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Official and Amateur: Exploring Information Film in India, 1920s–40s¹

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This paper will draw upon the archival film material of the colonial period in India to explore different currents in the use of film as a vehicle of information. While my larger project will look at documentaries, newsreels, short films (including topical and actualities) from the work produced by government, film industry, educationists, individual entrepreneurs and amateur or home film-makers, for this essay the focus will primarily be on official and amateur movies between the 1920s and 1940s.²¹ The important phenomenon of non-fiction film-making by the Indian film industry impinges on the themes of this essay in two ways. First, the industry provided the rhetorical ground to argue for the usefulness of film in its topical and instructional versions and, relatedly, the need to have compulsory screenings of such films at cinema halls.³ This came to be incorporated into government policy, if not exactly in the way desired. Second, the local industry was also compelled to develop ties with government initiatives as a result of the various conditions under which limited film stock would be allocated in wartime conditions. Thus, the story of these initiatives necessarily incorporates part of the narrative of local industrial activity as well.

While government initiatives go back to the 1910s, and I will refer to some dimensions of these earlier exercises, my main focus will be on the 1940s, when key long-term formations came into being. These related to the development of policies for production, circulation and exhibition, which were to remain influential after Independence, and also mobilised intelligentsia to assume leading positions in this venture. This was accomplished despite tensions and anxieties resulting from the face-off between the British rulers and the nationalists, which ultimately resulted in the Indian National Congress going into a critical phase of resistance, the Quit India movement in 1942. The second body of material, the colonial home/amateur movie, presents a different set of issues, even while we observe certain overlapping elements between official and amateur films. As I will suggest the overlap arises from the fact that the film-makers were often part of colonial officialdom, capturing not only home life but official events. There also appear to be instances of an overlap of home and professional worlds, for example, in the use of film to document resources and work practices for business needs.⁴ Further research will enable us to garner more precise details about the depositors of this material, the positions they occupied under the colonial regime and in the world of business and enterprise, and the spectrum of functions served by amateur forms. A major consideration will also be the nature of the equipment available for this substantial personalised distribution of film

technology, as well as the circuits of amateur film print culture and associational life which provided instruction, advice and community feedback for this hobby. For the present exercise, my purpose has been to take examples that appear to suggest important questions about the nature of film form and technique in such amateur activities.

To fully engage this archive of film material, related research in the print archive will be crucial. An exploration of the British Library's India Office collection and national and state archives in India will constitute a crucial dimension of the broader project from which this essay arises. Particularly important here are the political, public and information departments. The latter department generated official initiatives in commissioning, producing, circulating and exhibiting films. However, there are two frames to consider. The first is the wider orbit within which such official initiatives were taking place. Here, the relatively well-known but under-explored influence of transnational circuits on models of documentary, instructional and training films will need to be considered. These include the influence of important institutions and enterprises such as the Empire Marketing Board Film Unit, the GPO Film Unit and subsequent Crown Film Unit, the Shell Film Unit, the National Film Board of Canada, and Colonial Film Units in Africa, Malaya and the Caribbean. This influence was exercised through the presence of figures who were delegated to run new units or function as consultants, such as Alexander Shaw from Britain in the early 1940s, James Beveridge from Canada in the 1950s; it also developed through the circulation of journals such as *Colonial Cinema* and in the information relayed by British trade papers. A transnational company like Shell's Film Unit acquired substantial institutional and film-making presence in various territories.⁵ One of the most important agendas for all this would be the analysis of war-related training and propaganda films, such as those that emerged from the Army Film Centre in India. This appeared to have set up a wide menu of audiovisual forms that proved influential in developing new units of instruction in the period after Independence. Another transnational frame of reference emerges in technologies and political apparatuses for circulating and exhibiting film, as in the case of mobile vans, tents and outdoor exhibition in rural areas. In the absence of detail of how such practices worked in the Indian context, I will turn to comparable situations, in this case postcolonial Egypt, to speculate on the social and political circumstances that surrounded the cinematic event.

This agenda relates to institutional histories from the 1920s through to the 1950s, and indicates a line of continuity rather than discontinuity at the time of decolonisation. While some key institutions, state-run film-making and newsreel units, were disbanded, key people and policies continued when the new institutions, such as the Films Division, came into being. There were probably a number of different currents which fed into state models and documentary imaginaries, including the Soviet example while, at the level of training, the US was also a reference point for new entrants.⁶ Also, if certain national developmental and cultural agendas emerged in the war period, they did not emerge from colonial developmental agendas in an uncomplicated way. Thus, the cultural investments of a generation of film and information intelligentsia were involved in this transaction, and we can see the imprint of this investment in international bodies such as UNESCO.⁷

These issues may appear to be fairly standard: as states are reconstructed, lines of continuity tend to be somewhat inevitable. However, the historical implications of such continuities need to be considered, and here, agendas of development that emerged in the colonial period seemed to retain a potency for a long time after. The functions of film and other media forms in this long historical trajectory need to be better theorised, both within the logic of communication theory around issues such as the rhetorics of textual form and the incidence of infrastructural elaboration; and in film and media theory, in mapping the relation between the profilmic and the types, levels and densities of information or data ratios circulated to putative spectators.

To my mind, the latter set of questions poses significant challenges to historical method. For these derive not from issues of continuity and discontinuity on an institutional plane, but focus on film form and the materiality of film as a vehicle of information, of circulation and recombination. This line of enquiry emerges specifically from observations I make about the amateur film and its characteristic forms. Discontinuities in form, the arbitrary way amateur films combine episodes ranging from domestic subjects to public engagements of various types, suggest the possibility, perhaps even the imperative, of thinking of the form through disaggregation. This opens various lines of comparison and connection between characteristic units in the amateur film and the objects of professional practices. And it also opens the way to reflection on what would constitute an appropriate historical and ethnographic method of engaging with the indexical character of such material, the conditions – in terms of social authority and relations, technological parameters, climatic conditions, built and natural forms – under which spaces, people, bodies, things are imprinted on film. The question of disaggregation, rendering film into separable, unnarrativised or, shall we say, yet-to-be-narrativised units, is further addressed through the phenomenon of the stock shot, its circulation and recombination.

STATE FILM AND MEDIA INITIATIVES IN THE COLONIAL ERA

Central to official deliberations about the use of film were questions of address and reach, how the medium could be deployed to communicate with deeper swathes of the population. The question of address, the way textual form was shaped to appeal to specific audiences, is something I will explore in relation to some of the post-1940s official films. Considerations about infrastructures of circulation, related to how new communication technologies could be used to gain access to the broader small town and especially rural populations. Here we have as yet intermittent information on how substantial this was before more sustained developments took place in the period of World War II. Government information administrators, to coin a term, reviewed the potential of existing entertainment networks. These included the impresario Maurice Bandmann, who was key to the movement of live performers in theatre, circus, acrobatics and dance, as well as film products through a network of theatres that straddled the Eastern world, from Bombay to Hong Kong.⁸ However, while war propaganda films were exhibited in Bandmann's theatres and through his network, officials were sceptical about their ability to connect with the populations the government was really concerned to engage.⁹ It was argued at this point that if it was

decided to show films extensively to 'native' populations, then this would be best done 'by creating a special organization which would ... maintain "projecting outfits" and motor lorries, for which certain initial expenditure would need to be sanctioned'. A small price could be charged for exhibition.¹⁰ A census of the equipment and technical personnel available for such activity was planned, and guidelines were presented of the conditions under which government-approved films should be exhibited. The strictures outlined included, interestingly, the idea that deteriorated film material should not be exhibited as this would reflect poorly on the government. Officials were making an implicit distinction between government films and the more variable quality and conditions of commercial film circulation in touring cinemas, to which, surely, such government exercises would be compared. There was an emphasis too that films should communicate a fixed meaning. Thus silent films and magic lantern slides would be accompanied by scripts from which lecturers were not to deviate.

We have some insight into official strategies for information-dissemination and the way its focus was distributed among technologies of communication and exhibition in the Punjab province. F. L. Brayne, a Deputy Commissioner developed schemes for village reconstruction, based on identifying and training village guides. These would be key figures in a host of activities relating to health services, marketing, improvement of agricultural techniques, encouraging education, and so on. Such activities would be channelled through village fairs and competitions, and also through folk performances, magic-lantern and film shows. Film occupied a minor position in the overall strategy. There were few films available for such purposes, and these were supplied by the railways, another institution, which needs to be investigated when mapping the history of information films.¹¹ The colonial government also commissioned individual film entrepreneurs such as R. L. Shorey, also from the Punjab, to make instructional films. Shorey had returned from the US after training in film-making and set up a film studio. Later, his son Roop was to be a major producer in the Lahore film industry. The Shoreys also made films for the government in the 1940s, such as *Save for the Future* (1941) and *ABC of ARP: Bombs* (1943), on safety measures during air raids.¹²

While there is some evidence of government involvement in media communication in this earlier period, an altogether different level of initiative took place in the 1940s, both in terms of state investment in film as a medium of governmental communication, and in terms of measures to ensure the medium could reach rural populations. A multiplicity of institutional arrangements existed for the production of films, some based on developing ties with the industry, as with the Film Advisory Board (FAB, 1941–3), others being more directly controlled and managed by the state, as with Information Films of India (IFI, 1943–6). There was also an Army Film Centre, and finally an investment through collaboration with a private entrepreneur to set up an extensive network of mobile vans and projection facilities to carry rural education films into the countryside. Companies such as Twentieth Century-Fox were involved in producing newsreels for Indian audiences through British Movietone, a position subsequently taken by Indian News Parade, a government-controlled newsreel run by William Moylan.¹³

We will resist some of these ventures to consider their content; here I want to explore how the network of distribution and exhibition was set up in the 1940s. Key dimensions of this propaganda policy were reliant on the industry. Individual film-

makers and film companies became involved, either by participating in institutions such as the Film Advisory Board,¹⁴ or by making war propaganda films, for example studios such as Bombay Talkies (*A Day with the Indian Army*, 1942), Wadia Movietone (*Voice of Satan*, 1940), Prabhat (*The Awakening*, 1944) and National Studios (*Whispering Legend*, 1941; *Road to Victory*, 1943). A further two key elements came into play at this point. The first derived from the pressure the government could exercise on film studios around limited wartime film stock. The film periodical, *Film India*, claimed that the government leveraged war propaganda films by only ensuring supply to those outfits which would comply with its terms. This was related to a licensing system which continued till the end of the war.¹⁵ The second and very well-known strategy occurred at the point of exhibition, where, under Defence of India rules, the cinema exhibitors were obliged to compulsorily screen government-approved documentaries.¹⁶ Another restriction applied both to production and exhibition, with the feature-film length being restricted to 11,000 feet, and this was the corresponding duration allowed to the main feature in the film programme. The extra showtime was meant to be dedicated to the compulsory shorts produced through IFI. It was said that, in practice, cinema halls advertised main show timings so that people could avoid the government-sponsored films.¹⁷

B. D. Garga has argued that the Film Advisory Board, and presumably its successor, IFI, continued to demonstrate a concern about which films would work best with which audiences. Two considerations operated. The first was whether a film could be circulated outside the country, i.e., would it communicate with clarity the views and interests of government in the war effort and in how it was managing colonial populations. This was particularly important in terms of the image Britain presented to America as potential war allies. The second related to how far the film was likely to reach in terms of the local population, and decided whether it would be dubbed or not.¹⁸

Here, separate tracks for the deployment of film and other audiovisual techniques emerged. From the 1940s, provincial governments undertook rural education programmes using mobile vans and projection equipment. Information about efforts in the Bombay presidency indicate that this programme was undertaken in collaboration with a private entrepreneur in photographic equipment, Ambalal J. Patel.¹⁹ One hundred 16 mm Kodak projectors were purchased by the government from Patel's Central Camera Company, and films were screened in several districts.²⁰ It was reported that the films came from Patel's newly started firm, Education Films of India, and that other sources of supply included the Film Advisory Board, though any producer could in principle submit a film for consideration. How this scheme worked, what films were shown, in what settings they were screened, and through what local networks of authority audiences were congregated, have yet to be explored.²¹

I want to move sideways and forward in order to speculate on the framework within which this communication strategy emerged. James Beveridge, the Canadian expert who was film advisor to Burmah Shell in India for the development of instructional and documentary film, noted in 1955 of the Films Division's

coordinated scheme whereby all specialized films for the various Ministries of the Centre, are produced by or through Films Division for non-theatrical release to information vans, community projects, and other 16mm channels. This development is of greatest importance

as it will mark the evolution in India of specialized, carefully made films to be used functionally in a precise teaching context – a very different thing from release in commercial cinema to audiences gathered solely for entertainment.²²

But let us move sideways now, to an entirely different locale, but one perhaps overlapping in its film-pedagogical motivations, its bid to capture and educate ‘illiterate’ subjects, perhaps even in its understanding of audience identification. Here is the widely travelled Winifred Holmes, propagator of short films for development and cultural understanding, writing from Egypt:

The village to which we had come to see a film-show sponsored by the Egyptian Ministry of Public Health ... [was] ... a typical agricultural village ... [at] the Social Centre – to which the village comes for medical and social services and which cooperates with the Government in running by means of its village committee – a large crowd had gathered. Boys were running from all directions, shoving each other for best places; men, trying to appear as if the film-show were nothing to them, walked there as fast as dignity permitted. Groups of pre-adolescent girls scurried to get good places on the ground as close as possible to the centre of the screen and last of all, women, materializing, as if by magic, silently appeared, draped gracefully and discreetly in their long, black shawls, ‘milaya’, and sat together apart from the men. There must have been at least a thousand people waiting there.

The Ministry’s mobile cinema van flood-lit the scene. The screen and projector were in place and the warm air of an Egyptian Arabic song floated out towards the distant Pyramids, helping the people to forget the day’s work and putting them in a happy, expectant frame of mind.

The village headman, ‘omdah’, had some upright chairs placed for us and with the generous hospitality of Egypt, offered us some Coca-Cola which we drank with pleasure without the fuss of glasses. The village watchmen, ‘ghaffirs’, their rifles slung round their shoulders, kept order by tapping the more unruly boys none too gently on the back and shoulders with their staves of office. At last everyone was settled, the music ended, the floodlights went out and the Ministry’s spokesman talked to us about the films we were going to see. There was a hush and the show began.

Holmes captures here a picture of the institutional setting, authority structures (ministry official, village headman, village watchmen), within an ambience at once rustic and exotic (with an Arabic song floating towards the Pyramids). She further delineates an understanding of how documentary instruction provides the possibilities of audience identification:

The treatment of the subject was apparently just right for the audience, who gave the film their complete attention and made acute remarks while it was going on. The human story of village characters like themselves, acted by professionals with a touch of humour now and then was familiar to their own lives.²³

Overall, we could speculate that similar understandings and perhaps similar conditions of audience mobilisation operated in India.

For Beveridge, what was imperative was to develop greater precision in targeting audiences and estimating effects:

It might be said... that the production of specialized films in India, for functional and specific uses, has just begun. Ahead, there lies a whole range of trial-and-error experiences, of testing, audience sampling, evaluating, and comparing various production techniques to assess their effectiveness in reaching audiences of different kinds...²⁴

Positioned as part of a nation-state, rather than a colonial project to deploy film 'functionally', I will nevertheless suggest that there was a line of continuity here, with Indian film-makers, film 'intelligentsia' such as critics, film entrepreneurs such as Patel, and the key institution of the army, all participating in a project of harnessing film to pedagogic and instructional functions. Such instructional drives did not devolve on film alone. During the 1940s and 1950s we can witness a proliferation of associations and institutions promoting audiovisual education more broadly. Bombay State had been an initiator, as it had been with the use of film in rural propaganda. Its Inspector of Audio-Visual Education attributed the powerful emergence of AV techniques of teaching to the army's wartime investment in training technical personnel. The result was UNESCO making AV one of the principal planks, resulting in a large number of training programmes highlighting 'teaching aids like charts, maps, posters, diagrams, models and 35mm filmstrips'.²⁵ In practice, forms would be combined, and films often used diagram sequences. In her description of health documentaries, Winifred Holmes believed that such techniques had an immediate effect: "So this is bilharzias!" commented a fellah standing beside us as the diagram representation of the life-history of the disease, from snail host to sufferer, came on the screen.²⁶

Having suggested certain features of government strategy in circulating and exhibiting film and other audiovisual materials for instructional and propaganda needs, let me turn to a select discussion of film content and form. I will cite for my examples the particular 'progressive' axis' FAB and IFI were seeking to put together in some of their film products. *Women of India* (1943) is a case in point, and its investment in the image of modern professional women particularly notable.²⁷ This was produced by Alexander Shaw and directed by a key figure of the early information film, A. Bhaskara Rao, who went on to be an important Films Division director after Independence. The film opens with an image of Indian women destined to live out a life of constrained options. A marriage procession wends its way around a tree, and cuts to a woman borne along on a palanquin as a voiceover (VO) notes fatalistically that her only destiny is to await marriage and bear children. Having set up this traditional frame, the film leaves it behind. The image track shows us a fashionably dressed young woman getting into a car driven by a young man sporting a solar topi. The image might in another setting be the basis for a censorious viewpoint, but this possibility is rapidly skirted by the VO proclaiming a new generation unbound by traditional conventions. Suggestions of a romantic liaison in this image give way to an investment in the female group, presented in the next shot through a group of young women socialising over tea and cigarettes. 'They know there is more to life than their grandmothers ever dreamt of.' Here and later, the voiceover links this new



Women of India (1943): Women professionals and the war effort; teacher and journalist; double exposure shows two contrasting images of modern Indian women in the same frame

potential to the expansion of cities and new professions. I outline below the succession of images that follow this initial situation and define the film's imagination for modern womanhood. (These divisions do not refer to shot breakdown.)

- group shot of typists and client
- individual typist with war-mobilisation poster, hawai fauji ka taiyari/preparation for air combat, followed by closer view on typist and poster [VO: 'Thousands of girls all over India have jobs in the world of commerce']
- telephone operator
- cloth shop/shop assistant [VO: 'as in the West, emancipation gives the privilege of long hours in offices for small pay']
- doctor, followed by closer view
- image of drawing, with angle, scissor, hand in the frame; cut to female architect discussing the drawing with another [VO: 'As towns grow there is a need for more hands']
- women barristers (two shots) [VO: 'India has had one for the last sixteen years']
- well-known woman journalist interviews film star Surendra, in make-up room in front of dressing table
- teacher [VO: 'None of this is possible without education']²⁸
- group of women students in science class with male teacher
- doctor with blood-pressure machine
- student with microscope
- women painting
- women sculpting with male model on display
- music of the country
- singer and male violinist [VO: 'In the world of entertainment a woman's part is all important; all over India listeners tune in to their favourite tune']
- boy switches on radio



Women of India: Actress Devika Rani

- woman sings in front of microphone with tabla, harmonium and violin in accompaniment
- movies (shots of three film posters/publicity songbooks)
- Actress Devika Rani
- Actress Sadhona Bose
- Women in public debate with men
- All India Women's Conference
- Volunteers work in remote villages: images of women teaching village/small-town kids with close-up on girls
- Message will reach far and wide (women in manual labour, sorting work)
- Girl smoking
- Women playing badminton
- Air travel: woman alighting from plane
- Dancer [VO: 'Not held back by customs but appreciates all that is unique; women will be allowed to play a part in the destiny of this great land, like the women of England, Russia, France.')

There is a particular charm to this work, in its unabashed investment, indeed, celebration of the image of modern young woman, starting with the brash iconography of the debutante, at ease in the public world, in a variety of professions and in sporting activity. The pedagogical function that comes towards the conclusion appears as an add-on, with the organisation of shots and the distribution of narrative attention suggesting that female presence in the modern world, facilitated by education and urban expansion, is key to any broader transformation. Thus institutional and political mobilisation through women's organisation, popular pedagogy and so on appear to emerge from this primary focus.

Key points of departure include the underwriting of the acting profession and of the film industry, which, alongside the images of the female singer relayed to audiences through the radio, signal a startling openness of engagement. There is also a frisson of sexual adventure, both in the opening image of romance in the automobile, in the woman journalist's encounter with the male star in his dressing-room, and in the image of the male model displayed for women sculptors. The concluding focus on a considered cultivation of custom through the image of the female dancer appears to return the viewer to the imperatives that such emancipatory drives have to be reconciled with identity needs, specifically of a national sort. But the overwhelming impression left by the film does not get with this concluding note.

For our purposes, there are two sets of connections which I would like to draw attention to. The first is the remarkable exceptionality of this film in terms of its expansive account of female modernisation. What made this possible? The presence of two elite women collaborators, figures who worked in arts, literary and social reform circles, Tara Ali Baig as commentator, and Premila Rama Rau as screenplay writer, point to the outlines of the circle within which the FAB and IFI was functioning. Raj Thapar in her autobiography wrote of the dense and often incestuous network of leftist playwrights, actors, journalists, radio professionals and commentary writers who had a presence in the media professions of these times.²⁹ Alexander Shaw, then head of the Film Advisory Board, noted the importance of such intellectuals at a time when the FAB's functions were subject to strident criticism.³⁰ The group could be said to be both advanced and perhaps removed from some of the more conventional social protocols and patterns of change. It was perhaps indicative of a certain type of power elite that was to prove influential in the years after independence and beyond. This also suggests why deeper transformations, for example, in rural life, should have this top-down, add-on position in the overall design. It nevertheless remains a remarkable visual documentation of an investment in modern female professions of this time.

A related issue is the special position given to the arts, from painting to sculpture to music and dance, to writerly professions, such as journalism. In these years the FAB and IFI also made films on culture, handicrafts, dance, sculpture, as well as on new industries along with war-propaganda films. Much of this anticipated Films Division work after Independence, and continued to feature in Films Division and Central Film Library catalogues as part of the storehouse of material available in the area of instruction and education up to the 1960s.³¹ The film also, of course, highlights the profession of the film actor, symptomatic perhaps of the state film institution's bid to cultivate the film industry. While there were industry representatives on the Film Advisory Board, on the declaration of the Quit India movement, key figures such as the

leading industrial film-maker, V. Shantaram, dropped out. Nevertheless, government policies would continue to shape industry involvement, especially around disbursement of film stock against licences, with a baseline 25% amount dedicated to war-related films in the overall pattern of use. And, in turn, there were signs of industrial compliance in war-propaganda films, and in ways which do not always suggest duress.

Even after the Quit India call, the left in particular retained an ambiguous relationship to the war effort, committed as they were to the anti-fascist rationale for war involvement, and despite the failure of the British government to provide an adequate plan for the transfer of power. Thus, K. A. Abbas, the left-wing nationalist film critic, short-story writer, playwright, scripwriter and later director was involved in *Voice of the People* (1943), an IFI film on the democratic awakening made possible by the press, produced and directed by Ezra Mir.³² Abbas appears in the figure of a newspaper editor, identified as lynchpin to the process of news collection, communication, writing and processing. Abbas was an important figure in the left-wing cultural organisations, the Progressive Writers' Association and the Indian People's Theatre Association. So too was David, the Jewish-Indian actor, who started his career with the fiction film Abbas scripted on journalism, *Naya Sansaar/New World* (N. R. Acharya, Bombay Talkies, 1941). David features in a very skilled war-economy film called *School for Wives* (B. Mitra, Films of India/FAB 1943).³³ The film outlined strategies for housewives to economise on energy consumption in cooking, and to maximise use of all consumable material. It was deftly structured to address the husband through the conceit of a film within a film. The film within a film makes the husband rather than the wife the primary addressee of the home-economics class, deftly combining war-economy messages with advocacy for some change in gender roles.

Another in the 'School' series, *School for Farmers* (date not given, probably 1942, produced by Ezra Mir and directed by A. Bhaskara Rao) has more straightforward pedagogic functions.³⁴ It is notable however for Soviet-style angles in its opening shots of ploughing, a dynamic carried into the image of children marching with implements to work in the fields. In its portrayal of the schooling process, it also draws upon the armature of audiovisual methods which, as we have seen, were circulating at the same time, with the children presented with toys of factory implements and maps of the land as part of the learning process. There is a startling literalism in its depiction of how knowledge can be brought bodily to relate to agriculture, with children armed with books walking through crops to identify them. Such classification is allied, the commentary informs us, to the teaching of other skills, including arithmetic, the market calculation on the value of crops, and packing processes.

While research into this phase of officially sanctioned or 'approved' documentary and short-film-making is perhaps as yet too preliminary to make generalisations, I would note that the vast majority of films related in some fashion to the war, and those specifically devoted to culture and economic development were relatively few. However, even in the war films, issues of economy, gender relations, and so on, could appear, perhaps as a sign of the progressive alliance forged through this initiative. The phase remains institutionally critical. It developed the controversial model of compulsory screening that was to be followed by the independent Indian government;



School for Farmers (1942): Marching to work; models of agricultural implements

cultivated personnel for this activity, some drawn from the industry itself, others to come through the route of foreign education and training; and it consolidated the genre of a developmental documentary form.

HOME AND AMATEUR MOVIES

The archive of official movies is considerably complicated by the huge proliferation of the home and amateur movie, whose ostensible audience tended to be other family members or friends, perhaps members of an amateur film society or social club. I say ostensible because there might have been professional dimensions to the amateur form as well. Such a distinction is based on observation of the film material, rather than on evidence available through other sources, and thus is entirely speculative and provisional. A proper exploration of the status of some of this work needs to consider the standard repertoire of research questions posed for the non-fiction film: Who commissioned the film? What was the occasion for which it was made? To whom was it addressed?³⁵ This proliferation appears to have been facilitated by the availability of cheaper and more portable 16mm. cameras from about 1923.³⁶ For the colonial period, this is a new and startling archive for film history, but also for novel considerations about everyday life, providing as it does a form which moves between the personal and the public. While some amateur films may be devoted to a singular subject, whether related to home or public spaces, including townscapes, infrastructural vistas and workplaces, it was very common for these films to combine such elements. In this format, the films tend to move between the spaces of private habitation and those of social settings, public life and even official engagement. Mostly made by civil servants, army men, planters, businessmen and travellers, these films pose significant challenges to film history. This lies not only in their position on the border between the personal and the official, but also in their bid to show and thereby document the everyday and the event.

Patricia Zimmerman has argued that home movies should be differentiated from amateur films, primarily in terms of a distinction between domestic and public subjects, with the subject of travel in particular distinguishing the amateur film.³⁷ The latter also brought with it a whole panoply of associations, and journals of the 'how-to' sort. We will see in practice how this difference is difficult to uphold, in terms of the colonial home or amateur movie. She suggests another distinction, which again appears problematic:

Consonant with explanatory models of a history from below, the history of amateur film discourses and visual practices are always situated in context with more elite, more visible forms of cultural practices such as Hollywood, national cinemas and avant-garde movements, as well as other, larger historical, political and social metanarratives.³⁸

Clearly, while the amateur film I am dealing with here may be less visible than public and commercial film formats, it could hardly be called non-elite or part of a history from below. Further, the amateur film has a complicated relationship with discourses of professionalism, displaying as it does complex practices of framing and editing, and the insertion of intertitles. In some cases, one is startled by the achievement of compositional and cutting patterns. By the end of the 1930s, advanced discussions about amateur film techniques were available in India.³⁹

In the selection of colonial amateur movies I have looked at, there are instances of the classic home-movie format, where the focus is entirely centred on the home, and the addressees appear to be friends and family. A second type is the descriptive diary relating to some aspect of social life, including scenes from the everyday, but sometimes involving more detailed and carefully composed descriptions of agricultural, manufacturing and building processes. Most common is perhaps the third category, where the home segues into wider public events, settings and views. In these instances, the films assume the form of visual diaries, in which shifts in locale and subject matter emerge from the often highly contingent itinerary and interests of the film-maker. We could speculate that on these occasions, the functions of the material range from private consumption, through exhibition for family and friends probably accompanied by oral exposition, but also perhaps to professional requirements that need to be fleshed out through further research.

An example of the first, more clearly defined home-movie genre is available from the Hunter collection,⁴⁰ relating to a family based in Meerut, United Provinces, between 1928 and 1932. Three short films are centred around the Hunter family activities, and each starts with a title card 'A GLIMPSE OF INDIA', the words framed by drawings of palm trees and camels (a generic image of the East which could as well have stood for Egypt). The three films are notable for the use of intertitles, and an attempt to build a narrative around the premise that the Hunter family invites the audience for a visit. The first film starts with Hunter making this request via direct address, and spelt out by intertitles and the insertion of a written invitation. After this, the film evokes images of a journey through shots of landscape captured through a train window, and of the train's arrival at a station. The 'visitor' appears completely imaginary, his/her off-screen dimension highlighted when the mother holds the door of the family car open, but a cut precludes our seeing the guest. There follows a journey



Hunter Collection, Film 1:
A Glimpse of India

by family car from station to home, and the depiction of the house, the garden and the family at leisure and in play. The next film dwells on the servants, the servants' quarters, the 'bearer', maali or gardener. It then shifts to an extended scene showing washermen in action, beating clothes and wringing them, and ends with the arrival of the fully laundered material at home. The final film recounts the family visit to the hill station of Mussoorie during the summer. The film is notable for numerous intertitles, some printed, some handwritten on a blackboard or a placard; views from train and car to capture movement; static frames, but also shifts to closer views along the same axis. There is an attempt to build a sense of movement, not only by seeing through mobile vehicles, but by moving the camera towards objects and by panning. There is also cutting, but, it would seem, editing in the camera when the film is stopped before the next view is captured.

The Hunter series also displays a substantially different format, what I will refer to as something which inhabits the spectrum between an ethnographic and an industrial diary. This, too, is organised to generate narrative integrity by grounding what we see and read on a singular subject and its exposition. Thus, there are films devoted to irrigation, cotton cultivation, sugar production and road engineering. The irrigation film employs both ethnographic-diary and industrial-diary formats. I use the distinction heuristically, to distinguish a form devoted to a study of a people and their cultural forms, often with a sense of orientalist curiosity, from another which involves a description of material practices and technologies. The latter appears motivated by an impulse not to capture the cultural particularity of labour or natural-resource usage, but to indicate a transformative logic grounded in new technologies and techniques, or a combination of the old and new. Thus, the irrigation film ranges between showcasing the way new dam and canal construction facilitates irrigation, to featuring traditional forms and the use of animals, with intertitles highlighting these as resources of a traditional and low-tech society. The road-engineering film on the other hand, is quite distinct, organised as it is to show the materiality of a new practice. It was almost certainly an extension of Hunter's professional existence as an employee of the Public Works Department.⁴¹ In fact, at one point during the film, it seems that it is Hunter himself, a figure we have become familiar with from his home movies, who appears to

order the unloading of stones from a mule. The film works on the basis of fairly tight descriptive shots, introduced by typed rather than written intertitles. Each segment of the short film is devoted to showing specific elements of the work process, from describing the use of available materials to remetalling, surface painting and maintenance. This is followed by a series devoted to the replacement of an old construction bridge by a modern concrete structure. Here the film provides details about the mixing of sand, cement and concrete, shows how concrete is sprinkled with water for its consolidation, how metal 'reinforcements' are bent, and how concrete is laid in the foundations of the bridge. In contrast to the home movie and the ethnographic diary, the titles are not defined by personalised or cultural references or direct address. There are two instances of personalisation, and of the performance of a skill, which might elicit interest in an audience habituated to higher technological resources. The first is when the wizened guard of the old bridge, about to be dismantled, is placed before the camera, salutes and departs; the second is when the workman carrying bricks is presented from the front, loading one brick on top of another on his head until a veritable little mountain rises above him.

Finally, let us turn to the combinatory form, in which family scenes that take place in the garden give way to the outer world, a feature that is perhaps the characteristic structural pattern of the colonial home movie. This outer world may be variously constituted. It may derive from the official or semi-official frame, including scenes from official visits and inspections, visits to military and regimental displays, and the presentation of what we could call infrastructural or developmental vistas arising from tours, whether formal or informal, conducted by colonial officials. These would include dam, road and canal construction. Such films could even inhabit the genre of the promotional film, as appeared to be the case for a film by Stokes (Ootacamund, Mysore, Madras, 1930–3). Thus films 11 and 12 in this twenty-film collection herald 'a great irrigation project', relating perhaps to the Metur Dam, with title cards providing information about costs and logistics and the material used for the construction. The film features scenes of stone quarrying, and three elaborate, long, panning shots starting from the construction site and overseeing the train carrying the stone. There are also shots of the stone-crushers at work, the machinery they use, the laying of concrete, a view of the towers and a view of the dam (1931).

But often the shots of the 'outside' world are more loosely, observationally organised, so that such vistas (street scenes, scenes of labour practices) may appear to float free of their origins as colonial amateur movie. Sometimes labour practices are enclosed in a colonial ethnographic frame, where groups are defined by iconography of dress, implements and setting, when the Morgans (Lahore) for example, capture tea-garden labourers with their implements, or washermen demonstrate a characteristic flourishing movement in their beating of clothes. The latter image is indeed quite common, perhaps because it is integral to the household, but also one senses because it allows the film-maker to capture graphic movement. But on other occasions, there are quite startlingly organised and sustained scenes of documentation that do not cohere with a colonial ethnography.

An emblematic film of this more loosely, indeed, arbitrarily ordered form is available in the collection of films deposited by the Banks family in Lahore. The films move through the characteristic itinerary of the colonial amateur movie. The first



Banks Collection, Film 1:
Child in the garden

episode is devoted to a child crawling along in a garden. The second and most complex episode is a remarkably sustained segment on the glass-blowers of Lahore. The framing and cutting develop a sense of the interior space of the factory, of the way labour is deployed and specialised, a sense of intense heat from the glow of the furnaces, and a variable response by the workers to the presence of the film-maker, one of whom stares back disconcertingly at the camera. The film then shifts to the Lahore train station, where scenes of everyday activity are captured, an apparently objective frame intruded into by the self-conscious positioning of a white officer on the platform, perhaps the film-maker or a friend making an appearance. The final episode, featuring an exhibition of horse riding for a military regiment, is commonplace in subject matter, but displays once again an alertness to camera position and editing, including a sense of how best to frame to elicit maximum effect. Thus there is a recurrence of a particular stunt, in which two soldiers are seated precariously, the horse's hooves going dangerously close to them in the leap. When the manoeuvre takes place a second time, the camera captures the action again, as if to emphasise the risk involved. There is an awareness here of how the physical parameters imposed on the seated men confronting the leaping horse are reiterated in the filmic parameters imposed by the frame on the spectator, the sense of shock relayed through a peculiar doubling effect, where the body tensed and flinching is dispersed from on- to off-screen sites. This clearly may be over-interpretation, but the fact that such films solicit this type of curiosity and engagement indicate the complexity of the material they encompass and, on occasion, the way they give that material form.

The particular format I have described here suggests how a single film can combine forms, starting with home movie, moving into public space in a way that includes the home-movie subject in the frame, through an industrial film component in the glass-blower's factory, and onto the horse exhibition, that official-public setting which the colonial home movie can so easily navigate as an extension of its subject's world. The industrial format echoes, if with greater film-making acumen, the type of detail I referred to in Hunter's film on road engineering. And, in fact, we find that Banks was a representative of Imperial Chemicals, and has other films in his collection which provide



Banks Collection, Film I: In the glass-blowing factory

detailed accounts of artisanal practices and small-scale industry, for example, saltpeter-mining.⁴² There may even have been professional training involved in the dexterity the film displays, as Imperial Chemicals had started a film-making unit in 1925.⁴³

There is one conclusion we can arrive at from this juxtaposition of different types of film: official and amateur. This is that there is an overlap between the forms, in that both deal, willy-nilly, with official material, and they even deal with this in an official way. By this I mean that the recurrent movement outwards of colonial amateur movies from home to the official colonial setting – functions, inspections, displays, developmental vistas and so on – derives from a similar locus of public authority and may even share the objectives of displaying colonial developmental achievements. On the other hand, this overlap hardly tells the whole story of the amateur form. At one level, the shifting focus of these amateur films can only be unified by the subject who films the changing settings: the colonial officer, traveller, soldier, businessman and so on. However, it would be remiss to view these films only in terms of the colonial, racial or social position, which produced them. Of course, it may be true that certain views, for official functions, visits and inspections, and perhaps even certain perspectives on spaces and structures otherwise available for public view, are privileged by arising from their proximity to or presence as authority. However, there is a more openly and indiscriminately available visibility which these films traverse in their capture of street and bazaar scenes, labour practices and so on. The discontinuities of the amateur form, episodes following each other without any causal logic, lend an autonomous status to the different segments. In turn, they also invite us to consider the unnarrativised segment through a logic of indexicality, of the camera capturing the physicality of people and objects and material life in the world. Following Christopher Pinney's recent work on colonial photography, the question of indexicality is also one of the relationship between film-maker, camera and the subject and space viewed, and how that relationship is constructed through social and political authority, labour, travel, timing, and the material features of technology and film stock, including the susceptibility of film to the vagaries of climate.⁴⁴

Clearly, the image we see is a surface constructed through a set of relations. It then invites historical and ethnographic research into these relations, of a material, social and technological sort. I want to suggest also a second register. In underlining the autonomy and separability of components in a colonial home movie, we have two options. The first is to combine them with other similar views on these subjects, within a database indicating their source, location, perhaps with a view to create a thick description, in a Geertzian sense, of how a particular practice, material form, locale is captured through different views, technologies and so on. The second, however, is to emphasise not their indexicality, but their separability, including the possibility of their redeployment. In this sense, the material not only offers us a relationship to things in the world, a physiognomic specificity and irreducibility, but the possibility of entering a second register, that of their generic functions and perhaps an iconic rather than indexical dimension.

This particular form of documentary as matter is best represented by the stock shot, the non-integrated, generic, repeatable, redeployable form of film information. Here I will take an example of an iconic documentary film-maker of those times, P. V. Pathy. A publicity note in the film periodical, *Film India*, remarked that

Pathy, best newsreel man ... has worked with British Paramount and shot events like the Mysore Wedding, the Bikaner Jubilee, the Baroda Coronation, the Wedding of the Viceroy's Daughter, Haripura Congress Topical and the Quetta Earthquake ... Pathy has a library of stock film shots during his five-year stay in India: 'Shots of earthquakes, floods, gypsy dances, sunrise, sunset, camel caravans, temples, fairs, mountain parks, landscapes, architectural grandeur, village life, rivers with their sacred associations etc. ... [he] has filed and kept this at his house in Siki Nagar at Vithalbhai Patel Road. Sells at Rs 2.8 per foot for the films. Producers who keep their cameraman waiting alongside a sea shore may as well pay Dr Pathy Rs 15 for the shot and save time and money.'⁴⁵

It is also instructive to note the way Shell, another key player in the world of information film, also realised the value of retaining an archive of stock shots. It is suggestive to position this value against the backdrop of something Shell official history was proud to highlight, how its own product, oil, would only feature if it was an integral part of the story world:

Arthur Elton established another basic factor almost from the start. Shell films were in no way to be classed as advertising films. There was to be no heavy-handed waving of the product of the Company name at the audience. In fact, quite the reverse. If oil or petroleum featured in production it was there on the screen as an integral part of the story, not as something 'Made and distributed by Shell' ...⁴⁶

In counterpoint to this emphasis on how products would be integrated, if at all, to the narrative of public knowledge about nature, resources, peoples and cultures, there was also an understanding of the value of film footage as separable and reusable material.

With the mass of film footage that the Unit was acquiring, now from many corners of the globe, Elton decided that a properly organized stock-shot library should be formed. He

realised that there were many outtakes or extra shots taken during a film production that should not be junked, but catalogued and used for future productions or as a basis for complete films...⁴⁷

From questions of discontinuity, segmentation and indexical autonomy, we have shifted registers, to where filmic material is defined as footage, as extra material, as stock, repeatable and reusable. This is where the boundaries between mainstream commercial formats and documentary and newsreel may also be breached, as material of this type finds its way across divisions. Such effects were of course most noticeable in the way newsreel and topical footage was inserted into popular commercial films. In the Indian case, this was especially so with Nehru, actuality footage of whom was used in a number of entertainment films from the 1950s onwards.

These reflections on amateur film forms and on film as excess footage which can be re-used give pause for historiographical thought. Disaggregative logics, identifying key scenes, even fragments, rather than whole films, literary texts and other unities, are commonplace to historical method. Sometimes this is deployed for illustration, to explore a dimension or convention of the cultural artefact under review, and its relation to social and political reality. In the instances I cite here, such fragmentation is a structural characteristic of the amateur film object itself. I have suggested that the amateur film thereby provides a more complicated possibility, to explore the bundle of relations that composes the different scenes organised for the camera, demanding a historical ethnography of film practices. The result may require us to assume a distance toward larger ways of positioning filmic material and the way it implicates the subjects in front of or behind the camera. Perhaps this is new ground which, through an exploration of the material, social and imaginative dimensions of media forms will map lateral pathways and connections in the historical landscape.

NOTES

1. Acknowledgments: earlier versions of this paper were presented at the Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi; the Film and End of Empire Conference, University of Pittsburgh, PA; and at the University of Washington at Seattle. I thank those who made these presentations possible, including Neepa Majumdar, Colin MacCabe and Sudhir Mahadevan. Thanks also to Lee Grieverson for a careful reading of an earlier draft.
2. There was a substantial strand of film-making in the area of non-fiction film by local film companies and individuals that preceded World War II, which will be part of the larger project. Such activities acquired a significant presence in terms of cinema programming, with certain items such as topical films relating to nationalist activities proving popular with audiences. According to *The Indian Cinematograph Year Book of 1938* (Bombay: Motion Picture Society of India, 1938), some 830 short films were produced between 1920 and 1936, pp. 183–204.
3. Resolution no. 10, *Indian Motion Picture Congress Proceedings, 1939*, urging that

Provincial Governments should be approached with a scheme for the production of news reels of Indian events and for such purpose should work in collaboration with the film

industry ... Provincial Governments should assist the Industry ... by making suitable arrangements to see that in every theatre a prescribed length of Indian newsreel is exhibited in every daily programme.

See *Proceedings*, p. 189.

4. I have taken notes from films viewed at the British Film Institute and others at the Centre for South Asian Studies, Cambridge, including material recently put online.
5. See for example, Norman Vigars, *A Short History of the Shell Film Unit (1934–1984)*, Shell Film Unit London, March 1984.
6. When the government announced its decision to ‘revive the organization for the production and distribution of documentary films and newsreels’, it required most posts, from controllers to directors and scriptwriters to require five to ten years’ experience in the line of documentary, newsreel and general film production. This would mean getting people from the disbanded IFI, the film industry or from abroad. Some of the more basic office staff positions were in fact specified for IFI staffers, for example stenographers and so on. See classified advertisements 6 and 18, *Times of India*, 28 January 1948. A number of new hires at this time came from a group of Indians trained at the University of Southern California. Jagat Murari, ‘Reminiscences of Films Division’, in Jag Mohan (ed.), *Documentary Films and National Awakening* (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1990), p. 49.
7. See, for example, the comments made by Jehangir Bhowanagary on how the documentary would help circulate cultural information in the development of the nation. Mohan, *Documentary Films and National Awakening*, p. 51.
8. B. D. Garga, *From Raj to Swaraj: The Non-Fiction Film in India* (New Delhi: Penguin), pp. 25–6.
9. See Foreign and Political, Internal B, May 1919, nos 230–352, ‘Institution of Propaganda Relating to the War by Means of Cinematograph in India’ and ‘Creation of the Central Publicity Board’; four films issued by the Cinema Trade committee were exhibited through Bandmann’s theatres but ‘left the mass untouched’. Notes, Political, A February 1918. I owe this reference to Radhika Singha.
10. Ibid. See also Foreign and Political, Internal B, June 1918, nos 143–5. This file indicates that Vernon and Co. were making films in India on local topics and offered their services to the government. Letter from Vernon and Co., Bombay 7 November 1917.
11. F. L. Brayne, *The Remaking of Village India* (London: Humphrey Milford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1929).
12. *Information Films of India Annual for 1944*, New Delhi, Government of India, 1944; Ashish Rajadhyaksha and Paul Willemsen (eds), *Encyclopedia of Indian Cinema* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 216.
13. Sanjit Narwekar, *Films Division and the Indian Documentary* (New Delhi: Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1992) provides a very helpful account of this period.
14. Desmond Young, Chief Information Officer of the government, noted that, at the inauguration of the FAB, ‘efficient production and distribution of films could only be secured with the help of the brains and experience of those who were actively engaged in the industry itself. Among the industry representatives at this inaugural meeting were Chandulal J. Shah of Ranjit Movietone, Rai Bahadur Chunilal of Bombay Talkies, Chimanlal Desai of National Studios, Baburao K. Pai of Prabhat, M. B. Billimoria of M. B. Billimoria

and Co., M. A. Fazalbhoy of Fazalbhoy Ltd., A. Rowland Jones of MGM (India) and J. B. H. Wadia of Wadia Movietone. See 'War Publicity through Films: Advisory Board Formed', *Times of India*, 5 July 1940.

15. *Film India*, editorial, July 1943.
16. *Film India*, editorial, June 1943.
17. *Film India*, 'Bombay Calling', December 1943.
18. Garga, *From Raj to Swaraja*, pp. 65–6.
19. Ambalal J. Patel, Central Camera Co., advertisement, 'Educating India's Millions', *Times of India*, 22 January 1940, about availability of 16mm films priced at 100–175 rupees per copy. The districts targeted were Ahmednagar, Ahmedabad, East Khandesh and Belgaum. Twenty films were purchased from Patel's Education Films of India for this project. Reported in *Film India*, January 1940.
20. Government have purchased a hundred projectors to be distributed amongst the various districts on a population basis. Each projector will be passed on from village to village in each area so that it will be in constant use. Each fortnight a completely new 45 minutes of programmes of films, comprising a newsreel and two other features is to be compiled and distributed by the Director of Information ... The features will have a definite educational value, many of them dealing with subjects such as health, sanitation, agriculture and social welfare.

The films were silent, partially to do with electricity constraints, but also because of the diversity of languages involved, so that each film would be accompanied by a commentary 'delivered by a competent person'. See 'Documentary Films for India', *Times of India*, 23 January 1941.

21. It was reported that the scheme was an immediate success, with hundreds of people flocking to see the films. See 'Visual Education Scheme: Wide Popularity', *Times of India*, 25 February 1941.
22. 'The Film in India: First Impressions', *Indian Documentary* vol. 2 no. 1, July–September 1955, p. 5.
23. Winifred Holmes, 'The Documentary in Egypt', *Indian Documentary* vol. 2 no. 1, July–September 1955, p. 9.
24. Ibid.
25. G. K. Athalye, Audio-visual Education in Bombay, *Indian Documentary* vol. 2 no. 1, July–September 1955, p. 19.
26. Homes, 'The Documentary in Egypt', p. 8.
27. National Film Archives of India.
28. The double exposure was not part of the film's technique. My flagging of a particular image for capture in the film reel at the National Film Archives fortuitously located an overlap between frames. I was puzzled when I received the image, as I couldn't recognise this particular frame. The film has subsequently gone into storage, and so is not retrievable at short notice. However, the resulting mistake has produced a richly suggestive image.
29. Raj Thapar, *All These Days* (New Delhi: Seminar Publications, 1991).
30. Alexander Shaw noted that the bureaucracy was the main hurdle to the Film Advisory Board but he lauded progressive elements, who were involved. Writing in *Four Times Five*, a Films Division publication, he noted,

With their usual intuition, some Indian saw the possibilities for the future that the idea of a Government Film Unit contained. Left-wing politicians, journalists, intellectuals and fighters for women's rights decided to support our efforts to keep the unit going.

They often had to remain covert because of the independence movement, but

they gave advice, they opened doors, they showed us the path ... we were surrounded with a goodwill ... *it was important that we should realize that what we were doing was for the future, however equivocal the background of the project and its production might be These were small beginnings, but I hoped they helped to pave the way for the now world-famous Films Division, whose activities have made a pattern for the rest of the world to follow.*

See Mohan, *Documentary Films*, pp. 14–15, emphasis added.

31. It is instructive to see how far back post-Independence governments went in terms of material. IFI and FAB films continued to be used, as is indicated by National Council of Educational Research and Training, *Catalogue of Film*, vol. 1, 1947–61.
32. National Film Archives of India.
33. National Film Archives of India.
34. National Film Archives of India.
35. Thomas Elsaesser, 'Archives and Archaeologies: The Place of Non-Fiction Film in Contemporary Media', in Vinzenz Hediger and Patrick Vonderau (eds), *Films That Work: Industrial Film and the Productivity of Media* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2009).
36. Patricia D. Zimmerman, 'Geographies of Desire: Cartographies of Gender, Race, Nation and Empire in Amateur Film', *Film History* vol. 8 no. 1, Spring 1996, pp. 85–98.
37. Ibid.
38. 'The Home Movie Movement: Excavations, Artifacts, Minings', Introduction to Karen L. Ishikuza and Patricia Zimmerman (eds), *Mining the Home Movie* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), p. 4.
39. Stanley Jepson, 'The Amateur Cinemaniac's Progress: A Vision of What He Can Do in India', *Indian Motion Picture Almanac*, 1938, pp. 399–402. Jepson was the editor of the *Illustrated Weekly of India*, a leading English-language periodical.
40. All amateur films have either been viewed at the Centre for South Asian Studies, Cambridge, or online.
41. From the description of the Hunter papers, see <www.s-asian.cam.ac.uk/overview.html>.
42. See the description of the Banks papers available at <www.s-asian.cam.ac.uk/overview.html>.
43. There was also a film called *The Glassblower*, not dated, in the ICI collection, though this was not set in India. The BFI database refers to it as 'The Story of Homer Last, Glassblower at the ICI Plastics Division; His Interests and Activities'. See <ftvdb.bfi.org.uk/sift/title/220286>, accessed 14 February 2011.
44. Christopher Pinney, *The Coming of Photography in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008).
45. *Film India*, August 1940, p. 13.
46. Vigars, *A Short History of the Shell Film Unit*.
47. Ibid.

