



PRESS INFORMATION BUREAU
(Research Unit)
Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
Government of India



National Film Awards
Ministry of Information & Broadcasting

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The National Film Awards are the most prestigious film awards in India. The awards are intended to encourage the production of films that are both artistically and technically excellent, as well as socially relevant, and that contribute to the understanding and appreciation of cultures from various parts of the country through cinematic representation, thereby promoting national unity and integrity. The awards have been administered by the Directorate of Film Festivals since 1973.

Indian Cinema: A History

The success of Raja Harishchandra by Dadasaheb Phalke (1913) gave way to a new line of eager filmmakers and artists in the Indian film industry. Among the early pioneers were J.F. Madan of Elphinstone Bioscope Company, Calcutta, later known as Madan Theatres Ltd., and Himanshu Rai, Co-Director of the Light of Asia, who later became famous as the founder of Bombay Talkies. Under their and other producers' guidance, the Indian film industry grew rapidly. Although in the early years the number of Indian films was less than foreign productions, their popularity and importance grew exponentially. The Indian Government noticed this growth and passed the Indian Cinematograph Act in 1918. Nine years later, a committee was appointed to go into its problems.

The release of Alam Ara, the first Indian talkie, in 1931, marked the close of the silent era and opened a new chapter in the history of Indian Cinema. Between 1931 and the outbreak of World War II in 1939, the Indian film industry expanded multiple folds. Mumbai became the main centre of production during this period, and innovations in colour, cartoon films and dubbing in English were also attempted during this period. This progress led to Prabhat's Sant Tukaram being recognized internationally at the Fifth International Exhibition of Cinematographic Art held in Venice in 1937.

During the war period, while the quantity of films rose, the quality decreased. The post-war period saw an increase in the production of films in regional languages. The war gave much needed impetus to the production of factual films, for which a Government Unit was also organised. It was disbanded immediately after the war. With the achievement of independence, however, it has been revived as the Films Division under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

National Film Awards: A History

The National Film Awards were established in 1954, when the awards were given for the films of the year 1953. The awards were initially called 'State Awards' and two President's Gold Medals, two certificates of merit, and 12 silver medals for regional films were presented in the earlier years.

The 1st National Film Awards (State Awards) were held over two days, during which exhibitions were held and two documentaries were premiered, along with the presentation of awards.

- The President's Gold Medal for the All-India Best Feature Film was given to *Shyamchi-Aai* (Marathi).
- Two Certificates of Merit (Feature Film) were presented to *Do Bigha Zamin* (Hindi) and *Bhagavan Sri Krishna Chaitanya* (Bengali).
- The President's Gold Medal for the Best Documentary Film was given to *Mahabalipuram*.
- Two Certificates of Merit (Documentary) were given to *Holy Himalayas* and *Tree of Wealth*.
- The Certificate of Merit (Children's Film) was given to *KhelaGhar* (Bengali).



A still from Shyamchi-Aai



A still from KhelaGhar



A still from Inquilab (1937)



A still from Mahabalipuram

The State Awards were initially instituted to encourage the production of films of a high aesthetic and technical standard with educational and cultural value. The Film Enquiry Committee (established in 1949), which recommended the institution of the State Awards, also suggested that Regional Awards for feature films should be given in the following years.

The Regional Best Award was given to the National Best Film for the first six years. The number of awards has increased over the years. The first Best Actor and Best Actress awards were given to Uttam Kumar and Nargis, respectively, in 1968. This was after the awards for artists and technicians were separately established for the films of 1967. The Best Actress award was initially called 'Urvashi' and the Best Actor award was called 'Bharat'.

To commemorate the release of the first Indian Feature Film, Raja Harishchandra on 3rd May 1913, it has been decided to confer the National Film Awards on 3rd May of every year.

National Film Awards: Categories

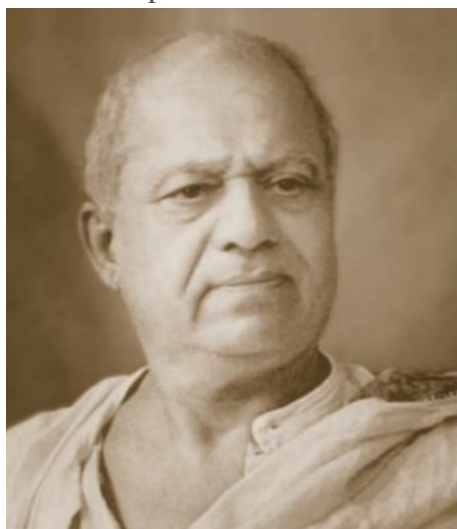
The National Film Awards are given in three sections: Feature Films, Non-Feature Films, and Best Writing in Cinema.

The Most Film Friendly State award is also given, along with the National Film Awards, to a state of India that has been helpful in furthering the growth of the film industry by creating an environment for ease of filming in the state, encouraging skill/talent development among other pro-active initiatives.

Dadasaheb Phalke Award

Instituted in 1969 when presented to Devika Rani, the Dadasaheb Phalke Award was introduced by the Government of India to commemorate Dadasaheb Phalke's contribution to Indian cinema. Honoured with the highest award in the field of cinema, the recipients are recognized for their 'outstanding contribution to the growth and development of Indian cinema'.

Dhundiraj Govind Phalke, known popularly as Dadasaheb Phalke, is regarded as the father of Indian cinema. In 1913, he directed the first feature film in India, Raja Harishchandra. He is believed to have made 96 feature films and 26 short films through his company Hindustan Films, in a mere span of 15 years. Dadasaheb Phalke was a producer, director, and screenwriter. His first film, Raja Harishchandra, was a silent film about a righteous king who sacrifices his family and kingdom to fulfil a vow and uphold the truth. The film was a one-man show and the unprecedented success of this venture by Dadasaheb Phalke was simply a testimonial of his ability and imagination that was far ahead of its time. The success of Raja Harishchandra inspired others and many more entered the film industry, following in the footsteps of Dadasaheb.



(A portrait of Dadasaheb Phalke)



*Amitabh Bachchan receiving
the Dadasaheb Phalke Award from President Ram Nath Kovind*

The National Awards along with cinema's highest honor, the Dadasaheb Phalke Award, are presented by the President of India for commendable contribution to Indian Cinema. The Dadasaheb Phalke award has been conferred to 50 Film personalities. The 51st Dadasaheb Phalke Award will be conferred upon Rajinikanth at the 67th National Film Awards ceremony.

Earlier recipients of the Dadasaheb Phalke Awards have been Amitabh Bachchan (50th), Vinod Khanna (49th), K. Viswanath (48th), Manoj Kumar (47th), Shashi Kapoor (46th), Gulzar (45th), Pran (44th), among other dignitaries in the Indian film industry.

Jury

Since the 57th National Film Awards, the awards in the feature film section are decided through a two-tier selection process, comprising five regional panels and a central jury. The juries are distinguished persons in the field of cinema, other allied arts and humanities.

The general composition of the juries for the National Film Awards has been as follows:

- Feature Film Jury: North, East, West, South I, and South II Zones (5 Members including chairperson in each panel)
- Central Panel comprises 11 members including chairperson of the Central Panel. 5 chairpersons of regional panels will serve as members in the Central Panel.
- Non-Feature Films Jury: Non-Feature Film Jury comprises 7 members including chairperson.
- Best Writing on Cinema: Comprising usually three members including Chairperson.
- Dadasaheb Phalke Jury committee: Comprising five members including Chairperson.
- Most Film Friendly Award Jury committee: Comprising three to four members including Chairperson.

67th National Film Awards

The Dadasaheb Phalke Award has been conferred upon Shri Rajinikanth for his outstanding and eternal contribution to the Indian film industry.

An Engineered Dream, a Hindi film has bagged the award for Best Non-Feature Film while Marakkar-Arabikkadalinte-Simham, in Malayalam, has taken home the award for Best Feature Film.



A still from Marakkar-Arabikkadalinte-Simham)

- The Most Film Friendly State Award has been given to Sikkim.
- The award for the Best Book on Cinema has been given to Sanjay Suri's A Gandhian Affair: India's Curious Portrayal of Love in Cinema. The award for Best Film Critic has been given to Sohini Chattopadhyay.
- Manoj Bajpayee (for 'Bhonsle') and Dhanush (for 'Asuran') shared the award for Best Actor.
- Kangana Ranaut won the Best Actress award for her performance in the films 'Manikarnika- The Queen of Jhansi' and 'Panga'.
- The Award for Best Direction in the Non-Feature Films category was given to Sudhanshu Saria for his movie 'Knock Knock Knock' (in English/Bengali).
- Sanjay Puran Singh Chauhan won the award for Best Direction in the Feature Films category, for 'Bahattar Hoorain' (in Hindi).

References:

Directorate of Film Festivals

M/o I&B press release on 67th NFA

66th NFA Catalogue

1st NFA Catalogue