lecture to both the Indian members of the I.C.C. and to the wider Indian audience. It is studded with phrases and words such as "we are convinced that our colleagues have been misled ...failure to appreciate the true position of the industry"(1928:61) and "in the light of these facts we cannot understand how our colleagues can seriously maintain that the Government should aid the industry financially or that a
quota is necessary" (p. 164) or "to indulge in such speculation would indeed be a new and fantastic role for any respectable Government" and again, with specific reference to the recommended quota scheme: "It is hardly necessary therefore to criticise further the "skeleton scheme" which our colleagues have put forward. It is indeed a skeleton, and those who put the bones together, despairing apparently of their own ability to clothe them can only suggest that a new committee should be appointed to devise a tolerably workable scheme". (p. 170) In the view of the European members the proposals embodied in the financial and economic recommendations enthusiastically supported by the Indian members of the Committee would encourage the production of inferior films .... and would confirm the present producers in the very weaknesses which they rightly deplore. If these producers gained thereby an immediate financial advantage, it could only be a flash in the pan. Inferior Indian films would alienate Indian audiences. (p. 169).

It concluded with a general endorsement of the bulk of the recommendations and a prophecy that if the Cinema Bureau was established along sound business lines the Indian film industry:

will never look back, and that even before the expiry of our colleagues' decade, at least 50% of India's screen time will be occupied by Indian films. (p. 175)

The conciliatory tone of the conclusion can in no way efface the excesses of the text. Indians educated within an English idiom and educational discourse could read the tone of the Minute and understand the ill-disguised disdain for the Indian mind, and quite correctly became upset by the meanings contained therein. The Minute marshals the facts and deploys them with punctilious logic. It displays its command of rational argument, unashamedly implying quite clearly that the Indian members of the I.C.C. were irrational, swayed by factors outside of the facts before them. The accusations contained an even deeper implication: if in relatively sympathetic circumstances and conditions Indian intellectuals and/or members of a ruling elite arrived at the wrong conclusions and
demonstrated a tendency to be swayed by racial considerations, then the deeply held view among the Anglo-Indians that the Indian mind was incapable of rational and logical decision-making was confirmed. The view that Indians were not ready to govern themselves was justified and the continuing British presence necessary. The Minute of Dissent is a powerful reminder of the actual state of affairs; and reason enough to engender deep suspicion among the Indians as to the true purpose of the I.C.C. Rangachariar's reply to the Minute of Dissent is lame by comparison, virtually conceding the arguments put forward by the Europeans. It is brief, setting out the conditions whereby the Report had been composed, and explained why, in circumstances where the committee was split 3:3 along racial lines, the recommendations pertaining to financial support for the Indian film industry and the establishment of quotas could be called the "majority" report. In effect it was made so by him voting for the two measures in his capacity as Chairman of the committee. (p.176) He also takes the Europeans to task on a couple of minor points about the interpretation of evidence and concluded:

we are differing really on two or three points of detail, no doubt essential in themselves, but really we agreed on the bulk of the conclusions and recommendations in Chapter IV as will be seen on a careful reading of the whole report and minute. (p.177)

The Government of India considered actively the recommendations and the process of internal consultation continued until at least 1932. (Report of the I.C.C.: Action Taken: IOLR/PJ/4964/1932) The key departments in this process were the Legal Department and the Industry Department who convinced the Government of India that it was difficult to implement the recommendations because of the expenses involved and the political ramifications for Dyarchy. The Government of India considered this advice and decided against the recommendations. A further factor behind the decision was the view that the recommendations enshrined a set of
privileges for a social group they had little sympathy with. The administration was convinced that the film industry had not attracted people of the "right type" despite the best efforts of the industry groups such as the I.M.P.P.A. and M.P.S.I. In the final analysis, however, it was the combination of cost factors and political ramifications that ensured that the I.C.C. recommendations were never implemented. Though it was never explicitly stated it is clear that the Commerce Department felt that the establishment of an expensive apparatus like the Cinema Bureau would have set a dangerous precedent. Nevertheless, while no recommendation was enacted into law other recommendations such as the one pertaining to an increase on tariff on imported exposed film stock (Rs2/foot) was endorsed by the Commerce Department and accepted by the Government of India. It was felt that this measure would protect the local industry just as effectively as a quota system. (NAI/I+L/I-273(102)/1929)

The Bombay film industry found it difficult to accept the Government's decisions on the I.C.C. Report and sent three trade delegations to the Commerce Department, one in 1935 and two in 1937, to discuss the implementation of the I.C.C. Report. (Filmland, 4/3/1933:10) On both occasions the Commerce Department accepted the industry's arguments on tariff increases and granted a concession by not increasing the tariff on raw stock to 30% as recommended by the O'Hara Tariff Bill, 1932. (ibid.) The Commerce Department then argued that it had incorporated the film industry into the economic mainstream and had thus accorded the film industry parity with other Indian industries that were encouraged through tariffs. While not a convincing argument it does demonstrate the British tendency to concede the minimum wherever possible in order to maintain a negotiating advantage. Finally, in discussing the I.C.C. it should always
be remembered that censorship was always the major concern of the Government of India. The Home Secretary, Crerar, made this abundantly clear when he announced the Committee's formation in 1927. An analysis of the Government files tends to confirm this view. (see Chapter Eight) The I.C.C. Report recommended precisely what the government desired: a centralized, repressive apparatus firmly under British control. When it was found that the administrative price to achieve the centralized was too high the British effectively shelved the whole matter despite its costs and thoroughness.

Other factors also influenced the Government's decision not to implement the Report. In the first place there were divisions within the film industry over the recommendations. Members of the Calcutta industry took exception to the privileged position the I.C.C. recommendations accorded Bombay; film importers and distributors saw the emphasis on production as potentially undermining their position. Alex Hague, a major figure in the Bombay industry in the 1920s, who was an importer of films and film equipment as well as a film producer, visited London in 1928 and informed the India Office that alternative positions existed within the Indian film industry, and that he personally was happy with things as they existed. (IOLR/PJ/3977/1928) Any division within the Indian formation was exploited by the British, but there were also three other significant reasons why the Government of India did not act on the I.C.C. recommendations.

In essence the recommendations of the I.C.C. transferred responsibility for film discourse from Anglo-Indian hands to Indian hands. In theory this was acceptable, reflecting the changes in political discourse brought about by the devolution of power under Dyarchy. In practice it was
another matter. To allow the control to pass from Anglo-Indian hands was judged not to be acceptable. This is never made explicit, but the valency of the language used in the Minute of Dissent discussed above reflects this view.

In addition the Report demonstrated to the Government's satisfaction that the system of censorship established under the Cinematograph Act was effective. The recommendation to shift responsibility from the periphery to the centre was not a recommendation to change the substance of censorship. On the contrary it was to be enhanced and maintained. In convincing the government of the effectiveness of censorship after a careful evaluation of the major complaints, the I.C.C. effectively removed film censorship from official Anglo-Indian discourse. If the rules could not be changed to accommodate a centralized system it did not really matter as an adequate substitute, which was much more in tune with the political realities of the time, was not only in place, but could also be seen to be functioning effectively. After the I.C.C. Report censorship became a matter of routine.

Finally, one other factor, probably the most significant of all, determined the Anglo-Indian actions in respect to film. Barnouw and Krishnaswamy point out that the formation of the I.C.C. was announced on the same day that The Jazz Singer was released for exhibition in New York; the 6 October 1927. (Barnouw and Krishnaswamy, 1980:58) The impact of sound technology on Indian film production was profound. Not only did it ensure a degree of protection from the imported film that legal and economic protection could barely approach, it also ensured that Indian cultural conventions became dominant in film discourse. The move towards formulaic film making which deployed music, dance, song and melodrama was
established rapidly as I have shown in Chapter Five. Bombay's fascination with Hollywood as an economic and textual model always remained but the pragmatics of production demanded that Indian culture, or cultures, constituted the bedrock of textual production. Paradoxically, the European members of the I.C.C., in their polemic, read the signs correctly. Quotas and financial aid were not required to establish a viable Indian cinema industry — the social and economic forces at work in the Indian formation which were beyond the control of either the British or the Indians determined the growth of the industry. Nevertheless the desire to control that growth remained as strong as ever.

The reasons for the non-implementation of the I.C.C. recommendations was never fully appreciated by the Indian film industry because they never had access to all of the facts. Consequently, they continued to characterize the Government of India's actions as being essentially both political and anti-film. This view led Barnouw and Krishnaswamy to conclude that the Committee was ignored because it "rejected its premises". I have argued that it did not reject its premises but adopted them wholeheartedly, which led it to exceed them. In doing this the I.C.C. showed the Government two things. Firstly, that its policies were within certain parameters, successful and supported widely within Indian society. The complaints about film emanated from a minority. Secondly, the film industry was progressing satisfactorily without government support. Given these factors combined with the complexities of implementing the I.C.C. recommendations it is not surprising the Government of India chose to reject the I.C.C. recommendations and maintain the status quo. This was the real achievement of the I.C.C. as far as the Government of India was concerned. It legitimated both the recommendations and the mechanisms set in place by the Cinematograph Act of 1920. These were essentially a
careful amalgam of censorship and the Indianization of the industry "along the right lines" which has remained the official position in India ever since.

The Film Advisory Committee 1942

British intervention in the film industry entered something of a hiatus between 1928 and 1940. Film became less of a social and more of a political issue, one which was contained by the mechanisms in place. The major issue was the circulation of images of Gandhi. (See Appendix 3) Here the Boards of Film Censors excelled themselves and proscribed all of the 1930s newsreels of Gandhi, including those showing him with the King-Emperor.

The most significant development of the period revolved around the changes to the rules of government enshrined in the Government of India Act of 1935. Film remained a provincial matter administered by the Provincial Home Department which was headed by an Indian minister. Control of the cinema, as foreshadowed in the I.C.C. report, passed from British to Indian hands albeit in a different form to that envisaged by the I.C.C.. However, apart from Bombay there was no obvious changes to censorship procedures. In Bombay, K.M. Munshi, the Gujarati intellectual and former screen-writer for Sagar Movietone became Home Minister. He took two steps towards accommodating the Bombay film industry's desires for legitimation. Firstly, he appointed Chunnilal, a principal of Bombay Talkies as a member of the Bombay Board of Film Censors, thus satisfying a long held request of the M.P.S.I.. Secondly he released a number of proscribed films for exhibition. He also promised to give government aid to the Bombay film industry in line with the I.C.C. recommendations, but was unable to meet these promises. (I.M.P.P.A. Silver Jubilee, 1962:52) In the final
analysis actions in respect to the cinema complex in the period were low
key and interventions minimal. The outbreak of World War II, however,
changed this state of affairs.

In 1939 Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy, unilaterally declared war on Germany
on behalf of Britain without reference to the major Indian political
parties, invoking the Defence of India Act which superseded all civil laws
for the duration of the war. It was a political blunder of the first
magnitude which alienated the significant sections of the Indian political
and intellectual formation who were sympathetic to the British position
because they recognized the dangers embodied in fascism. However, they
saw the British decision to enter the war without consultation as a
mockery of previous political developments. The declaration of war led to
the invocation of the Defence of India Act which was to have considerable
impact on the Indian film industry. In one sense it represents the most
naked and undisguised intervention of all, but at the same time the
British sought to soften their intervention through consultation: in
other words, to continue to implicate significant Indian groups in their
actions.

Under the Defence of India Act film returned to centralized control
although film censorship continued under provincial control, which in
effect brought about little substantial change. However, the Provincial
Boards became more active. (Dharap, 1942:120-126) The real changes
occurred at the point of production. By 1940 the film industry was
confronted by a number of problems. Finance remained a problem, communal
disturbances affected the size of the Indian audiences, entertainment
taxes had been increased in the provinces and the industry was generally
recovering from the impact of the 1930s depression. (I.M.P.P.A. Silver
Jubilee, 1962:55) The major impact of the war was to limit the resources available for film making. All film stock and film machinery was imported into India and it did not have a high priority. To overcome these problems the Government of India formed a Film Advisory Committee (hereafter F.A.C.) to advise it on matters pertaining to film production. (1962:57) The first chairman of the F.A.C. was Chandulal J Shah who resigned in 1941 and was replaced by J B H Wadia. (p.56)

The film industry did not feel the impact of the war until 1941. Thereafter there was a constant struggle between the studios and the free lancers for the limited resources. Initially the government called for voluntary restrictions on the length of film to 12,000 ft. This proved impractical and in May 1942 regulations were brought in that limited films to 11,000 ft in length and trailers to 400 ft. (1962:56) Throughout all of this the Indian Motion Picture Producers Association was advising the government through its representatives on the F.A.C. (p.56)

The problem appeared to be contained by the continuing British policy of accommodation through its recognition of the existing economic situation within the industry. However, after 1941 there was a substantial increase in box office receipts in India (p.57) which arose from a general increased prosperity in the urban centres. The development created conditions for further competition for resources as the increased box office was an incentive for further production (p.57). The established producers sought to control the situation by denying freelance producers access to film stock. The I.M.P.P.A. recommended that film stock be issued on past performance (p.57) and film stars be limited to appearing in no more than two films at a time. (p.59) The government responded by issuing producers with licenses to produce films and limited film stock to
40,000 feet for each film which included negative, sound and positive film to cover all stages of production. They also asked the producers to supply the scripts of the films and agreements with the financiers, studios and stars before issuing a license. The I.M.P.P.A. protested against the latter. (p.57) In its campaign to maintain its hegemony over film production in Bombay and Calcutta the I.M.P.P.A. lobbied the government and established a publicity drive through its trade publications against the regulations. This was unsuccessful and the I.M.P.P.A. representatives withdrew from the F.A.C. in June 1945. (p.57) However, the controls were lifted in December 1945 and the industry operated under an I.M.P.P.A. evolved scheme of studio allocation to overcome raw stock shortages from July, 1945. (p.58)

Considering the wartime conditions between 1940 and 1945 and the potential for draconian measures it is interesting to note how leniently the Government of India behaved towards film. The real problems lay within the industry itself.

The Proceedings of Bombay Motion Picture Congress, 1939 show that massive tensions had emerged within the Bombay film industry throughout the 1930s between the established film producers who were studio based and the freelance independents, a marginal group who had hitherto been largely outside of the industry politics of the 1930s. Chunilal J. Shah denounced freelancing in his opening address to the 1939 Congress, acknowledging that the Congress was an attempt to resolve the tensions within the industry and at the same time maintain the hegemony of the studio. (p.ii) Economic conditions in Bombay in the war period created a situation that worked against this state of affairs and encouraged the freelance producers insofar as enormous profits had been generated, within the Indian economy much of it in the second, or black, sector. At the same
time the film industry demonstrated a marked increase in profitability and thus became an attractive conduit for 'black' money. (1962:56) In a situation of competition for scarce resources the F.A.C. became a crucial factor in the studio establishment's desire to maintain its dominant position in relation to the independents. It was therefore imperative that the Chairman come from this sector. Wadia fulfilled the criteria of Chairman being an active member of the Motion Picture Society of India and the Indian Motion Picture Producers Association, both establishment organizations. (Barucha, 1938:81)

The British initially went along with the guidelines devised by the F.A.C. whereby film stock was allocated according to a predetermined formula based on past production records, which favoured the established studio producers. However, in 1944 the British broke this informal arrangement and insisted that allocations also be made to independent producers. This decision was possibly the result of intense lobbying. Wadia and other Indian members of the F.A.B. immediately resigned in protest at the decision. However, it was a futile gesture. The tactic of using the wartime conditions to freeze out the independents could only have limited success. The independents' financial resources were too great, and their financial inducements to established stars and technicians to transfer from the studios to their mode of production were too seductive. The studios who had invested their capital in establishing production complexes could not match the financial inducement and, although they fought a rear guard action well into the 1950s, their position was always fragile. During World War II there was a major realignment of economic and cultural forces in the Indian film industry that was a consequence of specific economic and political forces operating in the volatile wartime conditions. The British could not control these conditions but they could
make critical interventions that influenced the conditions one way or another. This is precisely what happened in 1944 when they invoked their reserved right to make discretionary allowances of film stock under the wartime regulations. (I.M.P.P.A. Silver Jubilee, 1962:58)

In the post-war era these forces became more apparent and the studios entered into a steady decline for three reasons. By the 1950s the film entrepreneurs who had established the studios in the 1930s had either died or lost their drive. They were no match for the young, largely Panjabi freelancers who worked hard to take the industry away from their control. Secondly, they did not have access to the same level of resources as the freelancers who were prepared to use huge sums of money to entice established stars and the skilled technicians away from the studios. Thirdly, the distributors were prepared to back the freelancers in their desire to break the power of the producers within the industry. The establishment of the F.A.C. initially stalled this development which had its roots in the 1930s, but the 1944 decision to include the freelancers in film allocation process contributed significantly to the decline of the producers' in the film industry. Ironically, it was this belated, virtually off-hand act on the part of the British that was to be their enduring legacy to the mode of production of Indian films. By the 1950s the studios had become little more than service centres for freelance production and the style of film making current today emerged.


In this chapter I have argued that the role and influence of the British on the development of the Indian film industry was marginal. My examination of the four interventions shows that the British were
critically marginalised on all occasions. The formal interventions were
the Cinematograph Act of 1919; the W. Evans Report of 1922; the I.C.C.
of 1927-28; and the application of the Defence of India Act to film
production for the duration of the war, 1940-1945. All saw a distinct
shift from Anglo-Indian control to Indian control of the film complex, not
only in the economic sphere, but also in the ideological sphere. Each
intervention was the product of a specific conjunction where conditions
demanded action on the part of the British. The outcome of these actions
was to have a long term effect on the type of films produced in India but
the effects were not necessarily those sought or desired by the British.
The Cinematograph Act gave film legal recognition. At the same time it
established a framework for controlling film that was to create the
problems for the British.

By devolving power the British, to use Foucault's terms, invested the
Indians with the means whereby they would inherit the right to "exercise"
power. In respect to film this happened as early as 1937. Evans'
recommendation that a nationalized industry be rigorously controlled by a
repressive state apparatus could not be accepted given the political
realities established by Dyarchy. The British rejected Evans'
recommendations for practical and ideological reasons and had to opt for a
cinema determined by capitalist market forces where it has remained to
this day. The I.C.C. provided a blueprint for a mixed economic cinema
complex where market forces were augmented by state intervention and
supported by a film bureaucracy, elements that characterize the current
Indian cinema complex. Finally, the British demonstrated that in extreme
circumstances such as war all aspects of film production could be
controlled by the state but only with the help of the industry. When the
relationship of compliance between the studios broke down conditions were
created whereby the control of actual production passed from the studios
to the freelancers: a situation that neither the British nor the studios
desired. But above all else, the British created a climate whereby the
ideology of censorship of film discourse was normalized. No one ever
seriously questioned the need for the censorship of film in India, only
the type of censorship was ever contested. In 1945, on the revocation of
the Defence of India Act, film censorship reverted to the provinces under
the interim arrangements arising out of the transfer from the British to
the Indian administration. The Home Minister of the interim government of
Bombay, Moraiji Desai, a future Prime Minister of India, visited the
offices of the Board of Film Censors and demonstrated what directions
censorship would take under a national government. The promise of a more
stringent and ideologically pure form of censorship was implicit in
Desai's action, which demonstrated the ultimate and total marginalisation
of the British to Indian film discourse. (I.M.P.A.A. Silver Jubilee,
1962:61)
CHAPTER EIGHT

CENSORSHIP

Censorship has become an overvalued issue in Indian film discourse for two reasons. Firstly it has provided a psychic mechanism whereby Indian rulers, in order to maintain an even more rigorous system of censorship, could displace discontent with their actions from themselves to the British. Secondly, the question of censorship disguises the true relationship between the forces of production and the superstructure. The British obsession with issues of censorship impeded their ever coming to any real understanding of the forces at work in the Indian film industry despite their inquiries and collection of statistical data. The nationalist government not only maintained the apparatus of censorship but they continued to subscribe to the ideology underpinning the apparatus through a series of inquiries that followed on from the work of the I.C.C. (Patil Commission of Inquiry, 1951; Khosla Commission, 1963).

Consequently, the commercial cinema and the state have always been at odds in the Indian context.

The issue of film censorship during the British period has attracted a great deal of critical attention from historians of the Indian cinema. In part this interest has arisen from a perception that at the core of the censorship activity of the British there was a crude racist ideology at work. In part this is true but it took a curious and ambiguous path, for it was the desire on the part of the British to control a system of representation which they was perceived to travesty their way of life which led them to initiate the first moves towards the establishment of a repressive apparatus, and not the desire to control the Indian systems of
representations. A major aspect of the I.C.C. brief was to investigate the issue of censorship. The Committee reported that the:

vast majority of witnesses, however, consider that censorship is certainly necessary in India, and that it is the only effective method of preventing the import, production and public exhibition of films which might demoralize morals, hurt religious susceptibilities, or excite communal or racial animosities. We unanimously agree with that majority view. We also consider that the existing censorship has yielded on the whole satisfactory results, but that its machinery is capable of improvement.

(Report of the I.C.C., 1928:105)

Herein lay the recurring surface motifs of censorship: demoralization, religious intolerance, communal friction. But as Barnouw and Krishnaswamy point out in a detailed analysis of some of the evidence of the I.C.C.:

While the need for censorship was thus asserted on various grounds, political necessity was almost never mentioned among them. Yet when the instances of censorship are examined, political reasons loomed large while the other arguments were advanced ... from Indians and non-Indians alike, laid the basis for a strict political censorship.

(Barnouw & Krishnaswamy 1980: 53)

Another major account of censorship (Vasudev, 1978), states:

Since film as a medium developed in an India under colonial domination, censorship was introduced by the rulers along the lines of what existed in their own country and was grudgingly accepted (emphasis added) in India as part of Imperialist (sic) control. Nor was there any protest against it by those who led the independence movement, as they did not consider cinema a worthwhile cause. As the years of British rule drew to a close, the film industry rejoiced in the coming of independence in the hope that political freedom for the country would signify the end of the limiting controls exercised by an alien authority. But an infrastructure of film censorship had been built up and, along with the whole administrative apparatus, was taken over by the new national government. (xi).

Vasudev's book, Liberty and License in the Indian Cinema (1978), purports to trace the development of film censorship in India. Her framework is clearly elitist as she argues that censorship in collusion with commercial producers have denied film the opportunity to develop 'into a form of art' (p.XV) in India. Her position accords with Rajadyaksha's category of "scornful amusement" (see p.2) in respect to the Indian cinema as she
denies both the validity of the expression of the huge number of popular films produced in India and the audience's enjoyment of those films. Her position is entirely contradictory on the British period. On the one hand she wishes to strike a creditable nationalist stance on the issue and attribute all the blame for film censorship at the feet of the British and on the other hand she is forced to recognize that the actual number of films censored in the British period was quite insignificant in the mainstream of commercial filmmaking. But they do give an indication of why the general run of pictures dealt with uncontroversial topics, where producers attempted to attract audiences with offers of sensational scenes of seduction, sadism and crime. They went to the censor boards prepared to cut out immediately all scenes that were thought to have gone beyond tolerable limits. For them, there was no problem of compromise with principle, or with artistry. The sooner a film could be released the sooner the money would start coming in. (p.48)

In setting up the unholy alliance of indigenous commerce and alien repression as a straw man to be demolished Vasudev cites twenty-one films. (pp.44-48) Her analysis represents a significant misreading of the economic practices current within the industry at the time and a lack of understanding of the industry's relationship to the government apparatuses. Vasudev has clearly not consulted the relevant files in either the National Archives of India or the India Office Library and Records. If she had she would have modified her argument which is theoretically impoverished. In this chapter I will contest both the views of Vasudev and Barnouw and Krishnaswamy on censorship arguing that censorship was not just a question of race and politics but more importantly about hegemonic relationships and practices.

Both accounts quoted above articulate the prevailing view that censorship in India must be viewed as essentially political in nature, and it was basically a British and not an Indian imperative. However, despite Vasudev's qualifier, few acknowledge the Indian contribution to the
foundation of an extensive process of film censorship that began under the British and has continued until the present. From the beginning the Indian elite adopted similar attitudes to those of the British on the subject; Rangachariar’s statements explored below illustrate the complicity between the two social groups on the issue of film censorship. Further, the industry itself remained compliant on the issue. Where disagreement did arise it was over individual films or the representation of individuals such as Gandhi rather than over the process or the need for censorship.

Consequently I wish to dispute the view that the censorship of Indian film discourse is essentially racially determined and argue that the issue of censorship needs to be put on a firmer theoretical basis. To understand its significance one needs to revert, in the first instance, to Nowell-Smith’s injunction (see above) on how the unconscious meshes into other histories. In doing this we can demonstrate that censorship is a hegemonic apparatus available to all ruling classes, it is a visible manifestation of the exercise of power. As such one then recognizes that those 'without the power' are enmeshed in the process of censorship in a multiplicity of roles: its object, its transmitters, its resistors: a situation that reflects accurately the role of the Indian film producers in the process of film censorship in India.

How did this arise? What were the conditions obtaining to the climate of censorship in the British era? How did they manifest themselves? How were Indian elites implicated in the process? How successful was it? These are just some of the questions that arise out of the recognition that British hegemony was underpinned by a repressive system that could only operate with the complicity of Indians. In answering them we must
traverse a complex terrain that includes sociological as well as psychological factors, but in the first place we must decide what the conditions of censorship were.

Unlike propaganda, which in many respects is an opposite to censorship, censorship has remained largely untheorized insofar as one is involved in the production of messages, and the other in their suppression. Censorship can be seen as a consequence of film itself. Film is a system of representations whose modality is realistic, which paradoxically can arouse fears of the Other: the dark uncivilized and the subversive. Put another way, of all the means of cultural expression available cinema, which combines image, sound and movement, can represent reality polysemously, which leaves it open to a multiplicity of readings and decodings. Early experiences of film suggested to the authorities throughout the world that film had a tendency to represent the shocking, gratuitous and indecent. (Phelps, 1975:20) Film was perceived as challenging both the accepted aesthetic codes of representation and the social conventions that underwrote them. These codes and conventions of representation and behaviour have been categorised as Victorian, a term that is itself ideologically laden with notions of political, sexual and economic hegemonies. Film, almost universally, was perceived as challenging these (Phelps:22): hence the move to the stringent censorship of film on a world-wide scale.

Our understanding of Victorian sexual mores and erotic behaviour has undergone a re-evaluation in recent years. Rather than being sexually anaesthetic we find that the Victorians and their successors had rich erotic lives within clearly understood conventions and boundaries. (Gay, 1984:passim) The nineteenth century was the era of the nude in art
determined by patriarchy and capitalism. (Berger, 1972:54) but these representations of nudity had to be contained within a complex classical illusory system. Transgression of this system evoked severe censure. Maude Allen operated within this classical system. Her reference point was biblical - Salome and the Dance of the Seven Veils - and although it could be viewed with apprehension by Anglo-Indians they nevertheless understood its erotic presence. In reality they quibbled only about the context. In contrast, film appeared entirely divorced from the classical and hegemonic system of representation, and hence attracted censure. Furthermore the fact that film was cheap and accessible and appealed to the masses, compounded the issue. It was not until key figures in the film industry in France and America, such as Abel Gance and D W Griffith, began to explore the classical systems that film even began to be discussed in terms of art, and this partially explains the extravagant claims made on their behalf in terms of structuring film discourse. Nevertheless, the tendency of film to present alleged unproblematic realistic portrayals of sexual, political, criminal and class relations was perceived quickly and almost universally: censorship was not just an issue in India. Indeed as I have shown in Chapter Seven the censorship of film discourse began quite late in India. What separates India from the other countries are the conditions under which censorship was constructed, and the problems this entailed.

Philip Woodruff, (or Mason) the principal historian and apologist of the British administrative services in India, consciously invokes a Platonic model of British rule:

The men of the service were chosen and trained on Plato's principles as Guardians who would rule in the light of their own vision of the Good and the Beautiful - or, at least, on an English compromise with Plato. (Woodruff, 1963:15)
At the same time this body of men could be characterized as merging into the Indian social structure and constituting a caste. In seeking to synthesize classical models and Indian models Woodruff inadvertently provides us with a clue to the fundamental premises of censorship.

Woodruff's formulation is problematic. In constructing the British as such he is denying them complete psychic lives in an colonial situation. In Freudian terms the Anglo-Indian "guardians" are all super-ego divested of their ego and their id. Paradoxically Woodruff describes a pathological state in attributing an exclusively guardian status to the British. This led them to adopt essentially destructive attitudes towards the things they saw as representing the id, hence their attitude towards the "untutored Indian masses" so neatly encapsulated in the headlines of Bromley's article in the Leeds Mercury

    Film That Lowers Our Prestige in India
    Imperilling the Safety of White Women.
    Pictures Utterly unsuited for the Native Mind by Constance
    Bromley - formerly Secretary and Manager of the Opera House,
    Calcutta.

    (Leeds Mercury, 20/8/1936)

Moreover, the attribution suggests that the Anglo-Indian found it difficult to distinguish the reality of their political and cultural situation. The advent of film into the volatile Anglo-Indian scene ensured that a discourse of censorship would occur in India that reproduced precisely the sexual, racial and cultural fears of the Anglo-Indians which reflected their tenuous status in India. This discourse incorporated all senior branches of Anglo-Indian life including the press, the church and the bureaucracy both in India and Britain.

There is a parallel between the hierarchised society projected by Woodruff and the actual structure of Indian society. Caste which determines much of a Indian society is organised hierarchically and the rules that govern
social relationships between the castes are shaped by sexual and dietary factors. (Karkar, 1981:122-124) Within Indian cultural relations men are encouraged to reach a stage of renunciation in their maturity when all other social obligations have been met. (Shahane, 1970:68) In other words the super-ego has a powerful hold on the ideological underpinnings of Indian social thought. The excesses of the filmic text was equally as subversive to Indian thought as Anglo-Indian. Consequently both groups inclined towards systems of censorship.

In thinking about censorship as a discourse we should be aware of Foucault's observation

history constantly teaches us, discourse is not simply that which translate struggles or system of domination, but the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized. (1981:52-53)

Censorship in British India was never static. Its object was always shifting according to the prevailing social, economic and political conditions and relations of a specific moment. The original object of British censorship of film discourse in India was the representation of European women. During the 1920s this underwent significant shifts where more general, and sophisticated, concerns became paramount such as the general social effects of film. By the 1930s political considerations dominated censorship where the censors went to extraordinary lengths to keep Gandhi from the Indian screens. (Baskaran, 1981:139-140) In the 1940s wartime conditions prevailed and political considerations remained dominant, but films generally perceived as undermining social morale were also censored. Each of these shifts of emphasis corresponds to other significant developments that impinged upon the formation of the film industry. The desire to control the representations of European women corresponds to the recognition among the Anglo-Indians that a crisis in hegemony had occurred. Similar relationships can be established for each
of the shifts in censorship activity. These are; 1913-1925, issues of race and gender; 1925-1937, issues of political representation; 1937-1940, an interregnum; 1940-1945, war-time conditions when national security and propaganda issues dominated. Intersecting with the censorship issues was the fact that the Indian film industry underwent a steady and substantial improvement in its productive capacity. Censorship laws were originally formulated to contain the problem of race and gender in imported American films but as the Indian industry expanded it was clear to the administration that the regulations required modification. Moreover, the sheer volume of Indian film production and the nature of the texts produced within a rich indigenous cultural tradition presented the system of censorship with a series of crises that mirror the crises confronting the Anglo-Indians on the broader socio-political front. Consequently it is necessary to establish a clear picture of film censorship.

In constructing the narrative I will first look briefly at the general conditions of film censorship in India, then go on to look at the conditions surrounding the formation of a regional Board of Film Censors, and the perceptions of the role as a guardian of moral probity and political stability. Finally through a critique of the statistical data available for one year I will seek to establish the links between the economic growth of the industry and the problems this caused the censorship system.

Film censorship was formally initiated by the Cinematograph Act, 1918 (II of 1918) but rather than quell the problem of cinema as the government expected, cracks in the system began to occur almost immediately. Rather than diminish criticism the overt intervention of the state into film discourse in India seemed to exacerbate, even encourage further criticism.
The I.C.C. took very seriously its brief to examine critically the conditions surrounding both the criticism of censorship and the practices of censorship. Its review of both is illuminating as it provides the most objective and measured evaluation of the conditions. By its own admission it engaged with the issue from a prejudiced point-of-view in that it anticipated finding evidence to substantiate the allegations made against the practice of film censorship in the period 1920-1927. (Report of the I.C.C., 1928:109-110)\(^1\). The evidence was not forthcoming and in the end the I.C.C. produced a remarkably cool and in many respects liberal analysis of film censorship. Reporting to the Home Department, G.G. Hooper, Secretary to the I.C.C., anticipated that the findings generally, and specifically in respect to censorship, would be controversial:

I imagine the Report will have a pretty mixed reception, but that was inevitable, I think, however, it should be quite interesting to unprejudiced readers.

(NAI/Letter from G H Hooper to Home Secretary, GOI, NAI Hom Poll. 80/XXIV/1928)

Prejudice was not confined to members of the public. The effect of the I.C.C. Report on censorship was to apparently remove it from the public sphere into the private sphere. This re-location included the private dimension of the administration. The view of Sir Maurice Seton, Under Secretary of State for India expressed the continuing doubts in the private and secret sphere of British society about the efficacy of Indian censorship practices;

the Committee took a somewhat complacent view of the effect on natives of Western crime and sex films, but its report is the most important document on the subject.

(Annotation to Minute/IOLR/PJ/775/32)

The Committee identified a number of key areas of criticism. The most important was the question of demoralization generated by a overemphasis

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\(^1\) Hereafter page references refer directly to the Report of Indian Cinematograph Committee. 1928.
of exhibition of 'crime, debauchery, adultery and the like'. (p.110) The Committee could find no evidence to support this view and dismissed it out of hand. They were particularly severe on the British Social Hygiene Committee, especially the Chairwoman, Mrs Neville Rolfe, who had gone to India specifically to arouse opposition to the cinema for the duration of the I.C.C. A central argument of the British Social Hygiene Committee was that film encouraged promiscuity, which in turn led to the spread of venereal disease. This was seen to be of special significance in the Indian context. The I.C.C. could find no evidence to support the allegations of Mrs Rolfe and dismissed them out of hand.

Not only can we not accept them, but it appears obvious to us that they were made without any attempt at serious enquiry, and partly at least, as a result of pre-existing obsession. (p.117)

Nevertheless it is important to note that until the I.C.C. took its strong stand there were significant groups prepared to accept Mrs Rolfe's allegations as confirmation of their views about the power of cinema to transgress social and sexual boundaries.

A second important and widespread criticism focussed on the alleged power of the cinema to traduce and travesty the British way of life. There were two consequences of this. Firstly, the effects were 'injurious to Europeans'. (p.111) Secondly, cinema was 'definitely harmful to Indians (their emphasis) because it either induces them to ignore what is good in Western civilization or to copy what is bad'. (p.111) The Committee could not accept these contradictory premises. Indeed it gave credence to the view that films could have positive social influence among the Indian population in respect to Western civilization. Its scepticism also extended to the allegations about the alleged influence of film on criminal behaviour pointing out that cars had preceded film in the Indian countryside and indeed penetrated the fabric of Indian life more
successfully than film. (pp.113-114) To the concerns over representations of passion and 'low life' were similarly dismissed. (pp.114-115)

Moreover, the Committee identified some of the causes of the massive concern about the libidinous effects of film discourse. It discerned a distinct anti-Americanism at work which it termed "trade propaganda and rivalry" (p.115) that was generated by British film producers for economic reasons; it also perceived how posters and advertising were used as an enticement to attract the audience by foregrounding moments of desire to mislead both the audience and the critics. Above all else it implied that cultural differences were the dominant factor in the systematic misreading of films as being socially subversive and divisive. (p.118) The new discourse of film operated by a set of signifying systems different to that normalized by the complainants, who had yet to develop the capabilities necessary to read the signifying practices of film texts. Having arrived at such a liberal reading of the social causes of the public demands for censorship, the Committee promptly acted in a most confused and contradictory manner.

After claiming that the system worked in a satisfactory manner the Committee went on to recommend provincial censorship be transferred from the regions to the centre and that a Centralized Board of Film Censors be established. To understand why this occurred it is necessary to analyse further the practices of film censorship in India.

The Cinematograph Act of 1918 as amended by the Devolution Rules (1920) controlled film discourse in two ways. All cinemas and other exhibition places had to be licensed and all films exhibited had to be certified by 1. The Cinematographic Act of 1918 is provided in Appendix 1.
an authority established for the purposes of examining and certifying films. (Sections 1-6) Under Section 7 of the Act, Boards of Film Censors were established at Bombay, Calcutta, Rangoon and Madras and later in the Punjab in 1927. Each of the five Provincial Governments responsible for the certification of films made its own rules. (Section 8) Regionalism was a feature of film censorship in India that caused a great deal of concern to the India Office although in practice the Boards were all structured along similar lines.

The Bombay Board of Film Censors consisted of the Commissioner of Police as President ex officio, the Collector of Customs ex officio, a member of the Indian Educational Service, a prominent Hindu citizen, a prominent Muslim citizen and a prominent Parsi citizen, but there was no separate European representation because 'European interests are considered to be adequately guarded by the official members'. Supporting the Members of the Board two stipendary officers: a Secretary and an Inspector. (p.106)

Calcutta's Board was constituted along similar lines insofar as it represented vested and communal interests which were consciously held in balance, but in a different mix to Bombay. The Commissioner of Police was President ex officio, his deputy the Station Staff Officer, or military representative was also ex officio. Other members were a European lady representatives of the Calcutta Trades Association, and representatives of the Jewish, Muslim and Hindu communities. In contrast to Bombay the Secretary and Inspector in Calcutta were Europeans, with an additional Indian Inspector. Also the Board's office was located at the Calcutta Police Headquarters. (p.107)
The Rangoon Board's composition reflected that Province's separation from India proper. It had eight members, the Chief of Police as President ex officio, a military representative, a European representative from the Vigilance Society, 'three Burmese gentlemen and one Burmese lady'. Its only salaried staff was a clerk. (p.107) The Rangoon Board took a much harder line on film censorship in general when compared to the other regions because its members did not rely on the stipendiary officers and was more actively involved in the process. This led it to seriously consider the more outrageous claims of the Social Hygiene delegation when the other regions exercised some caution. (p.117) It was also much more prepared to intervene in the circulation of films in comparison to the other regions. Indeed it was taken to task by the I.C.C. on economic grounds because it re-certified virtually every film imported into Burma as was its right under the Act (Section 9, Cinematograph Act, Appendix 1). This practice undoubtedly reflected the degree of regional autonomy the Burmese Provincial Government sought to exercise. There was an active Burmese film industry by 1927, but also Chinese films constituted a significant proportion of films exhibited. (p.107) Burma, then, represents a significantly different intersection of conditions which an active and articulate body of Europeans and their auxiliaries sought to contain.

In contrast the Madras Board was smaller and much less active. Apart from the Commissioner of Police and a military representative it had four Hindu members and one Muslim member, again a formula seeking to balance competing social forces at work under the guidance of the chief representative of the guardians in the form of the Commissioner of Police. (p.107)
Certification procedures were also regionalised within certain parameters set down by the Act. In Bombay the film importer or producer had to apply to the Board for a certificate. The Secretary or Inspector then examined the film within a prescribed time and reported to the Board on the nature of the film with a recommendation. The Board considered the recommendation and then made a decision. (pp.107-108) Only in cases where a recommendation was made either to excise a film or change an intertitle, or ban the film outright did members of the Bombay Board actually see a film and become actively involved in the process. The practice caused consternation when it became known to the India Office. They had envisaged a system similar to that of England whereby public spirited men and women donated their time in the public cause to censor films for the public good, fulfilling their duties as the 'great and good'. However, after receiving a number of reports from India on the topic the India Office finally accepted that there was a "problem of attracting suitable censors ... on Indian contemporary conditions". (Confidential Report, Home Dept., IOLR/PJ/3191/26) The India Office found it offensive that Western civilization was being mediated and interpreted by lowly-paid Indian functionaries. Both the Government of India and the I.C.C. Report took pains to point out that the Indian Secretary and Inspector of the Bombay Board were well educated. (1928:106)

Another area of concern for the British was the question of cost. As the Indian film industry developed in Bombay the demands made on the limited resources of the Bombay Censorship Board began to stretch it to the limits.

In 1926-27, the last year for which we have complete figures, 902 films were censored in Bombay, 679 in Calcutta, 126 in Rangoon, and only 9 in Madras. The total footage examined was approximately 6.2/3rd million, of which Bombay examined over 3.1/3 million feet, or nearly 53%, Rangoon less than one million feet or nearly 13% and Madras only
22,465 feet or less than half a per cent. These figures, it should be noted, refer to original examinations of films for certification, and do not cover re-examinations of films already certified. Now it takes approximately one hour to inspect 4000 feet of film, so that the average weekly time spent in the primary inspection of films in 1926-27 was about 17 hours in Bombay, 11 hours in Calcutta, 4 hours in Rangoon and half a minute in Madras. (1928:108)

Because of the lack of suitable candidates from among the Indian elites to fulfill the censorship function on a voluntary basis, the stipendary system proved essential for the functioning of censorship in at least Bombay and Calcutta which were the major centres of the film industry. In a situation of stringent financial management this was an expensive procedure. To offset any drain on general revenues the Boards were meant to be self-financing by the imposition of a levy of Rs 5 per 1000 feet examined. Bombay, in employing Indians in the crucial middle range positions of Secretary and Inspector on monthly salaries of Rs 350 (for a part-time appointment) and Rs 300-25-100 plus a conveyancing allowance of Rs 60 a month respectively could operate within its budget by 1927. This was not always the case and the Government of India considered raising the impost, but the industry complained and the Government accepted the view that

raising the fee as proposed would involve a risk of squeezing out the small importer in favour of the monopolist.

(Confidential Report, Home Dept., IOLR/PJ/3191/26)

In other words the Government of India was conscious of the claims made against the Madan Theatre Company by the emerging industry and chose to adopt a strategy that "protected" it. The India Office was not impressed and concluded that the issue was more important than the sensitivities of the local industry. (IOLR/Jails/No.F-308/1923) In this context Bengal remained an ongoing problem for the Government.
After the initial flurry of activity after the implementation of the certification procedures laid down by the Cinematograph Act the Calcutta Board found that its revenue declined rather sharply in 1922. (NAI/Home Jails/186/1922)\textsuperscript{1}. The Board ascribed this to three factors: an unfavourable rate of exchange for the Rupee, the high cost of films and the high rate of customs duty on imported exposed film at 20%. The impost of censorship was not included in the price of cinema tickets because of a highly competitive market. It was claimed that:

> to avoid any further shrinkage of profits they [the Indian distributors and exhibitors] are working on old stocks and combining together and passing round their films to each other. The result has been a steady decline in the income of the fund and it is now reported that it is insufficient to meet necessary expenditure. (Letter, Bengal Govt. No.1069P/23/1/1922)

In Calcutta the monthly expenditure was Rs 1000 per month made up of:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Allowance</th>
<th>Rs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inspector of Films</td>
<td>Rs 600 - 20 - 900 per month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor allowance</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>House allowance</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clerk</td>
<td>70 - 4 - 90</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
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<td>Accountant (Duty Allowance)</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cashier (Duty Allowance)</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peon</td>
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Moreover, in January, 1921 the Board had paid a bonus of Rs 600 to the Inspector, and in March, 1921 made an advance of Rs 2400 to the Inspector for the purchase of a motor car. (ibid.)

The discrepancy between income and expenditure presented the Government of Bengal with a dilemma. Its first reaction was to subsidize the Board to the amount of the deficit, in line with the actions of Rangoon and Bombay who had previously subsidised their Boards to the sums of Rs 6866 and Rs 18000 respectively. Failing that it could take over the Board entirely.

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\textsuperscript{1} The following account is based on this file from the National Archives of India, New Delhi which contains the files cited.
and finance out of general revenue. The last option which it advocated was to reduce expenditure by cutting the Inspector's salary.

The response of the Government of India to the problem of the Bengal Boards of Film Censors is interesting. In the first place it expressed its displeasure with the provincial government in strict terms but eventually it agreed that the cost of the Board could be met from general revenue as an interim measure. It also pointed out that the Rs 5/1000 feet examination fee was a recommended and not prescribed maximum and that the governments should not let 'the state of the trade deter Local Governments in fixing fees' which was their constitutional right under Section 8 of the Act and the 1st Schedule of the Devolution Act of 1920. In other words the Local Governments had to get their houses in order. Finally, the Government of India would not agree to any reduction in the salaries of the Inspector, because the work was too important. (Misc. A. July 1921/82-87)

What this exchange highlights is the manner in which film discourse impinged upon so many facets of Anglo-Indian hegemony - cultural, economic, political and administrative. Furthermore, it illuminates the relationship between the central and local level of governments in India as well as between India and the metropolitan power. There were clearly tensions within the relationship as local governments explored the ramifications of the changes implicit in the Devolution Rules. Of all the factors foregrounded in this situation the most significant is the privileging of the European: the disparity in salaries between the Inspector and his Indian subordinates in Bengal was enormous. The single largest item of expenditure in the Bengal Board of Film Censor's budget was the Inspector's salary. Further, the salary was supplemented by
allowances, bonuses and advances. In a time of general financial
stringency the Bengal Government would only consider reducing it in the
last instance, and the Government of India forbade the plan.
Considerations of competency were never on the agenda. In contrast in
Bombay where Indian inspectors operated at much less expense questions of
competency were constantly raised. As one India Office functionary
annotated a file 'how can men - and Indians at that - judge Western
civilization on a salary of Rs 500 per mensem?' (IOLR/PJ/2932/1926) Race,
class, and economic snobbery were powerful determinants of administrative
practice in British India.

After 1922 the volume of both imported and locally produced films
increased significantly throughout India and consequently the revenues of
the various Boards of Film Censors increased. I can find no further
evidence of a funding crisis in the administration of film censorship. On
the contrary, film became a rich source of revenue for the governments
through an increase in tariffs and the introduction and implementation of
entertainment taxes. (Barucha, 1938: 433-437)

In addition to the stipendiary staff the Censors were also paid for
attending sessions and meetings by the Boards. The actual fee varied from
Board to Board. In Bombay members of the Board met twice a month and
received a fee of Rs 16 per meeting. They were also paid a fee of Rs
2/1000 feet for formal examinations to a minimum of Rs 10 and a maximum of
Rs 20. Similar fees obtained in Calcutta, and they were higher in Rangoon
where Rs 20 was the minimum fee. (Report of the I.C.C., 1928:105)

After the establishment of the Bombay Board it became apparent that both
guidelines pertaining to judgements of film content and rules for
procedures were required. In the first instance the guidelines of the
British Board of Film Censors were adopted in total with some minor
modifications. (1928:110) Secondly, the Bombay Rules for Censorship of
Cinema: Cinematograph Rules 1921 were formulated and issued on the 13
June 1921. (IOLR/Bombay, No.517-E,8/4/1922) They remained in place, with
the exception of the War years, for the duration of British Rule and
constitute the basis of post-Independence censorship practices.

The "Suggestions To Inspectors of Films: Bombay Board of Film Censors"
mark a significant development in the practice of film censorship in
India. The "Suggestions" consisted of two parts: ten general principles
and forty-two specific instances where films could be judged to be
objectionable. The latter were devised by T.P. O'Connor, Secretary of the
British Board of Film Censors in 1919 (Phelps, 1975:29) and represent a
classic example of class interests determining the distribution and
circulation of semiotic systems. The categories subject to censorship are
logically presented although moral issues are interspersed with political
ones, and economic issues with moral ones. Of the forty-two items
seventeen are of particular significance. Items 10 to 14 deal with moral
issues, and items 15 to 22 deal with political matters.

(10) Nude figures
(11) Offensive vulgarity and impropriety in conduct and dress
(12) Indecorous dancing
(13) Excessively passionate love scenes
(14) Bathing scenes passing the limits of propriety
(15) References to controversial politics
(16) Relations of Capital and Labour
(17) Scenes tending to disparage public characters and institutions
(18) Realistic horrors of war
(19) Scenes and incidents calculated in time of war to afford
information to the enemy
(20) Incidents tending to disparage other nations
(21) Scenes holding up the King's uniform to contempt or ridicule
(22) Subjects dealing with India, in which British or Indian
affairs are seen in an odious light, and otherwise attempting
to suggest the disloyalty of Native States or bringing into
disrepute British prestige of the Empire

(Report of the I.C.C., 1928:215)
In the 1920s representations of sexuality in film were perceived as undermining respectable society. In India the representations of female sexuality in film contradicted the view of female sexuality that had been constructed in other media in a specific fashion. Consequently items 10 to 14 which dealt with this issue applied to Indian produced films but in reality they were designed to control the Hollywood staple product. The five issues: nudity, vulgarity and impropriety, indecorous dancing, excessive passion and bathing scenes were at the heart of Anglo-Indian concerns about filmic representation. These issues attracted more complaints than any of the others and were perceived to strike at the very core of European prestige in Asia because they operated in the realm of desire in a public manner, something that had hitherto been consigned to the private sphere. Furthermore, it should be noted that concern over these issues was not confined to the British in India. Nudity and excessive desire in the cinema were censored throughout the world but especially in Britain. (Pronay, 1981:113-137) In India the issue had an added dimension because of the colonial system of rule and the implicit racialism that it evoked. Films were thus excised or banned according to their system of sexual representation.

By the 1930s political matters dominated censorship. As the British struggled to maintain their hegemony in the face of massive social and political unrest their preoccupations with censorship became sensitised to political nuances. In these circumstances, items 15-22 became the dominant ones, although censorship in India was always compounded by religious and communal factors. We will see below that moral, political, religious and communal concerns remained constant but different aspects
dominated at different moments according to the prevailing social and political conditions and relations.

While the specific items of the "Special Instructions to Film Censors" are hegemonic the general principles are much more pragmatic and tempered by practice, recognizing the specific conditions of India and the fissure film discourse had opened up in the social and cultural formation. The first two encapsulate the contradictory position of film discourse:

1. No generally and rigidly applicable rules of censorship can be laid down.

2. It is essential to be consistent but impossible to aim at strictly logical decisions. (1928:214)

The suggestions of the second part of the guidelines immediately contradict these principles by providing concrete examples for censorship. The confusion implicit in the document, and which I take to represent not only the confusion existing in relation to film discourse but also in respect to the whole question of hegemony, is compounded by other specific general principles. For example a particularly idealized, middle-class Western view of morality is propagated in respect to crime, sex and dress which are contiguous with political and economic concerns. Not only are moral and political issues of specific concern but they are also sufficiently powerful to be expressed as general principles. At the same time Inspectors were expected to take into account the nature of the Indian audience 'which includes a not inconsiderable proportion of illiterate people or those of immature judgement'. (IOLR/PJ/Docket 228/1925) Significantly, the polysemic nature of film is recognized and the Inspectors were to exercise rationality in making decisions because the so-called "immature" audience could be misled and unable to distinguish between illusion and reality.
It is clear that the meanings embodied within the guidelines are implicitly assumed to be understood by the members of the class who constituted the Anglo-Indian hierarchy. They are culturally and ideologically laden. However, the cinema, precisely because of its polysemy, exceeded the class determined guidelines. Its excesses kept oozing out from underneath constraints placed upon it, hence the calls for a stiffening of censorship from all levels of the Anglo-Indian formation, official and non-official, central and local, Indian and Metropolitan in the earliest period. However, once the guidelines had been established in conjunction with the conditions of the Act the only way censorship could be stiffened was at the level of the practices involved in censorship.

The guidelines for Bombay state that 'Two Inspectors or the Secretary and one Inspector should be present at the inspection of a film'. (Barucha, 1938:471) If a certificate was denied a film after being viewed by the two functionaries then the person owning or renting the film could seek re-certification by applying to the Secretary (p.473), demonstrating that the film had been modified by the removal of the offending titles or subtitles, by cutting out offending sections from the narrative, or both, as demanded by the inspectors. (p.473)

An application for certification or re-certification was an expensive and time consuming business. The applicant had to provide full details of the film including the exact length of the film and number of reels, the name of the film, the number of copies imported or manufactured, the name of the company or person(s) producing the film, the name of the country in which the film was originally produced, a statement as to the certified status of the film in British India. In addition they had to show whether the film had already been certified in another location in India such as
Calcutta and three typed or printed copies of a synopsis of the film, plus provide a place of exhibition at the distributor's own cost suitable to the Censors. (p.473) The potential impact of these regulations was enormous. Between 1920 and 1923 there was a back-log of films to be censored and a liberal approach to certification was adopted (Baskaran, 1978:652) but once matters settled down the British had an eminently practicable apparatus at their fingertips to control film discourse. It would seem that these procedures more than any others impacted on the practices of the Indian film producers. After investing considerable capital in a film they did not want to lose revenue by not gaining a certificate: 'self-censorship' was a powerful definer of Indian film discourse. The conditions of self-censorship appear to be determined by the British who had constructed the parameters of discourse. However, its practice was conducted by Indian agents who acted as cultural mediators of some power who in turn played a crucial role in shaping film practices in India.

In Bombay the crucial figure in this process was the Secretary of the Board of Censors. Not only did he co-ordinate the operations of the Board but he also effectively determined its directions. The Secretary prepared the agenda for the bi-monthly meetings. He also kept and prepared the minutes of the Board and a register of all films examined. This was provided to the Government Gazette in Bombay which published the lists of censored films for the eventual circulation throughout India. He also had to ensure that the regulations were adhered to. Certified films always carried a clearly visible triangle in the bottom left-hand corner of the first visible frames of the screened film. To check that no uncertified films were screened, or decertified films were tampered with the Secretary had the right to enter any premises licensed to show films. (Barucha,
1938:472) In Bombay the Secretary became an increasingly powerful figure. In a sense it is a paradox, one that bothered London, that such a powerful figure of a British hegemonic apparatus was an Indian.

If most of the de jure power of censorship in Bombay devolved upon the Secretary the actual Censors still had the ultimate power insofar as certificates were issued in their name. If they saw fit they could in fact grant certificates in their own name, subject to the confirmation of a properly constituted Board meeting. (p.473) They also had to make the final decisions on ambiguous films. Consequently, I now want to look at a Board, how it was constituted and how it perceived itself, its role and function, in particular its ideology. I have chosen the Panjab Board because the province was a crucial one for the British from a number of perspectives. Sociologically the three major communal or religious groups, the Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs, lived in a precarious harmony which was reflected in the delicate political situation prevailing under the British. Rather than follow the Congress path the Panjab developed its own political strategies in which each communal group attained representation in the provincial government. Allied to this was a mystique about the Anglo-Indian provincial services and the style of administration effected by the I.C.S. in the province. In addition the Panjab was the most important recruiting ground for the British Indian Army. Communal harmony and public order were considered essential in the Panjab but difficult to attain and then maintain. The perception that film could disrupt social order could be tested in a province like the Panjab while at the same time constrained through the formation of a provincial Board of Film Censors. The Board was formed in 1927 ostensibly to oversee local production, but the company set up to produce the films
folded before any production began. In reality the Board was formed because it was deemed a political necessity.

The Panjab Board of Film Censors was gazetted on the 2 September 1927. Its procedures and practices were to be identical to those of Bombay and Bengal. (NAI/Home Jails/372/1922: The Proposed Constitution of Board of Film Censors in Panjab) Its composition reflected a careful attempt to replicate the communal and racial balance that characterized Panjab politics throughout the 1920s and 1930s although the membership was consciously dominated by Indian participation. The Commissioner of the Lahore Division was made President of the Board. That is, the senior civil authority was in charge and not the senior policeman. The Secretary was to be the Director of the Information Bureau, Panjab, reflecting that Province's much greater concern with and involvement in propaganda and ideological manipulation, a factor which had shaped Coatman's views on film which he expressed in his work on the I.C.C. Furthermore, a conscious decision was taken to include more women on the Panjab Board, one Hindu and one Muslim, in the belief that women had a greater sensitivity and clearer understanding of cultural matters. The rest of the Board consisted of male representatives of the Hindu, Muslim and European communities. The Board met once prior to the visit of the I.C.C. to Lahore in 1927. (ibid.) It was subjected to a close and intense questioning by the Committee and its responses are particularly illuminating in respect to film because there had been little time for the raw prejudice of the Board members to have been softened or modified by practice. (E.2, 1928:1-4)

The evidence tendered by the Panjab Board revealed how closely its members identified themselves with the Anglo-Indian literary culture having
normalized its standards and ideologies. Their collective prejudices against the cinema are instructive. Given the sensitive political situation in the Panjab the question arises to why this particular group was chosen to conduct such a sensitive task. One member, Miss Bose, Principal of Victoria's Girls School, Lahore had not even been to the cinema. (E.2:14) Another member, Mr A Yusuf Ali, I.C.S. (Rt'd) attended the cinema regularly and had also seen films in England and Europe. (E.2:5) The Committee pretended to be puzzled at the apparent contradictions at work within the Board but their questions soon elicited the reasons for the appointments of the people to the Panjab Board. Without exception they advocated stricter censorship of sexual and criminal representations in films because of the alleged influence the films could have on the minds of the young and the illiterate. Each member of the Board, no matter what their communal or racial affiliations were, was ideologically compliant with British cultural hegemony. One member stated bluntly that 'American films are positively harmful'. (E.2:4) Moreover, they were quite happy to have an Inspector of the Panjab Police Force to act as the Inspector of Films for the Board of Censors. (E.2:11) There was no perceived conflict of interests in their minds. When the Panjab Government banned an Indian film Sacrifice after the first meeting there were no complaints. This was perceived as compatible with their function. (E.2:11) The acceptance of British hegemony was complete and best expressed by Yusuf Ali:

> European civilization occupies a special place in India and if we cut the ground from under it, we shall be cutting the ground from under our own feet. (E.2:172)

There were, however, some tensions between the Indian and Anglo-Indian members of the Panjab Board. They could not agree entirely on the part the Government should play in film discourse beyond that of guardian. European members felt that Government expenditure on encouraging the
cinema was unwarranted, which conformed to the official view, (E.2:11) whereas Indian members saw some value in the suggestion. The divisions in the I.C.C. foregrounded in the Minute of Dissent existed outside of the Committee itself, and reflect a deeper racial fissure than the Report may actually signify. For example when H W Hogg, Secretary of the Boy Scouts Association in Lahore gave evidence there was a sharp exchange between Hogg and Rangachariar, (E.2:70) Hogg and Neogy (E.2:73), and Crawford and Neogy. (p.73) Hogg articulated in a clear racist manner that films lowered the respect for the white races, a position he arrived at on the basis of remarks he had heard in the cinema. (E.2:69) Both Rangachariar and Neogy took exception to Hogg's racism. Rangachariar said

We don't want to admit grounds which would at once rouse racial animosity and racial partiality. (E.2:72)

But race could not be avoided or effaced; only suppressed.

The Panjab Board could not make up its mind on the best way to support and control the Indian film industry. The tensions between the Centre and the Provinces was inflected by a sense of regionalism. The solution was a two-tier system with the Centre fulfilling certain functions and the Local Governments to look after regional problems. (E.2:9-10) In other words Dyarchy in film censorship was to be maintained but modified. The Panjab Board, then, had not had the opportunity to think through its position on questions of major importance in respect to film. Its confused position on most aspects reflected a wider confusion. However, its unanimity on the need to toughen censorship rules and practices did not require further thinking through. This view was deeply held and widespread throughout India by both Indian and Anglo-Indians alike, despite the racial tensions.

While the Panjab Board was new and inexperienced in 1927 the Boards in Calcutta and Bombay were well established with a set of well rehearsed
procedures. The inquiry could find little wrong with their practices and concluded that the deeply held views about film discourse and its lack of control were misplaced and in some instances mischievous. (Report of the I.C.C., 1928:110) As I have pointed out above a consequence of the I.C.C. was to remove film discourse from the public domain into the private domain. Official concerns over films did not evaporate, they became disguised by protocol. A consequence of this was to see a shift in the preponderance of complaints about censorship from the Anglo-Indian or Anglophile segments of society to the film industry itself: the problem now occupied a different terrain. Censorship inhibited Indian aspirations as expressed in film.

Both Barnouw and Krishnaswamy and Vasudev suggest that British censorship impeded the development of the Indian film industry. Film censorship in India was never constant. Rather it followed trends that had their roots in the broader political developments of the day. Thus in the 1920s moral issues and Muslim sensitivities tended to determine censorship. In the 1930s the emphasis shifted to political matters especially the various newsreels that portrayed the political activities of Gandhi. However, an examination of the production figures for the periods show that production was never impeded by censorship activity. On the contrary production boomed at the periods of heavy censorship activity. The periods of the most severe political instability and heaviest censorship (the Non-Co-operation Movement of 1930-32 and 1942 at the Quit India Movement) witnessed an unparalleled growth in the development of the Indian film industry. In both instances, there was a disjuncture between the perception and the reality. In the period 1930-32 the Indian film industry expanded because of the introduction of sound technology. In the war years the industry expanded because of the rise in demand for
entertainment from an urbanized, relatively prosperous audience. In other words in the periods of the most severe censorship the film industry actually expanded rather than contracted. Moreover, as a proportion of films admitted for certification increased, the films actually censored in any way remained very small in number. The development of the film industry was advanced or inhibited by economic factors (the availability of finance, the presence of exhibition outlets and distribution networks) and rarely by censorship. Indeed, in the final analysis censorship was an impotent weapon because the Anglo-Indian formation, no matter what formal or informal pressure it brought to bear, could not in any way determine the audience's reading of films. This quickly became apparent early in the enquiries of the I.C.C. and informed the Committee's decisions to dismiss the complaints about censorship articulated by so many Anglo-Indians. It also informed the decision of the administration when they discussed Evan's recommendations in 1922 and made the decision to opt for an industry 'along the right lines' rather than a monolithic government regulated industry.

In order to gain an insight into the process it is necessary to examine the lists of films censored between 1921 and 1945, and consider where given the reasons for censorship. The lists are neither comprehensive nor exhaustive. All levels of government including the I.C.C. complained about the lack of information on the subject and about the lack of a consolidated list of banned films. (1928:14-15) As each Board operated according to different Local Government procedures it was difficult to compile an all-India listing. Therefore, my data is incomplete but I think accurate; it is taken from the extensive files on the subject of Film Censorship at the India Office Library and Records and the National Archives of India.
The India Office claimed they required concrete examples of where film censorship was effective in order to answer the sequence of questions in the House of Commons by concerned Members who were clearly being fed information on the subject by interested parties. The desire to know, to extend British power prodded the administration into action. The only problem was that information was dispersed as a consequence of Devolution. The desire to formalize the information gathering process was as much a determinant of centralization as any other factor. The data reveals an interesting contradiction. The India Office and the Anglo-Indian community interpreted the situation as being out of control, but neither the Government of India nor the Local Governments accepted this view despite the occasional misgiving. In 1933 Lord Willingdon, the Viceroy, wrote to the Secretary of State for India, Lord Peel, and complained that "stricter censorship (was) required of films disparaging Western morals" but at the same time acknowledged that the local Governments "are generally satisfied with existing censorship". (Private Letter, IOLR/PJ/3842/33)

By the 1920s the number of films entering the country was enormous but the number of films actually being censored or endorsed in any way was minimal. Opponents of film used this fact to argue that uncensored films or smuggled versions of films were being screened in India. (Baskaran, 1978:659) The censorship files contradict this view. When actually confronted by the films neither the censorship inspectors nor the Boards could find many films that actually required any form of intervention. Further, there were considerable regional differences in the approach to censorship. For example Bombay would pass a film that Rangoon would ban. To complicate matters, these decisions were not communicated in any formal
way; there was no mechanism to facilitate such action. The Government of India was aware of these problems but felt that the situation was generally under control. This view was confirmed by the I.C.C. Report. (p.119) Nevertheless a perception of failure to control film was difficult to dislodge and represents the underlying crisis in hegemony that was displaced on to film.

At this point it is necessary to look at the available objective data on film censorship in India. I will look specifically at three sets of material: firstly, a series of questions in the House of Commons; secondly, the data from one of the minor Boards of Film Censors, and thirdly data for one year from the Bombay Board of Film Censors. (Additional censorship data is provided in Appendix IV). This data has been assembled in tabular form for reference. Table 1 refers to number of films produced and imported in India between 1921-22 and 1926-27 and it provided a benchmark against which the actual level of censorship may be measured. Table 2 charts the activities of the Burmese Board of Film Censors in 1925. Burma has been selected because it claimed to be more stringent in its censorship practices than the other boards set up as a consequence of the Cinematograph Act. Table 3 represents the activity of the Bombay Board of Film Censors in 1928. Bombay had, by this time, become the centre of the Indian film industry dominating both production and importation.

Over the years between 1914 and 1937 a number of questions were asked in the House of Commons on the question of film censorship in India. These questions tended to coincide with major shifts in British thinking on the topic. For example it was Carr-Gomm's question that precipitated the whole process. (see Chapter 2) In the 1920s a Colonel C Yates asked a
series of questions on the topic (IOLR/PJ/4/1922). In the later 1920s a Mr Day asked a number of questions too. (See IOLR/PJ/372, 6401, 6628/1930) These questions elicited responses from the India Office who found they knew very little about the topic which in turn saw them put pressure on the Government of India for information. In many respects the questions of Yates foreshadowed the establishment of the I.C.C. The significance of the parliamentary questions in the setting up of the I.C.C. is acknowledged by the Report. (p. 4) The questions served a number of functions. Firstly they acted as a catalyst, precipitating action within the India Office. Secondly, they acted as registers of British concerns over the decline of British prestige in Asia which were displaced on to film. Thirdly, they provided a sharp focus of these concerns. In essence they were alarmist but they struck chords in the India Office which reacted quickly to any parliamentary question taking great care to get the answer correct.

The censorship of films in India is a matter for the local authorities and I do not receive reports of the action taken by the Indian Boards of Film Censors in respect of the films submitted to them. I will, however, send to my Honourable friend a list of forty-seven films, the exhibition of which is known from the information in my possession to have been prohibited in the last two years.

(Typed Copy of Parliamentary Question No. 2, 22/7/1829, IOLR/PJ/2554/1929)

The alarmism portrayed in the Parliamentary Questions created a picture whereby it was easy to think that India was being flooded by unsuitable films that systematically destroyed English prestige.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1</th>
<th>1921-22</th>
<th>1922-23</th>
<th>1923-24</th>
<th>1924-25</th>
<th>1925-26</th>
<th>1926-27</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indian News Films</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Feature Films</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>485</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imported News Film</th>
<th>705</th>
<th>561</th>
<th>492</th>
<th>419</th>
<th>652</th>
<th>654</th>
<th>3483</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imported Feature Films</td>
<td>615</td>
<td>652</td>
<td>580</td>
<td>685</td>
<td>626</td>
<td>775</td>
<td>3933</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Report of I.C.C., 1928:p.115, Table 9

Table 1 shows clearly the situation in regard to the proportion of Indian films to imported ones. The question arises how many of these films were censored? The evidence suggests very little. Table 2 represents the censorship activities of the Rangoon Board of Film Censors for 1925.

TABLE 2

A. No. OF FILMS EXAMINED IN INDIA No. RE-EXAMINED IN BURMA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>465</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>557</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. TITLES AND STATUS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1926</th>
<th>Passed</th>
<th>Passed with Endorsment</th>
<th>Rejected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Atlantide</td>
<td>Foolish Wives</td>
<td>Life of Lord Buddha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Ship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: IOLR/Report of Rangoon Town Police, 1923

Rangoon promoted itself as having more stringent censorship standards than either Bombay or Calcutta. (Reports of the I.C.C., 1928:109) However, in 1925 and 1926 the actual number of films censored as the data shows was miniscule.

A similar pattern had emerged in Calcutta. In 1920 the Calcutta Board made cuts to forty-nine films and refused certificates to thirteen. By 1926 the Forward, a Calcutta newspaper of Indian liberal opinion reported in an article "Board of Film Census: A Year's Work" (17/7/1926) that the
Board had met twelve times with nineteen meetings of sub-committees to consider the Inspector's decision in respect to ambiguous films. Of the 701 films certified, only 599 had been examined by the Inspectors. It is also likely that most of the remaining 102 films had been certified elsewhere and the decisions relating to those films were accepted without question. Of the 599 examined thirty-nine were endorsed and nine films banned. Furthermore, the Board prosecuted only one concern under the Act and gained a conviction. (ibid.) Another way of looking at this is to say that of the 599 films examined by the Inspectors and the Board, only 8.01% were subject to any form of censorship whatsoever, and 1.05% were banned. Hardly a massive proportion of the films submitted!

In 1928 a total of twenty-eight films were banned by the various censoring bodies (see Table 3) and in 1929 a further nineteen films were banned by the authorities. (see Table 4). Of the films censored only three were produced in India (including Burma) or 10.7% of the total. It is difficult to know whether the films were produced in 1928 or not so as to gauge what proportion of films produced they represented for that year. However, Indian produced films represented 14.92% of films examined in 1927-28. Moreover, the diversity of sources for films is wider than anticipated although the United States of America dominated the market with the Hollywood staple.

Of more significance than the statistics are the remarks giving the reasons for censoring the films included in Table 3. They reveal a preoccupation with moral issues even at a time of political unrest. They invoke items 10-14 of the "Suggestions to Inspectors of Film", although two other categories are prominent. The invocation of item 20, (Incidents tending to disparage other nations) reveals a surprising sensitivity to
German feelings. Of more significance are the films banned because they were likely "to offend the feelings of Mohammedans" (four films, Yashoderai (Sacrifice), Moon of Israel, The Pasha's Seven Wives, and The White Black Sheep) constitute a significant sector, although only one was of Indian origin. Political considerations, especially in the Panjab determined these decisions.

Of the twenty-four films banned in 1928 two were produced in India proper. Compared to the films actually produced in 1927 this is not a significant figure. Indeed it suggests that censorship did little to impede the indigenous production of films in the 1920s. This is borne out by an analysis of the 1929 figures. Again only two of the nineteen films banned were produced in India, The Fate of the Outlaw and The Loves of a Mogul Prince. The latter was banned because it had the potential to offend Muslim opinion. The Fate of the Outlaw was probably banned because its narrative focussed on a Robin Hood type figure who could possibly be read in an allegorical way by an "untutored" audience. In 1927 The Forward (13/5/1927), after notification that The Red Lily had been banned because of its "low moral tone ... deals with the exploits of criminals and their conflict with the forces of law and order" asked

does not European imperialism itself represent a serious conflict with justice, morality and equity?
(IOLR/PJ/1613/1927)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Where Banned</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Triumph of the Rat</td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, Assam, United Provinces Panjab</td>
<td>Low moral tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Film Title</td>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Six Wonderful Nights</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>Bengal, B&amp;O</td>
<td>- women are exhibited almost in a state of nudity posing and dancing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in Paris with the</td>
<td></td>
<td>U.P, Bombay</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stars of the Follies</td>
<td></td>
<td>Panjab</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bergere</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Road to Mandalay</td>
<td>America</td>
<td>Bengal, Bombay and</td>
<td>Low moral tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Panjab</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Wanderer</td>
<td>America</td>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td>No information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Varieties</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The Chinese Trunk</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mysteries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Primrose Time</td>
<td>Shanghai</td>
<td>Bihar &amp; Orissa, Central</td>
<td>Low moral tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Provinces, U.P. and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Panjab</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Kicking the German</td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>Bihar &amp; Orissa, Panjab</td>
<td>- film held up the former German Emperor and Field Marshall von Hindenburg to public ridicule.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Out of Germany</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Yashoderoi or Sacrifice</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Bihar &amp; Orissa, U.P.</td>
<td>Certificate cancelled - calculated seriously to offend the feelings of the Mohammedans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The Stormy Night</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Bihar &amp; Orissa, C.P.,</td>
<td>Low moral tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Burma, United</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Provinces &amp; Panjab</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Sea Horses</td>
<td>America</td>
<td>B&amp;O, C.P., Panjab</td>
<td>Complaint by the Portuguese Consul General - contained stupid and defamatory scenes which reflected on the authorities in Portuguese East Africa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Region/Province</td>
<td>Moral Tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Once an Enchantress</td>
<td>America</td>
<td>Bihar &amp; Orissa C.P., Burma, United Provinces and Panjab</td>
<td>Low moral tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Moon of Israel</td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>- calculated to injure the religious feelings of the Mohammedans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>San H. Te</td>
<td>Burma</td>
<td>Burma</td>
<td>No information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Bhadie Bhamini</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>U.P. and Panjab</td>
<td>Treats improperly sexual matters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>The White Black Sheep</td>
<td>America</td>
<td>U.P., Bombay and</td>
<td>- Likely to cause ill-feeling and resentment among Mohammedans in India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>The Pasha's Seven Wives</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>- would cause offence to Mohammedans sentiments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>The Unpardonable Sin</td>
<td>America</td>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>- give serious offence to the German people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>The Great Unknown</td>
<td>Holland</td>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>- foment social unrest and is of a low moral tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Missing Daughters</td>
<td>America</td>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>- its subject matter (the White Slave Traffic) is objectionable and is not redeemed by the method of its representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>The Scarlett Letter</td>
<td>America</td>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>- calculated to bring the ministry of Christian religion into contempt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>The Mystery Club</td>
<td>Holland</td>
<td>Bombay and Panjab</td>
<td>Moral tone is low, and that it is also calculated to foment unrest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Broken Barriers</td>
<td>America</td>
<td>Bombay and Panjab</td>
<td>Moral tone is very low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Passions of the East Denmark</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>Bombay and Panjab</td>
<td>Theme, viz. the abduction of a European girl by an Indian Prince and marriage to him is likely to give serious offence to a section of the European community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Alias the Deacon</td>
<td>America</td>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>Glorifies gambling and justifies the robbing of the rich to help the poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>The Volga Boatman</td>
<td>America</td>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>Portrays class hatred, violence, degrading lust and brutality as accompanying the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>The Answers of the Sea (Former title Undine? with vernacular titles)</td>
<td>America</td>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>Certificate cancelled - found to contain objectionable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>College Days</td>
<td>America</td>
<td>Panjab</td>
<td>No information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NAI Home Pol. 21/XVI/1928
### TABLE 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>To 31 May 1929</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Love, Man and Beasts</td>
<td>France</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Siberia</td>
<td>America</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>The Fake</td>
<td>America</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Mistaken Love</td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>The Battleship Poel'mkin</td>
<td>Russia (U.S.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>The Triumph of the Scarlett Pimperl'nel</td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>The Fate of the Outlaw</td>
<td>India</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Princess Masha</td>
<td>France</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Pau Cling Liew, The Vampire</td>
<td>China</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Dawn</td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Love and Hate</td>
<td>America</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Rose of Blood</td>
<td>America</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Trial of Schlenk Cas</td>
<td>America (Behind Closed Doors)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Secrets of Paris</td>
<td>America</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>The Last Command</td>
<td>America</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>The David Dancer</td>
<td>America</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>After the Storm</td>
<td>America</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>The Loves of a Mogul Prince</td>
<td>India</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>The Woman State</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>entry into India was prohibited underSea Customs Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Storm over Asia</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Heir of Genghis Khan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: IOLR/P&J/2554/1929

An analysis of Table 4 shows that censorship was more active in respect to the imported film than the locally produced. Again moral issues remained the principle concern although morality in this case has a political edge. However, it was the small number of films that were actually censored that generated concerns in the administration. Even after the I.C.C. had laid to rest the allegations that the cinema caused a range of social ills officials in the India Office could still dismiss its discursive power. Lord Peel, Secretary of State for India sought a copy of the Report in answer to a Parliamentary Question. Sir Arthur Hertzel, Under Secretary for State retorted
I would not volunteer to call for a report on details of this kind.

(IOLR/PJ/2346/1928)

The tension between the practices of censorship and the perception of those practices remained strong although the more outrageous allegations were either ignored or suppressed after the I.C.C. Report. Nevertheless, the issue remained alive in Britain throughout the 1930s.

However, in India film censorship took a different path after the I.C.C. Report. In fact it had become a genuinely provincial matter and in many respects the Government of India were pleased that this was the case.

**TABLE 5**

**Banned Films by Province 1929**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Number of Banned Films</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panjab</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar and Orissa</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Provinces</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Provinces</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burma</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: IOLR/PJ/2554/1929*

Table 5 shows the various provincial totals for films banned in 1929. Bombay heads the table because of its status as the major film centre of India. The fact that the Panjab, Bihar and Orissa, and the United Provinces follow immediately on from Bombay is significant. Sections 8 and 9 of the Cinematographic Act accorded the Local Governments and their principal agents the District Magistrates considerable power in the field. These figures reflect that power in action. In either case the high figures show conservative provincial government taking matters into their own hands although different conditions prevailed in all instances.
Nevertheless the three provinces are linked by one factor: each had been subjected to communal rioting between Hindus and Muslims. The censorship activity of each province reproduced a common response to a problem. In the mofussil film was perceived as a divisive social agent and in need of control. Moreover, the late 1920s was a period when the British sought to mollify Muslim opinion for political advantage. Sensitivity to Muslim feelings is also apparent in the comments found in Table 3. Muslim attitudes towards the cinema were doubly determined. Culturally they found film in contravention of Koranic teachings on imagery. Further, the Indian film industry was seen to be dominated by Hindus who were utilizing film to Hinduize Indian culture. Muslim interests protested to the administration about this on a number of occasions (Baskaran, 1987:665). However, Muslim reaction to film could take quite extreme forms.

In the Panjab it was alleged that the Muslims maintained genealogies of the actors and stars which they would consult before approving the love interests in films. If they felt love interests transgressed these genealogies by showing Hindu/Muslim romantic pairings they could physically attack the screen which could lead to rioting. (Filmland, iv, 157, 10/6/33:1) Therefore, it was prudent politically to adopt a hard line towards film and protect Muslim sensibilities, but again the number of films banned represents a small proportion of the total number of films in circulation.

A further dimension of regionalism was the urban/mofussil dichotomy. Bombay and Calcutta were perceived as cosmopolitan and sophisticated urban centres whose standards were too advanced to act as determinants of cultural taste for the rural or mofussil areas. Films certified by either of the two major Boards could be de-certified by Provincial Governments
once a complaint had been lodged against a film under Section 8 of the Act. In the 1920s and 1930s District Magistrates, senior regional administrators in the mofussil, became increasingly active in the area of film censorship, it seems with the encouragement of the Provincial Governments who established a formal register in the mid-1930s for the circulation of banned titles on an all-India basis. (Baskaran, 1978:661) Distributors could, and did, appeal against what seemed to them to be arbitrary de-certification of films. Between 1924 and 1928 there were twenty films that had their certificates suspended under Section 7(4) of the Act but eight of the certificates were restored after appeal from the distributor as Tables 6 and 7 illustrate.

### Table 6

Certificates suspended by the Boards Section 7(4) of the Cinematograph Act from 1924-25 to 1927-28.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>No of Certificates Suspended</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924-25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>One uncertified. Order of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925-26</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>suspension cancelled in five cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926-27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>after excision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927-28</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>One uncertified, and in three cases order of suspension cancelled, in one case after excision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924-25</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925-26</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Uncertified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926-27</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927-28</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burma</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Uncertified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927-28</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madras</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924-25 to 1927-28</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE 7

Number of films declared uncertified by each Provincial Government under subsection (6) and (7) and Section 7 of the Cinematograph Act from 1924-25 to 1927-28

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bombay</th>
<th>United Provinces</th>
<th>Central Provinces and Baroda</th>
<th>Bihar and Orissa</th>
<th>Assam</th>
<th>Delhi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1924-25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925-26</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1925-26</td>
<td>1925-26</td>
<td>1925</td>
<td>1924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926-27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1926-27</td>
<td>1926-27</td>
<td>1926</td>
<td>1924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927-28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1927-28</td>
<td>1927-28</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>1927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Central Provinces and Baroda</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924-25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925-26</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1925-26</td>
<td>1925-26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926-27</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>1926-27</td>
<td>1926-27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927-28</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>1927-28</td>
<td>1927-28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burma</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bihar and Orissa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924-25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925-26</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1925-26</td>
<td>1925-26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926-27</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1926-27</td>
<td>1926-27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927-28</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1927-28</td>
<td>1927-28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madras</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bihar and Orissa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924-25) to )</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927-28)</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>1925</td>
<td>1925</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924-25</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1924-25</td>
<td>1924-25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925-26</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1925-26</td>
<td>1925-26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926-27</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1926-27</td>
<td>1926-27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927-28</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1927-28</td>
<td>1927-28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In the 1930s censorship practices remained much as before with focus on the moral and communal aspects of film discourse, albeit within a political framework, with one major exception. As Baskaran has shown the British went to extraordinary lengths to exclude Gandhi from the Indian
screens. (1981: 138-143) By 1932 fourteen newsreels featuring Gandhi were banned in India (see Appendix III) most of them produced by British companies. In reality this remains the apogee of Anglo-Indian censorship. Yet even at this point paradox invested the practice of censorship. In their desire to obliterate Gandhi from the Indian screens the censors were obliged to also censor out the King-Emperor (Gandhi Sees the King (1931) produced by the British Screen News Company). However, the desire to remove Gandhi from the screen was quite easily subverted symbolically by Indian film makers who could fill their mis-en-scene with innumerable symbols of Gandhi and swaraj, from the cotton forage hat worn liberally throughout crowd scenes to photographs of Gandhi in domestic settings. In both instances the film makers could have claimed correctly verisimilitude of setting. The censors acknowledged the dilemma and sought to recuperate their position by censoring areas unlikely to arouse as much controversy such as moral issues.

The impotence of censorship boards as repressive apparatus is made clear over the question 'of expunging the word "National" from the title and captions of the film that was recorded of the hoisting ceremony at Bombay of the new flag that has been adopted by the Congress'. The Bombay Government sought the views of the Government of India on the topic because the flag had 'no universal approval [by] all Indians and may offend Muslims and loyal subjects'. (NAI, Home Poll., 14/23/1931) The Government of India made its position clear on the Congress flag:

the policy has been not to interfere with it in any way provided it is not flown with any hostile purpose or object. Suggest substitution of "Congress" for "National" as there is no national flag. (ibid.)

After considering the replacement of "National" with "National Congress" in putting the word National in quotation marks the Government of India telegrammed the Bombay Government:
Excision of "National" would be exploited by Congress and Government of India think no action necessary. 
(Government of India Telegram, 2048-S, 14/8/31:ibid)

The data analysed here shows that despite all of the allegations and the massive amount of time spent in compiling information on the topic by all levels of government very few films were actually banned in proportion to the number of films either imported or produced in India. Consequently one can only conclude that the issue of film censorship was about the crises in British rule rather than film itself.

The censorship of films in British India represents another instance where the ruling Anglo-Indian elite had become marginalized in the development of the Indian film industry. The calls for film censorship among the British and Anglo-Indians have a duality of purpose, one conscious and the other unconscious. On one hand the Anglo-Indians had recognized that films represented a different world view which they perceived as not being in their best interests, on the other hand there was an inkling that the world view represented in fact signified a massive fissure in the fabric of the Anglo-Indian hegemony. Moreover, each shift of emphasis in censorship from the moral probity of the 1920s to the overt political intervention of the 1930s signified a profound shift in the underlying political realities of the Raj. Indians moved from a degree of complicity in the maintenance of the Raj to a position of dominance not only in the political sphere but also in the economic domain as well. Film is a microcosm of these shifts. Irrespective of the surface features the trajectory of development within the industry is one where Indian economic realities, cultural perceptions and social sensibilities could not be denied. The Indian film industry was in fact essentially free of British control from a much earlier period than is generally acknowledged. It was
basically in the interest of the industry personnel to comply with British guidelines for financial reasons and also because they recognized that within Indian society there was a consensus that censorship of the cinema was necessary in India. However, it is also clear that censorship did not inhibit the growth of the Indian film industry or Indian institutions and apparatuses of control. After the transfer of power from Britain to India film censorship became more rigorous. Vasudev points out that in 1947-48 Out of 195 Indian pictures passed by the censors in Bombay, 82 were approved only after cuts were made, and in Madras out of 37 foreign films censored, 18 suffered from excisions. (1978:81)

These figures represent a level of action never contemplated by the British despite their anxieties about film discourse. The Indians had learnt effectively from the British and mobilised the apparatuses they had inherited in a powerful fashion. Film censorship was, and remains, a hegemonic and discursive practice. Moraji Desai's actions cited at the end of the previous chapter (p.264) show this clearly and give resonance to Lance Brennan's that Congress had become the Raj! (1977:473-499)
CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSIONS

My central argument in this thesis has two related strands. Firstly, the history of the cinema in India during the British period has been misread in significant ways, distorted by a sense of elitism and regional national interests. There has been a desire on the part of previous historians of the period to either recuperate Indian film as an art form in the European mode or to assign Indian film interests pre-eminence in the field by overvaluing the struggle against the British especially in the area of censorship. The former view discounts the efforts of Indian film makers to create a significant indigenous film form grounded in Indian culture and characterised by Indian aesthetic principles. The latter view accords the British too much power and undervalues the role of the Indian film maker in all aspects of film discourse, production, distribution, exhibition and regulation. It ignores the fact that censorship is a hegemonic practice, instituted in the interests of the dominant group. Film censorship in India served Indian interests as much as British ones. The struggle to establish a film industry in India was between competing Indian regional, economic and cultural interests and not between Indians the British. Secondly, it is necessary to recognize the continuity of Indian film within an Indian cultural context. The continuity is characterised by a reliance on Indian aesthetic theory, narrative strategies and economic practices. The recognition permits us to make sense of the contemporary Indian cinema.

Modern Indian cinema is characterized by a number of significant features. Firstly it is divided by two major factors. The major strands of the
Indian cinema are the commercial sector and the state subsidised sector. Both sectors are highly regionalized, their content and audience determined by linguistic factors. However, the commercial sector is the more important sector of film in India. Of the regional centres Bombay remains the most important because it has sought to create through the medium of the Hindi language an all-Indian film that is firmly rooted in indigenous cultural practices and narrative strategies. Bombay's films are dominated by the combination of stars and formulaic film making. The stars represent the economic practices of film making, and reinforce the formulaic use of song and dance in conjunction with melodrama and action. These features of the contemporary Indian film, which represent an evolutionary process, had their roots in the British period of Indian film industry.

The cinema is a conjunction of technology and art, of commerce, industry and entertainment. It was introduced into British India at a particularly sensitive moment where on one hand it could be taken to be an example of the material and technological superiority of British culture. However, at a deeper level the superiority of British rule could be seen to be illusory. This was sensed by both the Indians and the British. World War I saw these apprehensions become more focussed and the immediate post-war period saw the first sustained opposition to British rule in India since 1857. Film became established in this period and much of the British and Anglo-Indian frustration at the changes in their position in India became displaced onto film. They saw film as traducing and travestying their culture. Film was also perceived as exciting the baser passions of the Indian audience through its representation of women and sexual relations. The conjunction of the two induced near cultural panic among the Anglo-
Indians which represented deeper held fears about their status in India, which in turn reflected a crisis in hegemony.

At the same time as the Anglo-Indians constructed their discourse of film the Indians formulated an alternative discourse of film. Like the Anglo-Indian discourse the Indian discourse had several competing voices. At times it intersected with the Anglo-Indian over issues of control and censorship. However there was never the perception among Indians that film was generating the conditions of cultural and political upheaval. On the contrary, film in all of its manifestations was rapidly accepted by the Indian audience as a form of entertainment and as a means of articulating a sense of Indian-ness. The vast size of this audience attracted a large number of young men to the industry, especially in Bombay, who perceived the medium as a way of making money at the same time as articulating their cultural and political position. As these men consolidated their position they established a studio mode of production within the industry. In conjunction with this development a number of industrial organizations such as the Motion Picture Society of India were created. The function of these organizations was to protect the interests of the film producers. This was achieved via representations to the Government and through the publication of a number of books and journals which contributed to the formation of the dominant view of the growth of the film industry in India, where the Bombay studios of the 1930s constituted a golden age of film making.

The economic formation of the film industry had three major phases. The Cottage Industry Stage lasted until the introduction of sound technology. The introduction of sound required greater economic resources which caused the prominent film producers in Bombay and Calcutta to create studios
financed through modern capital. The Studio Era coincided with the period of industrial organization and the formation of the dominant Indian discourse of film. However, the studios were never able to secure sufficient industrial and joint stock capital to ensure their absolute dominance. The film industry in India always attracted young, able and ambitious young men who had access to the indigenous capital markets. These young men were encouraged by the film distributors from the 1930s on, which led to the dominance of the studio being challenged in the 1940s in the wash of World War 2. The transfer of power by the British saw an entirely new set of economic conditions created in the major urban centres. Accordingly the studios as powerful agents of film discourse diminished to be replaced by a structure not dissimilar to the earlier cottage industry stage, although more sophisticated and with access to much greater sums of money available from the indigenous capital market. Crucial to this shift of power within the industry was the role of the stars who became the vehicle whereby capital was raised and the text circulated.

Allied to the shift in economic power were the changes in textual production. The Hollywood staple had exerted undeniable influence on the content and form of Indian commercial, popular cinema. However, each appropriation by the Indian film producers of a foreign film saw that film transformed into something recognizably Indian. The process began at the earliest stages of the industry. Film makers mobilized Indian cultural traditions and narrative strategies to ensure the economic viabilities of their product. Over the period 1913-1947 Indian commercial films progressed through a number of production styles evolving a formula that combined various elements into a uniquely Indian cultural product, the māsāla film. On analysis the success of this amalgam is not surprising
considering that each of the elements - song, dance, style, use of time and space - had its roots in traditional Indian culture dominated by regional theatre and folk traditions.

The power of the cinema to generate large audiences in both the urban centres and rural areas attracted the attention of the Anglo-Indian administrations. The British instituted three major mechanisms designed to contain the perceived power of the cinema and at the same time assuage the criticisms directed at their apparent failure to achieve this. These were the Cinema Acts 1918-1920; the I.C.C. of 1927-1928; and the Defence of India Act, 1939-1945. Each attempt at control by the British revealed how essentially powerless they were in respect to film. The introduction of the Cinematograph Act did not erase the problems that had precipitated its formulation. The I.C.C. provided the British administration with detailed knowledge about all aspects of the film industry in India. It provided a plan whereby the cinema could be both encouraged in its growth and at the same time controlled via a centralized method of censorship. However, the recommendations of the I.C.C. were not accepted by the British because it would have meant a major revision of the rules that governed Dyarchy. Although perturbed by film the British administration did not see it as sufficiently important to warrant such drastic action. Surprisingly the British never made the reasons for their actions clear. As a consequence the decision not to implement the I.C.C. recommendations has remained a controversial issue in Indian film industry.

Paradoxically the era of the most successful British intervention existed in World War 2 when the Defence of India Act prevailed. However, even in this period the success of British actions depended on the compliance of significant Indian groups in this case the established Indian film producers
who were seeking to secure their position as the main players in the film industry.

Indian film discourse has been dominated by one issue since the introduction of the cinema: that of censorship. India has an elaborate film censorship system that operates at the centre and the margins of Indian society and reflects the political realities of contemporary India. Film censorship was initiated by the British who spent a considerable amount of time and energy trying to establish a system that worked in a bifurcated political system. Conventional wisdom has it that they established a particularly repressive apparatus which impeded the development of the indigenous film industry. Close analysis of the data reveals a different conclusion. Initially concerned with the impact of Hollywood representations on the Indian mind, British censorship found it difficult to adapt to a situation dominated by local production. In reality, even at the height of political unrest, the British found it difficult to contain film discourse. Ultimately they found the most effective means to be situated at the local level where District Magistrates could proscribe films as unavailable for a specific district. Thereafter banned film titles were placed in a register which was circulated throughout British India so that a local ban effectively became an All-India ban. However, this censorship activity was not confined to the British alone. Indians were involved at all stages; as members of the regional Boards of Films Censors, as functionaries of the Boards, and even by the 1930s as District Magistrates. As the I.C.C. pointed out there was little dissent in India on the need for film censorship in India. The arguments revolved around who should conduct the censorship and for what purpose. In 1937, when the Congress assumed control of the provincial governments they did little to change the situation. In the immediate
post-Independence period the tendency was to extend film censorship rather than curtail it.

Within this narrative the constant has been the film industry itself. It developed from very humble beginnings to become a major international film industry. Its trajectory has been marked by changing political and economic circumstances that have been reflected in its changing practices and genres. Despite its remarkable growth its status in the cultural and economic formation of India has been ambivalent. Largely ignored in traditional accounts of the Indian economy and assigned culturally to the market place it has nevertheless demonstrated an enormous ability to adapt and transform to such an extent that it above all other contemporary cultural manifestations has the power to say something about modern India. This situation has arisen because the Indian film industry developed largely within a context defined by Indian sensibilities. As Lother Lutz has argued, film in India represents a situation where an essentially alien technology and form has been transformed into a vibrant continuity of a rich and diverse culture. The causes of this development lie in the hitherto "uncharted territory" of the history of the institution.
APPENDIX I
THE INDIAN CINEMATOGRAPH ACT, 1918
(As modified up to the 15th March 1934)

Whereas it is expedient to make provision for regulating exhibitions by means of cinematographs; It is hereby enacted as follows:—

(1) This Act may be called the Cinematograph Act, 1918.

(2) It extends to the whole of British India, including British Baluchistan.

(3) The local Government may, by notification in the local official Gazette, direct that the whole or any of its provisions shall come into force in any province or part of a Province on such date as may be specified in the notification.

2. In this Act, unless there is anything repugnant in the subject or context, —

"Cinematograph" includes any apparatus for the representation of moving pictures or series of pictures;

"place" includes also a house, building, tent, or vessel; and

"prescribed" means prescribed by rules made under this Act.

3. Save as otherwise provided in this Act, no person shall give an exhibition by means of cinematograph elsewhere than in a place licensed under this Act, or otherwise than in compliance with conditions and restrictions imposed by such license.

4. The authority having power to grant licenses under this Act (hereinafter referred to as the "licensing authority") shall be the District Magistrate, or, in a presidency-town or in the town of Rangoon, the Commissioner of Police.

Provided that the Local Government may, by notification in the local official gazette, constitute for the whole or any part of a Province such other authority as it may specify in the notification to be the licensing authority for the purposes of this Act.

5. (1) The licensing authority shall not grant a license under this Act, unless it is satisfied that —

(a) the rules made under the Act have been substantially complied with and

(b) adequate precautions have been taken in the place in respect of which the license is to be given to provide for the safety of persons attending exhibitions therein.

(2) A condition shall be inserted in every license that the licensee will not exhibit, or permit to be exhibited, in such place any film other than a film which has been certified as suitable for
public exhibition by an authority constituted under section, and which when exhibited displays the prescribed mark of that authority, and has not been altered or tampered with in any way since such mark was affixed thereto.

(3) Subject to the foregoing provision of this section and to the control of the Local Government, the licensing authority may grant licenses under this Act to such persons as it thinks fit and on such terms and conditions and subject to such restriction as it may determine.

6. (1) If the owner or person in charge of a cinematograph uses the same or allows it to be used, or if the owner or occupier of any place permits that place to be used, in contravention of the provisions of this Act or the rules made thereunder, or of the conditions and restrictions upon, or subject to which, any license has been granted under this Act, he shall be punishable with fine which may extend to one thousand rupees and, in the case of a continuing offence, with a further fine which may extend to one hundred rupees for each day during which the offence continues, and his license (if any) shall be liable to be revoked by the licensing authority.

(2) If any person is convicted of an offence punishable under this Act committed by him in respect of any film, the convicting Court may further direct that the film shall be forfeited to His Majesty.

7. (1) Any Local Government authorised in this behalf by the Governor General in Council may, by notification in the local official gazette, constitute as many authorities as it may think fit for the purposes of examining and certifying films suitable for public exhibition, and declare the area (hereinafter referred to as the 'local area') within which each such authority shall exercise the powers conferred on it by this Act. Where any authority so constituted consists of a board of two or more persons, not more than one-half of the members thereof shall be persons in the service of Government.

(2) If any such authority after examination considers that a film is suitable for public exhibition, it shall grant a certificate to that effect to the person applying for the same, and shall cause the film to be marked in the prescribed manner. The certificate of any such authority shall, save as hereinafter provided, be valid throughout the territories in which this Act is in force.

(3) (a) If the authority is of opinion that a film is not suitable for public exhibition in the local area, it shall inform the person applying for the certificate of its decision, and such person may, within thirty days from the date of such decision, appeal for a reconsideration of the matter by the Local Government by which the authority was constituted.

(b) If the Local Government rejects the appeal it shall, by notification in the local official gazette, direct that the film shall be seemed to be an uncertified film in that local area, and such direction shall have effect notwithstanding the
subsequent grant of a certificate in respect of the film by any other such authority.

(4) Any such authority may demand the exhibition before itself of any certified film which it has reason to believe is about to be publicly exhibited in its local area, and may by order suspend the certificate of any such film pending the orders of the local Government, and during such suspension the film shall be deemed to be an uncertified film in that area.

(5) The District Magistrate, or in a presidency-town or in the town of Rangoon, the commissioner of Police, may be order suspend the certificate of any film pending the orders of the Local Government, and during such suspension the film shall be deemed to be an uncertified film in that district or town.

(6) A copy of any order of suspension made under sub-section (4) or (5), together with a statement of reasons therefore, shall forthwith be forwarded by the authority or the officer making the same to the Local Government by which the authority was constituted or to which the officer is subordinate, as the case may be, and such Local Government may, in its discretion, either discharge the order or, by notification in the local official gazette, direct that the film shall be deemed to be an uncertified film in the whole or any part of the Province.

(7) A Local Government may, of its own motion, by notification in the local official gazette, direct that a certified film shall be deemed to be an uncertified film in the whole or any part of the province.

(8) The exhibition of a film to which any order or direction under clause (b) of sub-section (3) or sub-section (4), (6) or (7) is for the time being applicable shall in the area to which such order or direction relates, be deemed to be a contravention of the condition mentioned in sub-section (2) or section 5.

8. (1) The Local Government may make rules for the purpose of carrying into effect the provision of this Act.

(2) In particular and without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing power, rules under this section may provide for -

(a) the regulation of cinematograph exhibitions for securing the public safety;

(b) the procedure of the authorities constituted for examining and certifying films as suitable for public exhibition, and all matters ancillary thereto, and the fees to be levied by those authorities;

(bb) the appointment of officers subordinate to authorities constituted under section 7 and the regulation of the power and duties of such officers; and;

(c) Any other matter which by the Act is to be prescribed.

(3) All rules made under this Act shall be published in the local official gazette, and, on such publication, shall have effect as if enacted in this Act.
9. The Local Government may, by order in writing, exempt, subject to such conditions and restrictions as it may impose, any cinematograph exhibition or class of cinematograph exhibitions from any of the provisions of this Act or of any rule made thereunder.

Source: Barucha, B.D. ed (1938), Indian Cinematograph Yearbook, Motion Picture Society of India, Bombay, pp.429-433.
APPENDIX II

INDIAN CINEMATOGRAPH COMMITTEE

Questionnaire

Instructions

If you are willing to answer any of the questions kindly send your reply as soon as possible to the Secretary, Indian Cinematograph Committee, whose address will be c/- Presidency Postmaster, Bombay (up to 18th November); and thereafter c/- Postmaster, General Post Office, Lahore (up to 30th November); and thereafter c/- Home Department, Delhi.

Introductory

1. Have you any special knowledge of, or connection with, the cinematograph Industry either in India or abroad? If so, what?

General

2. (a) In your experience to what extent do Indians (1) of the educated classes and (2) of the illiterate classes frequent cinemas? To what extent is such attendance on the increase? (Please explain to what place or area your answer refers).

(b) Can you give an idea of the composition of an average cinema audience in the locality of which you can speak?

(c) What proportion of the audience consists of children under 14 or adolescents of impressionable age?

PART I

Film Industry in India

3. Have you any opinion as to what classes of films are the most popular with Indian audiences and generally in India?

4. Are the exhibitors catering adequately for Indian audiences? If not, what are the reasons?

5. Are Indian-produced films, depicting Indian life, readily available to exhibitors? If so,

(a) are they of good quality?
(b) are they popular?
(c) is it ordinarily less or more profitable to show an Indian than a Western film? Can you cite any examples of successful Indian films?

6. (a) Do you think that films of Indian life, topical Indian news, and scenes (with Indian actors) depicting stories from the national literature, history and mythology, would be more popular with Indian audiences than the prevalent Western films?
(b) Of such films, what kind would appeal most strongly

(1) to the educated classes,
(2) to the illiterate population?

7. Is difficulty experienced in obtaining suitable films for exhibition to the British and Indian Troops? If so, in what way exactly are the films unsuitable? What sort of films are both suitable and popular?

8. (a) Are you satisfied with the present condition of the Industry in this country in its several branches of production, distribution and exhibition?

(b) If you are not satisfied, what in your opinion are the main difficulties besetting the Industry and what means would you suggest for assisting it?

9. Are good films readily obtainable by exhibitors at reasonable prices? If not, is there any special reason for this?

Is there any monopoly or tendency to monopoly of the supply or exhibition of films?

10. Do the systems of "block" and "blind" booking and of "first run" or "key theatres" exist in India?

If so, explain the advantages and disadvantages thereof to the Trade and the Public?

11. Have the exhibitors in this country sufficient facilities for previewing films?

Have you any suggestions to make on this matter?

12. To what extent is the amusement tax (where it exists) a handicap to the exhibitor?

13. How does the present customs tariff on imported films affect the exhibitors? How far is it useful for promoting the indigenous production of films? What suggestions have you to make regarding the tariff generally on all materials connected with the film industry?

14. Do you consider that an increased use of the cinema for educational purposes in schools and for adult education in agriculture, public health, etc., by Government or other agencies would help the growth of the film industry in this country?

Is there any demand for such films?

15. Are conditions in this country favourable to the development of an Indian film-producing industry on a large scale?

What are your reasons for your opinion?

16. Do you consider that there are Indian producers, directors, actors, actresses and scenario-writers of sufficient technical knowledge,
enterprise, resource and adaptability on whom the country can depend for a substantial output of films of real competitive exhibition value?

What measures would you suggest to supply any deficiency.

17. Do you consider that there are Indian producers, directors, actors, coming for film-production?

18. Do you consider that suitable Government action whether legislative or administrative may be an effective incentive and encouragement to private enterprise for film production? Can you suggest what suitable action can be taken by Government?

19. How does the cost of film-production in this country compare with that in other countries?

20. (a) Do any of your proposals involve expenditure from Government funds? If so, do you think that such expenditure is justifiable, having regard to the other needs of the country?

(b) Have you any suggestions to make regarding the sources from which such expenditure may be met?

21. What is your opinion regarding a proposal which has been made that to ensure the production and exhibition of films conforming to moral standards, to provide a centralised neutral distributing agency and furnish a fair market, and to inaugurate the use of teaching and propaganda films, and generally to improve the conditions of the film industry in all its aspects, including censorship, a State agency should be created to undertake the management of the film industry as a monopoly?

Films of the British Commonwealth

22. Should India participate in the policy outlined in the resolution of the Imperial Conference to give some measure of encouragement to British Empire films, and if so, would such participation

(a) assist the development of her own film industry,

(b) assist in making herself better known and understood throughout the Empire and the world, and

(c) improve the standard of Western films shown in India?

Have you any suggestions as to the methods of putting such a policy into practice and the limitations if any?

23. (a) To what extent can cinema pictures be used for making known the conditions, resources and habits of the peoples, and the activities of the various Governments of the British Commonwealth of Nations to each other?

(b) What measures would you suggest for getting the various Governments to co-operate to this end?
PART II

Social Aspects and Control

24. (a) Do you consider that any class of films exhibited in this country has a demoralising or otherwise injurious effect upon the public?

(b) Is there a general circulation of immoral or criminally suggestive films?

(c) In your opinion what class of film is harmful? To whom is it harmful? In what way is it harmful?

(d) Consider specifically whether censorship is adequate in the cases of

(1) "Sex" films,
(2) "Crime" films.

(e) Do you consider there has been any increase of crime in your province due to the cinema?

(f) Support your statements, wherever possible, by instances within your personal knowledge.

25. Do you consider that the differences in social customs and outlook between the West and the East necessitate special consideration in the censorship of films in this country?

26. (a) Should more care be taken in censoring films likely to offend religious susceptibilities?

(b) Can you give an example of any film which has offended the religious susceptibilities of any class of the community?

27. (a) Have any of the films exhibited in India a tendency to misrepresent Western civilisation or to lower it in the eyes of Indians? Is it a fact that films representing Western life are generally unintelligible to an uneducated Indian or are largely misunderstood by him? If so, do undesirable results follow from this? Have you any suggestions to make on this point?

(b) Do you know of any films exhibited abroad which have a tendency to misrepresent Indian civilisation? If so, were they produced in India?

28. Has any class of film shown in this country a bad effect on -

(a) children,
(b) adolescents.

If so -

(1) what class of film?
(2) in what way is it harmful?
29. Are you in favour of certification of certain films as "for adults only?"

30. Are you in favour of prohibiting all children below a certain age from visiting cinemas except for special "Children's performances"? If so, why? What age do you suggest?

31. (a) Do you consider that censorship is an effective method of guarding against misuse of the film?

32. Do you think that the present system of censorship in your province is satisfactory? If not, in what way is it defective? Can you suggest any improvement?

33. Would a strict censorship -

   (a) interfere unreasonably with the recreations of the people?

   (b) involve a falling off in the attendance at cinemas?

   (c) unduly interfere with the freedom required for artistic and inspirational development?

34. (a) Do you advocate the replacement of the present Provincial Boards of Censors by a single Central Board?

   (1) If so, why?

   (2) Would this cause any inconvenience to the trade?

   (3) How should such a Central Board be constituted?

   (4) Where should it be situated?

   (b) Or, would you advocate a Central Board in addition to the Provincial Boards?

   (c) If you advocate a Central Board working either alone or with Provincial Boards, how would you regulate the relationship between the various Boards and the Central and Local Governments?

   (d) How should such a Board or Boards be financed?

35. (a) Is the present constitution of the Provincial Boards (of which at least half the members must, under the law, be non-officials) satisfactory?

   (b) Would you prefer a whole-time experienced well-paid officer as censor at each centre, to be assisted by an Advisory Board of non-officials?

36. (a) Do you think that the present system (prevailing at Bombay and Calcutta) under which films are ordinarily examined by inspectors subordinate to the Board is satisfactory? Are such inspectors sufficiently well qualified for the work? What sort of qualifications are essential?

   (b) Or do you think that all films should be examined by members of the Board? If so, do you consider that gentlemen of suitable standing will be available who would be prepared to
devote sufficient time to the examination of films for a reasonable remuneration?

37. (a) Are there adequate safeguards under the Act for preventing the exhibition of a film which may be objectionable locally although it has been passed by a Board in some other part of India?

(b) Do you consider that any safeguards are needed?

38. Do you know any instances of films which have been passed by a Board of Censors in one province and found objectionable in another province?

39. Have you come across any instances of pictures disapproved or banned from exhibition in the country of origin or in Great Britain being exhibited in India?

40. Should posters, handbills and advertisements of cinema performances also be censored? What measures would you suggest for such censorship without undue restriction on freedom?

Have you noticed any such advertisements which were objectionable? In what way were they objectionable?

41. Have you noticed any improvement in the moral standard of the films exhibited in India in recent years?

42. Have you any suggestions to make for getting the co-operation of the trade in the matter of the censorship?

43. (a) Is there need for a stricter control over the import and export of films?

(b) If so, why?

(c) What methods should be adopted for this purpose?

44. To what extent could public bodies and the press assist in maintaining a good standard of films?

45. (a) Should some control be exercised by Government over film-production, and if so what should be the nature of such control?

(b) Should all film-producing agencies be registered and licensed, and their studios periodically inspected?
Questionnaire addressed to the Boards of Censors
through the Government of India and the Provincial Governments
on 5th October 1927

1. (a) The names of the present members of the Bombay
      Bengal
      Madras
      Rangoon
      Boards
      of Film Censors; their professions or occupations; and the
      body or association (if any) by which they are nominated.
      
      (b) Name and profession or occupation of the Secretary.

2. (a) Total receipts and expenditure of the Board for each year
      since its institution.
      
      (b) Were such receipts derived entirely from examination fees?
      
      (c) Amounts of grants (if any) from Government in each year.

3. The rate of fees or allowances paid to members of the Board for
   attendance at meetings, examination of films or other purposes.

4. The staff maintained by the Board and their pay and allowances, (any
   special increase or reduction in the last three years should be noted).

5. A statement of the receipts and expenditure of the Board under
   different heads for each of the years 1924-25, 1925-26 and 1926-27.

6. (a) The total number of films examined in each year since the
      institution of the Board.
      
      (b) In each year -
          (1) how many were rejected?
          (2) how many were cut?

7. In each of the last three years (up to 31st March 1927) -
   (a) What was the total footage of films examined by the Board
       (including the Board's staff)?
   
   (b) How many films were examined by members of the Board and what
       was the footage so examined?

8. The number of films examined in each of the last three years which
   had not previously been certified in British India.

9. In each of the last three years -
   (a) How many appeals were preferred under section 7(3)(a) of the
       Cinematograph Act and with what results?
(b) How many certificates were suspended under section 7(4) and that were the final orders?

10. The number of meetings of the Board during each of the last three years.

11. In each of the last three years how many films were declared uncertified by the local Government under sub-sections 6 and 7 of sections 7 of the Cinematograph Act.

Note: The replies to this Questionnaire are printed in Volume IV of the Evidence recorded by the Committee.

### APPENDIX III

**NEWSREELS OF MAHATMA GANDHI BANNED BY VARIOUS BOARD OF FILM CENSORS IN INDIA, 1936 TO 1937**

**INDIAN**

1. **Mahatma Gandhi's March to Freedom 12/3/30**  
   - Swada Film Company

2. **Mahatma Gandhi's Historic March**  
   - Krishna Film Company

3. **Mahatma Gandhi's March 12 March Ahmedabad**  
   - Ranjit Film Company

4. **Epoch Making Voyage of Mahatma Gandhi to London**  
   - Saraswathi Film Company

5. **Mahatma Gandhi's Return from London**  
   - Krishna Film Company

6. **Bombay Welcomes Mahatma Gandhi**  
   - M B Billimoria

7. **Return of Mahatma Gandhi from Round Table Conference**  
   - Imperial Film Company

8. **Mahatma Gandhi's Return from Pilgrimage of Peace**  
   - Saraswathi Film Company

9. **Mahatma Gandhi's Speech in The Public Public Meeting**  
   - Krishna Tone Movie Company

10. **Topical of Mahatma and Others**  
    - Indian Topical Company

11. **Mandivi Khadi Exhibition and Mr Gandhi at Film**  
    - Indian Topical Company

12. **Mahatma Gandhi After His Release**  
    - Nanjewan Film Company

13. **Mahatma Gandhi After the Truce**  
    - Imperial Film Company

14. **Mahatma Gandhiji's Punarangaman**  
    - Krishna Film Company

**Source:** Baskaran, 1976: 663 fn.

**IMPORTED**

1. **Gandhi in England**  
   - British Screen News Company

2. **Gandi Sees the King**  
   - British Screen News Company

3. **Gandhi's Activities in England**  
   - British Screen News Company

4. **Gandhi News**  
   - Paramount

5. **Mahatma Gandhi in London**  
   - British Screen News Company
6. Gandhi's Visit to Lancashire

7. Gandhi With Charlie

8. Arrival of Mahatma Gandhi in London

Source: IOLR/PJ/443/1943.
APPENDIX IV

ENDORSED AND BANNED FILMS: A SELECT LIST 1921 - 1933

1921

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BANNED</th>
<th>Reasons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Our Girls and Their Physique</td>
<td>&quot;likely to offend Muslim opinion&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lankey in the Harem</td>
<td>&quot;likely to offend Anglo-Indian sentiments&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Lantern</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five Nights</td>
<td>&quot;gross misrepresentation of English life&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Flirt</td>
<td>&quot;course and vulgar&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moonchild</td>
<td>&quot;faithful assist African ruler to drive out the whiteman&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purple Iris</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Endorsed and Excised

| Half Breed                      | "suggestive scenes"                        |
| Damaged Goods                  | "delete scenes of British soldiers and sailors meeting prostitutes" (banned in Calcutta) |
| Head Waiter                    |                                            |
| Salome                         |                                            |
| The Garden of Allah            | "likely to offend Muslim opinion"          |
| Pathe Pictorial No. 99         | "excise scenes of Ireland and disturbances" |

Source: IOLR/No.891-1 C-19/Rangoon, 4/4/1922

FILM CENSORED PERIOD JUNE 1927 - JUNE 1928

1. Triumph of Rat                Britain
2. Six Wonderful Nights in Paris with stars of Folies Bergere France
3. The Road to Mandalay          US
4. The Wanderer                   US
5. Varieties                      Germany
6. The Chinese Trunk Mysteries  Italy
7. Primrose Time  Shanghai
8. Kicking this Genii out of Germany  Britain
9. Yashodivi (Sacrifice)  India
10. The Stormy Night  China
11. Sea Horses  US
12. Circe, The Enchantress  US
13. Moru of Israel  Britain
14. San HPE  Burma
15. Bhadra Bhamini  India
17. The Pasha's Seven Wives  Italy
18. The Unpardonable Sin  US
19. The Great Unknown  Holland
20. Missing Daughters  US
21. The Scarlett Letters  US
22. The Mystery Club  Holland
23. Broken Barriers  US
24. Passion of the East  Denmark
25. Abas the Deacon  US
26. The Answer of the Sea  US

Source: IOLR/PJ/2346/28

1929 BRITISH FILMS BANNED

1. Mistaken Love
   - the marriage of a European lady to an Arab chief would offend European and Muslim opinion.

2. The Triumph of the Scarlet Pimpernel
   - The French Revolution scenes show scenes of violence and ruthlessness of mob rule.
3. Shiraz - perversion of historical facts offensive to Muslim rule.

Source: IOLR/PJ/372/1930

1929 - 1930
List of prohibited films during 12 months
1/10/29 - 30/9/30 by country of origin.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Film</th>
<th>Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Anarkali or Monument of Tears</td>
<td>US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bicharak</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The Charge of the Gauchos</td>
<td>US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Civil Disobedience at Dandi 6/4/1930</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Civil Disobedience at Bombay 7/4/1930</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Drums of Love</td>
<td>US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Expiation</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Gandhi's March for Freedom</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Gandhi's Historic March</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Ivan the Terrible</td>
<td>Russia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>King of the Khyber Raffles</td>
<td>US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The Letter</td>
<td>US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Mahatma Gandhi's March</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Mr Patel's Procession</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>The Passion of Joan of Arc</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>The Patriot</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>The Red Dance</td>
<td>US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>The Scarlet Lady</td>
<td>US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Shiraz</td>
<td>Britain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>The Silent House</td>
<td>Britain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>The Terror of Chalta Purha</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>The Truth About Sex</td>
<td>US</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
23. The Very Idea  
    US
24. The Red Flame  
    Britain
25. Vilga-Volga  
    France

Source: IOLR/PJ/6629/1930

1930 - ADDENDUM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FILM</th>
<th>REASON</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Funeral Procession of Jatindra Nath Das</td>
<td>Because of its connection with Civil Disobedience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Stolen Night</td>
<td>Low Moral Tone</td>
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</table>

Source: IOLR/PJ/7157/1930

1930 - LIST OF FILMS BANNED 30/10/1930 TO 31/1/1931

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROVINCE</th>
<th>FILM</th>
<th>REASON</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bombay</td>
<td>Flag of Freedom or Swaraj Toran</td>
<td>Released as The Thunder of the Hills after excisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Her Last Dance</td>
<td>Sordid and revolting character.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengal</td>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>Sordid and brutal character.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thunderbolt</td>
<td>Deals with an unwholesome and undesirable subject.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: IOLR/PJ/1020/1931
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1916 J+P 4748, 5256.
1917 J+P 11, 413, 4677, 4775.
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1919 J+P 6450, 6685.
1920 J+P 1308, 1480, 2760.

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Mr E Mitchell of Allies Association, California - proposal to take cinematograph films in India.

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1916 P+J 3380, 3740 Copy 4748.

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"Indian Europe" Cinematographic Film

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1918   P+J   342, 356, 592, 634, 850, 2638, 2970, 2951, 3393, 3483, 3572, 3756, 3877, 4110, 4123, 4168, 4316, 4365, 4481, 4581, 4583, 4791, 4893, 5112, 5276, 5296, 5326, 5338, 5542, 5579, 5525, 2765.
1919   P+J   217, 606, 853, 3653, 5024, 5264, 5425, 6279, 6618, 6849.
1920   P+J   1429, 3981.

5. IOLR L/P+J6/1504
   P+J Dept. P+J 4206/17

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This file contains the following papers.

1918   P-J   4287, 4639, 5374.
1919   P+J   3705.

7. IOLR L/P+J6/1747
   P+J Dept. P+J 2601/21 Previous File J+P 5265/16

Film Censorship in India

Memo:   Evidence File Copies and Spares handed over to Record Dept.

This file contains the following papers.

1921   J+P   2601, 4738, 6805, 7165.
1922   J+P   1688, 1757, 2077, 3332.
1923   J+P   5101
1925   J+P   228, 336, 479, 715, 1340, 1703, 2047, 2096, 3003, 3292.
1926   J+P   1159, 3141, 1191, 3228, 3393, 3554.
1927   J+P   808, 864, 1218, 1613, 2050, 2299, 2421, 2462, 2509, 2570, 2835, 2944.
1928        J+P        3442, 3977, 4028, 4099, 4592, 4689.
1929        J+P        809, 2553, 2554, 4257, 4415, 5024.

8.  IOLR        L/P+J/6/1995
      P+J Dept.        P+J 372/30 Previous file 2601/21

Film Censorship in India: Names of Banned Films

           E+D 1849/31  Control of Cinematography in India.
           P+J 4487/29  Educational & Cultural Films Committee.

This file contains the following papers.

1930        P+J        372, 6401, 6628, 6629, 7156.
1931        P+J        1020, 1317.
1932        P+J        755, 1365, 2934, 3100, 4446, 5430, 6031.
1933        P+J        443, 3842, 4302, 4355, 4357.
1934        P+J        55, 135, 368, 555, 1498, 1619, 2756, 3915, 4042,
           P+J        4068, 4140, 4334, 4484, 4584.
1935        P+J        945, 1737, 2244.
1936        P+J        1289, 2812, 2857, 2968, 3074, 4225, 4325.
1937        P+J        79, 3044, 3761, 4394.
1938        P+J        2384.

9.  L/P+J/26/3970/6

Evidence to the Indian Cinematograph Committee, Vol.5. The in-camera evidence.

National Archives of India, New Delhi


1917        Home Poll. Sept. 139.  Bill to make provision for regulating exhibition by means of ....
           Home Poll. June 146  Censorship of Films in India.
           Home Poll. January 233-2348  Enquiry from S.S. as to what steps have been taken to censor films in India.
           Home Poll. September 127-128  Legislation for the censorship etc of films and control of cinema exhibitions.
Home Poll. November 779-791
Legislation for the control of cinematograph.

Home Poll. July 86178 + K.W
Preparation of films of the Indian Empire by Mr J C Raymond, Official Photographer circulation in the USA and neutral countries.

Home Poll. February 82-110 A
Proposed Amendment of D.P.A. Measures to be taken for the pre-censorship of film prohibition of those which are objectionable.

1918
Home Poll January 46-47 B
Cinema Films: Expenses in connection with films of the "Indian Empire" taken by Raymond, official photographer.

Home Poll. January 45 B
Legal Department paper regarding opinions expressed on Cinematograph Bill.

Home Poll. May 595-60 A
Cinematograph Act of 1918. Amendments to a Bill to make provision for regulating exhibitions by means of cinematograph.

Home Poll. January 375 B
Cinematograph Bill. Copy of a printed paper no. 11 relating to opinions expressed on the ....

1920
Home Poll. November 75
Papers received from the I.O. on the subject of cinematograph control in India.

1922
Home Poll. 147V
Cinematograph propaganda in America.

Home Poll. 147/1
Cinema Publicity Report of F.J. Evans on cinematograph in India.

Home Poll. 147/VII
Legislation for control of Cinema Films.

1923
Home Poll. 147/VII
Proposed Legislation to control of cinematograph in India and the importation of objectionable films.

1925
Home Poll. F 367
Rules for the regulation of cinematograph exhibitions in the Civil and Military Station of Bangalore.
1927

Home Poll. 48/VIII (pd) Exhibition in England of a missionary film "India Today".

Cinematograph Appointment of a Committee to enquire into the question:

a. of improving the standard of cinema film censorship in India
b. of developing the indigenous film industry and,
c. the desirability of taking steps to encourage the exhibition of Empire films in accordance with resolution passed at Imperial Conference in 1926.

Resolution moved in the Indian Legislative recommending the appointment of a committee.

Home Poll. 48 XVI

Constitution of the Board of Film Censors in the Punjab.

1928

Home Poll. 80/V Appointment and remuneration of the members and Secretary to the I.C.C.

Home Poll. 14/IV Questionnaire of the I.C.C.

Home Poll. 80/IX Request for the inclusion in the report of the I.C.C., of the correspondence.

Home Poll. 80/XVII Remuneration of the members of the I.C.C.

Home Poll. 80/16 Supply to the I.C.C. of certain information relating to the production of films in India.

Home Poll. 80/XXXIX Statement of expenditure incurred up to March 1928 in connection with the I.C.C.

Home Poll. 80/24 Termination of duties of Diwan T. Rangachariar etc as members etc of the I.C.C.

Home Poll. 80/II Arrangements in connection with the submission of official evidence to the I.C.C. by provincial governments.
Proposals for adjournment of the Committee and for its reassembly to write its report.

Home Poll. 14/XXI
Grant of facilities to Himunsai Rai for the production of a film in India.

Home Poll. 7/I
Formation of a Central Cinema Bureau.

Home Poll. 7/12
Consideration of the report of the I.C.C.

Home Poll. 8/6
Decision on the proposals made by the Imperial Conference covering the exhibition of cinematograph within the Empire.

Commerce 195-T(3)
Consideration of the I.C.C. on the question of the assessment of imported cinema films.

June

Commerce 1861-C
Formation of the Central Cinema Bureau as recommended by the I.C.C.

Industry and Labour
1296(13)
1. adopted at the 2nd International Conference for the abolition of Import and Export Prohibitions and Restrictions.

2. Extracts from provisionals numbers of the 9th meeting held at Geneva during 1928 relating to restrictions on Cinematograph films.

Industry and Labour
1273(89)
Resolution in the Legislative Assembly by Kumar Rananjaya Singh regarding protection of the Indian cinema trade and industry from exploitation by non-Indians by giving effect to certain recommendations of the I.C.C.

Industry and Labour
1273(99)
Question in the Legislative Assembly by Mawlvi Abdul Matin Chaudhury recommending that immediate effect be given to the recommendations of the I.C.C. with regard to the imposition of
the quota system for the development and encouragement of the Indian film industry.

Industry and Labour I-273(102) Question in the Legislative Assembly by M. Ismail Khan regarding monopoly in the cinema theatre business.

1930 Home Poll. 9/4 Prohibition of the film depicting Gandhi's march to break salt tax.

Home Poll. 9/11 Q + A in Parliament regarding the particulars of British films banned in India for a period of 12 months.

1931 Home Poll. 23/31 Q + A in Parliament regarding cinema films and exhibition of which has been prohibited.

Home Poll. 22/101 Question in the Legislative Assembly by Diwan Bahadur T Rangachariar regarding the action taken on the recommendation of the I.C.C.

1932 Home Poll. 2/11 Intended use by the Indian National Movement of the film as a propaganda agent.

Home Poll. 8/16 Report of I.C.C. Question whether adequate action is taken regarding censorship of films and whether under existing arrangements, powers of control under Cinematograph Act are being effectively exercised.

1933 Home Poll. 2718 P.Q. regarding the alleged exhibition of films: 1. derogatory to Western Civilization 2. of a pro-Communist or Bolshevist character 3. offensive to Muslim opinion.

Home Poll. 21/12 Censorship Regulations

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1913 File No 118 Annual and Periodical Reports of Police, 1912.
No 1508  Public Amusement, Bombay Rules. Rules for housing, controlling, keeping and regulating places of amusement in the city of Bombay.

No 1736  Plays Girje Kallyam. Prohibition under Section 3 of DPA 1876.

1914  J.D. 1354  Public Amusements, Bombay Rules for Licensing, controlling, keeping and regulating places of amusement in the city of Bombay.

1915  No 1425  Prohibition under Section 3 of DPA 1876 of play Andla Vishran (Blind Faith produced by Nutan Aarya) Kolhagin Dramatic Company.

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