

The Crowd and the DIY filmmaker: A Study of the DIY funding circuits of the dilettante

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Abstract

The paper aims at relocating the vernacular practice of *chanda* (funds) collection for creative projects with the intervention of new media and corporatised model of crowd funding and crowdsourcing in the support of the dilettante filmmaker. Web 2.0 has unfolded the dynamism of crowd participation onto the online forum through the dynamism of entrepreneurial ventures into the field of crowd funding. The ease of funding entry level and low-scale dilettante projects has taken the democratisation of filmmaking further ahead, making the marginal filmmaker mainstream in some ways. The evolved nature of marginalised efforts to create viability for creative projects has empowered the dilettante or do-it-yourself (DIY) voices in India.¹ Because of this, there are an increasing number of amateurs experimenting with the prosumer devices like mobile phones. Modulation of the conventional Kickstarter and Indiegogo model has brought out novel indigenous narratives of creating increased monetary access for the figure of the dilettante. On the one hand there is an entrepreneurial boost in form of organisations like Wishberry, Catapooolt, and Start51 supporting the reward based model of collecting funds from the crowds, on the other hand there are stories of crowd funding campaign failures. For example, *Sundar* (2014) was a popular Wishberry campaign, however it failed in collecting

¹ The paper uses the lens of the Web 2.0 moment, wherein the introduction of YouTube and other websites of the like led to creation and proliferation of user generated content, that has been stated as Do-it-yourself culture. This culture foregrounds the figure of user who is both the consumer and the producer of the content, therefore, she is referred to as a prosumer figure utilising the Internet for creating media and learning skills to make the media.

the required funds for finishing its production. Since there were many films of a similar subject being made at the time of the campaign, the film did not meet its target amount. *The* challenge lies in the information excess that has saturated the crowd's psyche and, as an outcome of this, there is an increasing need for product-differentiation. The campaigns harness the art activism caveat to touch a nerve with the crowd and gather funds. However, if art activism is used repeatedly, it does not reap beneficial for the crowdfunding campaign. Thus, in some ways the do-it-yourself or DIY funding circuit is ironically both accessible and contingent, in terms of the outcome it caters, to the dilettante for providing a distribution circuit and recognition in the independent filmmaking scene.

Keywords: Crowdfunding, *chanda* (funds)collection, Web 2.0 and crowds, Do-it-Yourself (DIY) culture, DIY funding, DIY filmmakers, short film, online film culture, online short film, crowdfunding campaigns, independent filmmaking, YouTube, mainstream versus dilettante filmmakers, prosumers and the Internet, funding films, user generated content, Cinema 2.0, crowds, participatory culture, DIY media creation, Wishberry.

Introduction

Web 2.0 has defined an era of publics entering the virtual space to contribute in their own unique ways to the content. This content is commonly defined as user generated content or UGC. With new media channels providing resources for making, distributing and funding films, both the amateur figure and professional figure cohabit the space thus created by the Internet. Professionals may still have a greater stake in claiming this space, but amateurs too have an equal opportunity to be a part of this arena. The short film distributed on the web is popular among both the categories discussed here. This further paves the way for alternate forms of filmmaking acquiring a professional status and professional practices deriving novel methods of making films from the amateur filmmakers. With virtual platforms like YouTube the categories of mainstream and independent also lose their commonly understood definitions. When the online channels of video distribution like YouTube began, there was a common tendency to look at it as an alternative space of distribution and exhibition, but over the years, user generated content has acquired mainstream presence with an increasing number of audiences and discourses around the same. Moreover, the

Internet has surged shadow economies of cinema wherein the informal and formal circuits supporting filmmaking and film distribution are at a constant interaction with each other (Lobato, 2012:96).

Crowds – Where it all begins

To begin the study on crowdfunding circuits in India, I will first locate the basic concept of crowds in this study. As one would notice in the paper, how a critical engagement with crowds within the context of crowdfunding is of utmost importance to further look at the role of crowdfunding. One of the most seminal works on the study of crowds, comes from Gustav Le Bon, who wrote his thesis in an era defined by upheavals in the European region. He states, “The age we are about to enter will in truth be the ERA OF CROWDS”.² (Gustave le Bon 2002)

In his analysis of the era of crowds, Bon outlines the key role of the power of crowds in mobilizing inaction to action through mass intervention. However, for the current study, since the primary lens is Web 2.0, I would like to shift away from Canetti’s definition of the crowds to an inclusive definition of multitude as defined by Hardt and Negri in their thesis. They theorise groups of people as,

The people has traditionally been a unitary conception. The population, of course, is characterized by all kinds of differences, but the people reduces that diversity to a unity and makes of the population a single identity: “the people” is one. The multitude, in contrast, is many. The multitude is composed of innumerable internal differences that can never be reduced to a unity or a single identity—different cultures, races, ethnicities, genders, and sexual orientations; different forms of labour; different ways of living; different views of the world; and different desires. The multitude is a multiplicity of all these singular differences. (Hardt and Negri, 2004:15).

In their thesis on the multitude, Hardt and Negri describe the Internet as a classic example of the multitude – wherein people interact in open space whilst retaining their many differences. Therefore, a multitude is a group of people together in a common space irrespective of their biases. For a crowdfunding campaign run using online platforms, the DIY filmmaker needs to reach out to this multitude and mobilise it for supporting his film’s production. To connect the people in a

² Le Bon in his analysis on crowds and their psychology, envisions that the era in which we are living and have lived before, has been defined by the way in which crowds can influence an event or a situation. In this reference, Le Bon celebrates the resilience of the power of crowds in shaping the society and influencing history. Emphasis added by author.

singularity, the multitude must be addressed using an emotional thread, that can bring together people in a crowd that supports a project. In a crowdfunding campaign, the "emotional contagion" is what pivots the people into the mode of activism. The phenomenon has been studied by Adam Kramer who describes it as follows:

Emotional states can be transferred to others via emotional contagion, leading them to experience the same emotions as those around them. Emotional contagion is well established in laboratory experiments, in which people transfer positive and negative moods and emotions to others. Similarly, data from a large, real-world social network collected over a 20-year period suggests that longer-lasting moods (e.g., depression, happiness) can be transferred through networks as well (sic) (Kramer 2014).

Filmmakers and crowdfunding agencies capitalise on the emotional contagion to a certain extent and philanthropic engagement as well, to garner funds for their film projects. Filmmaking as a process, demands team dedication. From the crew that shoots and edits to create the film, to the audience that experiences the same film in a pitch-black theatre or on its smartphones, the crowd is key to filmmaking. The man with the movie camera has transformed to men with smartphone cameras; the mobile panopticons that are constantly keeping an eye on us. Simultaneously, an increasing number of our activities have found a virtual manifestation including filmmaking, distributing and funding films – using online platforms.

The distinction between work and leisure has increasingly faded in the digital era, wherein, the user is both a consumer and a producer of the digital commodity. Real world communities have transformed into virtual ones. Internet users along with a primary reliance on online networks, rely heavily on offline or on ground networking too. Specifically, in case of crowdsourcing and crowdfunding, social networking sites function only as an online tool for connecting with interest groups, however, on ground networking is still needed in order to strengthen the crowd participation in a crowdfunding campaign. The idea is to harness the potential of networks for creating your own project that serves as a "new" intervention in any chosen field. Keeping this dynamic space in mind, Catapoolt's banner on its webpage reads, "We will help you do the new".³ Crowdfunding agencies across the board emphasize on leveraging the creative and novel inventions in any field. The campaign serves not just the purpose of funding for the project but also analyse the unique selling point and differentiation factor of the project. In a world of multiple copies of original, crowdfunding intervenes to package the novelty (in this study the film/video) with that differentiation factor. For the purpose of this study I interviewed the prominent

³ See: <http://www.catapoolt.com/> [Accessed on 15th January, 2015]

crowdfunding organisations in the Indian context along with the other filmmakers whose case studies have been discussed below. These interactions have been theoretically nuanced to lay out the discourse on crowdfunding and crowdsourcing in India.

Crowdsourcing and Crowdfunding – A brief history and the Indian context

Jeff Howe coined the term “crowdsourcing” to define a new media based phenomenon of crowd participation and outsourcing talent (Howe 2006). Crowdfunding on the other hand dates back to the age-old practice of *chanda* collection. The accounted record of crowdfunding practices globally dates back to the eighteenth century, when Irish loan funds were offered to low income families. According to fundable.com⁴, this practice was founded by author Jonathan Swift. Whereas a recent study on the history of crowdfunding quotes the erection of Statue of Liberty in 1886 as an outcome of crowdfunding using emotional appeals to the crowd, spearheaded by Joseph Pulitzer (Freedman and Nutting 2015:3). However, the recent avatar of online crowdfunding emerged in 1990s after the Internet became the playground for bloggers and artists as a medium to share their work with the world. The first website that emerged with an online crowdfunding model was artist share, founded by Boston based music composer and computer programmer Brian Camelio. The model was in close alignment with the present-day Indiegogo (founded in 2008) and Kickstarter (founded in 2009) rewards based model (*ibid*). Crowdsourcing and Crowd-funding are the prime models used by indie filmmakers. Although the terms have been used interchangeably in most places, there is a difference between the two; Crowdsourcing is common to filmmaking in a generic sense, wherein most of the crew and funds are acquired by collaborating with the people. Crowdfunding in the context of independent filmmaking differs from crowdsourcing as the agenda of participation from the crowd is solely directed towards garnering funds for at least one of the three steps of film production – pre-production (scripting and planning), production (shooting the film) and post-production.

The advent of filmmaking in India with Dadasaheb Phalke’s pioneering works was aided by conventional *chanda* or funds collection. Following the funds collection model, Shyam Benegal, Satyajit Ray and John Abraham too had employed crowdfunding to garner financial support for their independent film projects. The Odessa Collective⁵, was the first of its kind to ask for

⁴ See: <https://www.fundable.com/crowdfunding101/history-of-crowdfunding> [Accessed on 30th September 2016]

⁵ Named after Eisenstein’s famous Odessa Steps sequence in Battleship Potemkin (1925)

monetary contributions from a minimum of one rupee to a maximum of five hundred. As an outcome of this collective, veteran filmmaker John Abraham garnered funds for *Amma Ariyan* (What I want my mother to know) (1986). The collective was one of the first movements in India to bring together film enthusiasts and radically transform film funding and distribution methods. As a result of such concerted efforts *Amma Ariyan* was screened in non-commercial and non-theatrical format throughout Kerala (Kasbekar 2006:238).⁶ A similar campaign for funding and supporting independent filmmaking in Kolkata was led by Anamitra Roy and Striparna Dey called the *One Rupee Film Project* discussed later in this paper.

According to the SEBI (Security and Exchanges Board of India) report (compiled by IOSCO – International Organisation of Securities Commission) on crowdfunding, published in June 2014, the crowdfunding model of Indian markets has been broadly classified under the Community based and Financial Return based categories. The Community based model of crowdfunding operates through a system of donations and rewards whereas the Financial returns model operates through a system of peer-to-peer lending and equity. The donation-based model has been employed by Ketto, a crowdfunding organisation backed by some known names of the Hindi film industry like Kunal Kapoor.⁷ There are other examples like Hot Start⁸ and many other start-ups that have burgeoned alongside the introduction of new SEBI rules on crowdfunding on June 17, 2014. The model works because the investor gets a reward in the form of tax rebate for the donation made to the charitable cause supported by the crowdfunding organisation. While the lending based model also supports charitable causes and campaigns for the betterment of society through funding environmental awareness drives, education and other causes, the borrowed money is returned to the creditor over a period of time. This model has been adopted by Milaap in India and supports the education of backward and oppressed segments of the society.⁹ The equity based crowdfunding model is corporatized to a greater extent than the lending based model in terms of how the investments are dealt with. Wishberry was set up in 2012 in Mumbai in order to support not just

⁶After veteran filmmaker John Abraham's demise, a follower of his named Sathyan, who had appeared in one of the scenes in *Amma Ariyan* (1986), carried forward the Odessa Collective. A leading English daily, The Hindu, commemorated Odessa Sathyan, in a story about the activist who carried forward the Odessa Collective post Abraham's demise on August 20, 2014. See: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kozhikode/odessa-sathyan-was-committed-to-society/article6333825.ece> [Accessed on 4th October 2016]

⁷ See: <https://www.ketto.org/>, [Accessed on 25th August 2015]

⁸ See: <https://www.thehotstart.com/>, [Accessed on 25th August 2015]

⁹ See: <https://milaap.org/>, [Accessed on 9th June 2017]

creative ventures like DIY filmmaking but also charitable causes.¹⁰ The idea behind the project was to promote entrepreneurial ventures that could make an impact for large groups of people. The funding procedure of these organisations, therefore allowed the first-time investors and creators to pool their assets for the creation of something relevant for the public and to create a niche that avoids any freeloaders that may create risk conditions of losses of the money collected as a result of crowdfunding. Risk management for investors has been reworked in the new set of regulations introduced by SEBI. For the crowd to believe in the organisation, Dubey and Kataria relied on their personal networks and word of mouth alongside the online channel to spread knowledge about the open resource for private projects, marginalised creators and non-mainstream/amateur practitioners along with charity associations. By the end of 2012 Dubey's organisation focused the campaigns on the creative ventures solely as through market research there was a need for an agency like Kickstarter or Indiegogo to support the Indian artists and creators. Dubey further illuminates the fact that such projects have specific outcomes and therefore, the support has been extended towards creative ventures categorically. The fact that the project in itself must have a USP and market potential is what is analysed at the pitch stage. Once the screening of pitch is over, a team of board members inclusive of the creative advisors (including some producers as well from mainstream Hindi film industry) and financial advisors (including SEBI analysts many a times) chart out a marketing strategy for the project. This process fixes the target for collection of resources and further its distribution to wider scales of viewership. In alliance with the PR advisors, the projects are publicised then using print and social media for a better response for fund collections.

Crowdsourcing is what ideally connects the creator working on their independent project and gets them a team to support and enhance the film. From low budget filmmaking, the DIY filmmaking stands at the precipice with no budget and available resources. This is the reason why most DIY films never receive any recognition. The preferred funding circuit for such marginal filmmakers is crowdfunding, as it allows first-time creators to get connected to the funders as well as a pool of other people with their respective expertise to weigh in on the project and create something new for the world to see. Participation takes place through website-based advertising and by offline process through workshops and film festival programmes. Satish Kataria, founder of Catapooolt describes the methodical way in which the crowd is motivated to make an investment (both fund-based and skill-based) in a film project. Thus, the first step in the process of crowdfunding is to motivate the crowd.

¹⁰ See: <https://yourstory.com/2016/04/wishberry/>, [Accessed on 30th May 2016] and <https://www.wishberry.in/about/#/about> [Accessed on 31st March 2014]

Kataria initiated Catapooolt in 2010 in an attempt to introduce the idea of crowdfunding to the Indian market scenario. Having worked as a SEBI (Security and Exchanges Board of India) analyst alongside Hindi film industry producers, he had the acumen for understanding the financial channels and recognised the dire need of funding channels for amateur practitioners (ibid). Before starting Catapooolt, Kataria was a part of entrepreneurial and start up projects and after having been associated with international collaborators from UK called ProVC (an equity based crowdfunding start-up), he began his own crowdfunding organisations to democratise funding for start-up ecosystems. Catapooolt was his second attempt at providing a novel system for novice practitioners from filmmakers to entrepreneurs. His first venture was ProVC India. He was finally able to launch the Catapooolt system of reward-based crowdfunding in its fully functional form in July 2013. As of now it has funded a small number of films including the Kannada indie film *Lucia* (2013), and Sarthak Dasgupta's *Cut Throat* (2013) among many others. His focus remains exclusively on creative ventures, believing that people associate with the ideas easily and are motivated to pool in money as funding collaborators for a project. At the time of its launch, Kataria mentions in a personal interview, Catapooolt was the only crowdfunding organisation in the world following a reward-based model. The rewards model for crowdfunding was further employed by other competitors in the crowdfunding arena like Wishberry and start51.com. The model so far has worked for a developing economy where the people have a spending capacity lower than most other circuits targeted by Kickstarter and Indiegogo – the primary crowdsourcers for the developed economies. Unlike the US where passion alone motivates the funder, India needed a crowdfunding model that could cater to the need of the crowd as well. The need of the crowd being a reward in return to the investment made in the project. The rewards allocated by Catapooolt include not just gift vouchers for fast food chains but also loyalty points for the regular investors who are given special mention in the credits of the film.

Canetti in his analysis of crowds describes two types of crowds, namely open and closed (Canetti, 1962:16). The open crowds grow incessantly whereas the closed crowds have limits to growth. These limits are what determine the crowd-size and its potential as a group. Thus, closed crowds have a determinate number of individuals and a determinate/quantitative target. Crowdfunding models working on a reward-based format allow for closed crowd formations, to which the entry fee or boundary is the investment that the individual makes towards the target-funding amount of the film. Rewards in the form of being credited as executive producer and producer at the crew, invitations to private screenings, and pre-release download link for the film provided as rewards for the investment made. The hierarchy of rewards is decided on the basis of the amount invested for the target to be achieved. The rewards too are devised in order to garner more and more funds.

More often than not a great deal of marketing strategy goes into shaping the reward system of a carefully planned crowdfunding campaign.

Furthering the analysis on crowds, Canetti defines “crowd crystals” as small groups with a limited strength assigned to perform a specific function (1962:19). These crystals have their limitations and therefore their growth gets replicated only at the onset of very specific conditions. Drawing an analogy between the crowdfunding scene in the Indian context and Canetti’s framework of crowds; the investors in a crowdfunding campaign form a closed crowd with the boundary of the investment money that they pay in order to become a part of that crowd. The crowdfunding campaigns are managed by the employees of a corporatised start-up focusing on the function of managing fund collection and public outreach. These determinate groups of people who manage the campaign thus, form the crowd crystals. The crystals may or may not be a part of the closed crowd of the investors of the crowdfunding campaign. These crystals are what decide the model of crowdfunding adopted in a certain campaign as well as for the organisation in general.

With the intervention of Web 2.0, the process of funding acquires a DIY characteristic. The new media channels are what serve as the forums where the crowdfunding campaigns are presented to a wider audience (Gauntlett 2011). The care that the investors show in the form of the money invested in the project is what constitutes the affective labour – an important aspect of the post fordist work culture.¹¹ For any online project to be successful, it is the labour of the intended funders that materialises into the capital collected for creating films. Of the large part of the non-sleeping hours of the day, most part of those hours are now bracketed by the online advertisers — that flash the targeted information on the screens of the users working on their computer systems. The idea is to materialise the labour of the act of browsing through the internet. In addition, the idea is to grab the attention through a resonating keyword that holds the user to that page. When the ICT4D (Information and Communication technologies for development) developments have allowed for a deeper penetration of new media into everyday lives of people, the corporates have honed this opportunity to harness the potential of e-commerce. As a result, many novel products like smartphones and digital cameras have found commonplace usage. Crowdfunding forms a very intrinsic part of this channel. The purpose of crowdfunding has been

¹¹ Morini and Fumagalli define the framework of affective labour in his study entitled *Life Put to Work: Towards a Life Theory of Value* published in the *Ephemera* journal. They define the contemporary labour theory as opposed to the Marxist labour theory of value. The fact that in today’s life, labour constitutes every function we perform during the non-sleeping hours of the day makes the economy governed by biocapitalism. The idea is to conceptualise the labour framework not from the binaries of labour time and leisure time but to realise the dissolution of this dichotomy in the contemporary scenario. (Morini, Fumagalli and trans. Leonardi, 2010: 241)

to create a novel product that is useful for the masses. From Satyajit Ray to Shyam Benegal, crowdfunding has been a tool for garnering funds for filmmaking since the inception of cinema in the Indian context by Phalke. The intervention of Web 2.0 has dynamically transformed the process of crowdfunding and made it a DIY manifestation of the same. The ability of users to reach out to an audience has aggregated a novel narrative of crowdfunding in India. The creative industries paradigm as proposed by John Hartley (2005), defines the Web 2.0 space as a playground that can be manipulated to serve according to the user's need; which for crowdfunding campaigns is primarily to create a novelty and then to reach out to a wide audience. Though crowdfunding campaigns for DIY films are themselves a novelty they need to define themselves in a way that distinguishes them from the multiple others. This begins with the first and quintessential step of the pitch where filmmakers carefully translate their ideas into words and create an accessible document that can be circulated widely for garnering crew and funds for the process of filmmaking to begin. A pitch video is the first ideation step in the process of the crowdfunding campaign. Before approaching the crowdfunding organisation, the filmmaker must have a lucid video enunciating the ideas that form the project, in this case the film's narrative, and the essence of the idea; why it is important for the film to be made in the first place. A good pitch video attracts the attention of the crowd who is further motivated into participation. Wishberry's Anshulika Dubey emphasises, in a telephonic interview that the pitch video forms the core of any crowd-funding process. For a crowd to be interested in the film, it is of utmost importance that the filmmaker is clear about her own project and conveys it in the same fashion. The pitch video incorporates a performative activity in order to bring out the key USP (unique selling point) of the DIY film. Like the promotional events slotted around the release of any mainstream film, a DIY film banks upon the pitch and the website and offline networks in order to influence a viewership or a tentative audience. As with any promotional event that offers attendees a reward for their participation in the event, a crowdfunding campaign works on a reward system in order to reach out to an audience. Crowdfunding as a method of funds collection works as the initial group of funders decide the drift of the crowdfunding campaign. If a campaign is able to reach a certain percentage (above 20 to 30 per cent) of its target amount within the first week, the likelihood of the success of the campaign will be higher. However, the campaigns that rely solely on online channels for funding their projects can face failure. A disconnect between filmmakers and intended funders is due to a lack of offline outreach using door to door and event based drive for funds collection. Thus, more often than not the crowdfunding campaigns result in a failure. However, there can be other reasons for failure of a crowdfunding campaign.

As per the emotional contagion theory, a contagion would not be effective in a time span within the range when a similar contagion has been effectively introduced within the audiences (Kramer 2014). *Sundar's* crowdfunding campaign came at a time when Wishberry had successfully prevented the demise of Kashish queer film festival in Mumbai. The same emotional contagion thread was picked in case of *Sundar* (2014)– with a sole USP (unique selling point) of the cross dressing queer protagonist. For *Sundar* (2014), lack of a marketing approach to package the film as different from others of a similar genre led to the failure of the crowdfunding campaign. There are other examples in DIY funding and crowdfunding like the One Rupee Film Project that found success in the first round of funds collection, but failed in the long run as the funds collected were inadequate to finish the project.

One Rupee Film Project – A case study of DIY filmmakers and Crowdfunding

Combining the strength of crowdfunding with on-ground DIY funds collection, Anamitra Roy's *One Rupee Film Project* for funding his debut venture *Aashmani Jawaharat* (Like diamonds in the Sky) is a novel narrative. (Mishra 2014) Anamitra Roy and Suparna Dey began collecting funds through word of mouth pitches made to their friends and family. The result was a collective of a few people, just over a hundred, who managed to pool together enough for their production *Aashmani Jawaharat* (Diamonds in the Sky). The production was a collaboration of the Roy and Dey who took the pitch to IFFI film bazaar and Mumbai Film Mart in 2013. The ingenuity of the funding model was to ask people for a contribution of at least Re.1 and in return become the producer of the film. Roy and Dey started their journey of the one-rupee project by collaborating with an immediately accessible group of friends and family. As the plan panned out on ground, Roy and Dey managed to build a hefty sum of 2.95 lakh rupees with a target set at 3 lakhs. On ground the one-rupee project was carried out by Roy and Dey's friends in Jadavpur University and outside, and family. From neighbourhood funders to collaborators who provided Roy and Dey's *Aashmani Jawaharat* technical support, the project turned out to a satirical narrative about indie filmmakers.¹² Collection of one-rupee coins was in itself the satire on the process of independent filmmakers and their marginalised state for the audiences. Roy was adamant to create a revolutionary narrative by a method through which it was clear to the select group of funders that the film was an outburst against the capitalist regime of the mainstream cinemas of India. The film, as a result, turned out

¹² In an email interaction with the author Anamitra Roy and Sriparna Dey described the One Rupee Film Project as a DIY funding project that they pursued right after they became college graduates from Jadavpur University.

in different manifestations of clippings released on YouTube and Vimeo to diary records that were later compiled into books and sold at Amazon. Collaborating with Wishberry and Funduzz.com, alongside the One Rupee Film Project, Roy managed to pull the production with sound and color correction remnant as a part of post-production. In an email interaction, he vehemently declares that there is nothing as DIY filmmaking within the Indian scenario, but there are many independent voices. The voices he says make a claim for recognition in mainstream indie circuits. Setting himself as an anti-establishment auteur, Roy laments that there is a lack of sincere cinema audience within India, and as a result, there is little or no support to DIY filmmaking both in terms of technical expertise and in terms of theoretical acumen. The One Rupee Film Project he comments was an outcome of repeated failures at gathering funds for making the film possible. The film remains to become a finished screening-worthy product as of now and though the project has thousands of followers, Roy claims that the DIY circuit is still to make a recognisable impression in the independent filmmaking scene within India. He concludes, that he may have started a wave that could create ripples, but to create the ripple effect he needs the stone – that is the required money to edit the film. To garner more funds for his film, Roy has even published two volumes of his One Rupee Project diary accounts, called *A theory of being*. He plans to publish more volumes in this series and make enough money, through online sales, for the postproduction of the film *Aashmani Jawabarat*. The collections saw a surge once Roy found collaborators from the celebrity circuits, but the negotiations were doomed and the film still needs sound edits for a mainstream release. Roy himself as a filmmaker established that in the Indian scenario independent filmmakers are misunderstood for multiple reasons. Many saw Roy and Dey as money launderers and free loaders, and hence the film connected only to a select group of audiences who backed it until the juncture that they could. Only a select few in the crowd had the nerve to support a project that claimed the marginalised DIY filmmakers of the marginal indie scene. Roy comments that the idea in itself has the potential to transform the norms that be in mainstream industry, but the only concern is that the backers have abandoned the project midway and at this juncture when the film requires only sound edits, there are only a handful with a coin or two for contribution. The self-deprecatory pittance is what had made *Aashmani Jawabarat*, and it is this very attribute that has led to its current deadlock stage. However, with the YouTube collaboration, Roy and Dey had a copyleft¹³ supported release of the film in August 2015. In a recent series of articles compiled by Focal Press at Masteringfilm.com, Roy's interview appears in the segment entitled Big Brains –

¹³ A website on free software sharing systems called GNU.org describes a copyleft agreement as follows: Copyleft is a general method for making a program (or other work) free, and requiring all modified and extended versions of the program to be free as well. See: <http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/copyleft.en.html> [Accessed on 12th July 2015]

Small Budgets edited by Andy Siege gives a comprehensive first person account of the One Rupee Film Project and how the journey has been for Dey and Roy to create *Aashmani Jawaharat* (Diamonds in the Sky).

Success Stories – From Dilettante status to Professional

Crowdfunding has allowed the liquidation of the categories of amateur and professional in some senses. In contrast to Roy and Dey's campaign, Pawan Kumar's *Lucia* (2012) was a phenomenal success at collecting funds through crowdfunding. An amateur filmmaker, Kumar started his journey into filmmaking by learning the use of prosumer devices to create short films. Crowdfunding paid off his efforts by making it available to transnational Kannada speaking audiences across the globe. The online distribution channels aided in the DIY consumption of his work for audiences spread throughout the world. What is central to any first-time filmmaker's outreach planning is to understand and connect with an audience that could improve in strength over a period. Pawan Kumar ideated the Home talkies website in order to revive the Kannada film industry and in doing so improve the standing of the Kannada indie scene.¹⁴ Interactive and personal aspects of the crowd is what constitutes the participation that functions through online and offline networks. The need to become a part of the venture allows the crowd to experiment with a novel idea and further distribute it to a wider audience. The filmmaking experience and film viewing experience has been influenced in great measure by the collaborative participation on both online and offline platforms. For his current project, the campaign has NEFT funds transfer circuit, transnational support to his film. A minimum contribution of one dollar has been requested for his next film venture. This is on the same lines as the One Rupee Film Project led by Roy, yet the product differentiation strategy has worked for Kumar not only to transition from an amateur to a mainstream figure but also to catalyse the DIY circuits of filmmaking through workshops, DIY film viewing through online distribution and DIY funding through crowdfunding networks.

Conclusion

The promise of crowdfunding is that it empowers small time entrepreneurs, artists and makers to create new products that would never gain backing from traditional investors. But failures, along

¹⁴ His first film *Lifeu Ishtene* (2011) was a major box office success despite being an alternative film shot in an experimental format. Kumar's Home Talkies is an outcome of the extensive audience research.

with the relentless number of new campaigns launched each day, threatens to scare away would-be customers from crowdfunding altogether (Finley 2015).

Finley's (2015) observation on crowdfunding stands true for the Indian context owing to the initial phases of development in the crowdfunding models and their acceptance by all and sundry. While the philanthropic angle to the system is historicised in the *chanda* collection system and Indian filmmaking is not new to the phenomenon, the corporatisation of the models has created a much elaborate and complex garb within which crowdfunding functions for the amateurs and professionals alike. From the perspective of do it yourself methodology of making films, both crowdfunding and no budget filmmaking have relevance in the Indian context, as the short film format serves as fertile ground that functions as a launch pad for the entry level filmmaker and the DIY filmmaker. While there have been mainstream projects made and backed by DIY funding or crowdfunding, the success ratio of this segment is catching up with the increasing number of filmmakers – amateur and professional alike.

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