

Article

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## **A Critical Analysis: The Role of An Actor and A Star in Hindi Cinema**



### **Abstract:**

Cinema has been considered as an art form which is not very old considering the other art forms. It has its own unique methods of communication. Through audio and visual mixture, it creates a meaning and the story is conveyed through it. There have been many factors that work in the framework of cinema one of them is the actor who plays a key role in talking the narrative forward. In Indian perspective there have been actors who have been in cinema before the talkie era and there came actors as the cinema started talking its own language. A clear-cut differentiation could be seen pre and post 1931. This research paper aims to study the difference between an actor and a star though decades of journey of cinema in India with specific reference to Hindi Cinema. A study though this research produces information about the correlation between the audiences and the actor and the star with the box office. The research paper also finds the fact that an actor and a star are here for different reasons serving different purposes

Keywords: Talkie, Role, Narrative, Actor, Hero, Star, Hindi Cinema

### **Introduction:**

Film education in India has been around for 60 years now. Out of these years except barring a few reputed film schools and individual film teachers, acting schools have mushroomed all over the country. After the boom of Television industry, it went on a rise and till date it is growing like anything every day. The academics including exercise, practical designed with a particular tried and tested methodologies that a film school teach a student is to make him or her an actor, a trained actor for the platform he or she wants to perform on but down inside he or she is dreaming to be a star. In a country like India, a huge population of young men and women are driven to the 'City of dreams- Mumbai' to try their luck in the Hindi Film and TV industry. Not all of them are trained actors, not all of them are good looking, not all speak good Hindi, but they come to try their ability with a feeling that they are good in acting. They all come with a dream to become a star. A star stands in his balcony for a minute, where hundreds of fans are waiting to have a glimpse for a sec-

ond. Here is an attempt to analyze the difference between an actor and a star.



### Historical Perspective:

Film a not very old art form having an age of approximately 125 years. The new medium which got further flourished in the form of Television and now on web series have given some important landmark works of art to the viewers worldwide. Earlier times films could be consumed only in a theatre and not on any other platform due to sheer inability to project the positive film strip elsewhere than in theatres. The films used to get running on a film projector with a 35 mm print screened on a silver screen.

Over these many year's audience of all sorts anywhere in the world knew that the film which we are paying for giving us a virtual experience only. There will not be anyone in person presence in front of us against the money that I am paying for but still the audiences have kept going. The TV gave them options in home to choose the content and with web content options to watch anything anywhere, even while traveling in trains is available with the audience. There have been very few film goers who watch the films for the director, producer, any crew member, or the content. Most of the film goers watch it for the actors

acting in it. The actors, by this word being used here what I wish to mention in the clear understanding of the word, addressing those who are appearing on screen.

There have been actors who have ruled the hearts of audience over years nationally and internationally. The appearance, costumes and hair styles, the delivery of dialogue, the looks, the fashion the actor carries and his or her capacity to act.

A big legacy of actors has been there in the history of cinema and in Hindi cinema too. If one looks at the list of Dadasaheb Phalke awardees over the years one would find that the actors are in numbers but with that their contribution as director, producer also has been counted. They are the one who rule the box office; they are the one who have a face to be recognized.

After taking these things into consideration one thing remains to be seen closely and that is the difference between an actor and a star.

"Actors often speak of the release that playing a role gives them from what Alec Guinness called 'my dreary old life;' acting gives them permission to have experiences they would never have in real life." (Benedetti, 1997).

### Cinema: an art or a business or both?

Here it is important to see the difference between cinema as an art and cinema as business.

If cinema is an art, then the work that is done by the actor comes to forefront but if look at the world of cinema from business perspective then the one word that stands up and big is STAR!

The world of cinema business is centered on a Star. It is the actor who has turned himself into a star. There is no definition which would describe the word STAR from cinematic perspective but we may think of those who has this charismatic personality, image on and off screen, ability to turn eye balls on their appearance anywhere, capacity to pull the audiences to theatres etc.

In India there have been actors who were stars in their own capacity. K L Saigal, Ashok Kumar, Dev Anand, Dilip Kumar, Raj Kapoor, have been there for years. In Hindi cinema the first actor considered to be the superstar is Rajesh Khanna. He had enormous fan following and that reflected in the success of his films. Amitabh Bachchan rose to the stardom after *Deewar* and *Sholay*, bringing the angry



young man to silver screen. Mr. Bachchan has been there with his maintained stardom, despite his ups and down career moments.

In an International conference on the 'CHANGING PARADIGM OF MEDIA LANDSCAPE' organised by Sharda University online Mr. Vivek Waswani, Dean of Pearl University and a person who produced films with new actors only, shared an anecdote about Shahrukh Khan, one of the biggest stars that rose in India after Mr. Bachchan alongside Amir Khan and Salman Khan.

Shahrukh Khan, when came to Mumbai was doing television and was happy and content. Mr. Waswani was also new in business. He asked Shahrukh Khan the reason for only working in Television and not in films. Shahrukh Khan answered that Gauri, his wife does not want him to hug other girls. The leading lady opposite him in a feature film would have intimate scenes and would need him to hug and do other things which will follow. Hence Shahrukh Khan was only doing Television work and happy doing only that. Then Shahrukh's mother fell ill and he went to Delhi. After his mother's death and the funeral came back to Mumbai. On his first meeting with Mr. Waswani after this instance Shahrukh said that he wants to do films now, he wanted to be a star! On hearing this Waswani asked, Why this change? Shahrukh answered that his

mother wanted him to be a star in Bollywood!

### **There was a difference and there is a difference:**

Acting could be seen as a very challenging activity. On the other hand, it may also be looked at from a perspective of giving different pleasures. The experience of performing a role is a very much enjoyable. Converting oneself into a character and taking a narrative forward with being a key element. Acting definitely a creative act of being one in reality and one in the character. (Tanenbaum, 2011)

Dev Anand was a star and always known for his efforts as a producer supporting his directors to make a good film for his home production Nav Ketan. Dev Anand is the man credited to give Guru Dutt his directorial debut under the banner of Nav Ketan. The film was *Baazi*. Dev Anand grew to be a star after he started his film company and started producing films to promote his stardom. He could sell his films as a star and being there in the film. Dev Anand was never considered to be a great actor. He had his limitations with a tooth broken which he turned in his favour as a charming mark. He had habits to move his body while walking or delivering dialogues, but he was accepted as a star by the Hindi audiences. Dev Anand always wanted to be known as an actor, a good actor. This was there always in his mind. This led him to go in with everything to produce *Guide*. While making the English *Guide* he was eyeing to release the film in LA. The ambition to become an international star got punctured when Dev Anand realized that the English version of *Guide* is not going to be a great film and eventually failed in LA. After failure of the English version of *Guide* directed by Tad Deblowsky, Dev Anand concentrated everything on Goldie's Hindi version of *Guide*. He sensed a possibility of getting recognized as an actor and getting respect for ever in the form of *Raju Guide*. He could see a different film being made, a film ahead of times, a director adamant on showing Dev Anand having beard, fasting, looking pale and dying in the end will get recorded in the history of Cinema. A good producer and a good



businessman in Dev Anand stood behind the actor in Dev Anand and rode the high spirit of making of Hindi Guide. The actor in him could allow a set standing idle for 18 days for the song to get ready. The news coming back from industry, the chats between distributors, talks between co actors and directors that 'Goldie is making his elder brother die at the end of the film', was not making him worried but making him happy that Goldie was doing something different that have taken attention of people. How could Dev grow a beard? This will end his carrier and all these talks would give an artistic high to Dev Anand. By the way of *Guide*, Dev Anand saw the journey other way, from being a star in Hindi Cinema going to explore as an Actor.

"Acting involves adopting a mental state in which the performance of prewritten lines can feel like a spontaneous and emergent choice." (Tanenbaum, 2011).

Naseeruddin Shah in his book has mentioned about a few actors that he used watch films of. He has written that with *Guide* Dev Anand could hit a bull's eye.

With *Guide* Dev Anand achieved a name for him as a great actor. Guide put him up the pedestal as an actor written in the history of Hindi Cinema.

**How do we see an actor and how do we confuse between an actor and a star?**



Now with the new age of blasting in social media each and everybody has become a celebrity. This is a very small word as compared to a Star.

It is very important how the stardom works and how it is completely different from how actor's work. A producer goes to a star, he

requests for a film to be made together. First step if the star knows the producer and is willing to work with him gives a meeting and then a go ahead for the film. The dates available are usually after a couple of year than the date this process begins. The star gives an okey and a letter for his agreement to do a film with that producer. The producer gives an amount of a few CR as a signing amount to the star, say Rs. 5 CR. After getting the letter the producer goes to the investor, financier, or big Intentional film company. The proposed film will start getting made after two years and it is by then a Rs. 150 CR film. One of the film company says YES to the project and after the money negotiations gives a cheque which is 10 percent of Rs.150 CR, which has been the projected budget of the film. Now the producer has Rs. 10 CR, 100 % more than what he has paid to the star as a signing amount. Now he has money to put up in a film project and build a good property. He has ten CR to work for two years. This follows working on the story, finalizing costars, director, technicians, and other crew members, of course as per the willingness of the Star. We may consider this Star could be anybody currently running a successful career in Hindi cinema.

Now let us see how the Actor process works. A producer goes to a company, an investor, a financier with a film proposal to have a fantastic and a reputed actor known for his brilliant acting skills. He is recognized not only in India but world over for his ability to emote any scene. The company likes the proposal appreciating the fantastic elements, brilliant script, best of actors, and a super fine director but they do not promise to make the film. Rather on the other hand they ask the producer to make the film and once it is complete then approach the company. Later once the film is made and ready to be shown to the company (or who so ever having the money to buy the film) the company will decide if to buy it or what is to be done with it or not.

Let us consider this actor as any actor who has a reputation Nationally and, in a few cases, internationally too, for example.

This one example sets the discussion on a perfect channel and gives a true picture of how



the Hindi film industry works. It clearly differentiates between business, art and how cinema works.

A star sells the films before they are made.

With an actor, the producer has to make a film and then go for selling.

In film/ acting schools we are making the kids know the acting and what does an actor do, the kids are learning the acting but all they want to be is a Star.

Here one important point that needs to be discussed and that is, acting in films has anything to do with acting? "The Method trains actors to invent behavioural metaphors that illuminate their characters. Strasberg's assertion that concentration is the key to what has been loosely thought of as imagination is central to my argument. I will frame my position around an extended discussion of actors' imaginative use of their senses." (Lobdell 2000).

Theatre, where we see everything live has always been considered as an actor's medium. From an actor's point of view, TV is about being competent, it is the ability to speak well in the language that the serial is being made, be happy, be fresh the whole day and do a few pages scene every day for 30 days a month.

Cinema is about commerce, its economics; here the actor does not have a choice of what is finally going on to screen. He gives five good takes and out of the five takes, three are the best. The editor chooses to keep the third

which according to the actor is worst among the lot, but he does not have a choice. He may not know what is happening in the editing room. The actor in cinema does not have a choice of corrections. He cannot see anything and correct like theater. Importantly it is a very expensive medium.

The marketing will sell tickets, the distributors will put up film in good theatres, it will sell tickets, selling tickets is a different art.

One being a star kid does not help to run the business. Tushar Kapoor and Mohnish Behl realised that they are not Stars to pull up a film. Tushar shifted to a team with other actors and Mohnish Behl turned to be a character artist in both TV and films. Both these actors belong to Jitendra and Nutan family. The star in earlier times of cinema launched their kids to the big screen. Suneil Anand is an example of a star Dev Anand launching his son and son failed and Kumar Gaurav was launched twice by Rajendra Kumar. The second time even Madhuri Dixit's stardom could not help the film to earn stardom for Kumar Gaurav.

Being a star is about remaining to be relevant in the contemporary media over years. The money put in and getting back is all about being a star and that is through multiple ways possible. Whereas being an actor is applying oneself to the roles coming to the artist and keeping the polishing work on with each cinema.

The reality remains the same, it is about money. Even the father of Indian cinema had to go to Vishnupant Damle to ask for help. It was Damlemama who used to think above business and offered Rs. 1000/- to D G Phalke without any receipt. This was at the time of downfall of Phalke and not so good times of Prabhat film company too, where V G Damle was a partner. Such examples are rare though.

Behrooz Chaihel, an Iranian filmmaker clears the air about the difference between Hindi films and Iranian films. It is the budget that makes it completely different, he says in his speech on 25th June 2020 at the '*CHANGING PARADIGM OF MEDIA LANDSCAPE*'

organised by Sharda University online. The budgets of any film in India is even more than any film in Iran, according to Behrooz.



### Conclusion:

Prof. Siddharth Shasta, HOD, Department of Film Acting at Film and Television Institute of India gives his perspective and that may be a good conclusion to this discussion. According to him the audience take any actor with all his character traits and they want to see the actor as he is in earlier films. His personal character attributes over power the character written for a film on screen and the actor becomes a Star. The audience is not interested in what the character on screen is but what they are interested in watching their favorite star being on screen playing any character, any role any sort anywhere on any background. He observes that the teaching has started getting this factor in by making the new acting students realize what it takes to be a good actor and a star.

“Your experience of your character’s significant choices is the mechanism by which the Magic If produces transformation. When you have entered into your character’s circumstances as if they were your own, felt their needs as if they were your own, and made the choices they make given those needs in those circumstances, then action follows naturally and with it transformation.” (Benedetti, 1997).

In the light of the above statement we may look at *Khamoshi: The Musical*, directed by Sanjay Bhansali as an example to throw light on these concluding remarks. Nana Patekar had become a very famous star with his powerful dialogue delivery. The audience would go to watch his films to listen to his extraordi-

nary dialogue rendition with passion. In *Khamoshi: The Musical*, Sanjay Bhansali offered him a role which will prove the abilities of Nana Patekar as an actor. The role was of a deaf and dumb man, one who could not speak and hear, a differently able man with a wife, a daughter, and a son. A family man!



After the film began just in 10 minutes of the time on screen the full house audience in a Mumbai Theatre started shouting “Nana Bol, Nana Bol” (Speak Nana Speak) the result was directly seen on the tickets sell for the second show. There have been examples where actors have don different roles to prove their acting abilities. For example: Amir Khan is *Raakh*, *Talash*. Jitendra in *Parichay*, *Kinara*. The difference will always remain between a star and an actor. In a film there could be a fleet of good actors but amongst them is a star. On whose name the tickets get sold, the satellite rights get sold and the audiences go to the theaters as the Charisma of the star pulls them. The earlier times when there were big film companies on whose names the films used to run hits, later got changed into a star system and the things changed. To see the Hindi Cinema as a film industry and a business who feeds lakhs of people will always have this separation as an actor and a star.

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