

INDIAN FEDERATION OF FILM SOCIETIES

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A Brief Report to the Annual Congress of Film Archives: 1954.

This is a Congress of Film Archives, concerned primarily, I suppose, with the questions and problems of preservation of outstanding films, exchange of films between different archives and ancillary matters. A brief report, therefore, from India will surely appear to be a little irrelevant in the particular context it is being presented but it is hoped it will give some idea of what exactly we have been able to do so far - and what we have resolved to do - in near future, in the sphere of film appreciation, preservation and exchange.

National Archive

~~It is~~ ~~to~~ ~~say~~ ~~that~~ ~~we~~ ~~do~~ ~~not~~ ~~yet~~ ~~have~~ ~~a~~ ~~proper~~ ~~national~~ ~~archive~~ ~~but~~ ~~perhaps~~ ~~surprise~~ ~~many~~ ~~people~~ ~~and~~ ~~perhaps~~ ~~that~~ ~~the~~ ~~movement~~ ~~for~~ ~~an~~ ~~archive~~ ~~has~~ ~~been~~ ~~going~~ ~~on~~ ~~since~~ ~~the~~ ~~last~~ ~~few~~ ~~years~~ ~~it~~ ~~is~~ ~~only~~ ~~recently~~ ~~that~~ ~~the~~ ~~Indian~~ ~~Federation~~ ~~of~~ ~~Film~~ ~~Societies~~ ~~has~~ ~~been~~ ~~able~~ ~~to~~ ~~create~~ ~~a~~ ~~nucleus~~ ~~for~~ ~~an~~ ~~Archive~~. The Federation itself is an infant, having been in existence since the December, 1953 only. There are a number of individuals who have good private collection of some films from certain countries. The Federation, for its small library, is now trying to include some of these private collections and ~~is~~ ~~to~~ ~~also~~ ~~trying~~ ~~to~~ ~~acquire~~ ~~titles~~ ~~from~~ ~~abroad~~ (with little result so far). It is hoped that by 1955 the collection will increase considerably and it will then be possible to have an 'archive' of some value and importance.

The Federation of Film Societies, & the General Set-up ⁽²⁾

The Federation, indeed, is the 'Indian Cinematheque', ~~the~~ a country where rated to be the second largest production in the world after Hollywood, turning out on an average 300 full length feature films annually, serves a vast population of 360 million, 'aided' by foreign imports, mostly Hollywood and British productions. It will perhaps shock many of those present here to learn that 'Blue Angel' (now withdrawn) is the only German feature film to reach India; an old copy of 'Un carnet du Ball' went round some of the Indian cities 13 years back and only very recently the 'Bride Thief', 'Miracle in Kilari' and 'Shoe Shine' were released in India, through commercial channels, dubbed in Hindi language ~~with hardly any promotion aid.~~ with hardly any promotion aid. Certain American companies have in their lists such films as 'Roboman' and 'Yacki wari soo', 'Pearl' (from Mexico) but all these films put together touches a negligible fringe of the vast needs of 'starving' millions - the endemic famine, we mean, in the context of cinema - which had ~~no~~ no other source of seeing the work of Rene Clair, Eisenstein, Carue, Pudst or Thurman till the Federation came into existence.

The Federation has 21 member - units, film Societies, scattered all over the big country, with nearly 2500 members. Some of these Societies have good ^{collections of} ~~libraries~~ ^{publications on film} ~~and~~ but more than 12 Societies have ~~come into~~ been established during the last two years. The film Society movement is gradually gaining ground and it is expected that by 1955, the Federation will have a total of 40 member Societies. The Federation has a ^{foreign} reference section and a library. There are only two titles ^{of} in the permanent possession of the Federation: 'Potemkin' and Rene Clair's: 'It happened a to-morrow' among foreign feature films. It has a stock of ²⁵ good ^{feature} ~~documentary~~ films, mostly Indian and also a stock of ^{Indian} ~~feature~~ ^{feature} films. It is expected that by 1955, the Federation will have a better collection of publications on film and film titles. ~~The~~ ^{The} Hon. Foundation Secretary of the Federation has been assured help in this direction by some of the important organisations and ~~in~~ in the Continent of Europe and in the United Kingdom.

Indian Productions, Past & Present (3)

In the fifty years of Cinema, India has produced ~~some~~ a few outstanding films - feature films - and more than 50 good documentary subjects. Only a very few came out of India for viewing abroad. India's participation in various film festivals has opened the proper in a small but significant way. The Federations' efforts in this direction, to send outstanding Indian films for specialised audience abroad is expected to be ~~more~~ greatly successful by the end of 1955. It is an unfortunate thing, though, that the film trade in India is not very enthusiastic in this direction ~~and~~ possibly for the reason that a few very affected, unreal and unworthy Indian films received bad reception in ~~some~~ foreign countries. But the redeeming features are there: Some Indian Producers - Independent producers - with vision and Sincerity ~~and~~ ^{among others} the Bimal Roy, ~~and~~ the Ray Kapoor and the K. A. Abbas ^{are} ~~are~~ taking very great pains to produce films of value for ~~consumption~~ at home and abroad. Roy's film "Two Acres of Land", by far the most important Indian film since ~~1944~~ 1944 when ~~the~~ ^{he} ~~score~~ ^{directed} his "Hamrahi" ~~is~~ ^{is} ~~very~~ ^{is} greatly ~~acclaimed~~ ^{acclaimed} and awards ~~improved~~ ^{improved} the state of affairs, has ~~own~~ ^{own} acclaim & awards abroad, including at some film festivals of international repute and importance. Out of the 300 ~~or~~ ^{or} more Indian feature films produced annually, ~~it~~ ^{it} only about 15% are good, clean and ~~meritorious~~ ^{meritorious} films, catering to the Aesthetics of Cinema.

Conclusion

The Indian film Industry - the fifth most important industry in India - ~~is~~ ^{is} has started receiving the effective attention from the Government in ~~the~~ ^{the} certain spheres. The Film Enquiry Committee appointed by the Government in 1951 has examined certain important spheres of Cinema - mostly concerned with Taxation, import of raw materials, censorship, exhibition etc. - The Film Enquiry Committee has recommended, among other things, formation of a national film Institute and a Film Finance Corporation and the relevant Government Ministry is ~~currently~~ ^{currently} engaged in the study of the Report and it is ~~also~~ ^{also} ~~expected~~ ^{expected} that ~~the~~ ^{the} Ministry of Information ~~is~~ ^{is} under the able stewardship of Dr. B. V. Keskar, the Minister ~~is~~ ^{is} ~~concerned~~ ^{concerned}, ~~will~~ ^{will} ~~contribute~~ ^{contribute} ~~immensely~~ ^{immensely} to make things better. ~~to~~ ^{to} arouse aesthetic interest among producers, the Government sponsored Academy of Dance, Music & Drama, otherwise known as the

'Sangeet Natak Akademy' has introduced various awards for films produced in India. The Films division of the Govt. has produced some outstanding documentary films.

The Federation of Film Societies is preparing a scheme for submission to the Government in which questions relating to the establishment of a full-fledged archive under the Federation, exchange of films ~~between~~ etc. form the main theme. We do hope to join the FIAF as a regular member by 1955, receive films from various associates and member cinematheques of the FIAF ~~and~~ ~~to~~ ~~be~~ ~~able~~ ~~to~~ ~~do~~ ~~so~~ ~~soon~~ ~~as~~ ~~possible~~.

I shall perhaps betray my conscience if I do not mention, in passing, the inspiring meetings I have had with Messrs Lindgren, Longtis and Gaffney whose words of encouragement and assurance of help will take us a long way.

Ann Roy Londhery
Honey, Secretary
12/9/54.