

## Origin of Indian Cinema and Cinematic Adaptations

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Reference to this paper  
should be made as follows:

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Adaptations*

Artistic Narration 2021,  
Vol. XII, No. I,  
Article No. 06 pp. 035-039

[https://anubooks.com/  
artistic-narration-no-xii-no-  
1-jan.-june-2021/](https://anubooks.com/artistic-narration-no-xii-no-1-jan.-june-2021/)

### **Abstract**

*The glory of cinema has not left any part of the globe untouched, as it has always been reflecting the multiplicity of human psychology and its discourses. Indian cinema in the contemporary world is one of the most reproductive industries which were brought to India by Dhundiraj Govind Phalke in the year 1913 with his debut film 'Raja Harish Chandra'. 'Raja Harish Chandra' was the first full-length feature film and was a 'Historical Adaptation'. 'Raja Harish Chandra' accelerated an unstoppable voyage of Indian Cinema and Cinematic Adaptation. The genesis of Cinematic Adaptation could not be possible without Travel Writing and Semiotic Translation as a part of cultural representation varying High and Low contextual understandings. This paper will entail the hidden facts of the genesis of Indian Cinema and will relish the information about various important issues related to the history of Indian Cinema.*

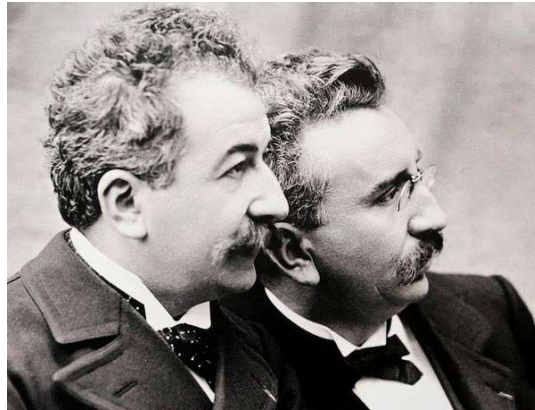
**Key Points:** *Genesis of Indian Cinema, Travel Writing in Indian Cinematic Adaptation, Semiotic Translation in Cinematic Adaptation, Cross-Cultural Impact, Film and Talkie*

## **Introduction**

Indian film industry, popularly known as “Bollywood” or/and “Indywood” has won global recognition and has brought laurels to the nation with its works and achievements. Indywood does not only produce Hindi feature films but also movies in several other regional languages such as Marathi, Malayalam, Bengali, Telugu, Gujrati, Kannad, and Bhojpuri, etc. Indywood produces around 1600 full-length feature films every year due to the heavy demand and popularity of cinema and every year a big increase in this counting is being registered. According to a survey being conducted in 2012, Indian Cinema generated revenue of Rs. 93 billion. In the year 2016, this figure of revenue was raised from ‘Rs. 93 billion’ to ‘Rs. 200 billion. Indian Cinema is widely celebrated as one of the most popular means of recreation in India and overseas but in the world of glamour, the history of Indywood remains untouched.

## **The genesis of Indywood**

The pioneers of Indywood were the Lumiere brothers who in 1896 manifested the art of cinema when they screened six short films in Bombay (Mumbai now) to the spectators of high aesthetic zeal. This compilation of six short films gave wings to the transmutation of cinema. The impact of these six short films evoked the intrinsic aesthetic sense of the ardent audience which resulted in the screening of films by James B. Stewart and Ted Hughes. In 1897 and also two more short films were screened parallel to them. However, Dada Phalke is still considered and regarded as the father of Indian Cinema because he produced the first full-length feature film of India “Raja Harish Chandra”.



Lumiere brothers (1.1)

## **Raja Ravi Verma and Dhundiraj Govind Phalke**

Ravi Verma, a highly reckoned painter of that time was entitled and appreciated as ‘Raja’ because of his unrivaled painting works of Indian Mythological Gods and their

mythological tales which we worship till date (prints of paintings). As an artist, Raja Ravi Verma was equally impressed with other artists and art forms including classical music, dance, and poetry. Despite several controversies, rivalries and misfortune, his unstoppable aesthetic urge let him come across a photographer who happened to know projection handling (Film Projection). This struggling photographer was none other than 'Dhundiraj Govind Phalke'. Raja Ravi Verma was experiencing the wheel of fortune turning against him as all of a sudden his printing press caught fire and his partner of the printing press did not agree to compromise over this. In order to end all his debts, Raja Ravi Verma decided to sell all his paintings and belongings of the printing press, and being superbly impressed with Dhundiraj Govind Phalke, gave him the remaining amount for working on film making.



Raja Ravi Verma (1.2)



Dhundiraj Govind Phalke (1.3)

### **Impact of Travel Writing and Cultural Contexts**

Dhundiraj Govind Phalke was friends with one of the forty magicians, Carl Hertz (German), actively working with Lumiere Brothers for the screening of six short films, who (Carl Hertz) not only inspired Phalke but also gave insights of film making. In order to learn new techniques and to be updated with new technologies, Phalke made his first voyage abroad to Germany. After acquiring the in-depth knowledge of new techniques for swimming in the current of revolution in the industry of filmmaking, Phalke started working on his first silent feature film Raja Harish Chandra in 1912 and released the film publicly in May, 3<sup>rd</sup> 1913. Prior to his first full-length feature film 'Raja Harish Chandra', he recorded 'Pundalik' an on-stage film drama, and shown the recording at the same theatre but he could not take the sole credibility as there was a great contribution of British cinematographers in the recording of 'Pundalik'. This diversity in cultural retention inspired him to travel and produce a full-length feature film (Raja Harish Chandra).



Raja Harish Chandra (1.4)

### **Travel Semiotics and Travel Writing**

The biggest challenge that cinema experienced at the initial stage was a lack of knowledge of National/International visual semiotics or emblems. In order to instill the standard emblems/expressions and visual semiotics such as gestures and postures in the artists of that time, semiotics of international experience and study were learned and brought to India in the form of Travel Writing from Germany. The traces of such emblems and kinesics can be observed in the silent movies including ‘Raja Harish Chandra’, ‘Satyavan Savitri’, ‘Mohini Bhasmasur’ as these silent feature films have lexical similarities or inspiration from ‘The Life of Crist’.

### **Shift from Movies/ Films to Talkies**

Indywood and Phalke experienced victimization to the emerging technology of Sound Films as the film industry was promptly shifting from Films (Silent Movies) to Talkies (Sound Movies). Phalke wanted to retain the temptation, gleam, and growth of the Indian Cinema Industry. This rapid shift compelled Phalke to produce a Talkie (Sound Movie) and as a result, he ended up dubbing his last silent movie ‘Setubhandhan’ and re-released it in 1932. Before retirement, Dhundiraj Govind Phalke gifted Indywood his last film ‘Gangavataran’ in 1938 and shifted to Nashik where he died on February 16<sup>th</sup>, 1944.

### **Transmutation (adaptation)**

All the films or talkies which have been produced under Indywood (Indian Film Industry/Bollywood) are adaptations of several types. The industry began with People-Based Adaptation and Historic Event-Based Adaptations and gradually shifted to Novel (Text) Based Adaptation, Sequels, Prequels, and Remakes. However, the fact remains that most of the movies produced every year are the Adaptations of Original works (Script or Story Writing). History has been witnessing thousands of talented Original Piece producers (Script Writers) producing original work for adaptation under several genres such as Gothic, Romantic, Art, Social and Historic Etc.

## Conclusion

As a matter of fact, this becomes of utmost importance to acknowledge the people without whose help the establishment of Indywood would have not been possible and they have been left unattended to date, such as the Lumiere brothers, Raja Ravi Verma, Carl Hertz. Dhundiraj Govind Phalke, without any doubt, deserves to be entitled as the father of Indian Cinema as his incredible contribution, passion, aesthetic zeal, and enthusiasm fathered Indian Cinema. Cinematic Adaptation has also been playing a vital role in the industry right from the history of Indian Cinema as, without the help of transmutation theories, the scripts of texts could have never been possibly converted into films. In the same line, Cultural Studies, Semiotic and Travel Writing have also played an equally important role in the popularity of cinema as it helped the producers/directors and actors to make a film/talkie that could be interpreted by the audience of diversity. Indywood has traveled from the Silent Feature film 'Raja Harish Chandra' to an exemplary talkie/movie 'Bahubali' which has reflected the spectrum of animation and vision. Indian Cinema has yet to decide a long voyage.

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