

MY ROLE MODELS



Irrfan picks the films and the roles that he would have grabbed without a second thought



NAYAK | Satyajit Ray's evocative film has Uttam Kumar playing a matinee idol with an effortless charm. Truly an unforgettable character that was brilliantly perceived

TARANA | Dilip Sahab plays a young doctor in this 1951 classic

JUKTI TAKKO AAR GAPPO | A memorable role of an alcoholic essayed by Ritwik Ghatak



DEEWAR | Amitabh Bachchan's angry young man has been an inspirational character

DEV D | Dev is a character that stands out in my memory for the way it has been written and conceptualised

NAYAKAN | The lead role in this film was immensely powerful

SPARSH | The character of the blind man played by Naseeruddin Shah is a role that comes along maybe once in a lifetime

—Meenakshi Sinha

A heritage mission to restore all audio-video tapes of our films, a museum of cinema, a single-window clearance for locations in the country. Grand plans are underway to mark 10 decades of movies in the land of cine lovers

Archana Khare Ghose | TNN

When Dadasaheb Phalke spooled the reel of Raja Harishchandra on May 3, 1913 at Coronation Cinema in Mumbai, little would he have realised that he was winding the tape for an industry that would go on to be the biggest common denominator of his country's identity in the decades to come. Little would he have known that it would traverse every possible barrier in this pluralist country and become what veteran actor Farooq Sheikh describes as the "largest cultural amalgamation of India."

As the industry that Phalke gave birth to unwittingly with his first film enters its centenary year, the country is ready to pay an enduring tribute to the date he immortalized with the first public screening of the first full-length Indian feature film.

From this year onwards, the National Film Awards will be given away annually on May 3, unlike in the past when it didn't have any fixed date; the honours were usually done in September-October. The new permanent pin on the film calendar is only a part of the celebrations that the ministry of information and broadcasting is set to announce at the ceremony for the 59th National Film Awards in Delhi this May 3. A package to officially kickstart the centenary celebrations is already in place and other projects are likely to be added as the year progresses.

"As part of the celebrations, we will set in motion an ambitious and massive project, the National Heritage Mission, to digitalize and restore all audio-video tapes of Indian films that we would be able to lay our hands on. This is over and above the digitization work that is already taking place," informs Uday Kumar Varma, secretary, I&B ministry. He adds that a fund of Rs 500 crore has been set

Marking movie's high moment



aside for this mission in the 12th Five Year Plan (2012-2017) and its archives will be set up in a hilly area to protect films from temperature and humidity.

The first of its kind Museum of Indian Cinema is also in the offing. "The museum will be housed in two buildings at the Films Division premises in Mumbai. The heritage building of Gulshan Mahal, a popular filming location, should be completely ready by December and the new, modern building should get ready by next year," says Varma. Other plans include a single window clearance for film locations in the country, a float dedicated to the centenary at the next year's Republic Day parade, a postal stamp, and people's participation in the celebrations through a website being put together by the National Film Archives of Pune. The celebrations will go beyond Indian shores through prestigious festivals — India has already been declared the partner country at next year's Cannes Film Festival.

While the industry as well as popular television channels that run on films either completely or partially are yet to give final shape to their plans, insiders are beginning to feel the high that should reach its crescendo in the next few months. Says Shabana Azmi, "One hundred years is a huge marking time and it's a good opportunity to look at the way the industry has evolved. One of the most important changes that have taken place in these 100 years is the way women are portrayed in cinema. Today, actresses get to portray roles of independent, working girls, which is heartening even though we have a long way to go."

Azmi, however, rues the fact that our films are beginning to tamper with "the unique Indian identity of song and dance routines. Indian cinema should not do away with it completely as these make us different from the world. It's part of our DNA."

Prasoon Joshi seems to be on the same wavelength when he says, "As a song writer, I think this event should reserve a special mention for songs as the country wouldn't have known what to sing on innumerable evenings of antakshari and bonfires without the poets and lyricists who gave words to the philosophy of the common man through unforgettable songs." Besides the song, films have given much more to all of us — as Joshi says, the films have given us ways in which to celebrate, talk, behave, express and even carry our total beings. Let the festivities begin.

BOOKMARK

Five classics from literature made into memorable films

R K Narayan's The Guide: Dev Anand gave the performance of a lifetime



in this Navketan classic. Also made in English where Nobel prize winner Pearl S Buck co-wrote the screenplay

Premchand's Shatranj Ke Khiladi: Sanjeev Kumar and Saeed Jaffrey smoked pipes and played the game of kings in this Ray-directed poignant story of Oudh's fall

Rabindranath Tagore's Nasho Neer: Charulata, Satyajit Ray's classic on forbidden love, had Madhabi Mukherjee in the performance of a lifetime



Ruskin Bond's A Flight of Pigeons: Shyam Benegal converted the novella into Junoon, a love story in the backdrop of 1857 revolt. Who wouldn't die or kill for the young Nafisa Ali?

Thakazhy Shivashankar Pillai's Chemmeen: An all-time Malayalam classic on the lives of fishermen and the sea. Unforgettable music by Salil Choudhury

COOKS & CONDUCTORS

Before they were stars

AKSHAY KUMAR | Waiter, cook, martial arts instructor...Khalid Kumar has tried his hand at multiple professions

DEV ANAND | During World War II, the evergreen hero had a job at the Military Censor's Office in Bombay, reading soldiers' letters

RAAJ KUMAR | The easy drawl and the mannerisms were probably perfected during Jaani' Kumar's stint with the Bombay police in the 1940s

PREM CHOPRA | The man who could send shivers down your spine with his lopsided grin and trademark dialogue delivery style, was working with The Times of India till the late 1960s

RAJINIKANTH | Catching bullets by the teeth, flipping cigarettes and lighting them in mid-air while beating up goons and outrunning trains are just a few of the wonders he can perform today... but before he became 'God' to millions, Rajini was a simple bus conductor in Bangalore



SMITA PATIL | With her emotive face and strong diction skills, she was a hit on the small screen as well, working for a number of years as a newsreader on Doordarshan in the 1970s



And these, dear listeners, are some of our sweetest songs

Best patriotic song | Aao bachchon tumhe dikhaen jhaanki Hindustan ki (*Jagriti*, 1954)

Best cynical number | Jinhe naaz hai Hind par woh kahan hain (*Pyaasa*, 1957)

Best bhajan | Man tarpat hari darshan ko aaj (*Baiju Bawra*, 1952)

Best bouyant number | Yahoo, chahe koi mujhe jungle kahe (*Jungle*, 1961)

Best item number | Munni badnam hui darling tere liye (*Dabangg*, 2010)

Best children's song | Lakdi ki kathi, kathi pe ghoda, ghode ki dum pe jo maara hathoda (*Masoom*, 1983)

Best qawwali | Na to carvaan

ki talash hai (*Barsaat ki Raat*, 1960)

Best cabaret | Monica o my darling (*Caravan*, 1970)

Best classical number | Laga chunri mein daag (*Dil Hi to Hai*, 1963)

Best sharabi song | Yeh kya hua, kaise hua, kab hua (*Amar Prem*, 1972)

Best folk number | Chalal musafir moh liyo re pinjre wali muniya (*Teesri Kasam*, 1966)

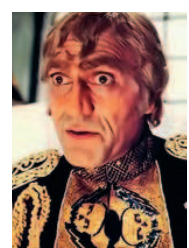
Best comic song | All izz well (*Three Idiots*, 2009)

Best song by a non-singer actor | Mere paas aao mere doston (*Mr Natwarlal*, 1979)

Best ode to nation | Mere desh ki dharti sona ugle (*Upkar*, 1967)

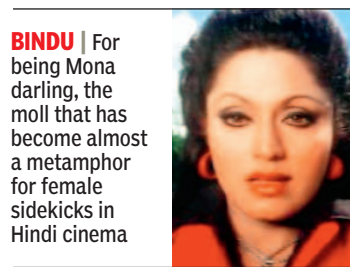
BADDIES & BABES

Why we love our villains and vamps



AMRISH PURI | For his perfect rendition of the megalomaniac Mogambo in *Mr India*. Not just him, even we were happy. India khush hua!

PRAN | For putting 'life' into each of his characters and effortlessly transiting from villainous roles to that of characters with heart of gold, like the unforgettable Sher Khan of *Zanjeer*



BINDU | For being Mona darling, the moll that has become almost a metaphor for female sidekicks in Hindi cinema

AJIT | Sara shahar inhe loin ke naam se janta hai. Need we say more?



HELEN | For being Indian cinema's golden girl, who danced her way into our collective consciousness with a sensuousness that has been difficult to replicate. Item girls, keep on trying!

Little cinema begins to dream big

A new breed of filmmakers is combining the ease of technology and the eagerness of art to tell some amazingly untold stories

Archana Khare Ghose | TNN

Chances are that most Indians didn't know what *Byari* was till a film of the same name was recently announced joint winner in the Best Film category at the 59th National Film Awards. Courtesy the award, most of us now know about this language — without a script of its own — of the *Byari* people of south Karnataka. But the importance of *Byari* is more than just being the first film made in the language, or being the first in that language to win the prestigious national award. Its importance is in its symbolism — a perfect reference point to measure the distance traveled by Indian cinema since April 21, 1913, when the first Indian film, *Raja Harishchandra*, had premiered.



community to express itself," says Utpal Borpujari, the 2003 National Award winner for Best Film Critic. And *Byari* is but a recent link in a long chain of films of and by the smaller communities of India that have told stories of people with strong cultural ethos of their own, as against mainstream philosophy.

Beginning with the first Bhojpuri film in 1962, *Ganga Maiya Tohe Piyari Chadhaibo*, little cinema has taken birth, and struck roots in the unlikely of India's remote corners. For instance, the first Chhattisgarhi film, *Kahi Debe Sandesh*, was made by Manu Nayak in 1965, 35 years before the region attained statehood. The successful Manipuri cinema, on the other hand, sees the production of nearly 40 films each year.

While these are relatively the more visible ethnic and linguistic groups within the minority, films are being made even in languages with almost the same status as *Byari* in the mainstream mindframe. Borpujari cites examples of Monpa language of Arunachal Pradesh and the Kokborok language of Tripura in which films have been made.

"A lot of interesting work is happening through cinema beyond Bollywood and powerful regional centres. There is, however, also a tendency to ape Bollywood. What has helped these marginal filmmakers is technology that has reduced the cost of production. National Award winning Assamese filmmaker Jahnu Barua says, "Technology has taken the

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Utpal Borpujari | FILM CRITIC

strong medium of cinema to grassroots. The best thing about technology is that nobody can own it and those who understand the power of cinema are putting the two together to good use."

Problems, though, remain in the form of accessibility. But zealous filmmakers almost always find a way out. While Ladakhi filmmakers are doing a successful job through mobile theatres, most others target global audience through cyberspace for minimum returns. Quite a few others skip the route of theatres and release films directly on videos/ CDs. What ensures continued production of films in the far-flung pockets of India is the strong urge to make films. KP Suveeran, the director of *Byari*, says, "Though I don't intend to make any more *Byari* films, the young people of the community who assisted me are very enthused. They will carry the work forward in that language."

And we will continue to learn about more unknown and unheard of stories through cinema.

Kings of the provinces

Indian regional cinema has its own superstars

M G Ramachandran (Tamil) A megastar in the world of Tamil films as well as politics. MGR made his film debut in 1936 with *Sathi Leelavathi* and rose to superstardom with the blockbuster *Malaikallan*. His other films included *Anbe Vaa*, *Aayirathil Oruvan*, *Mahadevi*, *Panam Padaithavan* etc. His dressing style was inimitable — trademark fur cap and dark glasses. In politics too, he developed his own style that was a hit with the masses, who voted him to power again and again, making him the first popular Indian actor, who rose to become chief minister. He was posthumously awarded the Bharat Ratna.

N T Rama Rao (Telugu) Like MGR, NTR was also a superstar, who rose to become chief minister of Andhra Pradesh. He gained popularity for his portrayals of Hindu deities, especially Krishna and Rama. With a career spanning more than 320 Telugu films, he forged another successful career in politics, although his terms as chief minister were often tumultuous.



Anuj Sharma, the Chhattisgarhi megastar and (below left) N T Rama Rao

Mohanlal (Malayalam) Starting out as a villain, Mohanlal is regarded by many as the giant of Malayalam cinema, who displays his range by doing both comic and serious roles with equal ease. Besides acting, Mohanlal has also dabbled in several business ventures like setting up a seafood export company and a restaurant in Dubai called La's Tastebuds.

Anuj Sharma (Chhattisgarhi) Once a marketing executive of Godrej, Anuj found stardom when *Mor Chhayan Bhuayan* became a blockbuster. Since then, the 36-year-old post-graduate in history has delivered several hits such as *Maya*.

Dinesh Lal Yadav 'Nirahua' (Bhojpuri) A long, luscious kiss in *Nirahua Rickshawala* vaulted singer-actor Dinesh Lal Yadav 'Nirahua' to superstar status. Since then, the Kolkata-born son of a factory worker has delivered a cache of hits notably *Nirahua Chalal Sasural* and *Lagal Raha Ae Raja Ji*.