

THE FILM AND TELEVISION INSTITUTE OF INDIA AND THE HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF FILM PEDAGOGY

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Abstract

By the late 1960s, India's economic aspirations appeared to crumble, indicating the decline of the Nehruvian utopia. This period marked a pivotal moment, influencing the emergence of a new social realist genre. In 1960, Shri Keskar, the information and broadcasting minister, purchased Prabhat Studio and established the Indian Film Institute. Secular and liberal viewpoints helped make the Film Institute of India an esteemed institute of film pedagogy. From the beginning, the film institute was led by a group of experts. Eminent Indian New Wave filmmakers and alumni of the Film Institute, such as Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Mani Kaul, Kumar Shahani, John Abraham, and others, acknowledged Ritwik Ghatak, Akira Kurosawa, Satyajit Ray, Mrinal Sen, George Sadoul, Werner Herzog, and Alexander Kluge as their inspirations in their student years. Based on memoirs, interviews, archival documents, and government reports, this article examines how the pedagogy of the Film Institute of India encouraged a group of young Indian New Wave filmmakers in the 1970s. In what ways did the curriculum and mentorship at FTII facilitate experimentation with film theory and praxis, which gave birth to a new genre of filmmaking? The article will also explain to what extent FTII's approach to teaching filmmaking promoted a liberal modern art form focused on social concerns.

Keywords: *Film and Television Institute of India, Indian New Wave Cinema, Film Pedagogy, Ethical convergence in Film Education, Cultural Inclusiveness, Critical thinking, Cognitive Divergence*

INTRODUCTION

In 1972, eminent screen actor of Indian New Wave Cinema and alumnus of the Film and Television Institute, Naseeruddin Shah, watched the film *Piya ka Ghar* at the famous Regal Cinema in Delhi. He was flabbergasted to find that the five lead actors in the film were alumni from the Film and Television Institute of India in Pune, Maharashtra. During his first year at the National School of Drama, he visited FTII because some of his friends were involved in student projects such as *Genesis*, *Mrigatrishna*, and others. He was intrigued by the fact that acting students at FTII had the opportunity to perform in front of the camera. The excitement of being in front of the camera himself was overwhelming, and he soon realized the potential of FTII as a vibrant, dynamic place (Shah, 2015). This experience occurred in the early 1970s, at a time when India's first film institute was producing graduates who quickly found employment in the film industry. A few of them unexpectedly gained stardom, and FTII had become a hub for the creation of stars, notable filmmakers and technicians. FTII is a place that marked the beginning of many journeys for film enthusiasts, where they learned to combine their passion for the craft with an understanding of how work and love for the work are often intertwined.

In the late 1960s, the emergence of Indian New Wave cinema marked a remarkable transition in India's modern cinematic landscape. Along with the influence of the world cinematic movement, it was also driven in part by the pedagogical divergences initiated at the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII). Scholars such as Ashish Rajadhyaksha, Amrit Gangar, Kaushik Bhowmik, Ira Bhaskar, Sudha Tiwari, and others situate Indian New Wave cinema within Indian postcolonial discourse, frequently emphasizing the textual narratives of films. Nonetheless, there is a lack of comprehensive academic inquiry into how the unique educational framework at the pioneering Film Institute specifically fostered groundbreaking methods of filmmaking among its alumni, who later became

eminent figures in the new cinema movement and critical thinking. This oversight limits our understanding of the relationship between film education and artistic expression within India's socio-cultural context during a period of significant political and economic transition. This article explores the pedagogical underpinnings of the first film institute in India and examines how FTII's pedagogy fostered a group of young filmmakers who introduced a new form of filmmaking and experimented with film philosophy and praxis. This article will also explain to what extent FTII's approach to teaching filmmaking promoted a liberal modern art form focused on social concerns.

METHODOLOGY

The research design used a qualitative method to examine the interplay between the Film Institute's educational practices and the emergence of innovative filmmaking. The study also draws on archival documents, interviews, and historiographical discourse to understand the pedagogical and ethical approaches of film educators, particularly in relation to inspiring a generation of filmmakers who have contributed to Indian New Wave cinema. The data was collected through two main approaches: archival research and semi-structured interviews. The archival research involved reviewing memoirs, government reports, PG Diploma theses and institutional records from FTII from the 1960s to the 1980s, which provided the historical background and information about the institute's curriculum, as well as the ethics of film pedagogies and the cultural ambience during the early 1970s.

These sources contributed to the reconstruction of pedagogical practices and institutional ethics that defined the secular, progressive, and liberal qualities of FTII graduates, which in turn influenced their approach to filmmaking and storytelling within the Indian cinema landscape, as evidenced by the innovative narratives and diverse themes explored in their films such as the incorporation of social issues and cultural

reflections that resonate with contemporary audiences. As part of the study to examine the FTII's pedagogical influences, a total of 25 semi-structured interviews were conducted, and purposive sampling was adopted. Purposive sampling ensured that the interviewees had an understanding of FTII's pedagogy and how it had influenced their creative activities. The interviews were conducted with acclaimed filmmakers, film technicians, cinematographers, actors, and eminent figures of the Indian New Cinema movement from the 1960s to the 1980s. Among the 25 semi-structured interviews, 11 selected are acclaimed FTII alumni and Pioneers of Indian New Wave personas, such as Mani Kaul, Kumar Shahani, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Jahanu Barua, Satish Shah, Shabana Azmi, Surendar Chaudhary, Naseeruddin Shah, and Girish Kasaravalli, Kanwaljeet, and Anoop Jotwani. Their interviews allowed access to personal experiences, mentoring, and how FTII's training influenced their filmmaking activities. These interviews were chosen for the analysis since they offered the most insightful and substantive information about the pedagogical impact of FTII based on the author's discretion.

This research used historical methods as its primary means to analyze how FTII helped shape Indian New Wave Cinema, examining both historical events and connections. This allowed for the contextualization of the interviews and archival data within the larger socio-cultural and cinematic backdrop of the 1970s. The study also used discourse analysis to find the hidden themes and unspoken truths that emerged during conversations with the participants. This method helped to identify how FTII's pedagogy fostered critical engagement with social issues and experimental filmmaking practices among its alumni.

To ensure the validity of the findings, triangulation was used. The data was collected through interviews, and archival documents as well as secondary sources such as memoirs, and government documents, which were then verified and cross-checked using a cross-referential method to ensure

consistency and reliability. This multifaceted method reduced potential biases and ensured the precision of the conclusions drawn. However, the study was not without limitations; its generalizability may be constrained by its predominantly qualitative nature and its partial reliance on empirical data. Although it works well for identifying pertinent respondents, the purposive sampling technique may introduce selection bias, which is a more general problem. Still, using both historiographical and discourse analysis, along with triangulation, provides a solid way to understand how FTII has contributed to Indian New Wave Cinema.

FILM AND TELEVISION INSTITUTE OF INDIA: A HISTORICAL LEGACY OF FILM PEDAGOGY

In April 1960, the former Prabhat Studios in Poona (now Pune) was purchased for USD \$11,793, and the Film Institute of India was founded. Regular academic courses commenced in 1961, and the Institute began awarding diplomas in cinema. A statement from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting clarified that the Institute, established with the primary goal of training people in film production, was in line with Entry 65 of the Union List (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1969). Legal counsel affirmed that the Institute, created as an 'Office' of the Government of India through an executive order, was authorized to grant diplomas. Diplomas from the Institute in Motion Picture Photography and Sound Recording have since been recognized by the Board of Assessment as Technical and Professional Qualifications under the Ministry of Education for the purpose of recruitment to positions and services under the Central Government (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1969, p.32).

According to a famous Indian cinematographer and FTII alumnus, Ramchandra Babu (2010), Satyajit Ray was initially requested to head the Film Institute of India, with Mr Gajanan Jagirdar as the first principal of the institute (Damle, 2023).

As the first principal of the institute, Gajanan Jaghirdar is remembered by FTII students for his initiatives that helped build the institute into an exceptional hub for studying cinema. He had a history of prolonged association with the Prabhat studio, from which the FTII came, and had a particular identity with the place. Gajanan Jaghirdar was a talented actor and director from the 1930s to the 1970s (Damle, 2023). The campus already had two working film studios, and one of them was the biggest in Asia at that time. The Institute received some equipment from the Prabhat era, and soon became operational. Over time, the institute began to gain recognition as the Pune Film Institute, both in India and abroad (Tyagi, 2022).

According to the Government of India's Estimated Committee Report (1969-70), the Parliamentary Statutory Committee resolved that the Film Institute of India was to be governed by a Governing Council with a Chairman at the helm. The Academic Council drafted the policy and strategic plan, and the Standing Finance Committee discussed and resolved any financial matters (Estimates Committee, 1969-70, p. 27). In the opinion of the Government of India, it envisaged transforming the Institute into a specialized technical institution, imparting training in film production to students, and carrying out advanced research across all cinematic disciplines. The Institute's core functions include offering comprehensive training in numerous aspects of film production, such as: 1. Film direction; 2. Screenplay writing; 3. Film acting; 4. Motion picture photography; 5. Sound recording and engineering; 6. Film editing; 7. Film appreciation; 8. Film production; 9. Art direction; 10. Film processing; 11. Make-up; 12. Costume design; 13. Animation; 14. Film publicity and public relations; and 15. Film distribution and exhibition. Currently, training is provided in the first six areas (ibid, p. 27).

Although the Government was keen on technical education, Shri Jagat Murari, when he became principal in 1962, ensured that the aesthetic dimension of the Institute did not suffer,

thus the secular legacy of Prabhat Studio was preserved. He believed that filmmakers should receive rigorous technical training, as well as develop their artistic sensibility and a strong sense of social responsibility (Damle, 2023). Murari emphasized that talent was an intangible quality. Talent was essential for success. It was the Institute's goal to identify such talent through selective admission and to train them methodically. Murari envisioned that the quality of Indian cinema would improve and that future industry leaders would be produced by successfully training filmmakers (Estimates Committee, 1969-70, p. 27).

According to the famous Indian Filmmaker and FTII alumnus Subhas Ghai (2022), Principal Jagat Murari was an energetic and efficient principal who embedded the FTII as an institute of aesthetic excellence. He admirably pursued an experimental course that added a vibrant language of expression and a new world of cinematic metaphors. He welcomed the world's best film technicians, experts, and filmmakers as faculty members at the institute (Ghai, 2021, p. 26). During his time, Ritwik Ghatak was appointed as Vice Principal, Satish Bahadur was appointed as a Professor of Film Appreciation, GB Kulkarni as a mentor in photography and motion picture, Prof. R.S. Pruthy in screenplay writing, Prof. R. K. Ramachandran in film editing, Prof. L. P. Shah in production, and Prof. Roshan Taneja in acting.

As principal, Jagat Murari not only embraced technical proficiencies but also trained students in the philosophical and aesthetic understanding of cinema. In an interview, renowned cinematographer and director Bir (2023) mentioned that during the orientation program, what Jagat Murari tried to make them understand was both the exciting and shadowy parts of filmmaking. Murari used to explain that filmmaking is exhilarating and exciting because of its exploratory and adventurous process. At the same time, filmmaking is quite painful because of its inherent potential to transcend the mundane barriers of the human condition. He used to say

that a successful cinematographer should depict the pain and reality of the human condition and turn them into a potent image through emotional value (Bir, 2023).

Bir (2023) also noted that, as a film educator, Jagat Murari believed that the greatest duty of the filmmaker is to delve deeply into the gravity of space and the dynamics of time, which can only be explored through collective sensibility and integrated consciousness (Bir, 2023). Film historian and FTII alumnus Surendar Chaudhuri mentioned in a personal interview that Jagat Murari was not only a good educator but also very sympathetic towards his students. Many aspiring filmmakers came to visit the Film Institute and dreamt of getting admitted there. Murari never refused a single visitor who came to meet him (Chaudhary, 2024).

FROM PROFESSOR SATISH BAHADUR TO RITWIK GHATAK: FTII AND THE GOLDEN ERA OF FILM APPRECIATION

Although the Ministry sought to adopt a regional approach to filmmaking, a group of eminent faculty members at the Film Institute deepened its international immersion. Professor Satish Bahadur, a renowned film historian, was appointed as Professor of Film Appreciation. In the course Direction and Screenplay Writing, film appreciation was regarded as the basic pedagogy. Professor Satish Bahadur and Professor Jagat Murari always believed that film appreciation is a crucial pathway able to help students improve their comprehensive abilities regarding vision, hearing, speaking, and writing. The film's distinctive traits create an experience that frequently transcends that of reality, and it also enhances the power of communication. The ability to stimulate the students' interest in learning, to achieve context-oriented teaching, and to incorporate language and culture learning are potential benefits. It provides students with the opportunity to pursue their studies according to their own interests and characteristics (Gopalakrishnan, 2021). Simultaneously, famous Bollywood actor and FTII Alumnus, Shatrughan Sinha (2021), writes in

his memoirs that in the initial session on film appreciation, Professor Satish Bahadur always gave the example of Roland Barthes and mentioned what film is and why film and its language are considered to be powerful mediums able to influence the vision of the audience. He, in turn, focused on the cinema's discourse of duality, which reveals its capacity to create an 'enthralled spectator', thereby establishing a basis for the potential formation of a communal experience within which individuals are both engaged by and engaged with the moving images presented. This phenomenon of enthrallment, even as it fosters a sense of shared community, also underscores a more sinister dimension of cinema which is its inherent capacity to manipulate viewers and promote the consumption of specific images and ideologies among mass audiences (Sinha, 2021, p. 29).

In the article titled "Film Institute as My Alma Mater" (2021), filmmaker Adoor Gopalakrishnan acknowledged Professor Satish Bahadur's innovative pedagogy and charismatic persona, which influenced generations of film students at the institute. He mentioned how Professor Satish Bahadur encouraged students to analyze and appreciate cinema through a nuanced artistic framework, which molded their engagement with films far beyond their academic years (Gopalakrishnan, 2021, pp. 31–34). His courses attracted students from various cultural and social backgrounds across India, focusing on the artistic and critical dimensions of film appreciation. Through his groundbreaking work, Professor Bahadur established a distinct space for film appreciation within Indian film studies, elevating it as a separate and recognized form of art. Professor Bahadur developed his own unique teaching approach, making full use of the National Film Archive at the Film Institute. The film appreciation format he created set the benchmark for all subsequent film appreciation courses in India. Together with Nair, the founder and director of the National Film Archives, Professor Bahadur spent nearly two decades travelling across both large and small towns in India, educating general audiences about cinema (ibid, 2021).

Alumni of the Film and Television Institute of India have unequivocally praised the unique teaching methods of Professor Satish Bahadur when studying cinematic language, particularly his use of examples from Ray's Apu trilogy to illustrate key concepts in filmmaking. Film critic and historian Surendar Chawdhury (2024) mentioned in an interview that Professor Bahadur sought to convey the importance of excellent cinema by referencing Ray's Apu trilogy. His focus was on studying cinema through the lens of editing, cinematography, and sound. He suggested that the audience could achieve proper film appreciation by viewing more than the filmmaker originally intended, including analyzing the film's underlying themes, cultural context, and emotional resonance (Chaudhary, 2024).

Professor Bahadur explained the cast of Ray's *Pather Panchali* in a three-act mode. New Wave filmmaker Kumar Shahani (2023) mentioned in his interview that Professor Bahadur screened *Pather Panchali* in separate single-reel screenings in half-light, followed by chalking different diagrams on the blackboard. Each of the three acts had three sub-acts, and so on. In his last years, he expanded his list and brought a variety of other films, including *The Bicycle Thief* (1948), *Rashomon* (1950), *Wild Strawberries* (1957), *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (1958), *Meghe Dhaka Tara* (1961), and *Ajantrik* (1958), to fit his 3- or 5-act model, regardless of the diverse possibilities of the makers and their working conditions and methods (Shahani, 2023).

According to the Ninety-Sixth report of the Estimates Committee (1969-70), from the outset, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting was determined to involve prominent figures from the film industry, such as directors, producers, actors, and film technicians, in the selection and admission process of the Film Institute. As part of this, the non-conformist filmmaker Ritwik Ghatak was appointed Vice Principal of the institute by Mrs Indira Gandhi (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1969, p. 43). Ritwik Ghatak, an

influential figure in Bengal's cultural sphere, was known for developing a distinctive filmmaking style. In his Partition Trilogy, Ghatak sought to portray the harsh realities of post-Partition Bengal, where poverty and unemployment were placing a significant strain on the socio-economic structure. The influx of refugees from East Pakistan into West Bengal led to changes in urbanization pattern, while the rise of the working class contributed to shifts in the economic framework of Bengal. Before the Partition, people from East Bengal were economically stable but after the migration to West Bengal, they were forced to live in precarious conditions, either on Sealdah's platforms or in refugee camps and colonies, taking on any job, no matter how low-paying, for survival (Halder, 2016).

Famous film director Subhash Ghai, who was an acting student (1963–65) at the Film Institute of India and an eminent filmmaker, mentioned Ritwik Ghatak as a master of the craft of cinema. Renowned filmmaker and producer Subhash Ghai was in his second year when Ghatak joined the institute as a vice principal. He mentioned that during his student life, in the FTII canteen, there was always a sharp divide between the 'Direction Students' and others. There were always two kinds of kids and two people at two different tables. One was full of cinema talks by Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Mani Kaul, Kumar Shahani, John Abraham, Janu Barua, Nirad Mahapatra, etc., while the other table was full of north Indian brash boys like Sudarshan Nag, Monto, Jagjit Khurana, KK Mahajan, Subhash Ghai, Narendra Singh, and Kuldeep Sood, who would be drumming on the table and singing Hindi film songs. They gave the other tables' students the name 'intellectuals.' Regardless, it was a great chance for him to explore the influences of the institute. With all of his excitement and courage, he rediscovered the different sights of the language of cinema. Ritwik Ghatak was one of the inspirations who encouraged him to explore the real vocabulary of the world and Indian cinema (Ghai, 2021).

Kumar Shahani, an eminent new wave filmmaker and disciple of Ritwik Ghatak, mentioned in his memoirs that during his lectures, Ghatak always talked about the social influence of cinema. He considered cinema to be an important medium of mass communication. He wanted cinema to serve as a commentary on contemporary history and as a document on human suffering, rather than a narrow window into people's lives or a mere tool for taking photographs. As a professor of direction and screenplay writing, during his lectures, he often cited the film *'The Bicycle Thief'*. Ritwik, too, considered *'The Bicycle Thief'* to be the best example of neo-realist cinema, which created a new idiom in world cinema, breaking away from the stereotypes of Italian cinema. What attracted him the most was De Sica's 'adopt and approach' strategy and the portrayal of the helplessness of the unemployed lower middle class. Ritwik clearly gave his opinion about the film; whenever he thinks of this film by Vittorio De Sica, he is reminded of what in English is called 'adopt and approach.' This strategy pervades the entire film. One gets to realize, upon viewing the film, to what extent cinema can do justice to reality. Here, a short story finds its fullest embodiment in the film. It starts with an ordinary theme that gradually unfolds in scope and, in the end, illuminates the spectators' minds with a sudden flash. This resonance endures in their minds for a long time. This film takes shape by immersing itself in the harsh reality of the urban lower middle class, struggling with various challenges. The life of the metropolis moves relentlessly, indifferent to the fate of any single individual: a man getting a job thanks to owning a bicycle. It is stolen, and he is looking for it with his son. He steals a bicycle after a fruitless search for his own, with his helplessness being the inevitable outcome of his fruitless individual efforts (Shahani, 2023).

Ritwik Ghatak's student, pioneering New Wave filmmaker Mani Kaul, mentioned in an interview that when he was a second-year student, Ghatak joined the film institute as the HoD of Film Direction and as Vice Principal as well. During the film theory and national cinema movement classes,

Ghatak used to emphasize the significance of montage theory and the enormous impact of Soviet cinema on film aesthetics. In class, he used to refer to extracts from the works of Eisenstein and Pudovkin, who were master technicians of world cinema. He mentioned the Odessa Steps scene to discuss the metric and rhythmic montages theory, which is considered to be the best example of art (Kaul, 2009). In Ritwik Ghatak's class, an example is also given from Pudovkin's film *'Mother'*. He added to his pedagogy that the application of dialectical materialism is through the theory of montage by two stalwarts, Eisenstein and Pudovkin, as an 'approach to reality' in cinema. He said that without Eisenstein, filmmakers wouldn't have learned the basics. He is the father figure, and all filmmakers learned from him how to edit. Pudovkin added that a film is not made, it is built. Like building a house brick by brick, a film is built shot by shot (Halder, 2016).

Ghatak, upon joining the FTII, completed four of his films: *Ajantrik* (1958), *Meghe Dhaka Tara* (1960), *Komolgandhar* (1961), and *Subarnarekha* (1964). He was one of the foremost educators in the Film Institute who taught the students what realism is. He advised them that to achieve realism, the person must go beyond it (Bir, 2021, p. 28-30). This was one of the students' learning experiences. Ritwik taught his disciples how to use melodrama to depict middle-class life in the complex vortex of socio-economic and political reality in post-Independence divided Bengal, which left its imprint on the filmmakers of the period from the 1940s to the 1960s, such as Guru Dutt, Raj Kapoor, and Hrishikesh Mukherjee. In the classroom, Ghatak always gave references from films like *La Dolce Vita* (1960), *Meghe Dhaka Tara* (1960), or *Ugetsu Managotari* (1953) to discuss how disparate elements, such as Marxism and melodrama, deconstruct film narrative and language in the space between 'Popular Cinema' and 'Art Film' in India. Ritwik believed that melodrama was his birthright (Halder, 2016, p.78). He dared to use melodrama through the device of coincidences, 'the lyric', and other such elements. In this regard, Ritwik spelt out his views in an interview with

Chitrabikshan (1974), that he believed that film form, or any other form, is primarily make-believe. What he wanted to do was educate spectators and if it took many coincidences to do this, he would do so. During his tenure at FTII, he used to tell students not to be afraid to use melodrama. Ritwik advised adopting 'sentimental melodrama' as a form, influenced by Brechtian epic theatre (Chitrabikshan, 1974, pp. 33-34).

The Film Institute of India's Prospectus for 1966–67 outlines that the Institute periodically conducts extension lectures on recent developments in various aspects of film production, as well as lectures on film appreciation. These lectures were intended for film professionals and anyone else interested in the medium. According to evidence provided to the Committee, the Institute had already organized extension lectures in Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras, featuring distinguished international experts: (i) Mr. V.G. Pell, a prominent expert in applied cinematography, delivered a lecture in Bombay; (ii) Prof. Jezy Toeplitz, Director of the Polish Film Institute and a renowned authority on 'Film Appreciation,' gave lectures in Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi, and Madras; (iii) Prof. Ilya Vaisfeld, an authority on 'Einstein and Film Aesthetics,' presented talks in Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras; and (iv) Mr. N.G. Papava, a Russian scriptwriter, conducted lectures on scriptwriting in Bombay and Madras. It was noted that the response to these lectures from film workers and other attendees interested in the medium was very positive.

P.K NAIR: A CELLOID MAN: A TREASURING TROVE OF WORLD CINEMA

A notable alumnus and renowned cinematographer, Naresh Bedi (1921), mentioned that in the classes of Satish Bahadur, Ritwik Ghatak, and Jagat Murari, they learned through screening how film appreciation is connected to understanding the global cinematic language, which enhanced the interpretation and development of personal connections with cinematic narratives as a mode of cultural and artistic expression. Professors at the Film Institute mandated

academic screenings to be held every evening for students and cinephiles to introduce them to international cinema and help them understand cultural values and identities. Nair, who is named "the celluloid man," made the experience inevitable by opening a treasure trove of world cinema for students at the film institute (Bedi, 1921, pp.37-38). Nair initially joined as the registrar of the FTII before becoming the director of the National Film Archive in Pune, Maharashtra. In his memoirs, Bedi (2021) recognized the contribution and dedication of Nair to building the film archive. In his article, "Against Expectations" (2021), Bedi mentioned that he and his colleagues often found Nair carrying a little light and a notebook with a pen, meticulously making notes and checking the print. Eventually, Nair connected with several embassies and film societies to obtain film prints for student screenings. If Nair had not done so, students would not have had the opportunities given to engage with world cinema (Bedi, 2021, pp. 40-41).

Ritwik Ghatak, maestro of Indian cinema, was a director, author, and playwright. His Partition Trilogy, including *Meghe Dhaka Tara* (1960), *Komolgandhar* (1961), and *Subarna Rekha* (1964), depicted how the partition of Bengal and the socio-economic and psychological crises faced by Bengali refugees shaped the melodramatic realism of Bengali cinema. He received the National Film Awards in 1974 for best story for his film *Juki Takko and Gappo* (Arguments and Stories). Ghatak joined the Film Institute as Head of the department of Direction and Screenwriting, as well as vice principal. Surama Ghatak, wife of Ritwik Ghatak, mentioned (1997) in her book 'Ritwik' (Ghatak, 1997) that, during Ritwik Ghatak's tenure at the Film Institute, he witnessed the entire process of how Nair single-handedly built the archive. He was not only an archivist; he had a keen interest in restoring and preserving films. As a celluloid man, Nair went to great lengths to find and acquire pieces of celluloid, which were often in sad condition, so then India's great film legacy could be preserved. Nair was also an astute mapper of cinematic trends. He was

very meticulous about the quality of film preservation, which must be a nation's aspiration and a source of enlightenment for serious students of cinema and society (Ghatak, 1997, pp 72-73).

Nair commenced his professional trajectory as an assistant curator at the National Film Archive of India in 1965. Subsequently, he was in charge of the film laboratory at the Film Institute shortly after its establishment. His endeavors to construct a comprehensive film archive were characterized by extensive travel across the nation, where he sought to acquire film reels in any available format. Notably, he processed three reels of Dadasaheb Phalke's seminal film *Kalia Mardan* (1919) for the filmmaker's son in Nashik in 1969. Although the reels were severely degraded and out of chronological order, Nair, utilizing a notebook maintained by Phalke, successfully arranged them into a coherent sequence (Chatterji, 2016).

Further enhancing his archival pursuits, Nair travelled to Bombay to engage with Ardeshir Irani, the progenitor of India's first sound film, *Alam Ara* (1931). His request for additional reels led to their retrieval from beneath a cot in Irani's residence. Additionally, his interaction with Henri Langlois, whom he regards as a pivotal mentor in the discipline of archiving, solidified his commitment to the preservation and curation of film heritage, prompting the assertion that Nair could be aptly described as the 'Langlois of Indian cinema.' Nair played a crucial role in the preliminary establishment of the Film Archive, which initially functioned as a subsidiary of the Film Institute (Chatterji, 2016). Through correspondence with international curators and directors of established film archives, he was advised to advocate for the creation of an independent and dedicated archive for films. In 1982, he ascended to the inaugural director of the Archive, a role he held until his retirement a decade later. During his tenure, he laid the foundation for the Archive, developed an extensive film library, and encouraged film students from the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) to engage with the archived

films at any time. His dedication to safeguarding the Archive was profound, often surpassing his commitment to his own family, with whom he had limited interactions with throughout his career. By the time he retired, Nair had amassed a collection exceeding 12,000 films, including 8,000 Indian titles and a diverse array of international works (Chatterji, 2016).

Nair did not differentiate between a classic and low-quality film, between highbrow cinema and popular entertainment, or between art-house and formulaic productions. For him, every film held significance, and it was essential for the nation to recognize and preserve its cinematic heritage (Chatterji, 2016). Moreover, it wasn't just the film itself that mattered—posters, song booklets, stills, and all associated materials were equally important. From the producers and directors to the projectionists, Nair believed that every component of the film industry deserved attention, as explored in a convincing manner. He understood the importance of the entire cinematic ecosystem and sought to ensure that others recognized it as well. Nair Sir's journey into the world of films began in the early 1940s when he watched his first film, a mythological work by Subrahmanyam, projected onto a bed of white sand in a tent theatre, a common setup at the time. Among the films that left a lasting impression on him were *Vigilante's Return*, Cecil De Mille's *Unconquered*, *Blue Earrings*, and *The Lost Weekend*. Renowned Polish filmmaker Krzysztof Zanussi regards Nair as a symbol of cinema's memory, while the late Sri Lankan filmmaker Lester James Peries describes Nair not only as an archivist but also as a historian. He is considered to be the custodian of Indian cinema for having preserved its legacy as an art form. He personally collected a lot of films from all over the city, from junk shops, and from various other sources, and he put together his Archive, brick by brick.

Pioneers of the Indian New Wave and alumni of FTII, filmmakers such as Sayeed Akhtar Mirza, Hariharan Krishnan, Mani Kaul, and others have acknowledged PK Nair's contributions to film appreciation and to the formation of a film library. In

an interview (2023), Karnataka-based Indian New Wave filmmaker Girish Kasaravalli acknowledged Nair's contribution to building the film library and his passion for film curation. As a student and beginner in film appreciation, he and his batchmates followed the same pattern Nair used, taking a small torch and writing notes in a diary during screening. Kasaravalli mentioned (2023) the discipline of maintaining records or archival documents, the lessons he learned from Nair, and the dedication to collecting national and international classic film prints from numerous sources. This experience further aided him when he became involved in the film society movement and served as secretary of the Suchitra Film Society in Bangalore, India. Kasaravalli mentioned that during his student life at the film institute, they learned from Nair about the importance of the film society movement and film curation, which encouraged them to reach the masses through it. Many of his classmates and seniors, including Adoor Gopalakrishnan, John Abraham, Jahanu Barua, Nirod, Manmohan Mahapatra, Mani Kaul, Kumar Shahani, and others, remained committed to bringing their films to a proletarian audience, driven by a strong ideological determination. All of them were inspired by Nair's obsessive passion for cinema, which served as a significant driving force behind their involvement in the film society movement in India during the 1970s and 1980s, a period considered to be one of the modern ideological trends of the Indian avant-garde (Kasaravalli, 2023).

FROM SCRIPT TO THE SCREEN: A TRAINING OF DOSSIER WRITING

According to the Second Annual Report (1965) of the Film and Television Institute of India, it states that in 1964–65 under the progressive vision of Principal Shri Jagat Murari and Vice Principal Ritwik Ghatak, research segments were proposed for the diverse fields of study offered at the institute. The suggestion to begin developing experimental films was a calculated effort to position the institute in step with the changing film industry landscape. Recognizing that

filmmaking is an art form undergoing swift progression due to ongoing advancements in technology and methodologies, the proposal highlighted the necessity of programs that are both research-based and practice-focused to maintain the institute's significance and preeminence in modern cinematic practices. At the heart of this initiative lay the creation of pre-production documentation, with particular emphasis on the production dossier, which was conceived as an essential resource in the disciplines of direction and screenplay writing (FTII, 1965, p.11). Jahanu Barua, a distinguished alumnus and eminent Assamese filmmaker, discussed the wider ramifications of this practice in a recent interview. Barua articulated that the aim of their investigation was to explore the various methods for comprehending filmmaking as a mechanism of world-construction (Barua, 1973). Instead of interpreting films as mirrors of the external environment, they emphasized the importance of investigating the social and cultural practices embedded in film production, which significantly influences the students' lived experiences and shared realities.

As stated by Jahanu Barua (1973), the process of writing the production dossier, introduced by Ritwik Ghatak and Jagat Murari, revealed the deep involvement of filmmakers and artists in their profession, extending far beyond traditional event narration (Barua, 1973). In a 2023 statement, Barua further explained that the practice of writing a production dossier fostered a deeper understanding of filmmaking as a multidimensional activity. This practice not only encouraged filmmakers to look beyond the cinematic experience but also strengthened community engagement and cultural preservation. Barua noted that the FTII's training in writing production dossiers for final year diploma productions enriched discussions of filmmaking from pre-production to post-production. It also significantly contributed to the development of complex social relationships, the building of community resilience, and the enhancement of interdependence in the human experience (Barua, 2023).

PROFESSOR ROSHAN TANEJA: PIONEER OF METHOD ACTING IN INDIA

The Film and Television Institute of India not only introduced filmmaking training simultaneously, but it also became one of the pioneering institutes of acting. It is very significant that several prominent actors of the Indian New Wave, including Naseeruddin Shah, Om Puri, Shabana Azmi, Kanwaljeet, Satish Shah, Naveen Nischal, Rahena Sultana, Rita Bhaduri, Tom Alter, and Vijay Arora, all graduated from FTII. According to the estimates committee report (1969-70), in 1964 at the Parliament committee meeting, the Information and Broadcasting Ministry suggested that the film institute should have been given the priority to produce not only a group of trained actors but also a group of creative minds with strong moral values and human ethics. Roshan Taneja was one of the key figures who provided the inspiration for this. In an interview (2023), actor Shabana Azmi stated that she strongly believed she would not be the person or actor she was if she had not come to the film institute. Professor Roshan Taneja, her greatest inspiration, played a significant role in her development. Professor Roshan Taneja was a student of Lee Strasberg's Acting Studio in the USA; he taught students Stanislavski's method of acting. As an instructor, Roshan Taneja believed that it is the business of an actor to be able to prefix the words that are to be spoken and that it doesn't matter what the character is. They may be a queen, a slum dweller, or a sex worker, but it's important to make the character believable. When Shabana Azmi signed up for Shyam Benegal's film *Ankur* (1974), it was the first time she had stepped into a village. In 1973, she played a character that was entirely different from the English-educated, Westernized Bombay girl she had portrayed before. What rescued her at that time was the pedagogical training she received from the guru, Gurukul (Azmi, 2023).

According to an interview with actor Kanwaljeet (2022), Professor Roshan Taneja significantly contributed to integrating both Stanislavskian and Brechtian methodologies

within the field of performance studies. Notably, he strongly emphasized the Stanislavski approach, underlining the essential tenets to help actors form deep emotional ties with their roles and the underlying texts.

Kanwaljeet, an alumnus of the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), remarked that he did not possess any formal training in acting prior to his admission to the institute. Nevertheless, his interactions with Professor Taneja, who was reverently addressed as "Sir," provided him with an unorthodox yet significant introduction to six fundamental techniques integral to Stanislavski's approach. Kanwaljeet reminisces about these techniques with affection and persistently integrates them into his professional acting endeavors. At the core of Stanislavski's system are the concepts of "given circumstances" and "the magic if." These principles encourage actors to fully immerse themselves in the play's world by imagining the circumstances described in the script, thereby fostering a strong connection to the material and breathing life into their performances. The method also emphasizes motivation, urging actors to understand their characters' objectives. During rehearsals, performers are urged to investigate their characters' aspirations and cultivate an emotional trajectory, often referred to as a "super-objective," that guides their interpretation (Kanwaljeet, 2022).

As part of his acting pedagogy, Professor Roshan Taneja always mentioned in class that the biggest challenge of acting was speaking rehearsed lines as though for the first time. In the class, he always emphasized 'learn your lines,' so then by the time the performance began, the lines don't get in the way of emotion. He used to mention that spontaneity in acting always depends on how the actor deliberates his dialogue, hits the marks, takes the lights, and is mindful of the camera. Sir said that an actor must be able to make the audience give themselves up to the willing suspension of disbelief. Professor Taneja was following Stanislavski's method of acting, and had a deep admiration for Brechtian '*Epic Approach*

and *Annihilation Effects*' (Azmi, 2021, p.77). In his memoirs, renowned actor Naseeruddin Shah recalled that on the first day of class, Professor Taneja would enter and begin his daily rituals. He switched from dark glasses to clear ones, lightly drummed his forefingers on the edge of the table, cleared his throat, and went "Mmmm..." as if testing his voice. Once satisfied with its functionality, he would proceed to speak. On that specific day, the teacher started with a hesitant request: "Er, I need someone to..." Before Taneja finished the sentence, Shah stepped forward, ready to show off his skills. He prepared to respond to the solicitation in any manner whatsoever. Whether through laughter, tears, dramatic monologues, anger, dejection, funny gestures, or even acrobatic feats. To Shah's astonishment, his guru, Roshan Taneja, issued only one directive: to leave the room and return. He provided this clarification in advance to avoid any enquiries regarding his rationale. The exercise functioned as a preliminary exploration of the Brechtian notion of alienation. Shah had earlier engaged with this theory at the National School of Drama (NSD), yet Taneja Sir elucidated its pragmatic implementations in theatrical practice with particular emphasis (Shah, 2023).

FTII AND THE HUB OF TECHNICAL EXCELLENCE

Professor Jagat Murari, the head of the Film Institute, often compared his faculty to an Australian cricket team, stating that the group's strength was more important than individual achievements. His metaphor reflected the idea that, just as a strong cricket team can win even if some of the key players are absent, the institution succeeded because of the different strengths of its faculty members whose collective work improved the teaching of filmmaking. Within the faculty, Mr. Kulkarni, Professor of Sound, initiated a new pedagogical approach centered on the notion of continuity in filmic practices. One of the major teaching tasks he introduced involved asking students to produce a silent visual narrative. This task required them to make a 5-minute film with no more than 15 shots. The main challenge was maintaining continuity across the different elements, including plot direction, production

design, and art direction. This exercise was later called the *mise en scène* exercise, and it was instrumental in making students proficient at visually telling cohesive stories.

Cinematographer Subrata Mitra, fondly known as '*Dada*' by his students, conducted major workshops on lighting techniques at the institute. Known for his innovations in films like *Pather Panchali* (1955), *Jalsaghar* (1958), *Devi* (1960), *Mahanagar* (1963), and *Charulata* (1964), he was pivotal in defining Indian film's visual vocabulary. Mitra's collaboration with Satyajit Ray spanned a decade, culminating in the film *Nayak* in 1966. During the 1970s and 1980s, his workshops at the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) profoundly influenced a new generation of cinematography students. Just as Ritwik Ghatak had inspired direction students in an earlier era, Mitra revealed the intricacies of the camera to a new group of technicians. Among these were Virendra Saini, Anil Mehta, Ku Mohanan, Dilip Varma, Sunny Joseph, and Anoop Jotwani, who would later go on to become prominent cinematographers. Mitra's approach was akin to that of an Impressionist painter, focusing on capturing the face's various tonalities.

Virendra Saini, a distinguished cinematographer, recalled that Mitra taught them the significance of the background, emphasizing that it was just as crucial as the foreground. Mitra devoted the rest of his life to refining his understanding of cinematography, its narrative function, and the profound impact of light. His ability to evoke wonder from the ordinary—described by director Ramesh Sharma as 'writing with light'—was achieved under challenging conditions, with rudimentary cameras and minimal technology on a tight budget. According to Anoop Jotwani (2023), one of Mitra's students, his lectures and workshops at the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) were "a revelation." Jotwani noted that Mitra's methods were unconventional, and that his knowledge was remarkable. "Before him, the light meter was just a tool for me. It became a guide, in the real sense, for what you

wanted to do with the exposure,” Jotwani stated (Jotwani, 2023). Mitra also made significant improvements to the FTII's laboratory processing standards, a point that Jotwani highlighted, recalling sitting with him in the lab as Mitra refused to accept results that he knew were flawed due to poor lab processes.

In his workshops, Mitra introduced the Zone System, a technique developed by photographers Ansel Adams and Fred Archer to calculate the correct exposure. As Ranjan Palit explained (2021) in an interview, “Ansel Adams had made a scale of Gray divided into nine zones. Dada made it into seven zones set to the seven notes of music. Ma corresponded to the mid-grey.” Mitra's understanding of this theory surpassed that of his students, and they were studying it in depth. Palit credited Mitra with encouraging him to “go dark”—to explore deeper, darker tones rather than focusing solely on lighter areas (Ramanath, 2021). Mitra also contributed significantly to the discourse on improving processing and exhibition facilities. In a 1989 convocation ceremony at FTII, Mitra dedicated his lecture to the substandard projection conditions in Indian theatres. He often emphasized the importance of a filmmaker's passion and commitment, asserting that it was the filmmaker's responsibility to emotionally engage with the audience (ibid, 2021).

Professor Sri. Ramachandra Rao was appointed head of editing, and he was the maestro of teaching its principles, such as how space and time are linked with the rhythm and length of filmmaking. He saw that the head of production had taught production management. It was because of him that students learned about scheduling and maintaining the planned budget. Apart from the professors and teaching staff, there were a group of unsung heroes in the film institute. To name a few: Babulal, an electrician; Phadke, a Lights-Man; Ramayyan, a Projectionist. During the celluloid era, a very important responsibility of the projectionist was to freeze a particular frame according to instructions. When

they taught film appreciation, Professor Satish Bahadur and Ritwik Ghatak followed these instructions, Ramaayyan used to freeze-frame. He was shouting in the classroom theatre like Ramaayyan. Freeze the particular frame on the projector.

Phadke, the Lights-man, was able to stay in the sets after being lit by camera students. How many feet candles of light in the background and how many foot candles light the actor is getting, by simply using his eye judgment! By measuring the light with the meter, a camera student also got the same reading!!!!

Babulal, the Electrician: *Whenever we needed a light in the most difficult places, Babulal would set it up in a few seconds and help the students run more experiments.* (Gopalakrishnan, 2021, pp. 33).

CONCLUSION

This article examines the pedagogy of the pioneering film institute in India and its contribution to advancing the new cinematic movement in India from the 1970s to the 1980s. Renowned cinematographer in the Indian New Wave and alumnus of FTII, Shri Bhaskar, considered (2021) the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) to be the ultimate place that would allow all novices who dreamt of cinema to immerse themselves in the splendor of the ethos of cinematic darkness. For them, FTII was a back paradise, where unforgettable characters were assembled with their unforgettable stories, leaving them with new insights and allowing them to delve deep into the human consciousness. All masters and craftsmen of the institute inspired them to look at life afresh; thus, from one birth, they could experience multiple rebirths through their creative works. In this line of thought, FTII can be considered the place of Dwija, one who is born twice (Bhaskar, 2021, p. 98). FTII's contribution to Indian New Wave Cinema rests upon three unified elements: 1) initiating and encouraging Indian New Wave aesthetics, 2) theoretical

experimentation in film practice, and 3) embracing social criticism and realism as the ideological core of cinematic values. These aesthetics, as well as technical craftsmanship, are philosophically grounded in the pedagogical initiatives of stalwart filmmakers, film curators, and technical experts, all of whom have played a crucial role in shaping the educational framework and fostered a new generation of filmmakers in India.

The film appreciation curriculum was pioneered by Professor Satish Bahadur as well as Ghatak's approaches to international theoretical frameworks, systematically exposing students to global cinematic traditions, from De Sica's neorealism to Kurosawa's humanism and from Eisenstein's montage theory to Truffaut's auteur theory, training them to analyze films through rigorous technical and theoretical approaches. Professors like Satish Bahadur and Jagat Murari equipped students with what the Indian New Wave pioneering filmmaker Adoor Gopalakrishnan called a "nuanced artistic framework" for engaging with cinema (Gopalakrishnan, 2021). This was not mere connoisseurship; it was the construction of a critical vocabulary that enabled young Indian New Wave filmmakers to situate their work within the global cinematic landscape while developing distinctly Indian responses to universal aesthetic problems. The evening academic screenings curated by Nair at the National Film Archive or FTII's CRT Auditorium transformed film appreciation from classroom theory into lived practice, allowing students to encounter international and national classics. These repeated screenings helped students develop their critical approach to film appreciation, frame by frame, and internalize the medium's possibilities. In synthesizing these domains, FTII established an integrated pedagogical model for film education. One that rejected the false dichotomies between theory and practice, between creative expression and social responsibility, between technical instruction and critical analysis. Students were not required to choose between becoming artists, technicians, or social critics as they were expected to embody all three

roles concurrently. This approach clarifies why FTII graduates of the 1960s and 1970s, whether eminent like Mani Kaul and Adoor Gopalakrishnan, actors like Shabana Azmi and Naseeruddin Shah, or cinematographers like Virendra Saini and Anoop Jotwani, helped reshape Indian cinema on multiple fronts through social inquiry.

The pedagogy of the Film Institute of India was consistently determined to inspire young students to be aware of their artistic responsibilities when bringing a camera onto the street and capturing contemporary socio-economic and political realities and the crisis of human life in post-colonial India. Ghatak's teaching and his approach to cinema, that cinema should serve as "commentary on contemporary history and a document of human suffering" rather than a "narrow window into the lives of people," inspired students to involve themselves within an ethical filmmaking framework. Ghatak's disciples, including Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Mani Kaul, Kumar Sahani, John Abraham, Arun Kaul and others, who were the pioneering filmmakers of the film institute, have skillfully introduced a new cinematic style that intricately examines the nuances of desire and mortality.

In the mid-twentieth century, when India began to present itself as a language-based administrative unit in the schema of cultural practices like cinema, it signaled a new shape and form in the region's imagination within the subcontinent. When the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting planned to set up a film institute, the Government of India aimed to have Indian cinema reach global markets and produce future industry leaders by training filmmakers from across the country (Bhowmik, 2018). With the primary goal of training in film production, as a pioneering film institute, FTII created an institutional ecosystem where a generation of filmmakers from different provinces, keen to make films in their own regional languages, could remain distinctly separate from mainstream Hindi cinema. They have referred to regional cinema as a further manifestation of cultural imperatives in mid-sixties India.

They not only brought new ideas and theoretical experiments to the Indian regional film industry but also introduced a new dimension, the magic of craft which helped the world engage with Indian regional films, using innovative storytelling techniques and unique visual styles that reflected diverse cultural narratives. There are many notable alumni of the Film Institute who were pioneers of Indian New Wave cinema, including Mani Kaul from Kashmir, Kumar Shahani from Pune, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, John Abraham from Kerala, Girish Kasaravalli from Karnataka, Nirod Mahapatra, Manmohan Mahapatra from Odisha, Balu Mahendra from Tamil Nadu, Ketan Mehta from Gujarat, Jahnu Barua from Assam, and others. They attempted to blend international filmmaking approaches with regional identity, using society as the context and the camera as a tool. They captured the spirit of crisis in post-independence India, reflecting the socio-political challenges and cultural transformations the country faced. Together, preoccupied with their individual, indigenous modes of filmmaking, they slowly but steadily established a separate kind of viewership—middle-class and proportional—by creating films that resonated with the values and experiences of this demographic, thus fostering a unique cultural dialogue. The discipline of the institute, for those who entered the new wave cinema movement, whose films paved the way for mass appeal, was granted by the Film Institute of India. For them, FTII was not only an institution of higher learning or a space for creation. It was all of this and more. The FTII was an institute where heterogeneous collocations of space and time were always present. Sometimes, reality wavers. They learned, and they made it as they walked under the wisdom tree, caressed a stone, and remembered. The institute encouraged them using the stupendous expanse between earth and sky, nature, and meaning.

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