

"O, the Aloe Flowereth!"

A SURVEY

Of The Indian Film Industry During The Past Twelve Months

LOOKING back upon the record of the Indian Film Industry during the past twelve months, from August last to this, one fact stands out. It is that imperceptibly, almost unknowingly, the industry has achieved an evolution so remarkable and radical that it is indeed a revolution.

From the "cul de sac" of depression and gloom in which it rested at this time last year—producers, crippled by falling returns, financial stringency and a record crop of box-office failures, were moaning that the industry might have to close down—it has emerged into a new field of promise bright with the prospect of bigger and richer growth than ever before.

Out of the darkness of the worst crisis in its record of forty years the industry has, within the brief space of a single year, sprung from immaturity, fumbling experiment and haphazard achievement into the adult assurance which knows what it wants to do and how to set about doing it.

The Indian motion picture industry has come of age. The aloe hasn't flowered yet. But it is beginning to bud. Its flowering time is not far off.

From "Rahi", released on August 14 last year, to "Waris" and "Subah ka Tara," the last releases to be included in our survey and "Filmfare's" second Annual Readers' Poll for the Clare Awards, the signs of recovery and regeneration have grown steadily into the marks of progress which herald the opening of a new era for our film industry and its output at home and abroad.

In the Special Independence Day number of August 21 last year, "Filmfare" advised producers to examine carefully the root causes of the malaise which was threatening to kill the industry, and suggested that instead of making vain appeals to the Government they should take the job of rehabilitation into their own hands.

It stressed the need for planning and design in the making of motion pictures, for scientific budgeting, fixed schedules and disciplined team work, for method, system and punctuality, for lack of which the industry had been reduced to its parlous plight. Let our pictures, it appealed, forget their borrowed and fictitious themes and turn to the portrayal of their own people, their problems and their way of life. The trend to realism

thus urged by "Filmfare", and set off by last year's Clare-winning picture "Do Bigha Zamin", which also won a Clare for its director, Mr. Bimal Roy, was taken up with an infectious zest which has been vastly and most powerfully encouraged by success.

A series of Marathi hits, "Taarka", "In Meen Sade Teen", "Soubhagya", "Oon Paus" and "Postatil Mulgi", based on true-to-life stories, presenting with unvarnished truth the drama and romance, the poetry and humour of the ordinary everyday existence of the millions who constitute the norms of humanity and are its salt and substance, gave healthy stimulus to that trend. The result has been a revival of realism in the creative arts of the film industry which bids fair to develop into a renaissance rich with promise at home as well as abroad. It is only a promise yet, but it is there for the keeping.

Of the hundred odd pictures which had a national release during the period from August 15 last to this, at least one half were based on realistic themes dealing with problems of social import or matters of human interest in the direct context of our society

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as it was, is or purports to be. Pictures like Raj Kapoor's "Boot Polish", Alhad Chitra's "Subagan", Kuldip Pictures' "Aulad", Abbas's "Rahi" and "Munna", Bimal Roy's "Parineeta", Ranjit's "Papi" and "Footpath", Rajkamal's "Surang" and "Subah ka Tara", Rupkamal Chitra's "Bhagawan", New Theatres' "Naya Safar", Prakash's "Chaitanya Mahaprabhu", Harishchandra Pictures' "Dharampatni", Kamal Amrohi's "Daaera", Nav Ketan's "Taxi Driver", Sudhir Banerjee's "Shoba", Filmistan's "Nastik", and "Shaheed-e-Azam Bhagat Singh" and "Baadbaan" are more or less outstanding examples of this new trend in our films.

Not all of them succeeded at the box office. But they were all commendable nonetheless as marking, each in its own way and category, the return of our films from their fatuous foreign inspirations to their native themes and idioms, as rich at least, if not far richer, in substance, sentiment and ornament. There is proof as well as promise in the outstanding success of

most of those pictures and specially of "Boot Polish", the first and only picture this year to achieve a "Silver Jubilee" run, that the road to realism is paved with silver at least if not with gold.

Rounding off this blessed re-birth in the substance of our pictures is the restoration of our ancient arts of Music, Dance and Song in the esteem and affection of our swelling population of our filmgoers, who were in grave peril of forgetting them for the meretricious glitter of their imported counterparts. Numerous circumstances combine to render the Indian filmgoer more sensitive than his fellow in any other part of the world to the appeal of Music, Song and Dance in his pictures. That has nothing whatever to do with his ignorance and illiteracy. Rather is it part and sign of his culture, an essential attribute of an ethos which from time immemorial has found its noblest expression in the primary human arts and derived from them its loftiest inspiration as well as its greatest delight.

The immense popularity of pictures like "Chaitanya Mahaprabhu", "Parineeta", "Papi", "Chacha Chowdhary", "Shabab" and "Nastik", to mention only a few of the films with outstanding music scores, indicates that the Indian filmgoer has his ears and his heart in the right place, and is willing to devote both to the right music if and when he gets it.

The revival of the folk and classic modes in our film dances is a feature of the past year's progress which has been widely noted and applauded as a happy recovery from the horrid hybridisms and nondescript contortions which disgraced this art in our films all these years. As in our Music and Song there is a quality in our Dance, a beauty of grace, meaning and expression which the world cannot rival. We were in some danger of losing it, but the screen will save it now.

In all the mechanical details and values of production the industry has shown marked and quite phenomenal progress during the year. Planning and design, practically unheard of in our studios and production units heretofore, are now routines with all but the most haphazard outfits—of which, it must be confessed, we still have many, but their disappearance is at hand. Pictures are planned, schedules fixed and shooting

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completed in as many days as it formerly took months. Most of the pictures on exhibition today have taken from three to six months from script to screen. There are some still on the sets which have been there for years. They belong to a past which will never recur.

This in itself is the outstanding mark of the past year's epochal progress in our film industry, the evolution which is indeed a revolution, for it is the key whose turning has changed the face and the future of the industry from gloom to brightness, and opened the prospect which now burgeons before it of a world market. It is only a beginning, true, but the exigencies of the industry itself and the very nature of movie-making, with its intense and imperative demands for speed and perfection at every stage and all the time, insure that the effort will have to be maintained and developed from the sheer necessities of competition and survival.

Thus perforce the scientific approach so long and earnestly, and vainly, urged upon our movie-makers is being forced upon them to their own good, in fact to their salvation and that of the industry. With the introduction of system, method and science in the production of our pictures will disappear all the evils and hindrances which have clogged its growth so far. With them will go half its problems, including the major one of hidden finance and "black" money. The elimination of this master evil may, and very probably will very soon, open the way to the financial credit which this great industry despite its glowing prospect has lacked till now. That, when it comes as come it must, will be another achievement to be added to the record of the past year's progress.

In other fields, too, the period was epochally notable. The Central Government awoke from its long lethargic indifference to promulgate its plans and proposals for the rehabilitation of the industry along the lines of the Film Inquiry Committee's report submitted four years ago. It will be some time before those plans and proposals are put into effect. They show at least that the Government is alive to the importance of the nation's eighth largest industry even if so far it is only the awareness of the farmer to his prize milch cow.

On the technical side, the signs of progress are gratifying. Our laboratories are still backward, and there is much depressing evidence of amateurish fumbling in the various skills required in the making of motion pictures, all the way from scripting to editing and printing. But the American visit and the growing intercourse with the industries of Europe, England and Hollywood, set off with the arrival in this country of the Technicolor unit for "Jhansi ki Rani," has created an awareness of our lacks and of the need to make them up which is working like a leaven in every department. Each picture which takes the screen today is a milestone in technical progress. The construction of studios like Raj Kapoor's and Mehboob's must galvanise that progress by the sheer stimulus of competition, and the end of the twelve-month period which begins today will surely see the Indian film farther along in this respect as well. Our major necessity at the moment is a scientific outlook in our laboratories where the best efforts of producers, directors, cameramen, recordists and our brilliant galaxy of stars are

all too liable to be defeated. Training abroad, or experts from abroad, and inculcation of the fact that processing of film is a matter of chemical operation, and therefore of scientific exactitude, are absolutely essential.

For the rest, the easing, however slight, of the economic stresses, which have hampered life and progress everywhere in India and the world since the war, is beginning to let in gleams of brightness from which the industry, via the box office as well as directly, must benefit.

We cannot close this survey without reference to our own small but important contribution to the year's rich record. The institution of the "Filmfare" Awards, presented for the first time last March to the successful nominees of a Readers' Poll of

(Below is a list of all the important releases during the period from August 15 last year to this, together with the relevant data regarding each for ready reference by readers wishing to join the Poll for the Clare Awards).

AUGUST 20, 1954

LIST OF FILMS RELEASED DURING THE TWELVE MONTHS

From August 15, 1953 to August 15, 1954

"HUMSAFAR": Nav Ketan. Produced by M. N. Vatal. Directed by A. N. Banerjee. Stars: Dev Anand, Kalpana Kartik, Smriti Biswas, Mohan Sehgal, M. A. Latif. Story: Not credited. Music: Ali Akbar.

"RAHI": Naya Sansar. Produced and directed by K. A. Abbas. Stars: Nalini Jaywant, Dev Anand, Balraj Sahni, Shalini Devi, S. Michael, Rasheed. Story: Mulk Raj Anand. Music: Anil Biswas.

"JEEVAN JYOTTI": Musical Pictures. Ltd. Directed by Mahesh Kaul. Stars: Chand Usmani, Shammi Kapoor, Shashikala, Nazir Husain, Dulari, Mswara Misra, Bannerji. Story: Not credited. Music: S. D. Burman.

"CHAR CHAND": Fine Art Films. Produced by F. M. Khan. Directed by A. Karim. Stars: Shyama, Sureah, Majnu, Bhagwan, Amir Bano. Story: A. Karim. Music: Nashad.

"PARINEETA": Ashok Kumar Productions. Direction: Bimal Roy. Stars: Ashok Kumar, Meena Kumari, Ashit Baran, Manju, Manorama. Story: Saratchandra Chatterji. Music: Arun Kumar Mukerji.

"GUNAH": Ambitious Pictures. Directed by Kidar Sharma. Stars: Geeta Ball, Jagdev, Vijayalaxmi, Gyani, Master Ravi. Story: Nagendra Bahuguna. Music: Snehal.

"PAPI": Ranjit Movietone Co. Directed by Chandulal Shah. Stars: Nargis, Raj Kapoor, Dulari, P. Kailash, Ramesh Thakur. Story: Chandulal J. Shah. Music: S. Mahindra.

"DHUAAN": Roopnagar Limited. Directed by Roshanlal Malhotra. Stars: Usha Kiron, Asha Mathur, M. Rajan, Om Prakash. Jeevan. Story: Madan Chopra. Music: Vasant Desai and Dhaniram.

"ARMAN": Film Technicians of India. Produced and directed by Full Mistry. Stars: Madhubala, Dev Anand, Jagirdar, K. N. Singh, Gulab. Story: Vinoy Chatterji. Music: S. D. Burman.

national proportions, was widely hailed here and abroad as providing a long-needed incentive to excellence in the fields of Acting, Direction, Production and Music. It set off a wave of similar encouragement elsewhere and provided a stimulus to the Central Government to put into operation its own long-held plan for the recognition of merit in motion pictures. The more the merrier, and undoubtedly the better for the industry.

On that principle "Filmfare" has announced elsewhere in this issue the addition of five more awards to the five already instituted by it, in the hope and assurance that they will accelerate as well as strengthen the impetus to improvement which in due course will place the Indian film on top of the world.

"BABLA": M. P. Productions. Directed by Agradoot. Stars: Master Niren, Sovi Sen, Paresb Bannerjee, Molina, Jawahar, Ashitbaran, Manju Dey, Pahari Sanyal. Story: S. M. Mukherjee. Music: S. D. Burman.

"SURANG": Rajkamal Kala Mandir. Produced and directed by V. Shantaram. Stars: Shashikala, Sheila Ramani, Vinod Kumar, Ulhas, Chandrashekar. Story: Vinod Kumar. Music: Shivram Krishna.

"SHIKAST": Asha Deep. Produced and directed by Ramesh Saigal. Stars: Dilip Kumar, Nalini Jaywant, Durga Khote, K. N. Singh, Om Prakash, Leela Misra. Story: Vajahat Mirza. Music: Shanker and Jaikishan.

"GAUHAR": All India Pictures. Produced by P. N. Arora. Directed by F. H. Hasan. Stars: Bina Rai, Rehman, Shamlal, Vijayalaxmi, Agha. Story: Not Credited. Music: Ghulam Mohammed.

"FOOTPATH": Shri Ranjit Movietone. Directed by Zia Sarhady. Stars: Meena Kumari, Dilip Kumar, Anwar Hussain, Sumati Gupte, Achhala Sachdev. Story: Zia Sarhady. Music: Khayam.

"BHAGYAWAN": Rup Kamal Chitra. Produced by Mahipatray and Anupchand Shah. Directed by Datta Dharmadhikari. Stars: Nirupa Roy, Alhad, Shakuntala, Raja Nene, Yashodhara Kathju. Story: Dada Mirasee. Music: Avinash Vyas.

"AAS": Goel Cine Corporation. Produced and directed by Devendra Goel. Stars: Kamini Kaushal, Shekhar, Om Prakash, Gulab, Chandabal. Story: S. K. Prem. Music: Shanker and Jaikishan.

"LAHREN": New Sai Productions. Directed by H. S. Rawall. Stars: Shyama Kishore Kumar, Shakuntala, Om Prakash, Johnny Walker, Leela Misra. Story: Anjana Rawall. Music: C. Ramchandra.

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