"Not in Our Good": Nationalist and other Concerns in the Censorship Debates in Early Indian Cinema

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In a full length newsreel named *The Great Bonfire of Foreign Clothes* (1915) by T. Jansen, a freelance cameraman from USA, M. K. Gandhi, perhaps for the first time on screen, appeared as the most prominent amongst the other nationalist leaders. The newsreel ran for two weeks at the Globe and the West End Theatre of Bombay and received enough enthusiastic response (Kaul 15). But the civil and the political administration of Bombay, seemingly embarrassed with the situation, could do a nothing to stop the exhibition. Nonetheless, the moment proved to be historic as it heralded an era of nationalist embodiment in Indian cinema which would relate closely with Gandhian idealization of the national in near future.

In 1915, there was no censor board and the British administration could not prevent the film from being exhibited over a substantial period of time. The rules of the existing regulatory authorities, governed by the "Dramatic Performances Act, 1876," proved to be inadequate to prevent the screening. As a result, the exhibition continued for almost one month without any authoritarian intervention (ibid 16). Shortly after, anticipating the danger of films depicting the nationalist cause and citing several concerns about the cultural, civic and hygienic norms in film theatres in India, The Cinematograph Act was passed in the British Parliament in 1918. By the terms of this act, four separate Censor boards were set up in Bombay, Madras, Calcutta and Rangoon in May, 1920. Later, another board was set up in Lahore in 1927. In 1921, a mythological film, *Bhakta Vidur* was denied exhibition by the District Magistrate of Karachi and the Local Officer for Bombay state because 'it is [was]

likely to excite disaffection against the Government and incite people to non-cooperation' (Vasudev 25). Moreover, the film was considered "a thinly veiled resume of political events in India, Vidur appearing as Mr. Gandhi clad in Gandhi cap and khaddar shirt. The intention of the film is to create hatred and contempt and to stir up feeling of enmity against the Government" (ibid). The controversy enabled *Bhakta Vidur* to enjoy the status of being the first Indian film to be curbed by censorship (Rajadhyaksha and Willemen 26).

However, the present paper does not intend to detail the quantitative evidences of the early censorship practices in India. Nor it carves out the political logic that had seemingly worked as the principle rationale behind the emergence of a censored cinematic regime during the colonial era. Rather it attempts to network the coordinates of the cultural hierarchies of the said period which eventually legitimized the extended practice of censorship on the Indian cinematic terrain. By "cultural hierarchy" it suggests considering the hierarchy enjoyed by the nationalist elites over the public sphere to continue with their dominance over the national imagination. In a way, the article extends the historical observation put forward by Priya Jaikumar (2003) which, taking account of the interviews annexed with the *Report of the Indian Cinematograph Committee* (1928), found the status of the then British Indian state as largely 'incapable of interfering in Indian film policy' (84). In the present discussion, such rendering of colonial authority appears largely as opening up a negotiated domain for sustenance of Indian cinema. The method of enquiry here thus moves into exploring the social basis of a seemingly indigenous practice of extra-constitutional mechanism of cultural policing in colonial India.

The practice of censorship, although enforced and materialized through the colonial institutions, largely stood as a practice of self-regulation during the heydays of the nationalist politics in India. The process, if seen along a historical trajectory of the cultural policing of film exhibition of cinema, which continued even through the post-independence period,

appears as producing a commonsensical, consensual perception of "good," largely driven by the ideas of nationalist articulation and dwelling with the notions of "tradition" and "modernity." William Mazzarella notes:

> If in colonial times, nonofficial (albeit officially appointed) censor board members were supposed to be "influential members of the leading communities", then the post-independence specification did away with such explicitly identitarian thinking, relying instead on the vaguer notion of a "cross section of society and interests (85).

The contours of the nationalist politics during the first few decades of the 20ᵗʰ century, largely hegemonised by the urban elites, enforced a mobilization of collective consensus in the public sphere. The article attempts to locate the coordinates of that mobilization in order to produce a cultural history of the early censorship practices in Indian cinema.

An Intricate Dichotomy

The major concerns of colonial administration behind fixing the agenda up for the incumbent censor boards in India did not only include the issues pertaining to political representation, but a grave anxiety over certain "immorality," spread mostly by the films imported from USA, took over as a key issue. The concern for a substantial de-legitimization of the "white" rulers in the eyes of the natives through the portrayal of the "immoral," "violent" acts played by the westerners in these films had more to do with the issue of censorship during its early era than establishing a protected regime for a burgeoning film industry. Thus, unlike its European counterparts, the indigenous cinema of India did collide with Hollywood summarily, if at all, to protect its existence as a national cinema. Hollywood, however, for a long time, continued to be counted as the most dangerous threat to the British Empire films within the Indian Territory. Interestingly "in relation to the empire cinema, the needs of imperialism and capitalism did not necessarily collide, but they did not necessarily work

harmoniously either" (Chowdhry 5). Available historical accounts on early cinema show how the British Empire films, Hollywood and other foreign films formed a complex network in India. The Hollywood imports created a genuine concern for the British rulers of India as they found immoral representations of the westerner's culture on screen by the American films causing much harm to British governance in India, which formed a primary basis for the practice of censorship in India. The *Indian Cinematograph Committee Report* (1928), as suggests Priya Jaikumar, stands as an evidence of Britain's "racial anxieties" over the impact of Hollywood films in India (*More Than Morality* 86). Their unease was also due to quantitative evidences showing the proportion of Empire films exhibited in India during the 1920s lag far behind films of different Western origins including Hollywood. According to the report, the proportion of the total length of the footages of Indian films (excluding Burma) examined by the censor boards of India during 1921-22 was merely 9.57 per cent in comparison with the length of footages of other non-Indian films. It shows a little progress in 1927-28 where the cumulative percentage raised to 14.92 (ICC 188). Within the imported films, however, the major chunk was from Hollywood; 77.90% during 1925-26 and 79.72% during 1926-27 (ibid 191). The committee, after conducting a comprehensive study of the scenario, recommended several measures to be taken by the government. The recommendations included the expansion of a home (Indian) market, support to the home (Indian) industry, waiving the duty on the raw stock of films. The committee also made a note of their concern about the practice of censorship in India (Barnouw and Krishnaswamy 56-57). However, the government did not pay much attention to implement the recommendations and the issue gradually died down in the wake of the talkies era.

Interestingly, apart from being a participant in the Hollywood-Empire Cinema binary, Indian cinema also shared another conflicting domain with British films. Although this particular tension between the British and the indigenous films of India can rather be

considered a point of internal dispute within the larger arena of the Empire films as India was the largest stakeholder in film business within the entire British empire, but the point eventually signals the early national aspirations of the Indian filmmakers. The primary and major conflict between Hollywood and Empire cinema, then, does not only stand as an important site of resistance offered by the Indian film practitioners in the forms of commercial conflicts and consequent changes in their favour, but it may also be perceived as a crucial factor in the historical formulation of specific strategies for the burgeoning Indian industry. The claim for the political and economic autonomy comes from a conditional objectivity where the industry is found engaged in a continuous struggle in establishing its specific cinematic practices and norms to develop a national perspective. Priya Jaikumar observes:

> [...] nascent institutional forms of the Indian film industry and evolving forms of Indian cinema laid claim to economic and aesthetic autonomy from the state in what were perhaps the most effective ways of resisting the British government, competing with Hollywood film imports, and defining a national imagination (*Cinema at the End of Empire* 18).

Also, the *ICC Report* specifically noted their concern for the Indian filmmakers roughly hinting towards the problem caused because of the cultural impact of the Hollywood cinema– "We find evidence throughout, more especially in cities, of the effect on the sentiment, habits and thoughts of the people of the constant exhibition of Western films" (91).

On the other hand, the film entrepreneurs of colonial India repeatedly sought for protection from the colonial authority for the sake of their cultural as well as economic sustenance. Chandulal J. Shah, one of the main figures of the then film industry, mentioned in his speech during the Indian Motion Pictures Congress in 1939:

> […] it is a tragedy that we the national and nationalist producers are not given any facilities in our country by our own Government and states whereas the British, American and even German Producers have often been welcomed to make use of everything India possesses (quoted in Jaikumar *Cinema at the End of Empire* 18).

However, historical evidences testify that there was a process of negotiation parallel to these happenings, as some of the entrepreneurs found it a practical solution mostly to do away with the problem of film finance. Himanshu Rai's *Light of Asia* (1926) was co-produced by Great Eastern Film Corporation and the Emelka Film Corporation of Munich, Germany. The Indian corporation was formed by Rai and one of his main associates Niranjan Pal. The tradition of joint venture continued through the making of *Shiraz* (1928) and *A Throw of Dice* (1930). These films were produced by a British and a German concern respectively in collaboration with Rai. However, his efforts failed to generate subsequent interest from the industry about his model of co-production and it could never become a trendsetter in India. The *ICC Report* also noted their skepticism about the nature of this kind of film production system (89-90). Adding to this concern, the report also found– "it is true that Mr. Himansu Rai says he tried to get Indians to take a financial interest in this venture of his and failed" (90).

For Films of "Good Taste"

The search for "good cinema," which will not only produce a respectable vision of the society but will also enhance the establishment of a "good" cultural environment, had thus become a major agenda of the controlling and consensus building institutions of Indian cinema. The process also initiated attempts which prescribed imposing restriction on the films which does not fit with the "cultural" or "moral" standards of the Indian society. And such developments necessitated the emergence of a seemingly modern genre of literary cinema. A considerable set of the imported films worked as a model for the enthusiasts in this regard. Although, not all films imported from US or from other countries of western origin could be considered

stunt, action of the films were full with bodily romance, rather a substantial section of them were of literary cinema, a form duly endorsed by the educated Indian middle class, the practical influence of which was substantially overshadowed by the earlier kind of films. Such a happening can be traced in the filmography of the silent era where out of the 1500-odd Indian films most of them were stunt and fantasy features, whereas a very small section of the lot was of the kind of so-called "good cinema," reflecting religious or social values from a moral viewpoint (Bhaumik 15).

This scarcity of "good cinema" partly explains the apparent reluctance of the educated middle class to the medium of cinema. As a sharp contrast to the European and American context of film production, the filmmakers during the Indian silent era seldom moved towards producing literary films, i.e. the cinema of "good taste." The *ICC Report*, evidences provided with the report and the early literary magazines, mostly run by the educated middle class of Bombay and Calcutta, relentlessly criticized the then existing film culture and kept lamenting about the bleak future of cinema in India. Kaushik Bhaumik links this issue to the question of labour for film production in early Indian cinema. He observes:

> [...] this [Indian] cinema, from the very beginning, was plagued by the non-availability of the 'respectable' bodies that could have led to a literary cinema of the kind that the West had achieved fairly early on in its history of cinema…in almost all cases depositors of evidences were of the opinion that the middle class reluctance to join the film industry was a major contributing factor to the lack of classy cinema in India. Thus cinema was left to the vagaries of cinematic speculators and latest fads of a fickle audience, leading to an inferior kind of art when compared with the imported cinema (ibid 16).

Although there were attempts to intervene into the domain with an intention to create cinemas of "good taste," even Phalke himself tried to contribute to this effort in his own way. But the

problem he faced, in most cases, was the availability of actors, actresses and other participants for his venture and obviously the capital (Phalke 58-60). The extent of social censorship had to take such things into its necessary consideration.

In Bengal, such a process to establish a norm for "good cinema" was already underway. The increasing command of the *Bhadralok* section over film production, specifically from the mid-1920s, thus carves the history of the early phase of the Bengal film industry differently from that of Bombay. Of course, there was Madan Theatres, monopolizing film business in Bengal too, but there were producers and exhibitors such as Globe Theatres and Alliance, who struggled relentlessly to overcome the difficulties caused by the monopoly (Gooptu 32). As an obvious consequence of this monopolistic practice, most the film companies were deprived from acquiring acclaimed American pictures. This was precisely because the best films of the lot were pre-booked by Madan on a "block-basis" and the American exporters were unwilling to accept anything other than the block-booking method (ibid 35). This feature practically zeroed the possibility of sporadic spread and exhibition of imported films. Also, in terms of production, almost half of the silent films produced in Bengal till 1934 came from Madan theatres (58 out of a total 119 films) (Sur & Goswami 1-8). However, contrary to Bombay, the major emphasis of Madan Theatres in Calcutta was to make films based on literary texts and less on stunt or adventure films. It was precisely the presence of the educated middle class professionals in filmmaking and other related businesses which made the conditions of colonial Bengal favorable to the production of more numbers of literary cinemas.

The *Bhadralok* hegemony over Bengali cultural productions, particularly during the 19th century, was established through various acts of subordinating folk or other marginal cultural forms (often termed as *Chotolok* culture, *e.g.* the culture of the inferior people) while simultaneously exploring the newer forms of cultural practices appropriate to the new regime

through a careful imitation of the British and other European colonizers. Since the wake of the 19th century, the hegemonic presence of the middle class of Calcutta gradually took command of almost all the major sectors of cultural productions. Bengali literature, largely influenced by modern European traditions flourished as an important expressive mode of Bengali modernity. Bengali theatre, another important sector of creative extravaganza, gradually distanced itself from folk traditions and underwent a major transformation under the influence of the European proscenium theatre. Similar changes may also be traced in the fields of other art practices such as painting, music etc. Even the conservative everydayness of the citizen life had gone through a massive turmoil through a meticulous restructuring of the value-system of the predominantly Hindu Bengali society.

Nonetheless to mention, the concept of modern education, specifically that of English education played an important role in necessitating these changes and forging an early civil society in Bengal. The historical process testifies that the genesis of the *Bhadralok* class has its initial roots in the process of the colonial takeover as they become "entirely the product of the process of colonial development" (Chatterjee 72). The changes eventually mark an important move towards developing a national public sphere censuring the articulation of the popular cultural commodities among the natives. Bengali cinema, from its early days, has emerged out of this milieu of *Bhadralok* nationalism. Hiralal Sen's early attempts with the establishment of his Royal Bioscope Company in 1898 marks one such endeavour. He ventured into film business initially as an exhibitor of imported films even before the Madans had commercially started showing films in 1904. Within a short span of time, Sen began to capture real life events and staged plays to project them during public exhibitions (Ray 20). He worked with a number of stage performances of literary adaptations— *Bhramar* (1901) from Bankim Chandra Chattopadhayay's famous novel *Krishnakanter Will*, *Alibaba* (1904) from Kshirode Prasad Vidyavinod's original play etc.

On the other hand the Madans, infamous for their monopoly and their track record of being the principal exhibitor of stunt and adventure films all over the Indian sub-continent, started producing literary adaptations of mythological tales and popular plays by Bengali playwrights. Around 50-odd films made under the Madan banner and about 40 out of the lot were either mythological films or adaptations of popular literary works. They even hired eminent thespians such as Girish Ghosh, Sisirkumar Bhaduri, Amritalal Bose to direct their films. Also, the works of D.N. Ganguly, an alumnus of Tagore's Shantiniketan School, may be exemplified as relevant in this regard. His first venture after forming The Indo-British Film Company with the help of his friends, *Bilet Ferat* (England Returned, 1921), was a satirical silent film on the educated Bengali people who blindly aped Western culture and also on natives who detest everything they found alien to their culture. During the mid-1920s, another important figure Devaki Bose joined Ganguly's British Dominion Film Company. *Panchashar* (1929), his first film as a director, is remembered for its liberal humanist approach. Bose had "brought to his films a rare sensitivity, a spirit of humanism and commitment that set the tone of Bengali cinema for years to come" (21).

The Pre-cinema Experiences of Self-Regulation

The early experiences of cinema in Bengal, as perceived by literary journals and newspapers, come as a fascination for the medium (due to its technological splendor) and also as an attempt to extend the domain of the theatrical arts. The idea of *Swadeshi* was most powerful in education and the industry where a significant number of small and medium sized enterprises were established and educational institutes were opened to spread national education. Thus for enlightened intellectuals it became imminent to welcome the medium of cinema, as an important contribution of science and also with a lot of potential to emerge as a significant constituent of national rejuvenation. And necessarily, such a discourse had to restrict the menace of "uncultured," "uncivilized" entities into it. The sense of "good" or

"moral" thus appeared as a matter of modern rationality, as a means of national enlightenment, which can only be acquired through entering into a sacred realm of knowledge. A number of early writings on cinema in Bengali periodicals bear the essence of this discursive approach. Poet Narendra Deb's serial essay *Chayar Mayar Bichitra Rahasya* in the famous literary journal *Bharatbarsha* or novelist Bibhutibhushan Bandopadhyay's *Chalacchitrer Marmakatha* come first in this chronology. Sharmistha Gooptu comments, "published in the high-brow *Bharatavarsha,* Deb's writings on cinema were evidently aimed at a public that was already enthused by science and technology and was reasonably expected to be interested in the technological aspect of cinema," Striking a similar note, Bandopadhyay's *Chalacchitrer Marmakatha* "points emphatically to cinema being embedded within the Bengali intellectual imaginary, and particularly in terms of a principle of scientific practice, something which already held a key position in Bengali mind" (45-46).

The other imminent impetus, other than literary and cultural nationalism, which shaped a particularistic vision for cinema, came from the then existing domain of theatres in Bombay and Calcutta. The Parsi theatre in Bombay was already in search of an identity mainly through mythological thematic, whereas Bengali theatre was trying to retrieve the tradition through the medium of proscenium drama following the model of European theatre. By the mid-19th century, the Bengali theatre houses had begun to be established and Bengali theatre came to the forefront. The theatrical conventions of Calcutta nevertheless strengthened the modern literary dominance over the fields of cultural production and as a consequence pre-modern literary practices and other performative folk forms were gradually marginalized. The extensive and explicit experiments with nationalist themes in Bengali theatre eventually annoyed the British administrators and they introduced the Dramatics Performances Act in 1876.

The act however had a farfetched effect not only on the field of performance culture in India, but also on the field of cinema since till the setting up of the system of censorship in 1918, the British administration tried to control cinematic exhibition by using the same regulation. Nevertheless, along with the stage, the periodicals, journals and newspapers play important roles in developing a sense of popular theatre appreciation in Calcutta and early film culture during the first decades of twentieth century Calcutta emerges out of this milieu. Initially the promoters of cinema used to follow the same advertising pattern such as that of the theatres to popularize the medium. Within a few years, cinema became a centre of attraction by virtue of being a technological splendor. Following its emergence as an important part of the entertainment culture in the city and after the filmmakers began filming plays and adapting novels, it gradually became a matter of discussion in the print media. The establishment of cinema as independent to the medium of theatre may be noted by its presence in popular journal and newspapers in the form of criticisms, advertisements, reports etc. Concurrently, the nationalist aesthetic approach, after getting great attention in other fields of art practices, turned to this immensely potential medium to re-fabricate it into a nationalist cultural enterprise. Signaled by Phalke during the mid-1920s, the idea of *Swadeshi* cinema already started a slow but steady intrusion into the minds of Bengali filmmakers.

Parallel to the domain of the nationalist theatre, a new idea of developing national culture for art was being strengthened in other spheres of creative practices. In visual arts, new modernist art schools were set up and a new set of artists emerged with a fresh perspective in their mind. In addition to that, Tagore's idea of nationalism was getting gradual importance among Bengali intellectuals than that of Gandhi's as the basic ideas of Bengali modernity did not find much resonance with the Gandhian discourse of *Swaraj* though the latter had a substantial presence in Congress-led activities. The *Bhadralok* nationalism always aspired to be of internationalist in nature and Tagore's idea of nation bore

that very characteristic. Partha Chatterjee specifies that the standard form of *Bhadralok* culture "was not merely national, but comparable with the most advanced international standards that provided the culture of the middle classes with the standard of legitimacy which made it accepted cultural norms for the entire nationality" (*Present History* 21). Bengali travel writings of this period bear the witness of Bengali aspiration to become a knowledge-based cultural community. Keeping accordance to this tradition, the early writings on cinema also focused on the explorative aspects of cinema as I have already mentioned how Bibhutibhushan Bandopadhyay and Narendra Deb elaborately discussed the then existing scenario of world cinema. The first generation film critics of Bengal were also quite enthusiastic about the newsreels and information films as these films seem to provide an opportunity to look to the outer world. Moreover, an urge for making literary cinema was also at work. The cultural appreciation of cinema was on its way to hegemonise its own social production.

The bare presence of "good cinema" in Calcutta during the early decades of 20th century attracted fierce criticism from the then intellectual domain. Barring a few instances, most of the films produced in Calcutta during the early silent era were severely criticized by the critics for the lack of artistic value. Their exposure to Western films made them more critical to Indian productions. Their criticism of Madan Theatre had an additional aspect to it; these films drew heavily from the Parsi theatre and therefore hardly reflected Bengali culture. Even after Madan turned to literary adaptations, the critics did not restrain as they found the enterprise itself non-Bengali, thus non-capable of producing a real aesthetic experience of Bengali modernity. A significant break in this tradition is D.N. Ganguly's *Bilet Ferat*, in which he practiced a new style with not only "Bengali dress and décor as opposed to Parsi theatre style, but also a basic transformation of popular culture, which entailed eschewing of excess and a more realistic ethos and greater interiority" (Gooptu 53). To develop a culture

for good cinema, the middle class intellectuals rather sought literary adaptations that inherently brought the demands for good scripts and proper décor, acting and mise-en-scene in. The works of the Aurora Film Corporation, Tajmahal Film Company, British Dominion Film Corporation etc. show the initial impetus of the Bengali film production business. The arrival of the talkies, however, gave a new life to this approach where the literary, theatrical, musical and other domains of art practices were involved into film production. The setting up of important studios during the 1930s does not only signify a new journey in terms of technological advancement but it also opens a rather uncultivated arena for exploration of the Bengali community. A significant reference in this trajectory would necessarily be the New Theatres in Calcutta which had been slowly developing their own generic conventions. Starting with a star-studded assembly of talented film technicians, writers, actors and directors such as D.N. Ganguly, Devaki Bose, P.C. Barua, the director of New Theatres B.N. Sircar chose to produce literary cinema. In his words: "I could perceive that following the path of literature would lead to the discovery of the right path" (quoted in Mukherjee 38). In fact in Bengal, the hegemony of the *Bhadralok* project of nationalism over the cultural production in colonial India reached a new height during the heydays of the studios. That eventually acted as a social exercise creating a regime for the social censorship for films. Historically, Bengal was proved to be a fertile land for such practice.

An Imminent Cohesion

Evidences submitted to the ICC during 1927-28 testify that most theatres were running successfully because of the overwhelming response from the plebian audiences who wanted nothing but immediate spectacle and emotive sequences on screen. And as a natural economic logic, theatre owners showed these films to maintain a sufficient margin in their business. The *ICC Report* took this factor as a major concern and offered recommendations to develop a film industry which would be more vigilant in showing a superior form of Indian

culture (ICC 70). On the other hand, the industry, caught between the dichotomy of morality and profitability, was seen maintaining an enigmatic stance about the nature of this spectatorship in order to validate the financial logic within the discourse of the national. The industry identified them as the plebian or "lower class" audiences, who were largely driven by motor-oriented pleasures and desires whereas the respectable or "higher class" audiences were generally motivated by the cognitive approach of the narrative. This "othering" of the "lower class" from the cultural institution of Indian cinema necessitated a formal cohesion of the cinematic form, gradually developed as a mode for mobilizing the gaze of the "respectable" audience.

In the given arrangement of spectatorship, the nationalist agenda of proliferating Indianness translates into producing a generic form capable of meeting the middle class audience's demand for social melodrama. Although, bringing social and political issues into films does not entail bringing anything new to the process, even mythological films carry a social and political undertone. A number of symbolic devices were improvised by filmmakers to synchronize their work with the contemporary social scenario and also to avoid British censorship. The formal deployment of social codes, especially from the early-1930s, with contemporary themes as narratives, gradually began replacing mythological films as the favoured genre of the middle class. One major narrative trope in this new generic category may be identified as the conflict between Indian morality and tradition, and affinity towards Western culture. Interestingly, the conflict is seldom seen to end with a proper resolution. Rather it is generally understood in terms of valorizing Indianness in accordance with Western logic, often excluding the hitherto existing irrationalities of Indian discourse. Hence, the rational rearrangement of the film narrative becomes a major operative for the industry. Ravi Vasudevan observes: "there were repressive and disciplinary elements to the agenda for

a modern social grounding of film narratives. The agenda here was for the social film to displace the mythological, and the superstitious and irrational culture it founded" (103).

However, the development of the new generic tendencies did not completely exclude the mythological elements from the emergent cinematic discourse; rather they initiated a dialogue between the modern and pre-modern cultural forms to refigure "tradition" on a broader cognitive level. This act may also be seen as an important agreement between the realist and non-realist elements in cinema. In the domain of aesthetic formulation, it enabled them to function within the same textual format. The process accelerated further after the arrival of the talkies and the simultaneous establishment of big studios during the late-1920s and early-1930s. The studios gradually became the repository of cultural agencies, experts such as directors, story writers, scriptwriters, actors, music directors, to develop literary cinema. It enabled the building up of a long standing liaison between cinema and literature, moving further to develop a thematic of social justice and reform.

Conclusion

By the 1930s, the status of Indian cinema clearly demonstrated that the industry had emerged commercially viable for the upcoming years. The factor made the film industry independent too, while positioning itself as a politically potential cultural institution. Jaikumar identifies this development at the level of commerce and audience reception that "rendered the British state and British cinema incontrovertibly ineffectual in the colony" (*More Than Morality* 105). It was the resistance, offered by the burgeoning Indian film market to the colonial cinema, which did not only minimize the possibility of colonial domination and social control over the film culture in India, but also moved on towards producing a social realm for exercising censorship in India. Moreover, as the aftermath of the submission of *ICC Report* suggests, the colonial institutions did little to implement the recommendations of the

committee to facilitate the development of a national culture for Indian cinema, whereas the self-censoring regime itself appeared as the producer of cultural norms and regulations in both the constitutional and extra-constitutional levels of the public sphere. Such developments also hint at the "commercial and aesthetic independence of India's evolving film industry" which eventually "defied imperial ideology more definitively than the political picketing of British films" (ibid 105). If seen as a discursive practice, this very act of defiance stands as perpetuating a nationalist framework for establishing a regime for social censorship for the cinematic medium. The regime, which enables various social layers to negotiate and develop a coalitional terrain in policing the cinematic production and exhibition, thus simultaneously stands as a site for contested authority and as an inseparable constituent for the social production of cinema in India.

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