FILM IN THE PRINCELY STATE:
THE LOTUS FILM COMPANY OF HYDERABAD

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Abstract: Most film historiography has originated from the urban centers of Bombay, Madras, Calcutta and Lahore. Recent scholarship has looked at smaller cities such as Pune and Kolhapur. In all these histories, details of film production happening in a city like Hyderabad are a curious absence that could be attributed to a multiplicity of reasons; for instance, the prominence of film production in the aforementioned cities and the availability of archival evidence. Focusing on film practices in cities such as Hyderabad presents the possibility of bringing alternative histories to the fore, which enhances the understanding of cinema as a complex network. Hyderabad has historically been distinct as a princely city under the rule of the Nizam, unlike the colonial cities of Madras, Calcutta, Bombay and Lahore. The study of early film history in Hyderabad then becomes a way to understand the social history of the place itself. This article attempts to trace the history of early film production in Hyderabad state by examining the case of Dhirendranath Ganguly who ran the Lotus Film Company in Hyderabad from 1922 to 1924. The case emerges as a site to investigate the networks of patronage specific to the princely city of Hyderabad, the industrial relations within which cinema operated and also the politics of film historiography after the linguistic re-organization of the Southern states of India starting in 1956. The fragmentary evidence of Ganguly's company points out that he operated as an artist-entrepreneur in the Nizam state and further gives us insights into the socio-cultural milieu of Hyderabad city in the 1920s.

Keywords: early cinema, Hyderabad, cinema under Nizam, silent cinema, film history

Introduction

The legend of 'Indian' cinema began with the exhibition of Lumiere's films[1] in Bombay. Gradually, the films were screened in Bombay and other cities of India. Cinema was one of the earliest go-to places in the city and a significant destination for the city's transport networks.[2] Cinema has to be understood as the coming together of several different kinds of people: the

entrepreneurs who made films, the travelling cinemascope operators, the theatre owners, the personnel who managed cinemas and the diverse people who watched films together. Lawrence Liang suggests:

> There can, arguably, be no distinct account of cinema or cinematic spaces, which is not *at the same time* an account of the history of the city, of the experiences of modernity and of the conflicts that define the very occupation of these spaces.[3]

Film therefore is inextricable from the idea of a modern city or urban everyday life. This conception of cinema allows us to ask a range of questions not just limited to the organization and networks of film but also about the nature of the society prevailing at a particular time. The study of cinema can thus be an entry point into studying the city. With this understanding the current article examines the case of film production during the 1920s in the princely city of Hyderabad. This research has a two-pronged approach: to understand early film production and its networks, and through it to discern the kind of society that prevailed in Hyderabad and how it intersected with cinema. For this purpose, I use a variety of archival and secondary sources. The fragmented nature of the material is also illustrative of the challenges involved in tracing early film histories in India.

I argue that early film production in Hyderabad followed an artist-entrepreneur model with primary focus on the artist and that it has to be understood as part of the patrimonial networks that operated in Hyderabad. The earliest references of film production in the Hyderabad state are that of the six films made by Dhiren Ganguly[4] from 1922 to 1924 under the banner of the Lotus Film Company in Hyderabad.

Problems of Film Historiography

This article is focused on understanding the city of Hyderabad through an enquiry in to the operations of the Lotus Film Company during the years 1922-1924. Towards such an endeavour, the existing film sources and historiographies pose a considerable challenge. This section examines the different possible sources to study early cinema in cities such as Hyderabad and engages with the kind of limitations they pose.

Most of the work on early cinema has been from the colonial cities of Calcutta,[5] Bombay[6] and Madras.[7] Cinema can then be thought as one of the imports to colonial cities. However, not much has been written about cinema in the princely cities. The possible reasons for most of the scholarship being focused on the colonial cities could be the predominance of

cinema in these centers, the availability of colonial records and archival material which enable research or even the dominance of the national framework in writing film histories.

The absence of archival material is one of the most important challenges faced by researchers working on early cinema in India. The archives and histories issue of *BioScope*: *South Asian Screen Studies*[8] and scholars such as Ranita Chatterjee have characterized the film archives by absence. Material such as studio records, agreements, legal documents and even films which might be readily available in the western context are completely absent in India. Researchers of early cinema have often had to rely on colonial archives or other sources like newspapers and magazines.[9] Priya Jaikumar gives an instance of the challenges involved in working with early twentieth century sources;[10] she writes, when the undersecretary of the Government of India wanted a list of Indian film producing firms operated by the British, the responsibility to collect the details finally fell on the police commissioners. Most of these production firms were virtually untraceable at the time when the film trade was unorganized. Moreover, several of these firms disappeared after a few films. Even the details which were finally collected were often incomplete. The focus of the colonial government on documentation of licenses sometimes makes for a rich source in the study of cinema. Research then has to rely on colonial documents and newspapers that take the place of the absent archive. Scholars have devised different strategies to work around the challenge of the missing archive. Kaushik Bhaumik uses newspaper advertisements supplemented with published historical material and governmental records to construct a historical narrative of silent cinema in Bombay.[11] Stephen Hughes studies advertisements, reviews and film criticism in magazines to document the evolution of genres in silent cinema in Madras.[12] While colonial governments in the cities of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay followed similar methods of documentation, the case of a princely city like Hyderabad was distinct.[13] Film is not a separate category of documentation in any of these archives; the references are often found in unexpected places, sometimes in the home department, and at other times under police records etc. The discovery is more by accident than by design. This mode of accidental discovery also determines the histories which are written; the historical narrative so produced is not a linear perfect narrative, addressing all the gaps but is rather episodic in nature. The absence of the archive on film can thus be thought of as one of the important reasons for the lack of work on early cinema in the non-colonial cities like Hyderabad.

Another reason for the absence of work on Hyderabad could also be the history of the city itself. Hughes has argued that history of cinema has tended to collapse under the larger

narratives of the nation or its modernities.[14] He notes that such a preoccupation marginalizes the alternative histories of cinema.[15] Hyderabad was a princely state ruled by the Asaf Jahi dynasty. Mir Osman Ali Khan was the last ruler of Hyderabad who ruled from the early twentieth century till the annexation of Hyderabad into the Indian union in 1948. Eric Beverley argues that the dominant conceptual frameworks of history work to serve the post-colonial states and hence only consider the colonial states and anti-colonial nationalism as worth examining. He uses the term sub-imperial[16] to characterize princely states and argues that these regions commanded a certain kind of sovereignty and constantly negotiated power with the British. Hyderabad thus didn't fit neatly into the categories of nationalist or anti-national; hence it can be said that even in the context of cinema, the princely state of Hyderabad cannot be fixed into the national framework.

Another aspect of importance in the context of film historiographies of Hyderabad is its current status as the home to the Telugu film industry, one of the largest film industries in India. S.V.Srinivas traces the socio-political history of Telugu cinema from its initial days in Chennai;[17] he argues that Telugu cinema was spatially shifted to Hyderabad in the 1970s after the announcement of state subsidies in 1964. He also notes the existence of a film culture in the Nizam region whose history was distinct from the one he traces. Hyderabad thus becomes a part of the story of Telugu cinema only after the shift of the industry from Madras. Srinivas narrates the story of Telugu cinema along the trajectories of the surplus of agrarian capital that was being injected in to film. However, the question of what kind of film culture existed in the Nizam period before the establishment of the Telugu film industry remains unexplored.

Examination of the Telugu film histories clearly points to the absence of Hyderabad's history of cinema. There is considerable amount of journalistic writing on the history of Telugu cinema in the Telugu language. Inturi Venkateshwara Rao writes the history of Telugu cinema on the eve of the diamond jubilee of Telugu cinema in 1991.[18] In "*Aravai Ella Telugu Talkie*" (60 yrs of Telugu talkie), he writes that Raghupati Venkaiah a "*Telugu bidda*" (Telugu son) was the first person to start the Indian film industry (not just Telugu) in Madras. He narrates the life story of Venkaiah, his experiments with the Chronomegaphone and his exhibition of films in tents across important cities including as far as Srilanka. According to him, Venkaiah established the first cinema theatre in Madras called Gaiety. He enlists *Bhakta Prahalada*[19] as the first Telugu film. Writing about the studios, he notes that he only considered those studios which were owned by Telugu people and those that were owned by Tamilians but were making Telugu films.

Language remains the basis upon which the historiography of Telugu cinema is written. Though films made by Venkaiah were silent, they are counted as a part of the events of the Telugu cinema history that had a lot to do with his status as a 'son of Telugu language.' It is to be noted that the Andhra Pradesh government instituted a lifetime achievement award in honor of Raghupati Venkaiah in 1981.

Gudipudi Srihari in his essay *"Telugu Cinema Sankshipta Charitra"* (a concise history of Telugu film) also writes about the experiments of Raghupati Venkaiah as a pioneer in film.[20] He lists *Bhishma Pratigya*[21] made by R.S. Prakasham as the first Telugu silent film. According to him, *Bhakta Markandeya*[22] made in Kakinada by C.Pullaiah was the first silent film to be produced in Telugu land. In writing the history of distribution of Telugu films, he points out that Vishakapatnam's Purna cinema (erstwhile Krishna cinema) was the pioneer in distribution in Andhra state. He writes in detail about the different Telugu films that were made in the Madras and Bombay studios, also dating the establishment of Sarathi studios in 1960 as the beginning of film making in Hyderabad. Alongside is a historicisation of the efforts of the state government in settling Telugu cinema in Hyderabad.

It is important to note that in this history, a silent film becomes a Telugu silent film because the film maker is identified as a Telugu person. Films made in Kakinada and Vishakhapatnam are referred to as the films of the Telugu land. However, though Hyderabad was the capital of the erstwhile united Andhra Pradesh in 1997 (when the essay was written), it is not considered Telugu land owing to its Nizam past.

In all the above histories of Telugu cinema, the work of Dhiren Ganguly appears as a notable absence. Since film journalists have largely considered language as the basis for the writing of film history, language then becomes the criterion for inclusion and exclusion of historical events and people. People who were identified as Telugu or made Telugu films or operated on Telugu land are included in these histories. It is also important to note that even silent films acquire linguistic identification based on the linguistic affiliation of the film-maker. Hyderabad and films made in Hyderabad before the 1960s do not feature in these histories on account of it not being considered a Telugu city. After 1956, Hyderabad became the capital of the linguistic state of Andhra Pradesh. Consequently, the efforts of the government to establish a film industry in the city feature in these histories.

Arudra's essay titled "Two Decades of Telugu Cinema" written in English is an exception to this pattern.[23] This essay was written on the occasion of the Filmotsav held in Hyderabad in 1986. Arudra dates Hyderabad's cinematic history back to 1922. He briefly

presents Dhiren Ganguly's enterprise and his Lotus Film Company as frontrunners in placing Hyderabad on the cinematic map of India. He also mentions Mahaveer Photoplays and National Film Company as the other film companies which functioned in the early 1930s in Secunderabad and Hyderabad. And the latter part of his essay focuses on the other film personalities such as Raghupati Venkayya, H.M. Reddy etc. who have developed Telugu cinema.

Though titled "Two decades of Telugu Cinema," Dhiren Ganguly and his films become important to this essay because it writes film history with Hyderabad as the basis. The city of Hyderabad was important as the capital of the linguistic state of Andhra Pradesh. In an essay titled "*Alanati Bollywood lo Mana Toli Hero*" (Our first hero in the yesteryear's Bollywood) from the book titled *Oregimpu-Telangana Sangatulu,* H. Ramesh Babu writes the history of the actor Paidi Jairaj who worked as a lead actor in several silent and talkie films.[24] He notes that Jairaj came from the illustrious family of Aghornath Chattopadhyaya and Sarojini Naidu in the Hyderabad state and that he was born in Karimnagar and moved to Hyderabad and then to Bombay to work in films.

This essay, unlike those of Gudipudi Srihari and Inturi Venkateshwara Rao considers the state of Hyderabad as its focal point of study and takes into consideration the Bengali family of Aghornath Chattopadhyaya as an important family of Hyderabad. Written in 2006 in the context of the rise of the separate Telangana movement, the essay takes the political geography of the Nizam state as the foundation for its history. Nizam state was a multilingual state and language was not the framework of identification, hence a Bengali family is considered a part of the state. The available journalistic material thus addresses the need to develop a pre-history for the linguistic state. As the Nizam state itself doesn't feature in this framework of language, the cinema history of the Nizam period is also not reported. The above historiographies point to the limitations of using the framework of language in examining early cinema history. Stephen Hughes' arguments about the history of silent film in the colonial city of Madras are relevant in the current context. Hughes argues that the silent film market was an integrated one and the films often addressed the multilingual audiences through the use of multiple language inter-titles. He finds that the fragmentation of the market eventually happens with the invention of sound. Hence language as a frame is inadequate to examine the early film histories before the coming of sound.

This article argues that the history of early cinema has to be examined in the local context; the work of the Lotus Film Company which made silent films also has to be examined

along the idioms of the princely state and the silent film market and not in the context of the linguistic affiliations of the owner (Dhiren Ganguly).

At this juncture, I argue for the consideration of the city as a basis for the reconstruction of early film history; cities were important nodes for communication networks through which film travelled to different corners of the country. In the context of Hyderabad, while the political geography of the region has changed from being a princely state to an independent state in the Indian union (Hyderabad state), a part of the linguistic state (Andhra Pradesh) and most recently to a smaller state based on its historical geography (Telangana); Hyderabad has continued to be the capital city through all of these shifts. Though the city has had a different character in each period; it then offers a certain frame of continuity for the purposes of examining its history.

My objective in this article is not just limited to tracing the film history but also to understand how film shapes the city space. City as a discursive category widens the sphere of film history; it includes the networks of exhibition and circulation and remains limited not just to the histories of the production companies. Thus, the objective of this article is two-pronged a) to examine the nature of early film business in Hyderabad b) to examine the engagement of cinema with the particular social structures of Hyderabad.

As argued earlier, the absence of a dependable archive is a challenge which plagues the case of Dhiren Ganguly as well. None of the documents about the Lotus Film Company or its business are available; none of the films produced by the company remain in full. This article then depends on alternative sources to fill in the details of the company. I depend on biographical notes, newspaper articles, advertisements and the evidence of the Indian Cinematograph Committee to understand the operation of the film company in Hyderabad. The current article is focused on the period of 1922-1924 when Dhiren Ganguly worked in the Nizam state, and this episode is also used to understand the social conditions of Hyderabad. While Ganguly continued to work for a long time after 1924, I only focus on his work in Hyderabad and examine it for the film practises in the princely city. The reconstruction of early film history also becomes a social history of the Hyderabad city in some aspects.

Dhiren Ganguly and the Lotus Film Company:

There was a renewed interest in Dhiren Ganguly's work on the event of the Padma Bhushan and the Dada Saheb Phalke awards being conferred on him in 1974 and 1975. Several articles on him appeared in the English Press and Bengal based newspapers. In 1978, Kalpana Lajmi

made a documentary called *DG Movie Pioneer*.[25] While the National Film Archives of India (NFAI) hold the reserves of some of these news articles, these are not properly referenced and do not give the details of the publications in which they were originally published. The NFAI also has documentation on Dhirendranath Ganguly by the research and reference division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and a brochure released by the Cine Forum Jabalpur[26] on account of his felicitation for the Padma Bhushan. *Indian Film* by Eric Barnouw and S. Krishnaswamy,[27] *The Encyclopedia of Indian Cinema* by Ashish Rajadhyaksha and Paul Willemen[28] and *The Cinemas of India* by Yves Thoraval[29] also present brief biographies of Dhiren Ganguly and his several different connections. I draw from these sources and most importantly from Dhiren Ganguly's testimony to the Indian Cinematograph Committee (ICC) in 1928 to understand the workings of the Lotus Film Company.[30] Firoze Rangoonwala's[31] filmography[32] lists the films produced by the Lotus Film Company. The above-mentioned sources present several different narratives of the Hyderabad episode in Ganguly's life. In this section I will examine these different narratives of his life.

Dhiren Ganguly was an alumnus of Shantiniketan; he was trained in painting. He came to Hyderabad to work in the Nizam's art college as its principal. He was interested in photography and produced an album called *Bhaver Abhivyakthe.* He went to Calcutta for a brief stint in filmmaking and returned to Hyderabad to establish the Lotus Film Company. He operated two theatres in addition to producing films during his stay in Hyderabad. He had to leave Hyderabad in 1924 on the orders of the Nizam. The details of his work have had to be pieced together from several sources which do not give a unified version.

According to Dogra's essay, "Grand Old Man of Indian Cinema"[33] Ganguly's book *Amar Desh* (*My Country*) drew J.F. Madan's attention who invited the former to Calcutta to make a film on Tagore's play. Before the film was completed, he joined the Indo-British Film Company as a dramatic director and produced and directed *Bilat Pheret* (*England Returned*)[34] and later *Yashoda Nandan (Shri Radha Krishna)*[35] and *Sadhu ki Saitan.*[36] The exact years of his move to Calcutta and his return to Hyderabad cannot be ascertained. Dogra writes that Ganguly realized the importance of owning a production company in relation to J.F.Madan's cinematic monopoly in Calcutta following which he shifted to Hyderabad.

About Ganguly's time in the Nizam state, Arudra notes that he both benefited from feudal patronage as well as suffered the repercussions of feudal anger. There are different narratives on why he had to leave Hyderabad; Barnouw and S. Krishnaswamy's *Indian Film* states that Ganguly left on the orders of a functionary of Nizam after he screened *Razia*

Begum [37] in his theatre. It notes "theatres were shut, equipment packed and families and technicians departed".[38] *The Encyclopaedia of Indian Film* and Bharat Dogra also corroborate this view. Yves Thoraval writes that Ganguly made a film called *Razia Begum* in 1922, which touched upon Hindu-Muslim relations following which the Nizam, fearing communal backlash, banned the film and banished the director. These diverse narratives do not compute into specific details Ganguly's exit. The question of communal relations was of importance to Hyderabad on account of it being a state with majority Hindu population, ruled by a Muslim ruler; the reason for Ganguly's exit from Hyderabad was also connected to the fear of communal tensions. This is further discussed in a later section on Hyderabad's socio-cultural influences on cinema.

Ganguly's testimony to the Indian Cinematograph Committee given on 18 December 1927 helps to fill in some more details. This should be read in the context of the prevailing socio-political conditions in Hyderabad. At the time of the testimony (1927), Ganguly was living in Bengal and was not producing any films. In Hyderabad, Ganguly had worked as a producer, director and even as an exhibitor. Each of these roles has to be examined separately.

On questioning about his role in film making and expertise, Ganguly admits to the cinematograph committee that he was primarily a director and did not have the necessary knowhow about the business aspects of film making. His testimony shows that he was hoping for state intervention in the business through a syndicate. He explicitly hopes for the British to float a company funded by capitalists who would facilitate the funds for local productions, ensure equitable distribution of films and also provide some amount of training to local film makers. He says that such an enterprise might find interest among local maharajahs who might buy shares in it.

About his film-making venture in Hyderabad, he says that he had made money on all the films he produced but had stopped producing because of financial difficulties. These films were profitable and were exhibited by the Madans in Calcutta and by the Majestic, Imperial cinema and Globe in Bombay. It is to be noted that Hyderabad seemed to be linked to the Bombay-Calcutta network and not with Madras as far as film production and circulation was concerned. He speaks about the changing inter-titles for different markets and that the insertion of inter-titles was easy and cost effective. Films could be circulated across geographies by changing inter-tiles; films thus had a wide market for circulation. His films seem to have made an impression as far as London. *The Stage* weekly wrote about Ganguly on 7 June 1923:

Go It, Ganye!

> There is a new producer just burst forth in Hyderabad, South India, who should go far. Don't forget his name, it is Dhiren Gangopadhyaya. He engages no Mary Pickford or Betty Baffours. Mr. Gango- he just plays his own leading lady, and I suspect fills in as his own publicity agent as well. He is supported by an artist whom he advertises as "Miss Sita Devey, the first Indian respectable lady actress on the screen. Her gestures will create a new epoch in kinema world". As to the film, it "can run for years together at a stretch. Most original at every step". His next picture is to be a "social, religious, and educational love-teaching drama", also directed by Mr. Dhirendranath Gangopadhyaya who writes all scenarios and directs the pictures and stars in them also. His latest "liberates the fetters of melancholia". It creates the loftiest spiritual thought. It typifies intense dramatic power. It produces panic at the box office!" It is the "greatest film craze depicting the highest philosophy, with titles in English, Hindustani, Urdu and Bengalee". This sort of thing makes "furiously to think" and really I must ask my editor to send me out to Hyderabad to see the surpassing picture.[39]

This news on Ganguly is indicative of the wide reach of silent films and international interest in the different films being made across the world. The fact that Ganguly directed, wrote scenarios, played his own leading lady and acted as publicity agent is indicative of the many roles early film makers played.

On being asked about his departure from Hyderabad, Ganguly responds that he had left the city because he was financially dependent on his brother who had moved away before him. He adds that it was difficult for outsiders to do business in Hyderabad.

Ganguly operated two film theatres in Hyderabad, which he closed down when he moved out of Hyderabad. He exhibited both foreign and Indian films in his theatres. He describes the procedure through which he acquired films at the time. He sourced the foreign films from Universal and other hiring agencies. He leased out his theatres at a price of Rs.350/- or Rs.450/- or Rs. 500/- for one week for an Indian picture. He also complains that the Madans who acquired several Indian films did not give their pictures for less than Rs.900/- which he thought was very high and not viable for the exhibitors. He says that the Indian pictures were very popular by then and all exhibitors wanted to show them but people like Madan controlled the distribution and had a monopoly over who could screen the films.

Ganguly's engagement with cinema is indicative of some of the early cinema practises in Hyderabad. As a trained artist from Shantiniketan, he was drawn towards photography and hence cinema. Unlike in Europe where cinema primarily attracted the entrepreneurs, in the Indian sub-continent it was the artists—be it from the field painting, sculpture or theatre—who were drawn to the medium of cinema in its early days. This difference in approach is visible in Ganguly's interaction with the ICC committee. The committee members question him on his training in film and he responds with his credentials as an artist who has published books. On further insistence about his film training, Ganguly answers that he did not have any.

Artist-entrepreneurs such as Ganguly played multiple roles including that of an actor, female impersonator, make-up artist, exhibitor etc. This indicates the lack of division of labor in early film business. The work of production, exhibition, distribution etc were therefore done by the same set of people. The artist-entrepreneur engaged in all possible jobs, therefore reproducing the workshop mode of production. Additional labor was contributed by kinship sources such as friends, relatives and acquaintances. Ganguly for instance received financial help from his brother and made his wife Sita Devi act in his films.

The reasons for his entry into exhibition can be located in the profitability of the exhibition business and the need for venues to screen his own films. Film magazines from the 1940s mention that there was no state tax on film theatres in Hyderabad, which also could be a reason for exhibition being a profitable business. Ganguly's testimony also indicates that he hoped for British help in the matters of business so he could focus solely on making films; his idea was that the British should collaborate with the local feudal rulers to provide capital for film making. This reveals Ganguly's primary artistic inclinations as well as the difficulties faced by early filmmakers in securing capital for their film ventures. It is at this juncture of issues, that of the availability (or lack thereof) of capital, the market for films and the artist-entrepreneur model that we can locate the operation of Ganguly's company in Hyderabad. The next section examines the social conditions in Hyderabad and their interaction with early cinema.

Hyderabad, Patrimonial Modernity and Cinema

It is unclear from the evidence whether Ganguly was invited by the Nizam to make films or he chose to move to the city; in his evidence to the ICC, Ganguly testifies that the Lotus Film Company was a sole proprietorship and it produced films in Hyderabad with the help of the Nizam's government. He qualifies the nature of the support, substantiating further that he had only used the Nizam's palace and did not receive any financial assistance.

Hyderabad in the early 20th century had a reputation of being an important princely capital city. As the largest princely state in India, it featured in the touring networks of several European performers. The European newspapers give evidence of several instances of performers being invited to the city. For instance, one Mr. Fredric Culpitt writes in the 17th June 1926 issue of the newspaper, "The Stage", describing Hyderabad as follows:

> In Secunderabad, the Nizam of Hyderabad took more than ordinary interest in the performances, and paid a high tribute to the artists when he returned to the theatre on the third night of the engagement and selected for the programme items which had appealed

to him on his first night. At his invitation the whole company were presented, and he invited him to Hyderabad where, under the guidance of H.E. the Maharajah of Tarbun, the wonders of the ancient city were enjoyed.[40]

It is to be noted that Secunderabad housed the cantonment[41] and the town[42] was connected to the colonial railway network. The British military which supported the Nizam was stationed in the cantonment. Several European performers came to Secunderabad as part of their touring circuits, which were shaped by the railway and colonial networks. It was not unusual for the Nizam to be invited to these performances who would then shower his appreciation on them. He often invited them to perform in his capital city Hyderabad. In the same way, Hyderabad also attracted spectacles from both the Muslim world through its own transnational linkages, and colonial networks due to its proximity to the British residency.

The Nizam state was known to be a patron of artists and performers. Eric Beverley's work is useful to understand the social structures of the Hyderabad state. He deploys the concepts of 'patrimonialism' and 'modernity' to describe the state in the early twentieth century. Patrimonialism in this context is defined as personalized authority premised on the relationship between the ruler and ruled, with the expectations of voluntary compliance by the ruled and accountability by the rulers. For Beverley such relations had a long history in the Indo-Muslim political discourse. Patrimonialism is then seen as a transition between pre-modern and modern authority. The two concepts of modernity and patrimonialism are often thought to be mutually exclusive; but in Hyderabad the pre-modern patrimonialism was intermingling with modernity through the language of technocratic, rationalist or modernist political change. According to Beverley, the educated bureaucrat intellectuals mediated between the Persian statecraft and global modernity. These bureaucrats were a mix of western educated locals and Europeans employed by the Nizam. Hyderabad's modernity had a wide range of influences, not solely of the British. The British Resident[43] operated as an advisor to the Nizam and the distinctive modernity of the state was a constant negotiation of the patriomonialism of the Nizam and the colonial rulers. Beverley then describes Hyderabad as "globally mediated, polyglot, multi-religious, cosmopolitan" city.[44]

The performances and exhibitions also worked as a part of the patrimonialist idiom. Christopher Balme[45] writes that European theatrical activities in India were perceived as a business activity and therefore went largely unchecked, which he terms as a *laissez faire* approach. While the performers and exhibitionists defined themselves as businesses in the colonial circuits, in the Nizam's state they could operate only because of the benevolence of the ruler or one of his nobles. My attempt is not to present the princely state as a backward

primitive space akin to orientalist descriptions of it but to argue for its distinct modernity which had several conflicting influences. Some of these can be seen even in the case of Dhiren Ganguly.

As mentioned earlier, Dhiren Ganguly was employed as principal to the Nizam's arts college.[46] The Nizam state had several institutions dedicated to education, the arts and culture which attracted talent from across British India. While the arts college operated under the patronage of the Nizam, it employed people such as Ganguly, who came trained from reputed arts institutions such as Shantiniketan. This is again indicative of the distinct patrimonial modernity of Hyderabad. Ganguly's company operated in Hyderabad through the benevolence of the Nizam. It was not unusual that the Nizam showed interest in cinema as one of the technological wonders of the time. The benevolence meant that the Nizam gave a free hand to the film maker to operate in his state, and in Ganguly's particular case it could amount to the use of his palace for shooting.

The Nizam's interest in cinema can be understood through the arguments made by Eric Beverley and Margrit Pernau. Pernau writes that patrimonialism was constituted by vassal loyalty which was built-in through several mechanisms. Ceremonies such as *khila't*[47] and *nazar*[48] held importance as symbolic markers of feudal control.[49] In the context of the Mysore state, Janaki Nair emphasizes the importance of processions and royal symbols in asserting the stature of local rulers against the British.[50] In the negotiations of power between the rulers of the princely states and the British, these ceremonies were important mechanisms of asserting sovereignty. Beverley also argues that the threat of colonization provoked the local rulers to assert their political sophistication and the degree of authority comparable to that of the European states. The provincial states then strived to present themselves as modern and thus of equal stature with the British. The patronage to cinema can be thought to have dual significance as an extension of the patronage to the performing artists and as an important spectacle of modernity. Hence the Nizam's interest in cinema served to raise the stature of the state and present its capital city as a cultural hub. The news report from *The Stage* (discussed in the earlier section), indicates that the Nizam was fairly successful in attracting European interest to the city.

This testimony of Ganguly to ICC committee can be analyzed to understand the prevailing business environment in Hyderabad. Ganguly in spite of being a successful producer and making profits on his films was dependent on his brother. His statement about the business environment not being conducive to the outsiders in Hyderabad also has to be understood as

the predominance of the patrimonial networks in the princely city. Ganguly is able to gain entry into these networks and operate there due to the patronage of its ruler.

The instance of Ganguly's expulsion following *Razia Begum*'s screening is reflective of the fact that the Nizam state allowed the artist-entrepreneur to operate in its territory when it was favorably disposed towards him and could also expel the latter when there was an instance which was not agreeable to it. Though film-making itself was a collaborative process and involved several people and infrastructure (theatres), the Nizam's orders affected the entire group, and not just Ganguly.

Ganguly's testimony also gives further insights into the cultures of the Hyderabad city. He specifies the use of Hindi and English captions for his films in Hyderabad. Gujarati captions were used for Bombay and while Bengali captions were placed for Bengal.[51] The languages used in film are very telling of the prevailing linguistic culture at the time as well as the intended audiences. While Hyderabad was a multi-lingual state with Telugu, Kannada, Marathi and Urdu spoken by diverse populations, the nobility (both Muslim and Hindu) were educated in Persian and Urdu; the language of the culture was Urdu or Hindustani. It is possible that because of this Ganguly did not find the need to insert inter-titles in the Telugu or Marathi languages in Hyderabad city.

Ganguly also testifies to the difficulty in finding female actors for his films, particularly in Calcutta. This, according to him, was not a problem outside Calcutta. He could even get one Mr. Bell's daughter, an Anglo-Indian to work for his film in Hyderabad. He adds that Anglo-Indians from respectable families could act in films. Much has been written about the unwillingness of women to work in the films in early decades of cinema[52]. Entrepreneurs such as Ganguly solved this problem through female impersonation. In addition to films, this was already a common practise on stage.[53] In his later films, Ganguly got his wife Sita Devi to act. Some of the biographical notes on him hail him as a pioneer who brought respectability to films by introducing his wife as an actor.[54]There was a significant population of Anglo-Indians and Europeans who lived in Hyderabad. And the willingness of Anglo Indians to act in films reiterates the many influences on the modernity of Hyderabad. Ganguly felt that the upper classes in Hyderabad were more positively disposed towards the film industry than in Calcutta. This could also be as a result of film being patronized by the Nizam.

Another aspect which the *Razia Begum* incident brings out to is the question of communalism. There is no clear evidence on what exactly angered the Nizam, whether it was the way in which Razia was portrayed or the issue of Razia being a Muslim falling in love with

a Hindu. In either case what it definitely points out is the concern of the ruler about the possible tensions between the two communities (Hindu and Muslim) and the capability of cinema as a medium to influence it. Cinema thus was considered powerful enough to fuel communal tensions or to assuage them.

Conclusion

The case of Dhiren Ganguly helps us think about the idioms through which early cinema operated in Hyderabad and the socio-cultural milieu of the city. Unlike in the colonial cities where film was a part of the *laissez faire* entrepreneurship model, early cinema in Hyderabad operated through the artist-entrepreneur model within the patronage of the Nizam state. The patrimonialist networks dominated film business in the Nizam state, which made it difficult for outsiders to make an intervention. While the Lotus Film Company is able to gain entry primarily due to the patronage of the ruler, it is compelled to leave when it falls out of the Nizam's benevolence. The Nizam's interest in cinema was on account of it being an extension of the arts and as an important marker of modernity. By fashioning the capital city as a modern space, the Nizam could establish the stature of his state at par with the European states in his negotiations with the British. The multiple influences on the modernity of Hyderabad were also reflected in the society; for instance, the greater acceptance of cinema as compared to Calcutta (as claimed by Ganguly) can also be seen as an indicator of this.

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Notes

[1] While acknowledging the many origins of cinema in India, I use the instance of Lumiere films only to argue cinema's relationship with the city.

[2] Stephen Putnam Hughes, "Urban Mobility and the History of Cinema-Going in Chennai," in *Chennai, not Madras: Perspectives on the City*, ed. A.R. Venkatachalapathy (Mumbai: Marg Publications, 2006).

[3] Lawrence Liang, "Cinematic citizenship and the illegal city," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 6, no. 3 (2005): 368.

[4] I use Dhiren Ganguly as a short version for Dhirendranath Ganguly.

[5] Ranita, Chatterjee, *Journeys in and beyond the city: cinema in Calcutta, 1897-1939* (University of Westminster: Unpublished Dissertation, 2011).

[6] Kaushik Bhaumik, *The Emergence of the Bombay Film Industry: 1913-1936* (University of Oxford: Unpublished Dissertation, 2001).

[7] Stephen P. Hughes, "House full: Silent film Genre, Exhibition and Audiences in South India," *The Indian Economic & Social History Review* 43, no. 1 (2006): 31-62.

[8] Ravi S. Vasudevan, Rosie Thomas, Neepa Majumdar, Moinak Biswas, and Stephen Putnam Hughes, "Archives and histories," *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 4, no. 1 (2013):1-7

[9] The National Film Archives (NFAI) was established in 1964, much of the material on early film was lost by that time.

[10] Priya Jaikumar, *Cinema at the End of Empire: A Politics of Transition in Britain and India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006):85.

[11] Kaushik Bhaumik, *Bombay Film Industry*, 10.

[12] Hughes, Stephen P, "House full: Silent film Genre, Exhibition and Audiences in South India." *The Indian Economic & Social History Review* 43.1 (2006): 31-62.

[13] The record keeping methods of the British and the Nizam were different. For instance Hyderabad state records are found in Persian, Urdu and English based on who the intended audience for the documents were.

[14] Stephen P. Hughes, "Pride of place," *Seminar-New Delhi* (2003), http://www.india-seminar.com/2003/525/525%20stephen%20p.%20hughes.htm.

[15] Eric Lewis Beverly, *Hyderabad, British India, and the World: Muslim Networks and Minor Sovereignty, c. 1850–1950* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

[16] Beverley uses the term sub-imperial states to characterize "princely" states; he argues that the term "princely state" was used by the colonial apparatus to present the native states as backward and barbaric and also to negate the power the native rulers had on their states. He argues that these states constantly negotiated their sovereignty with the British and that the colonial power was far from absolute in these states. He presents the sub-imperial states as modernizing states who consciously invested in bringing modern technology and processes to their states. For this project, Beverley's argument on the distinctive modernity of the "sub-imperial" states is significant to think about cinema but the term "sub-imperial" itself is focused on the sovereignty of the state, which is not directly relevant for this study. I therefore continue to use the term "princely state", which is a more common usage.

[17] S.V. Srinivas. *Politics as Performance: A Social History of the Telugu Cinema* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2013).

[18] Venkateshwara Rao Inturi, "*Aravai ella Telugu Talkie,*" in *Aravai Ella Telugu Cinema,* ed. Muddali Raghuram (1994): 1-37.

[19] *Bhakta Prahalada* (Directed by H.M. Reddy & Chilakalapudi Seeta Rama Anjaneyulu, 1931).

[20] Srihari Gudipudi, "*Telugu Cinema Sankshipt Charitra*" in *Telugu Cinema,* ed. Namala Venkateshwara Rao (1997):1-10.

[21] *Bhishma Pratigya* (Directed by R.S. Prakasham, 1921).

[22] *Bhakta Markandeya* (Directed by C. Pullaiah, 1925).

[23] Arudra, "Two decades of Telugu Cinema" (n.d.).

[24] Ramesh Babu H., "*Alanati Bollywood lo Mana Toli Hero*" in *Ooregimpu, Telangana Sangatalu*, eds. K. Vimala & S. Jagan Reddy (2006): 10-12.

[25] *D.G. Movie Pioneer* (Directed by Kalpana Lajmi, 1978).

[26] "Cine Forum Jabalpur", (Jabalpur: Cine Forum, 17 August 1976), Pamphlet, National Film Archives of India.

[27] Erik Barnouw & S Krishnaswamy, *Indian film* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

[28]Ashish Rajadhyaksha and Paul Willemen, *Encyclopedia of Indian cinema* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

[29] Yves Thoraval, *The Cinemas of India* (Delhi: Macmillian, 2000).

[30] Cinema Evidence II, "Indian Cinematograph Committee 1927–28 Evidence Vol. 2 Oral Evidence of Witnesses Examined at Lahore, Peshawar, Lucknow, Calcutta Madras with their Written Statements," (Calcutta: Govt of India, Central Publication Branch, 1928).

[31] Firoze Rangoonwala, *Indian Filmography: Silent and Hindi Films (1897-1969)*, (Bombay: Rangoonwalla-J. Udeshi, 1970).

[32] Rangoonwala lists the following as the films produced in the Nizam state.

Lotus Film Company: *Hara Gouri* (1922), *Indrajit*(1922), *Lady Teacher* (1922), *Chintamani*(1923), *Step Mother* (1923), *Yayati*(1926) National Film Company: *Hero of the Wilds* (1931) and *Deshbandhu*(1931), *Meri Maa*(1932). Eastern Films Limited: *Shikari*(1932).

[33] Bharat Dogra, "Grand Old Man of Cinema", (Pune: National Film Archives of India, 1976).

[34] *Bilat Pherat* (*England Returned)*, according to *The Encyclopedia of Indian Cinema* is directed by N.C. Laharry and Ganguly only acted in it but according to Dogra it was directed by Ganguly.

[35]*Yashoda Nandan* (*ShriRadha Krishna*) (Directed by Dhirendranath Ganguly, 1921).

[36] *Sadhu Ki Saitan* (Directed by Dhirendranath Ganguly, 1922).

[37] *Razia Begum* (Directed by Nanubhai Desai/ B.P. Mishra, 1924).

[38] Erik Barnouw & S. Krishnaswamy, *Indian film,* 26.

[39] "Film Jack and fancies", *The Stage* (London, 1923), 9.

[40] "Fredric Culpitt", *The Stage* (London), 17 June, 1926, 11.

[41] Secunderabad housed the garrison. Several British officials also lived in the Secunderabad area.

[42] The town area had bazaars and other commercial enterprises. Some local people also lived there.

[43] There was a British Resident stationed in Hyderabad State. The position played advisory role to the Nizam and managed the cantonment and military affairs.

[44] Eric Lewis Beverly, Hyderabad, British India, and the World: Muslim Networks and Minor Sovereignty, c. 1850–1950, 293.

[45] Christopher Balme, "Managing Theatre and Cinema in Colonial India: Maurice E. Bandmann, JF Madan and the War Films' Controversy," *Popular Entertainment Studies* 6, no. 2 (2015): 6-21.

[46] Nizam College was established by Mir Mahboob Ali Khan, the sixth Nizam of Asaf Jahis in 1887.

[47] The tradition of honorific robing prevalent in Nizam's state and a few other South Asian princely states

[48] The tradition of submitting some monetary or material gift for seeing Nizam.

[49] Margrit Pernau, *The Passing of Patrimonialism: Politics and Political Culture in Hyderabad, 1911-1948* (Delhi: Manohar, 2000).

[50] Janaki Nair, *Mysore Modern: Rethinking the Region under Princely Rule* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

[51] Ganguly speaks of captions and inter-titles in his testimony to ICC, presumably using them interchangeably.

[52] Neepa Majumdar, *Wanted Cultured Ladies Only!: Female Stardom and Cinema in India, 1930s-1950s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010).

[53] Kathryn Hansen, "Stri Bhumika: Female impersonators and actresses on the Parsi stage", *Economic and Political Weekly* 33, no. 35 (1998): 2291-2300.

[54] Swapan Mullick, "He made film making respectable" (Pune:National Film Archives of India, 1978).