Indian Cinema

the Indian panorama 1997

DIRECTORATE OF FILM FESTIVALS
NEW DELHI
The views expressed in the articles are not necessarily those of the Directorate of Film Festivals, or of the Editor.
Preface

Indian Panorama 1997 presents an unusual anthology of themes, stylistic approaches and social concerns, through the 13 feature films and 21 non-feature films which were selected by a committee headed by the eminent Indian writer and film-maker M.T. Vasudevan Nair for the feature films, and Aruna Raje Patil as the chairperson of the selection committee for non-feature films.

The films selected for the Panorama provide a significant look—along with the winners of the National Film Awards—into the evolution of quality cinema in India. These two annual forums for the Indian cinema have often been a launching pad for new talents discovered in the varied disciplines that combine to make for good cinema. Indian Panorama 1997 is no exception and offers not just the best of the year 1997, but also introduces us to the exciting sensibilities of new talents.

In keeping with the new demands and requirements of cineastes all over the world, one of the decisions taken recently was to attempt new inputs in the book for Indian Panorama 1997.

Therefore, the format of the Indian Panorama book has been changed this time round, to incorporate the Director’s Statement for the selected films; so that we may have a first-hand account of the birth and construction of each film, from the director’s point of view.

If there is an omission or two in this regard, it is not for want of effort on our part. The directors concerned were unable to send their statements in time for IFFI ’98. The absence of their viewpoint is regretted deeply.

On behalf of the Directorate of Film Festivals, we would like to thank the eminent film critic Shri Anil Saari for bringing out this volume as Guest Editor.

Our thanks are also due to Shri M.T. Vasudevan Nair, chairman of the all-India selection panel for feature films and Ms. Aruna Raje Patil, chairperson of the non-feature film selection panel and the other members for the tireless and dedicated efforts put in by them in the selection of films for this year’s Panorama.

(Mrs. Malti Sahai)
Director
International Film Festival of India
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Synopsis:

In the early decades of the 20th century there were mass migrations from the over-crowded, over-exploited downlands of south Kerala to the vast virgin highlands of the north. The journey was, in a way, akin to the exodus in search of a promised land, as narrated in the Bible. This is a story of a small Christian clan under the patriarchy of Yacob, who migrated from their native land to the lofty ranges of the Western Ghats. In the beginning they faced many calamities; wild animals destroyed their hamlets and crops and malaria swept away the lives of the majority of the settlers.

When the epidemic's macabre dance of death was most intense, there came a Capuchian missionary, Father Damien, who was to wipe away the tears from their eyes, dwell among them, help to rebuild their settlements and farms. He dissuaded Yohannan and his son, the only surviving members of Yacob's clan, when they wanted to return to their native land. Father Damien gave Yohannan
a new meaningful life, baptised his son Elias, then only four years old, and adopted him as his godchild. Together, they pitched the tabernacle of God on the summit.

While these settlements were taking root in the highlands, vast changes were taking place in the mountain valley. A new tea estate began sprawling its wings over the valley, a new township sprouted up and blossomed with shops, a market place and a parish church, with a missionary school and hospital under it.

With the establishment of the estate, there emerged two conflicting classes: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The estate owners tried to exploit and suppress the labourers with the help of their gangs and the labourers revolted against this. Yohannan’s son Elias went to school while living in the labourer’s quarters of the estate with a cousin of Yohannan, Outha. Though he was brought up in strict church discipline, he fell under communist influence when he joined college at the downland town.

During this period drastic changes occurred in both the attitude and the activities of Father Damien. His services and preachings among the downtrodden people were not liked by the institutionalised church, and it discouraged him. He slowly withdrew himself into his chapel, leading a recluse's life. A typical Capuchian Father, he found pleasure and solace in leading a simple rugged life, indulging in fasting and self-flagellation. Only Yohannan and Mariamma, a charming orphan girl of fifteen who did the daily chores at the chapel, visited the Father daily, and he, being an ardent devotee of Virgin Mary, felt that he saw the virtue and purity of the Divine Mother in Mariamma.

Elias loved and revered Father Damien even more than his own father, Yohannan. He also used to regularly visit his foster-father Outha at the labourer’s quarters of the estate. Elias was secretly trying to organise the labourers against the exploitation and tyranny of the estate management.

The labourers one day revolted against the estate manager, who had whipped a labourer publicly. The owner of the estate, James, engaged some gangsters to kill Outha, the leader of the revolt. Elias killed the estate owner. But soon Elias was trapped by the gangsters and ruthlessly murdered.

The three consecutive murders caused a great stir in the high ranges. Father Damien saw these calamities as the sign of Doomsday, the end of the world. His godchild Elias had gone astray. He felt that virtue and righteousness had disappeared from the earth. He was shattered when he learnt that Mariamma, to whom Father
Damien attributed the qualities of the Virgin Mary, was pregnant as a result of her love affair with Elias.

Father Damien now afflicted on himself the penance of the crucifixation. In his delirium he heard the corporeal voice uttering the Revelations of St. John, promising a new world of joy and prosperity after death.

Yohannan was dumbfounded when he learnt that his only son Elias had met a tragic death, seemingly causing the termination of his race. But he was soon relieved to know that Mariamma bore the sperm of his son, the seed of his posterity. And Mariamma saw in her son a new hope for a changing world.

**P.M. Abdul Azeez:**

In his student days director Abdul Azeez edited three magazines and also worked as a sub-editor of a daily newspaper. After post-graduation in Education, he worked as a teacher for two years. Resigned the job to join the Film & Television Institute of India and graduated in Direction and Screen Play Writing. Has written and directed three feature films and more than thirty documentaries.

He is a well-known playwright. His first play *Suicide Squad* won a Sahitya Akademi award in 1973. The same play, directed by him, was invited for the National Theatre Festival of India in 1975. All his plays have been translated and published in English; and one play in Sanskrit. Besides, Azeez’s articles, stories, one-act plays and novelettes have been published in leading periodicals.

Abdul Azeez is not a full-time filmmaker. This, his fourth feature film, has been made after a gap of twenty years.

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**Credits**

Cinematographer: Madhu Ambat
Sound Recordist: Krishnanunni
Editor: G. Bhaskaran
Art Director: S. Radha Krishnan
Music Director: Johnson.
Cast: Raghavan, Thilakan, Sujith, Raji P. Menon, Premjith Lal.
A FILM-MAKER'S CONCERNS

P.M. Abdul Azeez

Man hopes against hope that some day we will be rid of our old anxieties and agonies, whether they are over The Last Judgement prophesied in the Bible or over The Glorious Revolution led by the oppressed class. This theme of 'agony and hope' has always fascinated me.

As the story-writer and scriptwriter of the film, I sought here to find out a visual interpretation of this phenomenon through a film; a medium, I presume, that I can better communicate with.

The Malayalam title of my film, Athyunnathangalil Kootaram Panithavar means Those Who Pitched Their Tabernacles On The Summit, which has got a biblical connotation. The Old Testament of the Bible narrates the two great exoduses of the Jews under the leadership of the prophets Abraham and Moses, who pitched their tabernacles on the promised land.

After the First World War, when their poverty and their miseries had become acute, Christian clans of poor farmers migrated in large numbers from the overcrowded, overexploited downlands of south Kerala to the high ranges of the north, where virgin lands were in abundance. They settled on the mountain top, built their tabernacle (God’s house) there, hoping that their destiny was safe in the hands of God.

I was confident that I could better communicate this theme of agony and hope through the exposition of the life of a small cross-section of these Christian settlers. I reasonably hope, that I have achieved my aim, more or less.

I generally visit the location which I deem suitable for the background of the story. After that I plan the structure of the film and view the whole film, the full-fledged script with all its minute details. Since I am also the creative editor of the film I plan, before shooting, the pattern of editing, the length, cutting points, etc., for each shot.

All my previous films I had made for private producers and there were a lot of constrictions and interference during the
execution of the work. Since this film was completely sponsored by NFDC and Doordarshan jointly, I had full freedom in organising and executing my work. I could mould the form of the film according to the shape I had originally visualised.

Since the story of my film is about the early Christian settlers of the mountain ranges, I decided to shoot the entire film on location. We constructed the main set on a mountain peak, and sets of scattered huts in sporadically cleared forest areas. As a result, wherever we set the camera, we had a background of the undulating line of lofty mountain ranges shrouded with dense forest, which provided an apt background and atmosphere for the scenes.

Except for a few of the main characters of the story, I selected rustic farmers and estate labourers for the minor roles and the crowd scenes. Their ethnic features gave more reality and authenticity to the scenes. Sometimes, we shot the actual interiors of the labourers' cottages on the estate, using their household materials and utensils.

The plotline of my film runs parallel to incidents in the Bible. The chief protagonist of the story is a Capuchian Father, who leads a reclusive life in an isolated chapel atop a mountain. Like the desert priests of the Old Testament, Father Damien also hears incorporeal voices in the form of biblical revelations.

Besides creating the proper mood, these biblical references perform the same function as the chorus does in Greek plays, i.e., to recall the past, to interpret the present and predict the future.

Since the Bible's Old Testament is the basic scripture for all the three Semitic religions, viz., Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the biblical references and citations shall be better understood by the majority of the audience all over the world.

As a prologue to the story, I have shown an exodus, illustrating this journey through paintings. Though those are static shots, I have tried to create an illusion of movement through the creative use of sound. These pictures are linked through voices and incidental noises made by the moving crowd—the continuous rattling of bullock carts, the rippling sounds of flowing streams, the atmospheric sounds of birds and animals mixed with the narrative commentary, the background music and the songs. By this device, the whole sequence gives a vividness and a sense of mobility to the journey.

The most important characteristic of my film is its universality in the context of contemporary global happenings: war, terrorism, conflicts between different ethnic races and religions and castes, political rivalries, atrocities, creating a tremor in the heart of the thinking men. They generally react in three ways. Honest and righ-
teous men withdraw themselves into their small private world, brooding, like the chief protagonist of the film—the priest.

The second kind of people, though very few, try to question and fight against injustice, risking their own lives. Elias, though brought up in a deeply religious atmosphere, becomes a communist and revolts against the oppression and exploitation by the estate owners. Yohannan, Elias’s father, belongs to the third category of people, who form the majority of the world. Though he is conscious about the disgusting happenings around, he is unaffected and unperturbed by them and leads a normal life, focussing on his own existence and welfare.

The small world revolving around these three characters represents the modern world.

I don’t think that form and content are two separate elements in a film to be balanced to each other. The content, or rather the idea, first sprouts and develops in the mind of the artist. Then it takes a specific form and shape suitable to the medium the artist is proficient in. With his inherent artistic sense, and acquired skill and craftsmanship in his chosen medium, the artist may give the final form. It is the content that decides the form and style of my art.

Since a feature film deals with the story of living human beings and since it is fictional, actors are essential to represent its characters. In my film, I have used only two professional actors. The majority of the actors in the film are new faces including the lead pair. Some actors I chose on the spot, such as the devotional singers in the church, or labourers conducting a demonstration, or as characters for background action.

Actors have major role in a feature film. As the actions and reactions of the characters move the story on, it is the actors’ performance that contributes much to the success of the film. Though there are major and minor characters in a film, I give all characters equal importance. At the same time, the character of Yohannan, though he appears less in the film when compared to the two other protagonists in the film, has a greater significance than his role projects. Though he is a rustic farmer, imbibing the ethnic features of his small tribe, he represents the human race as such. When he shouts in ecstasy “my posterity is not uprooted,” it expresses his optimism that the human race cannot be wiped out from the earth.

The famous cinematographer Madhu Ambat has handled the camera for this film. We last worked together as director and cameraman some twenty years back, but still have a good rapport and mutual understanding. So, there was no difficulty of communica-
tion between us. After the completion of the script, I took Madhu for location hunting and then we discussed every aspect of picturising the film. Before actually shooting we would also discuss each shot.

After seeing the final cut, with the dialogue, the music composer and I discussed in detail the nature of the background score and came to the conclusion to use only sporadic background music at selected moments to enhance mood and atmosphere. Since ours was a Christian theme and many of the scenes take place inside and around an isolated chapel, we decided to use only a few western instruments, predominantly the church organ and gongs. Once we had finalised these general concepts I gave full freedom to the composer and I think the film benefits from the creative use of background music.

Indian life moves at a slower pace than in the west. Hence the majority of Indian films are made at a lower tempo, but this feature cannot be attributed to the Indian style of filmmaking, but to the peculiarities of Indian life—the subject matter of the film.

Luckily, film is a most expressive and eloquent medium and the film-maker can make use of the cinematic range to express and communicate his strongest feelings and ideas.

Many of the films I enjoyed influence me unconsciously when I transform my ideas into a film. In the early years I had actively participated in the leftist students movements and the ideology of Marxism had influenced me much then, but later I was fascinated by the radical humanism of M. N. Roy. Now I am not committed to any particular ideology or movement.

The appreciation and acceptance of quality films in India is deteriorating. Unless and until the production of quality films is supported or sponsored by governmental and other agencies, there will not be any future for quality films in India.

In the Malayalam film industry, a new trend is in vogue: to invest in big-budget films with a superstar cast, to engage in expensive technical pursuits and have opulent production values. Most of these films are not recovering their investment at the box office, but funds keep flowing into the film industry from people who are engaged in nefarious activities—thanks to the glamour and the other attractions of the film world.
BOOTHAKKANNADY
(Magnifying Lens)

115 mins., 35 mm, col., Malayalam

Synopsis:
Vidyadharan, a watch repairer is residing in a rural town. From a middle class Nair family, he is married and has a girl child. His wife died of snake bite. He has all love and care for his little daughter Sreekutty. He is a scary type and had been drawn to Sarojini, a lady belonging to Pulluva caste. But his love could not materialise, and Sarojini was married to another man. This marriage lasted for not more than three months. Sarojini has a girl child whose upbringing rested on her alone. Though both Vidyadharan and Sarojini were married and both had a child each, both of them nurtured a fond longing for each other.

Sarada, elder sister of Vidyadharan, strives in vain to induce Vidyadharan to marry again. Vidyadharan maintained a belief
that the death of his wife was due to a snake bite, which was a case of revenge. The memory of an incident during school-going days in which one of the tow mating snakes was killed by pelting of stones, still haunted him. He believed that the mate who escaped death had killed his wife and is still in a state of taking revenge against him.

Meanwhile, Minikutty, daughter of Sarojini was murdered and shadow of suspicion fell on Parameswaran, a hunter who used to roam about with a gun for shooting birds and small animals. Vidyadharan had an aversion for his rough and crude behaviour. He believed Parameswaran to be the killer of Minikutty. A chance encounter between Vidyadharan and Parameswaran culminated in the latter’s death. Consequently, Vidhyadharan is imprisoned for seven years.

Sarojini calls on him in jail, the only visitor he ever has. It is through her that Vidyadharan got news from around his place. She informs him about the accidental death of Balakrishnan, a life-long friend of Vidyadharan. Haunted by the memories of the past, he is torn under fears and doubts which leads to the dream of his mind. However, he writes to Sarojini that they can live together along with his daughter when he is released. All these have completely undermined his faculties and finally, when accompanied by Sreekutty, Sarojini arrives in the prison. She is rudely shocked to find him completely demented. The final scene, in which Vidyadharan stares blankly at the shattered Saroini and Sreekutty, leaves a lasting impression.

A.K. Lohithadas:

A scriptwriter and director by profession, Lohithadas was a highly regarded playwright and theatre activist in Kerala even before he worked on his first film, Thaniyavarthanam.

As a film-maker and scriptwriter, Lohithadas’s achievements include several national and state film awards. He is exceptionally gifted in inspiring the best out of his cast and artistes such as Mohanlal (Bharatham, Kireedom, Amaram) and K.P.A.C. Lalitha have won top honours at the national and the state level for their respective roles in Lohithadas’s films.

Credits

Direction-Screenplay : A.K. Lohitha Das
Producer : N. Krishnakumar Unni
Cinematography : Venu
Editing : G. Murali
Story : A. K. Lohitha Das
Music : Johnson
Sound : Babu (AVM-C)
Art Direction : Premachandran

THE sexual harassment of children has become one of the most disturbing problems of our society. In my film Bhoothakkannady, the issue is viewed through the eyes of the parent which adds an emotional depth and a new dimension to the focus on the problem. This is also a film about man’s search for meaning, the inner realities of life, an essay on the micro-macro analysis of this multidimensional world of ours.

Yes, I do improvise, especially while shooting. And, as you know, it is easy to take liberties with one’s own screenplay. This is my first film. I have always dreamt of depicting the shine and shade of life’s tragi-comedy at its utmost intensity. It is my firm belief that I have succeeded and realised my original conception in the completed film.

After working for long as a scriptwriter, this is my first directorial venture. It has brought a new meaning to my concept of film direction.

The visualization of the complexities of life I have tried to depict in a convincing manner. Viewed through another angle, the film is a classic example of a man trapped inside the labyrinth of superstitions and age-old customs, from which there is no way out. Again, the film can be cited as a study in reality (or unreality, rather). The protagonist’s preoccupation with the eye lens makes him grasp reality in the most bizarre way—the smallest and the minute assume giant proportions; the largest escapes vision. Archetypal patterns, the mythical concepts, have been employed. Moreover, an unusual depiction of characters has enabled me to transform them to the level of pure symbols in Bhoothakkannady.

A good film requires a perfect balance between form and content. Primarily, I see myself as an artist rather than a communicator, and I am more concerned with the cinematic style, but every director wishes to communicate his concept of the film to the viewers and good actors are his tools for this. Actors materialize the director’s dreams. A highlight of Bhoothakkannady is the perfor-
mance of Mammootty. His acting talents have taken the film to great heights. The three characters that mean the most to me are those of Vidyadharan (Mammootty), Sarojini (Sree Lakshmi) and the blind singer (Mala Aravindan).

Every piece of creative art, be it music, dance, painting or film, should communicate. Without it, it's purpose is lost, it becomes meaningless. For me, the word "experimental" has a new meaning. In my films, I wish to experiment with human emotions, to depict the inner soul of man—in the most bizarre way.

Satyajit Ray, Kurasawa and David Lean are the film-makers who have influenced me deeply and the ideology that has most influenced me is that of Humanism.

Cinema as an industry has been facing lots of hurdles all over India. In Kerala the situation is no different. The higher rate of literacy in the State has enabled its film-makers to bring out good realistic films. But as the cinema of Kerala is restricted to the small audience of the State, the financial hazards are countless. I feel that the future of quality films is very bleak. And the most obvious trends in Indian cinema are the invasion of high technology and the charisma of fusion music. Cinema is a work of art which should enthrall and illumine the heart and soul of man. A film, ideally, should be affirmative and purifying.
CHAR ADHYAY
(Four Chapters)

110 mins., 35 mm, col., Hindi

Synopsis:
Ela is a charismatic woman who has stepped out on her own at a remarkably young age.

She is given the task of inspiring young men by the leader of her group, the brilliant Indranath who has been spurned by the colonial system. Unfortunately, Indranath is forced into being as cruel as the system against which he operates.

His orders are ruthless. He is destructive of many young lives.

Ela is in love with Atindra who is forced into such acts that he does not know anymore whether he is a criminal or a revolutionary. Atindra carries within himself the love of a poet.

In the end Atindra is set to the task of killing Ela, whom he has considered the very incarnation of divinity.
Kumar Shahani:

A leading protagonist of the new cinema movement in India since the late sixties, Shahani is a versatile avant-garde film-maker and ideologue since his graduation from the Film & TV Institute of India in 1966.

During the last thirty years, Shahani has made feature films, featurettes, short-films and films on art and music, which have been shown widely at international film festivals and have won national and international awards.

Shahani has also been a prolific writer on the cinema and the arts, has directed plays for the stage, presented film appreciation programmes on television, and been invited to join juries both in India and abroad.

He is currently working on three film projects:

Anna Karenina, a film biography of the great Indian modernist painter Amrita Sher-gil, and Cotton which studies the history of civilization inter-linked to the history of cotton.


Credits

Director : Kumar Shahani
Cameraman : K.K. Mahajan
Sound Recordist : Narinder Singh
Music Director : Vanraj Bhatia
Art Director : Nitish Roy
Dubbing Voice : Jaya Bachan

It is time to celebrate. Celebrate the 50th year of our independence... and the 100th year of cinema. I seek, like Tagore and all the poets, the artists, the freedom fighters, film-viewers and film-makers who gave us this centenary, freedom for all of us. The independence of each art form is the independence of people who see it, make it, are its subject, embedded in the imagination.

To have imagination is to be free. The cinema is imagination realised, in all its fullness. It is as rich, as multivalent as life itself. As speech, as music.

Char Adhyay is the questioning of what it celebrates.

It is a homage to Tagore, to Ghatak and to all others who have made our lives liveable, to aspire to liberty, whether in the crowded streets of Calcutta or in the distant lands of love and laughter.

In Europe, I was told by my blue-eyed one, "you will not see it anywhere, you won't find that expression in the gaze that tells you everything, c'est pas cultive, to vois.," Perhaps it is the speech then that does not dissimulate? Twenty years later in a far more eclectic ethos in Paris, someone warns me: "You give yourself away too easily, for nothing in return. Why are you so naive, innocent, vulnerable?" In India, or on the subcontinent, the intensity of passion makes the beloved turn away the eyes.

What is one to believe? Such ethnic myths that ring true!

Shall we believe in that unknown being out there, can we? In that drive, not far from the Mediterranean, kissed by trees of translucent gold, green as in a fairly tale, she tells me of her many lives, the more exotic and opaque as one has grown, in time and distance.

Can we believe in a continuum of our being?

In that being that has no definite point of existence because in one's act of recognition, one may posit an essence which is only a projected identification?

It cannot be helped, you might say. How should I know you, given that I have to be correct about all that distinguishes you: gender,
nationality, sexual behaviour, musical preferences, class in the process of becoming?

Neither you nor I are in any way positioned like a Renaissance painter, inventing perspectival laws, proposing and being proposed ourselves by a spatialised fragment of time. Fixed forever.

Neither you nor I can boast that we carry within us that secret child to whom will be known the way of voluntarily finding freedom to exit and to enter, perhaps to stay within the womb?

Annihilation may stare us in the face: not through nuclear arms alone, nor through ecological disasters. Over and above everything else, it is the deadening logic of a system that bewilders its own processors. The more a system appears to have its own agency, the less the presence of the subject. The world is a conspiracy without conspirators, forcing us to celebrate as near magico-religious omnivores. A kind of paganism in reverse where the object gives breath to the worshipper. Bewitching still-lives stir the quick and hungry. All representations seem to trap within idealised geometries—the intelligence, judgement, desire and their propulsions into the too transparent presences of cultivated nature.

The impossibility of naturalistic representation, I imagine, engaged all the artists of Asia that came into contact with it in the colonial era, even as they were provoked into the desire to possess reality like their imperial conquerers, who had, back home, far away, introduced along with that very form, democracy and the monetisation of labour.

In India, representative functions were pressed into the service of iconism. That which was representative was worshipped, held up as an ideal or an avatar on the grounds of what she or it signified, in both the spiritual and material contexts. In fact, I think that it is important to remember that while this-worldly and other-worldly manifestations and significations have been around as distinct in the human mind from the beginning, there has always been a desire for the sacred and the divine to inhabit the secular space.

Thus, through the European hegemony, a new iconography began to appear with a curious trajectory. The Mannerist postures of the Elizabethan stage entered the founding of our modern arts: oil painting in Ravi Verma, cinema in Dadasaheb Phalke. There were all the photographers as well who introduced posed, centralised and flattened events, trying to achieve some freedom from the convergence of lines imposed by the camera’s lenses and privilege the hieratic.

The Italian film-maker Michelangelo Antonioni, in a personal conversation with me, complained about the experience he had in
China of his subjects' insistence on assuming those grandiose postures that Shakespearian heroism demands, preventing him from creating a documentary event, subverting every desire in him to know, to present his knowledge of the East to the West.

History is so cruel that some would wish it away in triumph as in defeat. Introduce instead the comfort of belonging somewhere!

When my daughters were asked who they were at school, they did not know what to claim, because until then they thought that, like everyone else that they met, they were on their way to becoming themselves. Shyly, they began to ask how they should locate themselves—through language, caste, territory, food habits, nationality, dress, the colour of their skin?

I would tell them of the first actress that I had to direct and, who while trying to establish an emotional rapport, asked me where I was born. I told her the truth: Mohan-jo-daro in the Indus Valley, Larkana. She was quick: How old are you then? Her playfully incredulous voice, the rite of passage to sublime dissimulation.

In every initiation, does not the form precede the content? The splendour of ritual celebration before the sacrifice. In historic reality too, the convulsions repeatedly shook us into those caesurae that we had fondly believed to be single episodes of a distant past: the partition and our independence. The renewal of the politics of identity and difference in the post-fragmented world brought riots and bomb blasts to Bombay.

Our children were shocked by the culture of the adults. To overcome the paroxysm, one hopes that a new kind of learning will be discovered by them. Henceforth, they will have to build over here and elsewhere, not quite present upon this earth, never yet, but of which glimpses are seen in all civilising insights, sometimes opposed in origin and development. The Future has left its traces in anticipation of a tryst that no single nation or tribe or civilisation could ever bring us to, at the appointed hour. Instead, the carnage, the displacements, all the traumas of separation.

The forced factuality of electronically generated images has, in fatigued addiction, created an insatiable hunger that can only make sense within new hybrid formations instead of originary and teleological concepts. The Europe that I have loved and known is one that has not sealed its borders in terms of location, ideas, mercantile concerns or the movement and imagination of people. Amongst Pascal's predecessors, one is often reminded, the most significant is St. Augustine, the moor. And all those anonymous mathematicians of algebraic art. The peripateties and equivalences of Descartes and Karl Marx could have been predicted by the boatmen.
who set out from the riverine towns into oceans whose turbulences could be measured by the distance between stars. When St. Joan in her cell says that she should not be burnt because she is not impure, I think of all our epic heroines that anticipated the holocausts and witchhunts. Yet, we continue to speak of the West and the East, essentialise them and hope to transcend separate histories that meet in an elsewhere through the presence of multiple ghettos in our pluralist personalities, wishing to re-integrate through a division of labour in the ersatz bazaar of biologized differences.

From the beginning of cinema, the great film-makers whether in the United States or Japan, whether in Europe or India, born in the age of Imperialism, wished to offer the wage labourer a possibility of constructing a self-image as dignified as an empty vessel into which you could pour the elixir of life.

Often it did not matter what ideology prompted the making of the film. Griffith’s depiction of the suppressed races as being on the edge of capitalist civilisation did not prevent him from critiquing it, nor from restoring the historical subject, no matter where he came from, what colour of skin he wore. Dadasaheb Phalke wanted not only himself and his audiences to enter history but wanted the gods too to participate in it. Ozu’s cinema had begun to propose that every being, every tree, every square in the sliding walls of his homes bear a trace of individual form, albeit emerging from an aristocratic attentiveness. Dreyer’s depiction of the Passion showed womankind as dissenting, courageous, individuated in the face of the most terrifying institutions.

To think that these films were offered as commodities in a world market earlier, speaks well for those who were building unconsciously that system, post-colonial, post-modernist that we inhabit today. And amongst them, the heroic Joris Ivens, a source of inspiration not only to me but also to all the young people that I have met anywhere at any time in my life span. Already, all the way back, in the period between the wars, he had initiated the liberating discourses that could free human action both from the state and from the market, precisely because the logic of these very institutions, the movement of commodities and what they contain, irrespective of origin in nature and culture, makes primitive preoccupations with identity and difference both ridiculous and redundant.

In fact, today the fetishised nature of leisure itself, therefore of free time and free thought is so spellbinding that the exhaustion created by it can be compared to the mental and physical voiding of the person at work, when and if work is available in the globally determined structure.
This loss of initiative is happening right in front of our eyes: regressions to fundamentalist positions even amongst those who attacked historial totalisations from new, liberating viewpoints.

It appears often as if the object into which we would earlier project our being has itself lost its autonomy; that its destiny is in its self-annihilation in offering itself to be either instantly consumed or in its disappearance like a television spot.

In fact the trivialisation of choice has subverted fulfilment because desire is computed into needs to be satisified in a state of near panic. Will we have any existence in the market tomorrow, we have to keep asking ourselves.

There is a transference of one's own particular nervous system into the fatalist levelling of the World Information Order, dictated by GATT, TRIPS etc., that respects no other traditional regime of authorship nor the appropriation of one's natural and cultural resources by a community, cancelling out alternative cultural responses to those put in place by the multi-nationals.

Shall we still continue to dare to speak of free will and Pre-destination? Of voluntarism and the historical forces that overwhelm us? Of the contradiction between the Ever-self-revealing and the Rational? Of the multi-pronged conflicts that emerge between dharma, artha, kama, moksha - of the impulse to realise oneself in action, in material and sensuous joy, even as we aspire to spiritual freedom: full blown creativity?

Organised religions, ideologies and above all formulations anonymously generated by the market have turned those very questions into brutalising moral codes that bring to mind images from the Leviathan, a Kalyuga.

The point is to free those very questions from their membranes, sometimes linguistic, sometimes visual, often embedded in musical and other temporal forms.

Our freedom lies in seeking the synapses in the world system's impulses that we can recover as our own at every given moment which can change the world at the distances the information order affords us, even as we signify it in gestures of everyday living, empowering discourses that can be relayed through meeting points, sometimes as anonymously and as invisibly as digitised knowledge, sometimes in open, performative praxis that resists any pressure of generalisation, individuating abstracted currencies into tangible pleasure and pain.

These then are the traces of liberty, not left by a disappearing past, but perhaps by an immanent future.
DAHAN
(Thereafter)

145 mins., 35 mm, col., Bengali

Synopsis:

Dahan is the story of two women—Jhinuk, a young school teacher and Romita a newly married girl. The two have grown up in different social milieus. While Jhinuk’s father is a professor, who is upwardly mobile, Romita’s father is quite high up in the corporate ladder. Jhinuk is a working woman, independent, and about to get married to the man of her choice. Romita, on the other hand, is a housewife, who has married the man of her father’s choice.

The two would probably never have met. But fate had a different view of things. On her way back from shopping one evening, Romita was molested by five young men. Her husband, Palash, was beaten up as he tried to protest. Passersby heard Romita scream, but did not come forward to help.

Jhinuk was going back home in an auto after a visit to her
grandmother in an old age home. As she heard Romita’s cries she stopped the auto and ran forward to help. While Jhinuk struggled with the young men, a train arrived, and people started pouring out of the metro station. The boys realised they would soon be outnumbered and fled.

Jhinuk then took a lead and got Palash and Romita to lodge an FIR. The next day the incident became a front page story in newspapers and Jhinuk was hailed as a heroine. Romita’s in-laws were also quite grateful to her.

However, certain discordant voices were heard, but by and large, Jhinuk enjoyed a few days of glory.

Soon, reactions in both the houses changed. Romita’s in-laws, who were initially sympathetic, were soon upset over the incident as friends, family and neighbours started asking embarrassing questions.

Jhinuk, on the other hand, kept pursuing the issue. She went and identified the boys after they were arrested. When they were released on bail, Jhinuk was upset. As the day for the final hearing of the case approached the two girls were determined to fight, while both families tried hard to dissuade them from doing so. Both Palash and Tunir (Jhinuk’s fiancé), used various tactics to prevent the two from appearing in court.

The D-day dawned. Both Jhinuk and Romita reached the courtroom. Romita could not ultimately keep up the fight. Social pressures of the family forced her to say that she did not recognise the culprits.

Jhinuk put up a spirited fight, but the defence counsel literally made mincemeat out of her in court as Romita and Palash had not identified the guilty. She came back home with high fever.

Once this was behind her, Jhinuk started preparations for her marriage. Romita went back to her in-laws and wrote to her sister she was going to visit her in Canada. Was it for a holiday, or...?

The story in its simplicity reflects the world of middleclass sentiments, morals and hypocrisies, where women who are outwardly independent are still bound by the rigid codes set by society.
Rituparno Ghosh:

In 1995 the young film-maker startled the Indian scene when his second feature film, Unnishe April, won both the National Film Award for the Best Feature Film as well as the Best Actress Award for lead-player Debashree Roy.

Son of the short film-maker Sunil Ghosh in Calcutta, Rituparno’s interest in films goes back to his childhood. After graduation and completion of his Master’s degree in Economics, he joined an advertising agency as a copywriter, where he was soon involved in the making of ad-films, winning a dozen-and-a-half ad-film awards.

His first venture into feature films was Hirer Angti, a children’s film. With his second film, Unnishe April, completed in 1994, Rituparno made his mark as a serious film-maker. The film was shown in Indian Panorama 1995 and screened at several international film festivals.

Since then, Rituparno has made several films and has scripted and directed a popular television serial, Bahanno Episode.

Filmography: Feature Films: Hirer Angti, Unnishe April, Dahan.

Credits

Direction-Screenplay
Producer
Cinematography
Editing
Story
Music
Sound
Art Direction

Rituparno Ghosh
Bijay Agarwal, Kalpana Agarwal
Hari Nair
Arghya Kamal Mitra
Suchitra Bhattacharya
Debjyoti Mishra, Paroma Bannerjee
Chinmoy Nath
Surya Chatterjee, Sudeshna Roy

Dahan focuses on the unseen bonding that develops between two women, who were complete strangers until they met in one chance encounter. In the film they never meet again and yet they are one in spirit through their gradual estrangement from society and the realisation of their essential isolation.

I didn’t want to over-dramatize things. In a story essentially of crime and punishment, with a bizarre twist, which has its own narrative progression, I didn’t want to treat it as an extra plot-element or subplot. Weaving it subliminally into the story has worked. Most sensitive viewers will be able to pick up the hints. I could have, for instance, made one or both of them write letters to each other which ultimately don’t reach. But even that would have made their inner agony too explicit. Their suffering is, indeed, made subterranean by the pressure of events on the surface surrounding the court case.

I started out being as faithful as I could to the novel, because I liked it immensely. But then a major improvisation crept in which added a whole new dimension to the finale. How this happened is a story by itself. One night, we were shooting on location. It was the sequence in Romita’s bedroom, prior to the “marital rape”. Suddenly the police came and stopped us because local people had complained about the noise of the generator. So there we were, packing up midway through the scene. Romita’s business was to be writing a letter.

I came back early next morning before anyone else had arrived. The room was still empty, the valuable props all packed away. That’s when the plight of the character hit me in a strange way. I was sitting on the empty bed. The bed-head, the dressing table looked so empty, I suddenly felt that Romita was really not here any more, not in spirit. She had gone away, distanced herself from the whole sorry mess of her life. And then the content of the letter she was writing her sister came to me. I wrote the last letter on the spot,
then the other letters became a cinematic device. It gave me the idea for the title sequence which had not been worked out till then.

There's a recurring theme of loneliness that I tend to explore. In Unnishe April there was this celebrity mother, her alienated daughter, their inner struggles. It's a narrower focus there. In Dahan, the social canvas is somewhat broader, but the theme of loneliness still persists.

The narrative form is the one that comes most naturally to me at present. I'm working on it, trying to perfect it in my own way, working along the seam of a given storyline, to present it as cinematically as possible.

Unnishe April was a linear narrative basically thriving on the style of the teleplay. Dahan is more complex, more multi-layered and it exploits the specific narrative style of the cinema, as opposed to literary narrative. Telescoping time and space to juxtapose external events and their impact on individuals. A chain reaction set off by a chance incident.

The layered effects were achievable through soundtrack and visual sequences conveying dissimilar motifs which build a third dimension, which again is the basic stuff of life.

Perhaps my effort to build characters in the round, keeping the grey areas in mind are the strongest feature of the film. Here the verbal component is as strong as the gestural language, even the silences. I am inclined to pay a great deal of attention to detail: behavioural detail, the details of setting and ambience.

Balancing form and content being an essential prerequisite, the newspaper clippings are used as chapter headings helping the progress of the narrative. Additionally, the device serves two other purposes. One, it serves as a visual reminder that it is a real life incident. Two, how the media hype contributes to the conflict.

The film is located in Calcutta, the specificity of the situation and the characters are never lost sight of. At the same time, there are certain universal elements at the core, which move beyond regional boundaries.
Excerpts from an interview with Rituparno Ghosh:

Please define the emphasis you place on the actor's role in communicating your concept of the film.

Characterisation is very important in my film, therefore the actors are very important too.

Would you like to elaborate on the contribution of any of the artistes in your film's cast?

No, they were all equally responsive.

Of the characters in the narrative, which ones do you feel are of greater significance than the length of their role suggests?

Romita's sister, to whom the letters are written and Jhinuk's grandmother.

How do you define your style of cinema? Do you see yourself as an 'Indian director', or as a director working in an international medium?

I see myself very much as an Indian director. In fact a Bengali first and then an Indian director working in an international medium.

As a film-maker what are your views on the need to communicate your intent to your audience?

I have an audience living within me, constantly approving or disapproving of whatever I do. Keeping in touch with this inner critic is sufficient for me. Therefore, I don't have to think separately of any outside audience.

Who are the people who have influenced you most in your intellectual development as a film-maker?

Satyajit Ray.

Could you tell us the ideas that have influenced you?

His sense of economy, brevity, sense of structure. The difference one feels when the outcome of an event is blandly predictable or, as in Ray's case, the denouement gives one a sense of the inevitable, the feeling that it could simply not have been otherwise.
HAZAR CHAURASI KI MA
(Mother of 1084)

148 mins., 35 mm, col., Hindi

Synopsis:
Calcutta 1972

The story is set in a period when Bengal, the eastern state of India, was swept by a powerful political, militant leftist movement known as “The Naxalbari Movement”.

Sujata Chatterji is a middl-aged, traditional, submissive, unprotesting, upper middle-class lady, employed in a commercial bank in Calcutta. She awakens one early morning to the shattering news that her youngest and favourite son, Brati, is lying dead in the police morgue, reduced to a mere numerical: Corpse no. 1084.

This awakening impels her on a journey of discovery, in the course of which, struggling to understand her Naxalite son’s revolutionary commitment, she begins to recognize her own alienation as a woman and wife from the complacent, hypercritical bourgeois society her son had rebelled against.
In an attempt to regain a sense of ‘self’ from the intense psychological and emotional trauma, Sujata, as a mother, gains some deep insights into the complex relationship between the personal and the political.

Govind Nihalani:

Began his career as a cinematographer in 1962. The first feature film photographed, and co-produced, by him was Shantata! Court Chalu Ahe, directed by Satyadev Dubey. Then followed the highly rewarding association with director Shyam Benegal, for whom he photographed several documentaries (including a feature-length documentary on Satyajit Ray) and ten feature films, including Junoon for which Nihalani received the National Award for Best Colour Cinematography in 1979.

Aakrosh was Nihalani’s first feature film as director-cinematographer. It immediately established him as a serious film-maker. The film shared the Golden Peacock Award at IFFI 1981, New Delhi. The same year, director Richard Atenborough signed Nihalani as the second-unit director-cinematographer of Gandhi.

With his third feature film, Ardh Satya, Nihalani also established himself as one of moving spirits of the New Cinema movement and carved out a niche in the audience mind as a commentator on the times. The film’s lead actor, Om Puri, won the Best

Credits

Direction-Screenplay : Govind Nihalani
Producer : Govind Nihalani
Cinematography : Govind Nihalani
Editing : Deepa Bhatia
Story : Mahasweta Devi
Music : Debjyoti Mishra
Sound : Prabal Pradhan
Art Direction : Chokas Bhardwaj

Cast: Jaya Bachchan, Joy Sengupta, Nandita Das, Anupam Kher, Seema Biswas, Milind Gunaji

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Actor Award at Karlovy Vary in 1985. The leading actress of Nihalani's fourth film, *Party*, won the best acting award at the Asia Pacific Film Festival. And Nihalani won the Best Director Award at the 9th Damascus Film Festival, 1995, for *Drohkaal*.

Nihalani is at his best when he tackles themes of social concern. But he is also inclined to think of the unusual aspects of the human psyche.

**Filmography:** Feature Films—As Director: Aakrosh, Vijeta, Ardh Satya, Party, Aghaat, Tamas (5-hour TV epic), Jazeere, Pita, Drishti, Rukmavati Ki Haveli, Drohkaal, Sanshodhan, Hazaar Chauraasi Ki Ma.
AN ACCIDENT IN THE TIME OF BLOCKBUSTERS

GOVIND NIHALANI

It was indeed an accident. I had been nursing the thought of making a film based on Mahasweta Devi's novel *Hazar Churashir Ma* for years. But it was only by sheer accident that I came across the English translation of the book around April 1997. And standing in the bookstore, I told myself this film has to be made.

Who will play the complex role of Sujata, the mother? The role needed an actress who would look petite and vulnerable, but could also manifest quiet strength and courage. The actress had to possess a quality of understatement and restraint, and control in her performance. The character of the mother could, so easily, be interpreted melodramatically and sentimentally. It needed an actress of highly refined sensibility and deep sensivity. The only person I could think of was Jaya Bachchan. I was so very happy when she accepted the role, for if she had refused I would not have proceeded further with the project.

It was no accident that when I finally decided to go ahead with the film, Jaya ji having said yes, and Mahasweta Devi having given me the film rights of the book, I had absolutely no money to make the film. It was, again, by sheer accident that I mentioned the project to Sahara India — and the whole project fell in place in a couple of weeks. Within a month on the 1st of July 1997, to be precise, we commenced the shooting of the film. At 2 p.m. in the afternoon, 29th of August, 1997, the final married print of the film was screened for the Central Board of Film Certification. The same evening the film was certified without cuts for adult viewing: 59 days from the first day of the shooting to Censor Certification.

All these years I had been thinking of making this film and when it actually happened — I had a strange feeling. I couldn't believe it was happening...

A series of happy accidents and a film is made. In fact, the kind of a film that the director wished to make with minimum compromise.
What are the chances of a film like that to reach the audience in India today? How do the market forces affect its fate? On the one hand, one gathers the impression that the audience for a personal kind of film is out there — it needs to be persuaded to come to the cinemas. On the other hand one experiences heavy pressure to eschew any attempt at diversion from the safe narrative strategies employed in the mainstream cinema. And this pressure is felt the most in the form of indifference from the distributors who consider such films too risky for business. So, what can be done?

Imaginative promotional strategies will certainly help in creating an awareness about the film. It will have to be followed up with a careful distribution and exhibition pattern. Releasing the film in the right kind of cinema theatres, which are easily accessible to an audience of educated middle class students and professionals, and which have moderate seating capacity, has so far proved the best strategy.

However, one can’t depend entirely on theatrical release to recover the investment anymore. Additional avenues for distribution must be explored.

There seems to be a growing demand for off-beat cinema on a number of television and satellite channels, particularly in Europe. And if the length of the film is confined within 120 minutes, it may have a fair chance at the art-house release too.

One has heard on several occasions that to be acceptable on the art-house circuit one must plan the film with an international audience in mind. Two questions arise:

1. What is an international audience? Is it an homogeneous entity, the tastes and aesthetic preferences of which can be predicted? Even if it were, how can one make a film to cater to the demands of an audience except as a purely commercial exercise?

2. Isn’t it important that a film-maker functions in an environment free of pressures of international or for that matter even domestic audience?

Every film-maker expects an audience for one’s film but it is quite different to make a film designed to be accepted by an audience. Under such circumstances the perceived preferences of an audience dominate the cinematic expression of the film-maker. In designing of mainstream films, audience preferences acquire dominance over everything else.

I personally believe that form in cinema is an artistic strategy to preserve a film-maker’s commitment to his vision — a strategy which respects the intelligence of the audience but is not domi-
nated by preconceived notions of audience response.

If the personal cinema — a cinema which is created with artistic and intellectual convictions; cinema which the film-maker strives to create without compromising his creative integrity; if such cinema is to exist, as it must, then the film-maker must be alert towards market forces. To resist these forces is not easy, to say the least. Perhaps, one way to look at the situation would be like a state of war to preserve one’s artistic freedom and integrity wherein strategic withdrawal in a battle may be unavoidable in the interest of winning the war.

The important thing is not to lose sight of the ultimate objective which is to create for oneself an environment of making films with the least amount of compromise. A tough task indeed, but not altogether impossible. In the times of blockbusters one cannot depend on an occasional “accident”, can one?
KAAL SANDHYA
(Twilight of Death)

124 mins., 35 mm, col., Hindi

Synopsis:
A terrible devastation has come upon this beautiful land richly endowed with nature's gifts. Political and moral degeneration, appalling corruption and greed for power have led to the emergence of chaotic and depraved society. Ideals of reformation and revolution have long since degenerated into a tale of greed, envy and vicious ruthlessness; extortion and looting, kidnapping and murder have become a part of life of the common man. Innocent people are killed mercilessly but there are no answers as to why these killings occur and who are the people responsible. Near and dear ones of the victims become burdened with terrible anguish and desperate loneliness. And such is the life that women like Anjali Dutta and Anuradha Sharma find themselves living as they carry on a relentless struggle to survive.
Ranjit was an educated but unemployed young man who was desperately looking for a job. He found himself being taught to use a gun by people who promised to show him a new way of life and lead him to a better future. One day, as instructed by these people, he shot and killed Anuradha’s husband, Arabinda Sarma. A few days later, Banajit Dutta, a professor in a local college, was shot to death. Dutta’s death created an outcry in society. The entire town was swept by outrage and indignation. Protest marches and hunger strikes denounced the act wave organized in every neighbourhood, people gathered to pay homage and pray for the departed soul, rallies and meetings were organised by political parties to lambast terrorist forces and the governent’s incompetence, while the government issued promises to bring about justice and retribution and announced measures to compensate the bereaved family.

As the days went by, the outrage subsided, the meetings and protests ended. Friends and relatives of Anjali Dutta, who had flooded her with sympathy and support, became busy with their own lives, leaving her to face a harsh, ruthless and very lonely world with her eight year old daughter, Deepa, and as she struggled to survive, one question continued to torment her remorselessly—why to survive? For what reason was her husband, the one man who was so dear to her, whom she needed and depended on so completely, chosen to be murdered?

Choudhury, a diligent and high ranking police officer had long been disillusionsed by the immorality that he saw in the world of politics and crime. So intricate were the machinations of the political system that, even though armed with a statement confessing murder, he was powerless to arrest Ranjit and bring him, to trial. His growing anger and resentment, coupled with the self-disgust and guilt he experienced, drove him to carry on a personal war with Ranjit, who, for him, epitomised the essence of what had gone wrong with the society.

Choudhury devised a strange scheme that would perchance absolve both of them—by giving him a chance to convict Ranjit, and by giving Ranjit a sentence he deserved. Outside the realms of government and politics, courts and prisons, he placed Ranjit in a situation where, surrounded by wealth, prosperity and affection of his beautiful fiancee and his sister, he could experience, at extremely close quarters, the havoc and destitution that the bullet he had fired had caused in the lives of women like Anjali and Anuradha.
As time went by and Ranjit grew inevitably closer to Duttta's family, life in this strange prison became intolerable. Haunted by memories of the crime that he could not forget, tortured by guilt and remorse, he struggled to find peace, to retain his sanity. Now he sought answers to the questions he had not asked before—the same questions that Anjali and Anuradha had never found answers to. Why did he kill Arabinda Sarma? Who profited from his death? What purpose did his death serve? Did anyone achieve anything? He set out on a desperate journey seeking these answers from the people who had once promised him a new life by showing him a new way.

One day, the journey came to an end. On that day he left behind his lovely fiancee, Bina and his young sister, Kusum, to join the likes of Anjali and Anuradha to keep waiting for the answer.

The answer did not matter to anyone else.

Dr. Bhabendra Nath Saikia:

Among the major creative writers of Assam in the post-independence period, Dr. Saikia has a distinctive record as a person active in various fields of art, culture and education. An accomplished short-story writer, novelist, playwright, journalist and filmmaker, Dr. Saikia is also actively associated with the Mobile Theatre troupe, Assam, as playwright-director.

An eminent and much-awarded writer, Dr. Saikia has won National Film Awards for all the eight feature films he has so far made.

He started life as a physicist before turning to active literary and cultural pursuits in 1978. Presently he is Chief Editor of Prantik, a prestigious fortnightly magazine in Assam and editor of Sofura, a children’s magazine. He has also served as a member of several national institutions such as the Sangeet Natak Akademi, Sahitya Akademi, FTII and the National Book Trust.

Credits

Direction-Screenplay : Dr. Bhabendra Nath Saiki
Producer : NFDC-Doordarshan
Cinematography : Raju Mishra
Editing : Ujjal Nandi
Story : Dr. Bhabendra Nath Saikia
Music : Gautam Mukherjee
Sound : Hirendra Prasad
Art Direction : Nuruddin Ahmed

Cast: Jatin Bora, Ashish Vidyarthi, Dabashree Roy, Nipon Goswami, Mridula Barua, Pranjal Saikia.
NUMEROUS people have been killed, heartlessly, around me in the last few years. Whatever the political, social or economic ideologies may have been, I do not believe that the people responsible have made any contribution to those ideologies by these killings. Neither has the country or the society benefited in any way from these countless deaths. What has resulted, however, is a tremendous erosion of humanitarian values in society. I wanted to draw people’s attention to this fact and that is primarily what led me to make Kaalsandhya.

As a film-maker, I first decide upon the theme that I would like to work with. Then I choose the story that features this theme. I pick out the aspects of the story that I want to emphasize. Taking care to maintain that significance but at the same time emphasizing on cinematic beauty, I create my script.

I write a “shooting script”. I write down the individual shots in chronological order. Sometimes, while filming, two or three shots need to be combined or a particular shot splits into two separate shots. I seldom make any major changes in the original screenplay. Sometimes I may not film a couple of shots that seem redundant—other than this, I do not improvise upon the original script during shooting or editing.

In my previous films, I had dealt with the lives of ordinary people, their emotions, joys and sorrows and their personal experiences. The theme of Kaalsandhya has been derived from the current socio-political scene. Therefore there are differences in my treatment of this theme as compared to other films. But from the point of view of intellectual concerns, I think a sense of continuity has been maintained by me.

I have strong links with literature. In fact, I came to the world of cinema from that of literature. I have always made films based on my own stories. I do not mind if my films have a literary flavour and I want my audience to appreciate it. However, through the medium of cinema at times you can establish a more direct and
closer relationship with the audience, which makes it easier for you to put across your subject and for them to assimilate it. The message is carried much further. In Kaalsandhya I am making an attempt to take advantage of that process without compromising with the cinematic quality.

In Kaalsandhya, without any conviction in his ideologies, without any concept of a goal, a young man shoots and kills an innocent man in the name of "revolution". Then he is made to experience at close quarters the devastation wrought by his action and is compelled to seek an answer as to why he did what he did. This introspection and search for the truth, I believe, is the strongest feature of the film. Another important aspect is the portrayal of how a young man, basically a good man, because of prevailing social circumstances, finds himself helplessly manipulated into a self-destructive way of life—at immense cost to himself and those dear to him.

In this particular film, Kaalsandhya, I am most concerned with the film's subject (which is of great relevance at the present time). At the same time, I have tried to ensure that the cinematic language is not compromised. I give more importance to content as opposed to form of cinematic style. In literature, modern poetry has a particular form and style. I do not think such a form should be applied to cinema. Rather, the form of cinema should be that of a short story or a novel.

The subject of this film is intimately related to the socio-political scenario prevailing in the part of the country where I live. Therefore, one identifies oneself very closely with the theme. However, the issue depicted in the film has assumed global proportions. I have not indicated any specific geographical location as a backdrop for the events portrayed.

I believe that it is impossible to communicate the concept of a film in a satisfactory way without the cooperation of the actors and actresses. One of my most important tasks, before I start shooting my films, is to expound my concept and my vision of the theme to the cast. Especially in Kaalsandhya, because of the complex nature of the theme, I relied heavily on the performance of the artistes.

In a film, all artistes, regardless of whether they are playing small or big roles, share equal responsibility. I feel it is essential that they offer a hundred per cent of their ability—whether it is the hero or heroine or someone appearing for thirty seconds, I expect total commitment from them. It is true that the screenplay rests heavily on the shoulders of a select few in the cast. In this film,
they are Debasree Roy, Ashish Bidyarthi and Jatin Bora.

The character of Anuradha Sarma, the widow of Arabinda Sarma, played by Mridula Barua, is a brief role but it is one of the most significant characters in the film as one who exerts profound influence on the life and actions of Ranjit, the chief protagonist.

Even before I start shooting the film, it is essential for me that the cinematographer has a complete understanding of my concept. He is then able to engage all his talent and expertise to give me what I want. And I am always there, ready to help him to achieve this.

I sit next to the editor during the entire editing process so that together we work to make the story and screenplay flow more smoothly, effortlessly.

I have lived a life with strong ties to the land and people of India. My values, thoughts and perceptions are inherently a reflection of this. So, naturally, in the work I do, whether it is cinema, literature or theatre, they are given the greatest emphasis. In that respect, I am an Indian director. However, even when the theme and the way it is handled is Indian in its essence, a number of features in my films have universal connotations. Whether I have utilised my cinema as an international medium will depend on how well I have been able to depict this universality. I believe, an accomplished, sensitive Indian film-maker will always treat cinema as an international medium.

Naturally, I want that my audience should perceive and assimilate what I am trying to convey to them through my cinema. But one must realise that this depends to a great deal on the individual intellectual make-up of the audience. I do not believe in compromising the quality of my work just for the sake of reaching the audience. I want to be able to communicate with them at a particular intellectual level. And I believe that it should be the goal of all sincere film-makers to try to cultivate and nurture such a perceptive, tasteful and "serious" audience. This in itself is a tremendous accomplishment.

I find an unparalleled pleasure in making films in my own language, in my own region. There is a great deal of pleasure in exploring the characteristics, themes and situations unique to one's land and culture and then presenting those experiences in a creative and realistic manner. Finding talented local artistes is also a challenge.

Given a choice, I would always prefer to make films in my own region, in my own language. However, there are several ob-
stacles and the biggest one is lack of financial support. The kind of films that I like to make attract a limited audience and their numbers are not sufficient to meet the financial needs. Making a run-of-the-mill commercial movie just for the sake of making money is not an option for many of us. It is becoming increasingly difficult to attract distributors and exhibitors to serious cinema, and this has not only been very demoralising for film-makers, but has also caused many of their careers to come to a standstill.

Unless a widespread awareness and sense of appreciation for good cinema is created among viewers by using popular media like television and by programmes undertaken by the various film-related agencies and institutes, unless an effort is made to give the people who create good cinema their due recognition and provide them with some kind of financial security, I do not believe that quality cinema has a good future in this country.

The commercial films that have become a part of our culture cater to and incite the very basic and elementary tastes of a vast audience. Some characteristics of these films have begun to influence serious cinema. A section of film-makers is sitting on the fence separating the two, trying to find a foothold on both sides. By doing this, they are doing substantial harm to the cause of good cinema. This, I think, is a significant trend emerging on the Indian cinema scene.

A story, of nature and humanity, rich in beauty and creativity, written on the screen by the camera. That is my definition of film.
KALIYATTOM
(The Play of God)

130 mins., 35 mm, col., Malayalam

Synopsis:

An indigenous adaptation of Shakespeare's Othello.....

The theme of Kaliyattom is set against the backdrop of the traditional art form, Theyyam. The situations and sequences in the Shakespearian play, Othello, have been adapted to be in absolute tune with Kerala background.

The traditional concept of Theyyam, the divine art-form, is that the Theyyam artist assumes the dimensions of God when he is in his performance and crest.

Theyyam is performed by the members, belonging to Vannan and Malayan community.

The film is an analytical examination of the subject of power at multifarious levels, and these levels are revealed through the story of an ace Theyyam artiste, Kannan Perumalayan. He falls in love with a beautiful upper-cast girl, Thamara against the wishes of her landlord father. The dark-complexioned and complex-stricken black Moor, Othello, has been transformed into Kannan Perumalayan,
who is replete with scars of childhood smallpox. The character of Iago becomes Paniyan, a Theyyam who provides comic relief in the festivals. With a motiveless malignity and devilish delight, he induces paranoia in Perumalayan.

The malevolence of Paniyan reaches its culmination. Kannan Perumalayan commits the gruesome murder of his wife, when his divinity has been left incomplete, as the process of dressing up as Theyyam was yet to be completed.

Jayaraaj:

A graduate in electronics and telecommunication engineering, Jayaraaj arrived as a film director with the proverbial bang. **Kudumbasametham**, his first feature film, received five Kerala State Film Awards in 1982.

The musical score of Jayaraaj’s films has been one of the highlights in his feature films.

The 1996 production **Desadanam** received the Jurys Special Mention at Karlovy Vary and was shown at several international film festivals. The film won three National Film Awards and six awards in Kerala State, including that for direction.

**Filmography:** Kudumbasametham, Sopanam, Desadanam, Kaliyattam.

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**Credits**

- Direction-Screenplay: Jayaraaj
- Producer: K. Radhakrishnan
- Cinematography: M.J. Radhakrishnan
- Editing: B. Lenin-V.T. Vijayan
- Screenplay: Balaram
- Story: William Shakespeare
- Music: Gautam Mukherjee
- Sound: Hirendra Prasad
- Art Direction: Nuruddin Ahmed

**Cast:** Jatin Bora, Ashish Vidyarthi, Debashree Roy, Nipon Gowami, Mridhula Barua, Pranjal Saikia.
Synopsis:

Nagamandala is based on a play written by Girish Karnad. It is the story of a beautiful young girl, Rani, who, after having grown as a care-free lovable girl, is married to a village landlord, Appanna. Appanna has a girl-friend, Chelvi, and to win over Appanna, a girl has to match his physical needs. And Rani fails to win.

Appanna leaves Rani behind locked in the house and starts spending nights with Chelvi. Kurudavva, an old woman, who was responsible for the marriage, takes Rani in confidence and gives her a couple of roots to attracts Appanna.

Terrified by the concoction, Rani pours that into an anthill. The cobra that lives in it falls in love with Rani and enters the house as Apanna. Rani spends the happiest days of her life with the snake resulting in her pregnancy.
In the village court, Rani proves her loyalty. Finally the two men meet in a duel, and the snake is killed. Realising his mistake, Appanna lives with Rani happily everafter.

**T.S. Nagabharana:**

Over the last twenty years he has established for himself an immaculate position as film-maker, winning a string of National and State film awards for his commitment to the social and cultural themes of the country with an accent on rural life.

Emerging from his rural background, Naga Bharana started working in the theatre while still at school. Though he studied science and law at the university, he chose to go into the theatre thereafter, where he worked with some of the best in the field, before emerging as a creative and experimental director in his own right.

He soon extended his activities to the cinema and has regularly been working in feature films, tele-films, TV serials and ad-films. He was also to head a film institute for six years.

**Filmography: Nagabharana** has directed some twenty-five films so far, of which the most acclaimed are Grahans, Arveshane, Banker Margayya, Aasphota, Santha Sishunala Sharifa, Mysora Mallige, Chinnari Mutha, Aakasmiks, Naviddeve Echarike, Janumada Jodi, Nagamandala.

**Credits**

- Direction-Screenplay: T.S. Nagabharana
- Producer: Hary L. Khodaynan
- Cinematography: G.S. Bhaskar
- Editing: Suresh Urs
- Screenplay: C. Aswath-Surendranath
- Story: Girish Karnad
- Music: C. Aswath
- Sound: Arvind Kiggal
- Art Direction: Shashidhar Adapa

**Cast:** Prakash Rai, B. Jayashree, Varita Vasu, Vijayalakshmi, Ramesh Datatreya.
A DEEP RURAL CONCERN
T.S. Nagabharana: An Interview

What attracted you to the subject of your film 'Nagamandala', now selected for Indian Panorama 1997?

The folksy style, the dramatic element and its all-time relevance.

Describe the nature of your method in approaching the script?

I critically appreciate and analytically diagnose all aspects with a social purpose and commitment, hold intellectual sessions and then form a pukka script. Moderate improvements may be made (in it) to suit situations that are encountered during the film’s making.

How do you compare your new film with your previous films?

Novelty — I seek in every film that I make or direct, so that each film is distinct from the other.

Nagamandala has folksy style along with the narrative element, through lilting musical interludes... depicting a lifestyle near to a feudalistic rural one... the rich and rugged dialect... all in keeping with the endeavour to record a village and a Wade which were once full of life in northern Karnataka, but now submerged for a big irrigation project.

Have any new cinematic avenues opened for you through this film?

The invitation for making this film in almost all Indian languages and to make new films in Hindi and Tamil.

The strongest features of your film?

The novel theme, the folksy style; the purpose, commitment and concern — above all the relevance to the present generation, and, of course, future ones too — these are the strongest features of my film.

Is your film located specifically in the region to which the narrative is related?

Yes. The old Wade which existed yesteryear is now submerged. It is filmed and stored in a jukebox for the present and the future generations. The location was best suited to Nagamandala.
What emphasis do you place on the actor’s role in a film?
The actor is a medium or a transparency to communicate my concept of the film to the audience. In this film, I was impressed by the quick grasp of the new face introduced, to mention a specific example.

I cast Vijayalakshmi (who plays Rani) for her freshness, Vanita Vasu (Cheluvi) for her liveliness, B. Jayashree (Kurudavva) for her ability to typically live the role, and Prakash Rai (Appanna Nagappa) for his ability to give expression to my conceptions of the roles. I think the characters played by B. Jayashree (Kurudavva) and Prakash Rai (Appanna-Nagappa) are of greater significance than the length of the roles suggests.

What are your views on the need to communicate your intent to your audience?
The need to communicate my intent to the audience is a social commitment and a deep underlying rural concern—purposefully seeking to educate, inform and entertain the audience.

And when you try something new or experimental?
To present the novelty and experiment in the best possible and simple manner, to make it easy for universally common comprehension.

Who have influenced you most as a film-maker?
Girish Karnad and B.V. Karanth.

The ideas that have influenced you most?
Rural life, the folk style, social purpose, unity in diversity— the Indian cultural heritage, have always influenced me. And literature.

How do you evaluate the specific situation of the (language) cinema in which you work?
The regional language cinema has contributed a great deal to the Indian film. Many South Indian films have received accolades and appreciation in foreign film festivals. Kannada, the first daughter of Devanagari bhasha Samskruta, has a history of over 18 centuries and there is no problem in making a film in Kannada; but it rather boosts the morale of a Kannada film-maker, because of its richness, clarity and lucidity in communication.

What do you feel about the future of quality films in India?
Technically, quality films in India will have a super future.

What are the important trends emerging on the Indian film scene?
The first one is commercial approach. The theatrical approach dawned into relistic films and realistic films to neo-realistic films. Now, it is 'bridge cinema'—a combination of aesthetic sense and
entertainment. The evolution of a 'bridge cinema', as a good cinema, is emerging.

**Your personal definition of cinema?**

Cinema is a visual poem. It must build up instant rapport, hold the audience with rapt attention, communicate with moderate haste and give their dreams near-realistic visuals.
RUI KA BOJH
(Cotton's Weight)

115 mins., 35 mm, col., Hindi

Synopsis:
Old age is like a bale of thawed cotton, apparently weightless, but every passing moment of time (age) makes this bale of thawed cotton more and more wet, and it soon becomes so heavy that every one wants to throw it off. **Rui Ka Bojh** is the story of such a bale of cotton.

Kishunsah is a self-respecting wise old man who decides to divide his property among his family the moment he smells that all is not well between his sons and daughters-in-law.

As the father is the only property which any brother would happily leave for the other brothers, Kishunsah too is very generously donated to the youngest son Ramsharan.

Ramsharan is very enthusiastic about giving his father a respectable retirement, but at the same time, he is vulnerable to his wife’s manipulations.
Ramsharan’s wife is a cunning woman. When Ramsharan asks her to give his father a litre of milk everyday to maintain his health, she convinces him that one litre of milk is the diet of a wrestler and if given to an old man, it would upset his stomach.

She follows the rulebook strictly and does not care even if the old man dies of starvation, but she will not serve him *makka ki roti* when he is suffering from dysentery.

He has three grandsons—Munilal, Chunma and Munma, who, with their behaviour and pranks fill the old man’s life with hope, joy and sometimes sadness.

Madhobhagat is a wise man who has seen life in all its colours, always boosting Kishunsah’s morale whenever he feels disappointed. He convinces him that a ‘vow of silence’ will solve many of his problems, and he would come to see him on the third day of his observing a vow of silence, but never returns. This is a turning point in Kishunsah’s life.

After the division in the family, Kishunsah settles down with his youngest son, but the honeymoon comes to an end sooner than expected. He too has to face the rewards of old age—the ignorance, the insults. He has no values now. One day, he is thrown into a junkyard room to live. He feels completely detached from the family and decides to snap all his relations and emotions and renounce the world for ever.

Can he do it? Is it possible to suppress his values and kill his emotions?

**Subhash Chand Agrawal:**

Taking his diploma in sound recording and engineering from the Film & TV Institute of India, Pune, Subhash Chand has worked in the Bombay film industry for over 15 years as a sound recordist. As a sound recordist his best known associations are with the feature films *Parinda, Raju Ban Gaya Gentleman, Kabi Haan Kabhi Na*; the TV serials *Buniyaad, Project Tiger, Chanakya, Reporter, Shriman Shrimati* and *Mrs. Madhuri Dixit.*
Rui Ka Bojh is his first feature film as a director. He has also been an active writer and has been published in leading Indian newspapers and magazines.

Credits:

Direction-Screenplay: Subhash Chand Agarwal
Producer: NFDC-Doordarshan
Cinematography: Mahesh Chandra
Editing: Aseem Sinha
Screenplay: Subhash Agrawal-Vijay Bhope
Story: Chandra Kishore Jaiswal
Music: K. Narayan
Sound: Vijay Bhope
Art Direction: Satyen Choudhary

Cast: Pankaj Kapur, Rima, Raghuveer Yadav, V.M. Badola, Sri Chand Makhija, Uday Nene, Amey Ambulkar, Rohan Mishra.
I have read a number of books and seen quite many films on the same topic. Had it not been for the style the book is written, I myself would call the subject of Rui Ka Bojh a cliche-ridden one. It's the language and the treatment of this novel that makes it qualitatively different from other similar themes. The most serious of the situations are handled in a most light manner. The most touching sentiments are conveyed in almost comic words. The writer has studied the age-behaviour of men very minutely. Their behaviour becomes highly unpredictable. They generate their own logic and reason.

The language of the story has its own flow and none's at a tremendous pace. This story has no ride-tracks. It runs absolutely on one track with Kishnu Sah, his family, the age factor and the social values with which an orthodox middle-class society is still bound. When you read a paragraph of the novel the first reactions to laugh but the very next moment one feels touched by the meaning of the words one has read. This is my first film. I tried my level best to finalise my script before shooting, incorporated as many details as possible. While shooting, I do not like to make any major changes in the screen play. If at all I got any new idea or if it was given by a colleague, and I think it could be useful, I would like to shoot it and keep it as an alternative.

But in fact in my film Rui Ka Bojh at the time of editing I changed the order of quite a few scenes towards the beginning. A director must keep his mind open at all stages of making of the film, both for the visual as well as the audio aspects.

I believe that a good film can be enjoyable too and every film director has a certain duty he owes to society. I believe the theme is the basis of a good film. If the story and screenplay are bad, I personally believe the content is most important. Only content can carry a film though, but not form alone.

I particularly tried that the cinematic style does not dominate or overpower the subject of the film. My film had a simple and
clear story that needed little or no cinematic style. I used very basic techniques as and when required. I was more concerned about the subject, the aesthetic values, the authenticicity of things and atmosphere, certain traditional values of society on which the film is based.

I believed the sentiments in my story are universal, hence they must not be restricted to any region or dialect. I used the most universally accepted dialect of Hindi, so that anybody living in any part of India, and who is able to read and follow Hindi should understand my film.

While communicating my concept to the actor, the emphasis I place is on the character my actor is playing. I try and give a verbal sketch of the character to the actor, so that the actor understands the role better and carries through my concept in a best possible manner.

Pankaj Kapoor’s contribution to my film is appreciable. He worked on his role. In fact, he worked on his role so hard that initially it irritated everybody, but when we saw the results we felt it was worth it. He always put his suggestions politely and these were quite useful at times.

The final casting of my film came as a blessing in disguise. For the main role, initially, Pankaj and Anupam Kher were contacted. The role Raghuvir Yadav played, was offered to many other so-called big actors, but none accepted the role. Similarly, the child artistes kept changing. But, finally, what I have in my film I am very satisfied with Pankaj who did a wonderful job. Rima and Raghu and everybody else contributed their bit to my satisfaction. The last moment change, Uday Nene, the child who played Chunna, was godsent. He gave a wonderful performance.

I define my style of cinema as a cinema which can be understood and enjoyed even by illiterates, both cinematically and otherwise. I want a minimum application of mind while watching a movie— a simple technique, a simple form and a clear narrative.

It is necessary to communicate your intent, your ideas, to the audience. But, I believe this communication must be in the simplest possible manner. A film-maker must bear in mind that everybody in the audience is neither a trained cinema person, nor has studied the abstract in subjective language of symbolism. Moreover, why should an audience be forced to guess or read the mind of the director in order to decipher the meaning of a particular shot.

I do not have any ‘Ideal’ to follow in the cinema, which may have influenced me as a film-maker. I started watching films as
late as 1972. Even during my days at FTII, Pune, while everybody watched films at the main theatre, I took to the badminton court. A person who could walk out of Roshomon and Z, one can imagine what kind of cinema lover he is!

If you ask me to name five foreign film actors and actresses, I can’t answer. If you ask me to name twenty Hollywood films, I can’t tell. In the last 10 years I have not seen ten films. I do not watch television.

But I am greatly influenced by people who worked selflessly and even at the cost of their lives gave great ideas, or did great works. People, who initially were nothing, but who achieved everythig through hard work and effort. It is difficult to list their names here.

From Copernicus to Jamnalal Bajaj, they have influenced my thinking. Helen Keller is my ideal and the life of Henry Ford my inspiration.
Synopsis:

The father and the son hold a special relationship in exercising a perception towards a vibrant social perspective. The father struggles and fights throughout his life to get freedom for the child. The son ventures into this world of freedom to experience life according to his own terms. When experiences of the old and the young meet and interact they converge on a point of doubt, dilemma and suspense in order to breathe and envisage a dream for a new vision.

A.K. Bir:

Bir is one of the leading cinematographer-directors in the country. After graduating from the Film & TV Institute of India, Pune, as a cinematographer, he began shooting ad-films and documentaries, winning a couple of awards for his ad-films and the Indian Documentary Producers Association's award for cinematography.
for the documentary *Maa Ooru*. He has not looked back since. Receiving the Clio Award in the USA and a prize at Cannes for his short-films *Born Equal* and *No Smoking*, respectively.

As a cinematographer, Bir also handled the second Panavision camera in the first unit of Richard Attenborough’s *Gandhi*. Bir has won three national cinematography awards for his work in the feature films *27 Down*, *Daasi* and *Aadi Mimansa*.

*Aadi Mimansa* was Bir’s first film as cinematographer-scriptwriter-director. It won a National Film Award and the Aravindan Award for the Best First Film of a Director, five Orissa State Film Awards and considerable international recognition.

Since then he has been making feature films with regular frequency. *Lavanya Preeti* received the Best Asian Film Award at the Osaka Film Festival, apart from national awards. His *Aranyaka* was selected for the Indian Panorama, 1994.

**Filmography:** *Feature Films—as Director:* *Aadi Mimansa*, *Lavanya Preeti*, *Aranyaka*, *Shesha Drushti*.

**Credits**

Direction-Screenplay : A.K. Bir
Producer : NFDC-Doordarshan
Cinematography : A.K. Bir
Editing : Assem Sinha
Screenplay : A.K. Bir
Story : Ramchandra Behera
Music : Bhavdeep Jaipurwale
Sound : Aqueel Khan
Art Direction : Chhel-Paresh

**Cast:** Sarat Poojari, Narendra Mohanty, Nelam Mukherjee, Neeraj Kabi, Tejal Kulkarni, Laxmi Devi, Sudhanshu Sekhar, Preeti Misra, George Tiwadi, Nirmalya.
What most attracted me to do *Shesha Drushti* was the subject of the relationship between an old father and his young son, which plays a significant role in presenting a vibrant perspective to social life. The father, who symbolises the past, being a freedom fighter, denotes the nature of freedom through introspection. The son, with his youthful exuberance, represents the present and exercises an impression about the character of the prevailing atmosphere, based on some practical experiences. When the experiences of the old and the young meet, interact and deliberate, they converge on to a point of doubt, dilemma and suspense in order to breathe and envisage a dream for a new vision.

Does the film-maker fully realize his original conception? In pursuance to a creative endeavour, one always falls short of reaching to that elusive perfection. But the human instinct, with the support of an intellectual exercise, when it is guided towards that elusive term for achieving the illusion, can only perceive its dimension through feeling. In this context, from the point of a concept to the present state of realisation of this illusion, has been very enriching and enlightening for me.

I write my own script. This helps me in exercising over the complexities of human nature and creating an abstraction in order to present the cinematic drama in its simplicity. Initially, I work through the idea freely in order to develop it into a story. Then I try to prune the narration by deliberating over its logical flow in regard to its dramatic progress. Subsequently, a cinematic style and form is planted into the narration in order to make it compact with regard to space and time. Then the images of the whole script are worked out by drawing sketches in order to develop a definite perception to its visual order. Invariably, this helps me in encountering the variables and unpredictables effectively, during the practical phase of filming, without deviating from the basic design of my script. But occasionally, I improvise during the shooting, through creative means to effect a solution to the problems which spring
out of a pragmatic approach to film-making. Due to the elaborate
exercise during scripting, the editing aspect is worked out in detail
in order to make the filming definite and editing more fluent.
Basically, these disciplines are meant to work freely and creatively
within a limited budget.

Every film of mine has been an exercise in the creative
exploration of the inherent characteristics of the problem which is
dealt with. But the theme of my present film, Shesha Drushti, has
tackled a complex problem like the concept of freedom in regard
to our national character, its political awareness and its universal
significance. Gradually, it leads towards an invisible realm, which
echoes the sound of the basic human instinct to seek freedom
against all odds.

In this film, there has been a conscious effort to exercise on the
cinematic style in order to project the human sensitivity with ref-
terence to the objectives of the theme. The time factor, the tempo,
rhythm, flow of action have been designed through the dramatic
sense and the cinematic sense to display the meaning carefully.

Every creative effort, after attaining its objectivity, leads me to
a state of vacuum. Hence I grope in darkness till I venture into a
new project.

Psychological drama, human sensitivity, visual choreography
and audio design are the factors which are handled with care to
make the experience of filming stimulating and probing. Even with
all the planning and conscious design, I learn to work under pres-
sure, to make intuitive decisions on the spot. It is a lot easier and
faster because I know well what the lenses can do, know exactly
how to get the effect and communicate that information to my
crew.

The film’s form represents the visual perception of an object.
Especially when an idea assumes a form, it is carved out of a
space. The content is the inherent energy which flows within it.
The strength of a form depends on the quality of energy which it
binds. From a creative point of view, with regard to the objective
and the intending experience, the defining factors take prominence.
However, the ultimate feeling is to be lyrical, lucid and flowing.

The idea is the first step which dawns over a creative mind.
Then the subject, inherent within the idea, takes shape over the
visions. Then the sensitivity brings forward the psychological drama
into it. Subsequently, with regard to the inherent characteristics of
the medium, the cinematic approach is guided into it, in order to
make the communication more expressive. In addition to this, the
craftsmanship or the style crafted into it, in response to the intellectual flair of the audience.

The vitality of cinema very much depends on the effectiveness of an integrated approach. Hence, every discipline with its inherent, interdependent and relative value, needs to be exercised with caution and discretion.

**Shesha Drushti** is in Oriya language, though some characters speak in Hindi as well as in English. The regional character and the social ethos adds to the distinct understanding of human nature. But the medium of cinema is so profound and powerful that it can transcend the specific social milieu into a universal understanding. My film has been an exercise in this regard to reach out to this profound and exciting impact.

In film, an actor is any person or, in effect, anything that moves and is moved by the story. It becomes a focal point of audience attention and interest, and undergoes some process of change, or fortune, as the story is told. Often the actor is a human being, but objects, events and animals are equally useful. Even rivers, cities, nations, diseases, and abstractions such as problems and revolutions have all served as ‘factor’ material.

The actors are the characters which carry a specific image in response to the audiovisual design. They carry a certain kind of energy, by which the film idea becomes physical. Hence they form a very integral part of my film-making process. It is an extraordinary quality of human nature to be able to outgrow the self and lead into an imaginary being. As a director, they are an extension of my sensitivity, dignity and pride. I always love to guide actors to a state of consciousness by which they enact the imaginary being with ease. In response to a spiritual understanding, they are my best friends during the filming.

The director is the film actor’s sole audience while he is performing. Only the director is concerned with the total effectiveness of this particular shot within itself and as it relates to the other parts of the film. Hence my intensity of observation of the actors and guidance to them are the same for every character. However small and big the role may be, each of them contributes to the total significance of the film.

For casting, I depend mostly on my intuition about the physical requirements of the role. I believe firmly that an actor can do things much better when he believes that he invented them. I never want to have an actor feel that he is directed. As a matter of fact, if there are two possibilities and the one the actor suggests is, in
my opinion, a little less effective than the one I would suggest—I let him do it his way because I feel I will get something in exchange. It becomes easier; it’s more right for him, even if it could be improved.

The length of the role of a character in a film has its relative significance. The smaller role has as much significance as the importance of the longer ones. For example, the character of the father in the film is quite small. Yet he lives all through the film even though he does not figure in most part of the film. This has been deliberately effected in order to keep the past, which the father symbolises, as a hidden stimulating factor to the probing human psyche. Thus he plays a pivotal role in unearthing the layers of illusions of the human character and its basic instinct which causes the mysteries, suspense and drama in life. At the other level, the son makes his presence felt throughout the film. He carries forward all the experiences to lead into the final climax, which represents the abstraction of human action, emotion and vision.

Film composition actually consists of two interrelated and interdependent aspects: internal composition, that is composition within the frame, and external composition, the composition arising because each shot occurs in the context of other shots. Hence the cinematographer is an extension of the director’s vision. In my case, having started my career as a cinematographer, I rely on my technical awareness on the aspect of the visual design. This does help me in organising the shooting smoothly. Hence, from a director’s point of view, it helps me in setting up the shot in regard to story motivation, logical physical placement of the characters, psychological motivation of the characters, the relative dynamics or effectiveness of one angle over another, continuity, the visual effects desired, the emotional effects desired, the editing plan and use of cutaways and intercuts etc.

The editor and the music composer are the other important members of my unit. But my basic method of interacting with them remains quite normal and natural. Through this process, I try to bring forward their creative sensibility. I always work with the music composer from the beginning in order to make him understand the kind of music I intend to use. Music in the film can never be ignored or discounted, even when the audience is not consciously aware of it, and even when the music is so low as to seem almost inaudible. Not only is music among the most effective of film-making tools, it is among the most flexible, at least when used
to create and direct emotions and psychic states of being. For example, the music for the climax scene of *Shesha Drushti* was discussed and composed before the starting of the filming. Only after that was the action conceived and choreographed with the help of a choreographer.

As a human being, I owe my existence to the world civilisation. As a citizen I owe my growth to the national ethos and as an individual I owe my identity to my place of birth, which is Orissa. These factors give a specific dimension to my consciousness and accordingly, I direct it to express myself. As a director, I look at the world as a dream and I strive to explore the mysteries, thrills and dramas inherent in it through my direct encounter with truth, fact and reality. As a director, I always work within the premise of creating simplicity of the complexity of an idea, through the technical means which remain subservient to my expression. It may be linear or nonlinear, according to the emotional experience aimed at. Hence, it is necessary to understand the machines as well as men, because it is through machines that my work is recorded and transmitted to the audience.

Just as there is a gap in perception among human beings, because individuals do not have identical systems of perception, there is a gap of perception between men and machines. No machine "sees" or "hears" the way human beings see and hear. As a director, I do not work in terms of scenes and sounds as I perceive them in reality, or even as I see and hear them in my imagination, but in terms of images and sounds as I know these will be recorded, channelled, modified and transmitted by machines. But in terms of execution, I strive to deliberate over the technical implication in its bare necessity within its parameter of sophistication. As a creative person I believe that, in this medium of expression, for an effective communication, the human factor is paramount. Though it is only through mechanical means that the director can communicate with his audience, the communication takes place in human terms, that is, in the realm of emotion and intellect. Hence, I always take up small human problems, which have a direct bearing on human sensitivity and consciousness and try to give a cinematic dimension to it which encompasses a universal spirit. I try to reach out my film to my immediate audience and gradually extend its impact to the international audience.

I would like to share the richness of my experience, understanding and awareness with the outside world. Being a free human being and a creative person I intend to express and commu-
nicate myself to the audience through this sophisticated medium, cinema, for their growth and development. A society, a nation or a civilisation may grow through a natural process, but it may not improve in terms of value and qualitative richness unless and until the refined vision is brought into play. Hence a film-maker tries to present something to the audience, through entertainment, without destroying the sanctity of one’s sensitivity.

Film is an extension of human expression, arising out of the socio-economic and political conditions. It assumes a natural course when the human mind gets matured through a relative understanding, sophistication and educative process, by interacting, reacting and acting with the existing phenomena. The quality of its expression depends on the kind of perception, the nature of imagination and the character of vision one pursues. But at the present moment, invariably, the form of expression has been more artificial than natural.

In the present trend of film-making, technology has taken an upperhand over the subject. In the process, the manipulative approach has been very dominating and the creative spirit has been sulking in darkness. Probably this is a phase in which the creative spirit will become more mature and come forward with greater values for the future.

Ideally, film is like a dream, in which it offers fresh air to breathe, a brilliant vision to behold, moving sound of silence to listen and flowing water to quench thirst.
SOUDA
(The Deal)

90 mins., 35 mm, col., Bengali

Synopsis

Souda is an unsentimental look at the responses of a lower middle-class family whose sole bread earner is knocked down by a rich man’s car on a stormy day.

The story delves into the minds of the family members: the victim’s wife, a jobless son, and two daughters, one married and one unmarried. They are faced with a painful choice between the man’s life and the two lakh rupees compensation that is promised to them if the man does not survive.

The dilemma brings them face to face with unknown ogres in the innermost recesses of their minds.
Nabyendu Chatterjee:

One of Bengal's leading makers of quality films, Nabyendu Chatterjee's latest, *Souda*, is the first tele-film he has made. It is his eleventh feature film. His two documentaries are as highly acclaimed, in particular his documentary *Bleeding in the Sun*, on the aged and reclusive painter Gobardhan Ash. It was selected for Indian Panorama 1996.

Nabyendu Chatterjee says that film has always been his first, and "genuine", love, though he also describes himself as "an ardent lover of life", with interests in writing lyrics, painting and observing life as it goes by.

His second feature film *Adwitiya* enjoyed spectacular box-office success in Bengal. With his next film, *Ranur Pratham Bhag*, he won the first of many National Film Awards. It was the beginning of his journey to many an international film festival, with successive films. *Parashuramer Kuthar* (1990) won the Silver Lotus and the Best Actress Award in India. *Atmaja* was telecast by the ABC network and *Shilpi* (1993) won the Best Film Award at the World Television Competition in Japan.

**Filmography: Feature Film**—Naye Raaste, Adwitiya, Chithi, Ranur Pratham Bhag, Aaj Kaal Prashur Galpa, Chopper, Sariscreep, Parashuramer Kuthar, Atmaja, Shioli, Sauda.

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**Credits**

Direction-Screenplay: Nabyendu Chatterjee
Producer: Nabyendu Chatterjee
Cinematography: Sakti Bandopadhyay
Editing: Nimai Roy
Story: Dulendra Bhowmik
Music: Nikhil Chottopadhyaya
Sound: Snajay Mukherjee
Art Direction: Radharaman Tapadar

**Cast:** Vasant Chowdhuri, Jay Baneerjee, Kajal Gupta, Chaiti Ghosal
What most attracted you to the subject of your film Souda, which has been selected for the Indian Panorama? To what extent are you motivated by a subject you may come across by reading, or do you first conceive of an idea and then go out in search of a script?

When I first came across the novelette on which the film Souda is based, the relational dynamism between the economic orbit and human relationships drew my attention the most. I wanted to explore the awkward, unuttered and always hidden link that tags the two. I wanted to portray in this film of mine this peculiar truth of life, with a special emphasis on how an implied element of life not only regulates the essential components, but also causes an irreducible damage in the value system, leading to identity crises.

To what extent do you think you have realized your original conception in the completed film?

I grow with my films. The original text acts complementary to my original perceptions and it is the fusion between these two that causes a tumult. All my films are virtually a cinematic rendition of that tumultuous multitude. My debt to the original therefore ceases to be a loan as it is transmuted to the level of wealth, followed by a process of spontaneous assimilation.

Do you improvise and add on to the original screenplay while you are actually shooting and then editing the film?

I never murder a film by finishing it on my writing table. I do write a script, but that only serves as a reminder of what to shoot. I always keep my options open while shooting and editing and I have always noticed, whenever the available shooting-situation does not match with what I have in mind, it is this crisis that triggers off a creative streak and channelises my thoughts and actions in a different way and the result has always been positive and better. In fact it is the improvisation that sustains the artistic sensibility.

How do you compare your new film with your previous films?

I like making films on issues that have a social relevance. So-
ciety, being a huge and compound campus of concepts, the films relate to different segments of society in particular and as a whole. This film is no breakaway from the continuing philosophy of mine, how I interpret life and all that it contains; but a projection of my exploring the largesse of human relationships, isolated for the purpose of enhancement and highlighting.

I have never found myself driven by any cinematic aspiration or ambition in particular. Whenever I am fascinated by an idea I feel like transcribing it into film, provided the same goes with my perception of life and world, and above all with my temperament. That way, in this film as well, my cinematic aspirations and ambitions have not been my forte, I have tried to put together whatever I have visualised on the issues presented in the film, and with the best conviction possible.

The integrity of the cinematic impact gained in this film speaks for performance in transience. The film on the whole is an introspection, a journey to one's innermost self. This quality, I noticed, did not die out or lose its brilliance even though life around us had not remained stationary—between when I first thought of the film and completed it.

What would you say are the strongest features of your film?

To put it in very simple terms, it is the interplay of the impact of ideal values on the psyche of the characters and the dichotomy expressed through the actions and a consequent appearing before one's self—that are the highlighted areas of the film. There is always a rhythm running that seems like the rhythm of life and it is set to be an ever-going stream that includes in itself the opposite currents as well.

What are your views on the balance between the cinematic style and the theme/subject of the film?

Diction in a film is very important. It is always a highly personalised element that varies from one director to another. Form or cinematic style contributes a lot in composing the diction. Diction is important because it embellishes the content, the subject a director wants to elucidate in his film. Without a natural spontaneous coherence between form and content, the over-all impact of the medium will be disturbed.

I always strive for a smooth balance between form and content. I believe that if the richness in theme is not supported by a matching standard of form, the message will fail to be put across with proper weightage. Inversely, a highly stylised making of a light, insignificant theme will nullify the entire endeavour.
Please define the emphasis you place on the actor's role in communicating your concept of the film.

Actors and actresses do play an important role in the film because although I determine what to present and what effect to achieve, they contribute to make real what I visualise of the characters.

Most of the actors in the film bear a resemblance with the characters they portrayed. Looks are the most important attribute that go into selecting the actor.

It so happens sometimes that some characters are better portrayed through symbolism and suggestion than through narration. That is why some characters do have a greater significance than what their presence suggests. Here in *Souda* there is Rinki, the daughter of the man whose car ran over the main protagonist. She deserves special mention. She represents the class of human beings who are flexible enough to overcome the stand-offishness that status imposes upon them. She is a character who starts from a certain point but when she ends up she is a different human being altogether.

How do you define your style of cinema? Do see you yourself as an Indian director or as a director working in an International medium?

I do not really believe in branding cinema as per the regional demarcation. When Kurosawa tells us a tale of a Japanese life, he is not only talking about Japanese life. The portrayal has a wider impact. I believe life-situations, type-characters, sets of emotions have a global significance. In my films I have tried to achieve the universality factor and when you are going to create something artistic, it ceases to be bound by any forced or implied limitations.

As a film-maker what are your views on the need to communicate your intent to your audience?

It is very important. Film-making does not make any sense unless it is intelligible to the masses. There must be a two-way communication between the film-maker and the audience. Erudition of both the parties enhances the level of the communication.

When you try something new or experimental in a film, what are the most important aspects that you keep in mind?

In a given situation, I always place it in real-life simulation and try to find out how far this is credible and how far weird.

The ideas that have influenced you the most?

Moments bloom and they wither. The spell in-between unfolds.
itself with an elaborate design. I have always been haunted by the indifference of this eternal design to the human endeavour. A nagging sense of lapse, loss and futility overshadows my thought processes.

How do you evaluate the specific situation of the (language) cinema in which you are working?

Bengal has always been a place of creative thinking. The people, the language, the culture, the life-profile have always struck me to be fascinating. Making films gives me a tremendous sense of command, originality, eloquence and comfort. This is true for any film-maker working in the region. There are, of course, some constraints, relating to equipment and finances mainly, which should be geared up for the better.

What do you feel about the future of quality films in India?

A good film always has a bright future in India, because the audience here is so reciprocative, sensitive and supportive. My anxiety lies with the growing influence of consumerism that has posed the greatest threat to the medium and, on the other hand, to the paucity of good film-making.

Since the last few years we have noticed a bankruptcy in the field of Indian Cinema, both thematically and technically. Original thinking and an original way of expression are both rare today. The dominating motif is to entertain people somehow. The most important utilities of cinema are not exploited in most cases. There are definite exceptions, but that is only a microscopic minority.

To me, cinema is a simulation of a specific section of real life that lifts us beyond the parameters of reality. Ideally, cinema should be a constant source of sustenance and solidarity.
THE OUTHOUSE

96 mins., 35 mm. col., English

Synopsis:

The Outhouse is about a young Anglo-Indian couple who have moved from a small town, Kolar, to the big city, Banglore, with their two children in search of a better life. They settle in an outhouse. Their problems begin when the wife wants to take up a job outside the home to meet her basic expenses.

Her husband does not allow this and resorts to violence and abuse to his wife. All of this is watched silently by the growing son. How the wife goes about achieving her goal is what The Outhouse is all about.
Leslie Carvalho:

A student of the New York Film Academy. After completing a basic course in film-making, Leslie returned to India to write, produce and direct his debut feature, The Out-house.

His student-film Cherish won critical acclaim. It deals with child abuse, as seen through the eyes of an Indian "exchange student" living in the USA. This was a short, ten-minute, film. Thirty six years old, Leslie Carvalho lives in Bangalore.

Credits

Direction-Screenplay: Leslie Carvalho
Producer: Leslie Carvalho
Cinematography: S. Ramachandra
Editing: M.N. Swamy
Story: Leslie Carvalho
Music: Gerard Machado
Sound: Peter Rajarathanam
Art Direction: Leslie Carvalho

Cast: Priscilla Corner, Ratan Thakore Grant.
The Outhouse was born on 18 September 1996. The shooting lasted for 12 days. Another day of shooting was required for a couple of additional shots and for the titles. Altogether 13 days. But I would say The Outhouse was completed on 29 August 1997, i.e., the day I obtained the Censor Certificate. This year-long delay was due to financial difficulties. I undertook one at a time. First for the shooting, then finding finance for editing and processing; then dubbing; then finding more finance, so on and so forth.

The Outhouse was possible only because of the hard work, dedication and cooperation and of course the great talent from everybody involved. It was like a small family getting together, pitching in to help each other, achieving something we felt had moved each one of us.

The Outhouse is a study of marital violence. A wife needs to work to supplement the family income, but the husband is reluctant, leading to violence within the family, which the couple’s young son watches helplessly.

Real life happenings are what motivated me to make The Outhouse: the violence experienced by someone close to me; violent happenings taking place in my social world; a realization of the way we treat each other because of race, gender and money; and my observations on how one covers up one’s insecurities by attempting to wield physical power over another human being.

My filmscript was hand-written. It took me around three months to write the original screenplay. I carried little bits of paper with me all the time and as and when ideas came, I jotted them down and added them to the original script. After I was satisfied, I re-wrote the screenplay again.

I do improvise and add on to the completed screenplay while shooting, because I’m always open to interesting happenings and new ideas and am open to contributions made by the artistes or the cameraman, and include these while shooting.
The Outhouse is my first feature film. My previous film was a 7-minute student film titled Cherish. It was a 16 mm, black and white film. The Outhouse being my first feature film, I was aware of some of the problems I would have to face in making it. I wrote the script merely to tell a simple, straightforward, uncomplicated story and I think I've been able to do that. Working on a shoe-string budget and with just a handful of helpers, I tried not to cram too much into the film. I wanted my audience to be an eye-witness to what's happening on the screen, unaware of the camera's presence and if my audience can feel for my film, that's all I can ask for and that is what I set out to do.

I think The Outhouse has a universal appeal. People can identify with its characters and theme, anywhere it is about a problem faced by women everywhere.

A theme as delicate as marital violence requires sensitive handling with an intimate cinematic style. I wanted the camera to catch every detail of the emotions and expressions of the artistes, as well as the surrounding objects, with empathy.

The film is located in Bangalore city. The location was of prime importance to me—the old lavish British-built bungalow and the little modern outhouses are essential elements to the nature and theme of the film.

I went about casting each and every actor personally. I had long conversations with each of them and discussed film, editing and their roles with them. The look of the actors chosen was very important; they definitely had to look the character they were playing.

For me, the actor's role is very, very crucial to the telling of my story. I treated this film like a play. I had rehearsals with the actors for 3 months. I wanted them to be totally prepared, since I was working on a very low budget. I could not afford too many takes. Most of the scenes included in the film are first takes. All the artistes have done a marvellous job. It was a great team effort. Everyone of us felt drawn to the theme and the screenplay and this led them to contribute generously to the quality of the film.

I had three very professional and understanding persons to collaborate with: Cameraman S. Ramachandra, the film editor M. N. Swamy and music composer Gerard Machado. I was very clear about my requirements, but also very open to their ideas and suggestions. It was a matter of getting the best out of everybody.

My film style is simplicity, direct and detailed. What is important is important. Anything unimportant and not in keeping with the theme must be discarded. I want my film to have a pace of its
own, in keeping with what I'm trying to say. Over-doing a scene is
not my idea of cinema.

I see myself as both an Indian director and as a director work-
ing in an international medium. I have been influenced by the works
of many American and European film-makers. Having lived in these
two continents for some 10 years, I am in a way able to view things,
compare them and analyse them; so while having my roots in India,
I see my cinema reaching out to a global audience.

As an observer looking keenly at life, I try and communicate
while taking into consideration all the elements of film-making,
blending these in a cohesive manner so as to present film-making
in an honest and true form, to communicate my intent. The Out-
house being my first film, I tried to stick to the basics, to handle just
what I thought I was capable of. As a film-maker I have been influ-
enced by lots and lots of individuals who have done great work in
the different departments of film-making. Actors, scriptwriters, cam-
eramen, editors, directors, teachers. One of the biggest personal in-
fluences has been that of Spencer Tracy, the actor whose timing and
under-playing of a role has fascinated me.

Some of the film-makers whose works I greatly admire are
George Stevens, Billy Wilder, William Wyler, George Cukor, Elia
Kazan, John Ford, Fred Zinnemann, Victor Fleming, Michael Curtiz,
David Lean, Akira Kurosawa, Ingmar Bergman, Vittorio Di Sica, Jean
Renoir and Satyajit Ray. My father always appreciated and recognised
good work; and the director and staff of the New York Film Acad-
emy, where I did a short course in film-making, instituted in me a
discipline and certain values of good film-making.

Art, i.e. the aesthetics in art, has always fascinated me. Be it
painting, the theatre, cinema, literature or comedy. But much more
than Art, it is real life that has interested me and moved me, and
ideas coming out of the living experience have influenced me greatly.
I am ever-mindful of life's little nuances. A childlike curiosity to
observe. The idea of freedom to be oneself, the freedom from con-
straints to allow oneself to grow both spiritually and intellectually
has always appealed to me.

A film should, hopefully, be total, i.e. there should be a begin-
ing, a climax and a solution if need be. Cinema should provoke the
audience to react to it. Cinema should help people understand re-
ality, which in turn would help them initiate change. Cinema, if it
cannot necessarily change the world, should at least change the way
we look at things.
TRAIN TO PAKISTAN

108 mins., 35 mm, col., Hindustani-Punjabi

Synopsis:

It is the summer of 1947. The frontier has become a scene of rioting and bloodshed. But in the village, where Sikhs and Muslims always lived peaceably together, partition does not mean much. Life is regulated by the trains which rattle across the nearby river bridge. Then, a local money-lender is murdered. Suspicion falls upon Juggut Singh - the village gangster who when not in jail, is carrying on a clandestine affair with a Muslim girl.

A western educated communist agent is also involved. A train comes over the bridge at an unusual time and the villagers discover that it is full of dead bodies of Sikhs. Some days later, the same thing happens again. The village becomes a battlefield of conflicting loyalties and neither the magistrate nor the police can stem the rising tide of violence. It is left to Juggut Singh to redeem himself by saving many Muslims' lives in a stirring climax.
Train to Pakistan is a study of characters under stress. It will excite the viewers, both intellectually and emotionally, as one is made to share the individual problem of loyalty and responsibility facing the principal figures of the story, and understand human implications of a momentous historical event.

Pamela Rooks:

She has staged a coup of sorts in making Train to Pakistan. For over two decades, novelist Khushwant Singh had been reluctant to part with the film rights of his much-talked-about novel, though innumerable film-makers had set their eyes on Train to Pakistan.

Says Rooks, who had first read the novel when she was 17: “I’m a Punjabi. My father is a Hindu from Lahore and my mother is Sikh from Rawalpindi. My father was with the British, and later the Indian, army escorting a train from Pakistan to India. The family sought refuge in a camp near Amritsar. I grew up on these stories.”

This is Rooks’ second feature film, her first being the critically acclaimed Miss Beatty’s Children, which won the National Award for the Best First Film of a Director and Best Cinematography in 1993.

Before moving on to feature films, Rooks was a prolific documentary film-maker and a television journalist.

Filmography: Feature Film — Miss Beatty’s Children, Train to Pakistan.

Credits:

Direction-Screenplay: Pamela Rooks
Producer: NFDC-Rooks A.V.-Pan Pictures
Cinematography: Sunny Joseph
Editing: Sujata Nirula
Story: Khushwant Singh
Music: Kuldip Singh
Sound: Narinder Singh
Art Direction: Nuruddin Ahmed

My father is from Gujranwala and my mother from Rawalpindi. I grew up on stories about Partition and Train to Pakistan was something I could identify with. I read the book when I was 17 years old and it left an indelible impression on my mind. As a film you could say it had all the essential ingredients a powerful story about love, courage, revenge and conspiracy set against a dramatic historical backdrop, but what appealed to me most was its message of humanism, which is what I set out to explore.

Writing a screenplay, based on a book as well known as TTP, is not an easy proposition. You face the danger of offending the writer’s sensibilities as well as an army of critics who will readily claim that you have not been faithful to the book and thereby done a grave injustice to it.

I took the risk of taking certain licences with the story and characters, as I felt it would help to enhance the dramatic and emotional impact of the film. I am always open to ideas, and if a member of the cast or crew made an interesting suggestion, I had no problem incorporating it. Books and Cinema are separate mediums and have to be treated as such. For me, it was important to capture the spirit of the book. It seems to have worked, since Khushwant Singh himself has showered the highest accolades on the film. I could not ask for more!

My first film, Miss Beatty’s Children, was also a study in humanism, but in many ways the two films are very different. Yet I view every project as a learning experience, whether it be a documentary or a feature, and naturally, my intellectual concerns and growth will be reflected in the choice of subject and treatment thereof.

TTP is a film that many film-makers in the past have aspired to do. That in itself was daunting, since I was aware that a lot of people would be watching and judging it. Besides documentaries, I had only one feature film to my name, and many felt I would not
be up to the challenge of handling a project like **TTP**. It also had a very "masculine" theme, which people thought would be best handled by a male director. It is commonly thought that women directors are best left to films dealing with social issues, women, children, etc. Hopefully, that archaic concept will be revised.

I think the film has a strong plot, which is lacking in most Indian films. All the actors have given very fine performances without the exaggerated histrionics and overacting we often see in the usual fare. The photography, costumes and music have all contributed in adding to the natural authenticity of the film.

The cinematic style, or one could say the treatment of the film, is also subject to many other factors. I had a tight budget and very limited time to make this film. I decided on a more intimate approach, since the lack of time and money were major constraints. Certain scenes would have been handled very differently if I had the choice and opportunity, but there is no point in dwelling on that now.

The choice of good locations was extremely vital for authenticity in a film like **TTP**. The film was shot on various locations in Punjab where the story is based. Having done two documentaries in Punjab, I was familiar with the landscape, the culture and the language of the people. But I still travelled and photographed extensively before I decided on my final locations. With period films you have to be particularly careful. Many villages in Punjab retain their old world charm, but many had electric and telephone poles and wires, TV antennae and new constructions that we had to remove or disguise, which is where a good art department came into play.

To cast a film like **TTP** a number of factors come into play: (1) the actors had to look Punjabi and have a basic, working knowledge of the language; (2) availability of dates, since we were shooting at a stretch and on a very tight schedule; (3) actors whose enthusiasm for the project would outweigh monetary considerations, as we had no budget to speak of—basically people who would not bring a lot of baggage with them.

To a large extent, I was very lucky with my actors. If you have the right cast, more than fifty per cent of the battle is won. Indian popular cinema is synonymous with exaggerated histrionics, so the focus of my direction was to tone down performances and present a more realistic approach to characterizations.

I do not like lazy actors, who expect every move and emotion to be presented to them on a platter. I worked for a long time in the
theatre, and as an actress I learned the importance of doing one's own research, improvising and basically moulding my own personality with that of the character I was playing. This obviously leads to more natural performance, which is further fine-tuned by the director to suit the form and content of the play, or film as a whole. I am what you call an instinctive director and this is the approach I tend to use with my actors, especially when there is no need to underestimate their intelligence or talent.

Cinema also gives us the freedom to do more than one take. So, if there is some dilemma, you can shoot a sequence in a variety of ways, especially if you have the time and budget, and then when you are editing, you can decide at that stage which take has the required impact.

For me, every role has great significance, no matter for what duration of time the actor is actually present on screen. It is vital for the person to be just right for the role. For example, a few critics commented that Rajit Kapur was wasted in a comparatively small role in TTP. I disagree. Rajit brought a wonderful sense of subliminal arrogance to the idealistic western-educated communist agent that he played in TTP. This helps to define the contrast and the development of his relationship with Jugga, the well-meaning, less literate village budmash played by Nirmal Pandey. If the two actors had switched roles, the impact would have been considerably lessened. In the final analysis, you have to see the big picture and not equate the length of an actor's presence to his or her histrionic ability; but what is required to make the film and story work as a whole. It is so easy to fall in love with a visual, dialogue or performance, which does not necessarily contribute, but is unnecessarily inserted. This slows down the pace or is a detriment in other ways, and can be a very real danger that the film-maker must learn to avoid.

For me the cinematographer is an indispensable part of the film process. He is the one who has to translate your vision onto the screen and so the relationship between the director and cinematographer must be based on mutual understanding, respect and trust. Sunny Joseph is not only a very talented cameraman but a wonderful human being. Facing the odds that we did in the making of this film, I was extremely blessed to have him by my side.

Editing, of course, is very important, since it is on the table or the Avid, that you finally see your film take shape. The ideal situation would be to have your editor present at the shoot, so that he or she is familiar with the material, but that is not always possible.
I have always been present for the first two or three cuts. By that time, the editor is familiar with the material and has a good idea of your vision and where you are headed. After that, I believe the editor should be given the liberty to play with it and then show me changes that might work for the betterment of the film. After we discuss this, obviously I make the final decision before we go in for the final cut. Again, it is very important that the editor respects your voice. If a film succeeds, everyone shares the accolades. If a film bombs, it is the film-maker who is normally blamed.

The choice of music has to be done very carefully. The ideal thing would be to give a script to the music composer before shooting, with perhaps some suggestions as to what you as the director have in mind. By the time you have the first cut and show it to the music composer, there is a good chance that most of the score can be finalized. Music must never overwhelm—it is there to add, not detract from the sequence in which it is used. I have sat through all recordings for the score of my films. This way, you can change and revise those pieces that may have earlier appealed to the ear, but may not actually work when you juxtapose it with the visual. It’s a fascinating process.

It is very important for me to feel a great passion for the subject I am dealing with, and in turn I feel the need to communicate that to my audience. Sometimes you succeed and sometimes you don’t. But I can’t make a film just for the sake of making a film. It isn’t the glamorous work it’s projected to be. It’s very hard work, time-consuming and very demanding. If the project moves you, then, of course, the sacrifices entailed become worthwhile. But the sense of accomplishment becomes so much greater when you reach an audience that appreciates your work.

I wish we could handle direct sound in India and master special effects to the extent that they have in the west. Unfortunately, we are way behind in both these areas in our country. If finances permit, I would bring in technicians and equipment from abroad, and do post-production outside of India where the technical know-how is far superior. What should be explored is the setting up of treaties between countries such as India and Canada, where co-productions would assist film-makers to tap into resources, financial and technical, and allow the exchange of talent in all spheres. Films could then be made for a decent budget and be of an international competitive quality.

I have always loved cinema. As a child it was a magical, escapist world. As I grew older I wanted to study film in the U.S. but
instead I fell in love and married a film-maker, and life took another turn. I spent a lot of time in the west, met people from different spheres of the film industry from various countries while working with my husband, and, gradually, I suppose, I developed my own sensibilities as to what cinema appealed to me most. I have never studied film per se. I wrote scripts, interacted with a cross-section of people, watched, listened and learned.

In 1986, I started work in television, making current affairs programmes and documentaries. In 1992, I made my first feature film Miss Beatty's Children, which was based on a novel I had written a few years earlier. But whether it be a documentary or a feature, I have always found each project to be a learning experience in terms of research, interaction with people and situations, improvisation, technical innovations or even dealing with government red-tape. Each project becomes a new experience, and what I am today is probably a sum total of all those experiences.

My first film, MBC, was in English and my second, TTP, is in Punjabi/Hindustani. I don’t think language should be a problem in the making of a film, if the film-maker has an affinity for the subject. Personally, I would like to have a working knowledge of the language that is to be employed in a film I am making. It makes a difference when controlling the nuances and intonation of your actors when they perform.

Many people believed that MBC didn’t do well because it was in English. I think MBC didn’t do commercially well because it was never given access to an audience like a lot of regional/art films. However, MBC was telecast at least 7 or 8 times. It was just never promoted correctly.

I strongly believe in the future of quality cinema. One just has to see how many “big-budget, big-star” films have failed in recent times. You cannot underestimate the intelligence of the Indian audience and keep forking out the same rehashed formula and expect them to pay for it. The films that are succeeding are the ones that have a different storyline and better performance value.

I think it’s a sad statement that as a country that makes the largest number of films, we have made no noticeable dent on the international scene like the Taiwanese or Japanese have. It’s certainly not due to the lack of talent.
Synopsis:

For millions of years this benign mother earth has been our home. We have consistently drawn substance from nature's infinite bounty. But what do we give in return?

Civilizations have risen and fallen, religions evolved around the world, philosophies and political thinking have been embraced and rejected. Man has conquered space and we daily pride ourselves on dramatic breakthroughs in science and technology!

But in the name of advancement are we not hurtling towards the destruction of all that has embellished this wondrous planet, all the glorious gifts of mother earth?
Sushma Potdar:
A director with the Films Division at Mumbai, she has been making a mark as a film-maker with a strong social concern and an ability to articulate these concerns through stylistically impressive visuals.

Credits

Direction-Screenplay: Sushma Potdar
Producer: Films Division
Cinematography: Anil Kumar
Editing: Harish Sutar
Story: Sushma Potdar
Music: Dinesh Kumar Prabhakar
Sound: Faiyaz Waris-Kamlesh Dwivedi
I was very clear about the objective of my film on pollution, A Place in The Sun. Pollution of a different kind—beneath the water. To make the concept interesting I evolved a story about a group of fishes who were subjected to water pollution beneath the reverberation due to the penetration of polluted atmosphere, chemicals and garbage. To overcome the effect of pollution they set out on a voyage in search of clear water. But, alas, wherever they go they find the water polluted.

In my animated film AIDS, based on preventive measures for AIDS, there was hardly any scope to experiment with the format. But in this film I treated the subject giving scope to my expression through animation. Maybe because of this my film has been recognised at national and international forums.

As a film-maker one is never satisfied with one’s work but when it is recognised at national and international forums it gives a sense of fulfilment to some extent. But, certainly, it is not an end of the road. One has to go a long way to achieve satisfaction through the medium. Every small step makes the path wider for one. I think it is just the beginning. I have a long way to go.

The ideas that have influenced me are from the environment around me. The biggest problem with me is I am never satisfied with the work I have done and look forward to new challenges. Our part of the country has lots of socio-economic problems and so long as there are problems, the future of cinema is assured because it gives you an outlet to articulate your concern.

The most important trends emerging on the Indian cinema scene are of crime and violence without much substance. But there is a ray of hope through some committed film-makers. Cinema in my opinion is a reflection of reality, with substance and creativity.
ANYAR
(The Outsiders)
27 min., 16 mm, col., Malay

Synopsis:
A document on three women who fought for their survival. Mariakutty, Aleykutty and Mary Roy have suffered silently almost throughout their lives from both inside and outside the family. They only needed a rightful share of the paternal property. Little were they aware of the unending struggle ahead in the midst of perpetual indifference and hatred.

The film Anyar anchors on the issue relating to the succession rights of the Syrian Christian women of Kerala and probes into the causes of their backwardness.

The Travancore Christian Succession Act stipulated that the daughters were entitled only to one-fourth of the paternal property possessed by sons in the event of death of the father who did not execute a legally valid will.

Following the merger of Travancore and Cochin unions in 1951, the Indian Succession Act came into force. But the Syrian community by and large refused to accept it.

The historic Supreme Court verdict in 1986 in a submission by Mary Roy providing application of the Indian Succession Act too was resisted by those with vested interests, including religious heads, bigwigs in society and Christian males.
Asha Achy Joseph:
The young film-maker combines her many years at work with a thorough theoretical background in communications. She is also working on a Ph.D. thesis on intra-cultural comparative comprehension of social messages in television in rural India, with Pune University.

Anvar is Asha Joseph’s fourth independent documentary, and her first on film. Her previous work was in the video format. She also worked as assistant with Shiv Prasad for the Malayalam feature Gauri and as assistant director (research) for the popular TV programme Surabhi in 1994-95, after completing her post-graduation in communications at Pune University.

Credits

Direction-Screenplay: Asha Joseph
Producer: Forum for Christian Women for Women’s Rights
Cinematography: Saji Kumar K.
Editing: Vinod Sukumaran
Story: Asha Joseph
Sound: Mohan Das. V.P.
ATHMEEYAM
(Spiritual)
82 mins., 35 mm, col., Malayalam

Synopsis:
"The film starts with a man who narrates the story to a lady. In due course the story itself is revealed through flashbacks. The changes in the main character is the story and it takes full shape in the end. The 360 degree crane shot with voice over and music make the last scene complete.

The story is about a woman who tries to commit suicide and a sage who comes to give her the meaning of life, and death.

"I was trying to talk about the meaninglessness of a desire for death and the preciousness of the desire to live. By using dream sequences, cliff scenes, and an appropriate soundtrack, a mystic atmosphere is created first."

— Nand K Kavil
Nand Kumar Kavil:

A graduate of History from Kerala, he also graduated in film direction from the Film & Television Institute of India, Pune.

Nand Kumar Kavil is presently working in the area of folk arts, and the theatre of Kerala.

Credits

Direction-Screenplay: Nand Kumar Kavil
Producer: Film & TV Institute of India, Pune
Cinematography: Sajan K. Jose
Editing: Narayanan, A.V.
Story: Nand Kumar Kavil
Sound: Ajay Kumar P.B.
Art Direction: Mohammed Razi
Every human being faces critical situations during his life span. In such situations he may lose his balance and choose the path of death. That may be the reason for the increasing number of suicides now-a-days. Psychological studies explore the various reasons behind each death. One such incident shocked me. I, too, had sleepless nights over the thought of suicide. Infected with such thoughts, I had been sinking into a state of meaninglessness. But when I analysed myself, I found that a person can survive through the strength of his own experience and self-analysis helps us a great deal to overcome such confusions. I thought this kind of a situation can be powerfully articulated through a traditional performer, because life is more ritualistic and more difficult for them. Though their performance has a routine nature, they continue to be beautiful. I was just trying to mix the complexities of death and art in Athmeeyam.

Being a Diploma Film, my film had undergone many limitations. For example, the film had to be shot within two hundred kms. of Pune. My film is in Malayalam, so the atmosphere should have been Keralite, for a real touch. Likewise, most of my artistes were not Malayalees and, therefore, I was forced to limit the dialogues. These were improvisations that I was forced to make. As far as the technical aspect was concerned, I decided to give a general natural tone to the film. For that, I chose two colour schemes. Flashbacks are shot almost in a warm tone and the Present Situations are shot in a cool green tone. As well, camera movements are high for Flashbacks and less so for Present Situation's. While editing, I tried to control the duration to 22 minutes; for that, I controlled the pace of the film, in such a manner that the Flashbacks had the maximum pace and the Present Situations the minimum. Music was also used accordingly.

The main challenge for me was to convince the audience about the inner conflicts of the main character without many dialogues. The real time and space of the story is very broad. I was just pack-
ing the whole thing in a limited time.

As far as my understanding is concerned, cinema is just another creative expression, like painting, writing, etc. The creative artist enjoys a kind of personal fulfilment when he completes a work. Films are like dreams. In that respect, I like to work in an international medium, because men everywhere dream. More than that, as a language enriches itself by imbibing words from other languages, cinema is also enriched by receiving various techniques used in international mediums. Even so I do have my own concepts about the so-called Indian films, i.e. films that reflect the basic rhythm of India’s unique culture. I like to focus my camera on Indian villages where the real spirit of our nation lies.

Any art-form which lacks the quality of communication, cannot be considered as an art-form. Being a highly influential medium, films should be highly communicative and informative. The work should be relevant, sincere and communicative. One of my uncles, who was a traditional performer and who committed suicide later, and my brother, who is active in the theatre, played roles in Athmeeyam. The ideas in the film relate to the real sufferings of the common man.

Any significant art-form that can stand the test of time would survive. That is the case with films also. There may be business in art, but mere business cannot be an art-form. I believe that if we find our true rhythm and strength, we can make a good film.

Gandhiji taught us to go to the villages and realise the culture of India. But our new motto is to go to the towns and enjoy a sensational cinema. Cities do not contain much truthful life. I believe the city cannot be truthful. But we are almost swallowed by the city and its activities. The trend now prevailing in the cinema is to imitate the city and its life.

Cinema should be a dream, a dream that is truthful and sincere to ourselves. When such a dream is shared with our fellowmen they too dream with us. We learn from that dream. And one day our dream may come true. Just as a person writes or paints or sings a song, we should have opportunities for making films, too. Good cinema will flourish if such opportunities are nourished and financial sustenance given to film-makers.
CHOOSING THE FUTURE

58 mins., 35 mm, col., English

Synopsis:
This film depicts the role of Election Commission and also depicts the Election-96. The film explains about the importance of voting.

Yash Pal Chaudhary:
Now Deputy Chief Producer at the Films Division of India, Chaudhary has been one of India’s top documentary film-makers for over 25 years.

Graduating in direction from the Film & Television Institute of India, Pune, he started his film career in the feature film industry at Bombay, before going on to work in radio. He joined the Films Division
in 1967. Widely travelled, he worked as the liaison officer for Richard Attenborough’s *Gandhi* and was the producer of *Nehru*, an Indo-Soviet co-production.

**Selected filmography:** as **Director:** Chandigarh, Krish, New and Renewable, Energy from Wind, Water and Sun, A Race With Death, Frame Within The Frame, Sohrab Modi, Anand Bhavan, Story of Ten Villages, Falsh Back.

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**Credits**

- Direction
- Producer
- Cinematography
- Editing
- Screenplay
- Story
- Music
- Sound

- Yash Chaudhary
- Films Division
- A. Anjaneyulu
- B. Mhatra, Rane M. Sawant
- A. Bengali
- Pratap Sharma
- Yash Chaudhary
- Ramanuj Das Gupta
- Subhashish Chaudhary
My film reflects the aspirations for choosing the future through the ballot in a democracy which has been paralysed due to corruption at all levels. The concept of the film has been depicted through free and frank discussions on the General Election-1996, and substantiated by an anchor-person. The content of a film reflects the true image of the society which has been captured in a candid manner and this is quite a satisfying exercise for a filmmaker.

The strongest aspect of my film is its frankness, captured through candid interviews depicting the people's aspiration for choosing a better future for themselves through the ballot box. It is a free and frank interaction between voters and intellectuals while discussing the future of the country through ballot papers. The film was shot in various regions of the country. The locations along with people play a vital role in the film.

The cinematographer played a vital role in this film while capturing interviews of people from different walks of life. The role of the editor was also significant as he has juxtaposed the appropriate visuals as per the contents of the interviews.

I have no style of my own except to capture authentic items through my medium.

As an FTII graduate, I have gone through an intensive training in the field of cinema and been influenced by film-makers of repute on the national and international scenes. Being a film-maker I am prone to all sorts of ideas which have a direct relevance to the society in which we live. Film-making is a passion riddled with problems and commitments and I enjoy it. I believe that the future holds lots of hope. A strong content is a key to success for any form of art, and cinema should reflect reality in an interesting manner.
DANCING FOR THEMSELVES

52 mins., 16 mm, col., English

Synopsis:

Spring denotes 'hope'. After a year's hectic journey, people tend to be soiled and tired. Along with spring, music of a new generation and hope of fertility symphonises. So rites in every meaning is precious and Charak is the call of rites of the spring—beginning of a new era. Chhow dance is very much an extension and culmination of these rites.

Dancing for Themselves is a documentary film on Chhow—an age-old performing folk-form of Eastern India, viz., West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Chhow, needless to say, has by now, won high acclamation in India and abroad. Cultural anthropologists, home and abroad, consider Chhow as one of the most potent and pregnant
folk-forms of the rich cultural heritage of India.

There are three different styles or gharanas of Chhow—the Purulia gharana, the Seraikala gharana and the Mayurbhanj gharana.

Other than the rainy season, the performers dance throughout the year—the season starting from the Chaitra Sankranti, the last day of the Bengali year—the Charak. Dancing for Themselves is an outcome of a laborious and strenuous research work, field-study and creative endeavour. Chhow is an open-air ground-level performance where the viewers sit round the arena and the dancers through their vibrant body-language give vent to the expressions, improvising quite often, while the musicians play instruments like dhamsa, dhol, flute and one of them narrates the mythological stories singing jhumur.

Chhow is a masked dance-form, though in Mayurbhanj, they dont use mask. Dancing for Themselves particularly deals with the Purulia and the Serikala style because, besides documenting the dance-form as a whole, this film has a focus on the relation between the face and the mask—the mask transforming into the face, the face transforming into the mask. The Purulia mask depicts mythological characters like Durga, Shiva, Parashuram, etc., while the masks of Saraikala are abstract depiction of nature and moods like storm, ocean, peacock, etc.

Most of the performers know the art of mask-making, though there are artisans who make mask for them. Charida, a village in the Purulia district of West Bengal is one such example where the main source of livelihood for the villagers is mask-making.

Maestros like Padmashree Guru Gambhir Singhmura, Padmashree Guru Sudhendra Narayan Singhdeo, and Guru Kedar Nath Sahu have spoken in detail about Chhow in this documentary film. Dancing for Themselves meticulously documents all these aspects of the dance and mask-making in a humane attitude. In short, the film is a documentation of Chhow dance as well as the Chhow community, their grief and sorrow, joy and struggle.

Jiban Saha, Shidhartha Samaddar and Arun Halder worked together as film makers in Dancing for Themselves.
Jiban Saha/Shidhartha Samaddar/Arun Halder:

Jiban Saha worked as a director and reporter of news episodes of Calcutta Doordarshan. Also worked in the national award-winning feature film, Nagmati. Worked in Bengali T.V. serial, Mahua Sundari. A script writer in Art of Poetry based on eminent painter, Jamini Roy for Doordarshan.

He is a graphic designer in different films and T.V. serials, namely, Portrait of an Actress, Thakurbarir Chitrakala and Arati.

Working as an experimentalist writer, editor of magazines Ekhon-Ei-Rakam and Barnaparichay for the past twelve years.

Shidhartha Samaddar worked as assistant director in Mohua Sundari and is writer of Pakasthalir Dant Nei, a highly explosive and experimental book in Bengali literature about which it is still talked about.

Arun Halder is an eminent U-matic film-maker in India, specially working on Bhutan and Bhutanese culture, and is an eminent photographer.

Credits

Direction-Screenplay: J. Saha-A. Halder-S. Samaddar
Producer: Isabelle Halder
Cinematography: Madhu Shi
Editing: Mahadev Shi
Music: Gautam Chatterjee
Sound: Sadhan Das-Rajjak
Art Direction: Hiren Mitra
Purulia and Seraikala are the two places in the fringe areas of West Bengal and Bihar states. Life there revolves around chhow, a folk art-form, which is being practised, cultured and presented for years by the inhabitants of the area. Their dreams and desires, joys and sufferings, smiles and tears, and also their love and emotion, find expression in chhow. This intimate bond between the art and its artistes kindled the fire in me.

As a cultural activist, I had the opportunity to spend a long time in close proximity of these artistes. The depth and extent of my realization of the deep-seated inner relationship between the art and the artist was too large to be projected fully in a documentary of medium length. In our film we have in fact tried to decode the underlying codes of the lives of the chhow dancers.

I took off from a highly coarse version of a script, which was by and large changed, corrected, modified and improvised at the time of shooting. This intimate bond between the art and its artistes kindled the fire in me.

I would like to ask my audience to notice in our film how intense the inner bonding between the art and its artistes can be; how the artist can be entirely consumed by his art, and how the life of a community can be directly controlled and influenced by its very own art. In fact, we are specifically thrilled and moved by the way in which the chhow dancers select their motif and apply it on stage. That is why our film has been aptly named as Dancing for Themselves. We could not think of a second name.

Not only in cinema, but also in any form of art, the artiste has his philosophy (theme) on one hand and the images (verbal, non-verbal, or both) at the other. In creation, if one or the other dominates or overflows, it's bad art. But a judicious balance between the two takes the creation to its artistic height.
A particular theme always calls for a specific style. This alchemy is automatic. The artiste must groom himself to understand and imbibe this alchemy. Otherwise, the creation becomes either theme-heavy or style-heavy. Whenever at work, we look for a balance. The places, Purulia and Seraikala, have figured in our work in a very important manner, so much so that they may well be treated as the home-address of our film. But as far as the universality of film language is concerned, we are confident that our work has the ability to transcend the regional borders. In fact, the film has its appeal to all who are concerned in a certain way and who love to live with art.

In my role as a cultural and communication activist, I am continually being exposed to the inner conflict between the man and his environment. This interaction is the guiding force and the prime influence in my life and work.

A film-maker’s strength and problems, like any other human mortal’s, directly evolve from the socio-economic and geographical factors of his location. Hence, my strength and hurdles are typically Bengal-like. As the number of documentary-takers is still to multiply manifold before it looks handsome, the documaker has to sustain on rare generous sponsorships. The picture here is very grim. Fortunately, there always remain a few gifted people who have the ability to live ahead of their time. They are the ones to listen to our cinematic tantrums. Another disappointing side of celluloid filmmaking is that most of the projection centers are video-projector-based. So, for a mere screening, you have to convert your stuff to video format with lots of sacrifice in quality.

In our college-going days we used to see a few informative shorts before the main screening of the day’s film. Why is the practice no longer in force? Cinema is meant for communication and a man makes a film to reach wider cross-section of humanity. But I am in fact very optimistic about quality films in India.

So, many good films are Coming up nowadays even outside what is conventionally called Mainstream cinema. I am yet to ascertain dismay how exactly one fine morning some diehard commercial ventures came to be labeled as Mainstream Cinema. However, it is heartening to observe that quite a few good films are also being made, which can touch all layers of our existence. Another interesting thing to note is that most of today’s directors are searching for a harmony between man and society, instead of forcing one, on the other. A good film is a combination of the contemporary intellect with the most modern technique, with a judicious balance between the two.
In the process of making *Dancing for Themselves*, I was inspired by the idea of collective mode of making a film, as well as experience, explore and find a way with an ‘independent-approach. Besides, the content matter, I suppose, personally I was facinated by observing a community of mask-makers and dancers, who transcend a very important memory back to our ever-developing modern society. At the conceptual level, the ‘original’ thought grew over the years as the film progressed. Obviously, improvisation in the whole process took place throughout. My cinematic aspirations have gone through several stages and have made me aware about so many aspects of film-making of this kind.

Referring to the strongest features of our film, I would say, it is the film mode that we have worked on keenly. At the same time we tried to depict an age-old tradition of *chhau* dance and the artisans concerned. Potent in martial art and theatre forms, a diverse wealth of costumes and drama, vibrant in its movement, the community of these rural artisans do have a life of their own. We tried not to be opinionated but to observe beyond a structured anthropological interest. Locations in the region of Bihar and Bengal offered the film an enormous visual lyric and portrayed the micro-macro aspects.

The nature of collaboration with the cinematographer and the edition was engrossing. Madhu Shi and Mahadev Shi as cameraman and editor, respectively responded to an optimum level. We got the music designed by Goutam Chatterjee, a national award winning film-maker himself.

I do see myself as an ‘Indian director’ who is wandering and enriching himself, at times away from India. The whole process of the journey makes sense with this versatile international medium as I work with European independents as well. A tremendous sense of the need to communicate to the audience is the driving force, I believe. Trying out a different language pattern that is emerging out of this journey, I wish to communicate as widely as possible.
In this film, we had an experimental attitude, which opened up room for happy accidents and unexpected events. I think the most important factor is to balance content with form and, I believe, the quest is for a ‘film’.

I think, Indian cinema is very potent and creative in its alternative expression. The social impact could be raised by the film federation movement as well, because the audience are much interested in such films, which to me is a very exciting development to observe. I believe, film has evolved in various expressive modes. Therefore, for me, film does not abide by any particular definition of what it should be. Ever-expanding as it is, personally I would like to think that the definition of a film can be discovered continuously.

So many figures have influenced my film idea: Ritwick Ghatak, K. Sahani, Goutam Chatterjee, Cassavettes, Fassbinder, Herzog, and so on—too many to name.
FOR MAYA

38 mins., 16 mm, col., English

Synopsis:

This is a film that explores the lives of three generations of women, ending with the fourth, which is just about to grow up. Through the film we understand the changes that have taken place in the lives of women, and how rapidly the situation is changing with new aspirations replacing the traditional patriarchal form which has given way.

Shot in Almora, Garhwal, Lucknow and Calcutta, where the fourth generation lives, the film also explores the way women are socialised into being ‘good girls’ through the awesome power of myth, and of course, the family.
Vasudha Joshi:
A trained sociologist, Vasudha Joshi has made a name for herself as a documentary film-maker, full of insight and concern.
She started off as a reporter-researcher for documentaries and as a freelance correspondent for the PTI TV organisation.
Her first documentary, Voices from Baliapal (1988), which she co-directed and co-produced, won a National Film Award and the Golden Conch award at the Mumbai International Film Festival (1990) and the City of Freiburg Award in 1991.

Credits:
Direction-Screenplay : Vasudha Joshi
Producer : Vector Productions
Cinematography : Rajan Palit
Editing : Reena Mohan
Story : Vasudha Joshi
Sound : Suresh Rajamani
THE FAMILY REVISITED
Vasudha Joshi

The subject of my film For Maya came about consciously because I was commissioned by the Foundation for Universal Responsibility to do a film on gender for 50 years of Indian Independence. The more I thought about it, it seemed to me that 'gendered' relationships are most visible within the family, and I began toying with the idea of doing a documentary of three generations of women in a family. And then, I thought I might as well do it on my own family that I know best. I had been toying with a documentary, partly based in Almora, but that was a different idea, though there are overlaps with this film.

I think I have come close to what I had in mind when I planned the film. I had a written script, but this was inevitably modified in the course of shooting and editing the film. For me, this has been an opportunity to make a more personal and intimate film.

My first film (and subsequent ones too) was a 'political' one — Voices from Baliyal. What tends to happen is that you get quickly branded as making only a particular kind of films.

So, if at all, you are also very likely to get only that kind of work. This is frustrating, because though I may be concerned with social issues, that doesn't mean I don't want to explore different ways of story-telling and more personal narratives.

I think what I enjoyed about making For Maya was being allowed to (and funded to, which meant no financial tensions) tell a story without interference or a preset agenda determining the film (beyond the broad one of gender).

I have always experienced working on a film as a collective process/project—even if, as in this case, the material and characters are close to me personally—because close cooperation with the cinematographer, editor and sound recordist is crucial for me.
HYPNOTHESES

26 mins., 35 mm, col., Hindi

Synopsis:

A man finishes breakfast and leaves his house. Another applies for leave in his office. A third finishes his tea and gets out of the canteen. Another gets himself shaved; while leaving he steals the shaving razor.

All four are partners in a joint venture. They are fresh entrants in the world of crime, kidnapping to be more precise.

The kidnapping is successful, except for one hitch. The father of the kidnapped boy refuses to pay up. The son has already played this trick on his father thrice before and collected good ransom. The father does not believe this time it is a real thing.

The kidnappers get desperate. The son has an idea. The plot thickens.
Rajat Kapoor:

Studied film direction at Film & TV Institute of India, Pune, passing out in 1988.

His first independent film was Tarana, 25 mins., 35 mm, based on the Hindustani classical musical form. It won the National Film Award as the Best Non-Feature Film of 1995 for "its excellent cinematic interpretation of a traditional mystic music form." It also won the Best Cinematography Award for "the beautiful images achieved through fascinating camera movements, excellent lighting, composition in tandem with music."


He has also been working regularly in the theatre.

Credits

Direction-Screenplay: Rajat Kapoor
Producer: FTTI, Pune
Cinematography: Rafey Mehmood
Editing: Vandana Kohli
Story: Rajat Kapoor
Music: Kedar Awti
Sound: Hari G.
Art Direction: S. Banerji
There Exists Only Time-Space
Rajat Kapoor

Hynothesis was a peculiar project in the sense that the format was given. It was to be a short (20-25 mts) film, fiction, using the actors from the acting course at FTII.

I had conducted workshops with these actors at FTII. Now there was a question of a script for five actors. That was another given. Five faces, all male, belonging to different points of the country. The film should have five equally defined and balanced characters.

The script had to accommodate these givens.

But the basic impulse, the first thought, the germ, believed the script was the actor and kinds of performative idiom. We wanted to move from a naturalist performance to a degree of stylisation and finally to complete theatricality and to discover the relationship of these styles to the camera. Well, these ideas were at the back of the mind when I started writing the script.

We arrived at a rough but well worked-out script in terms of the scenes, narrative development, dialogues and the plot. Work on locations, sets, costumes, colours, lighting followed. But the film was making itself through the ten days of shooting. We (the plural is for the cameraman Rafey Mahmood and me) would go to the location/set each day and work on the taking at the moments—trying out things, rejecting them, doing it again and doing it one more time, till both of us were reasonably happy with the shot. Then move to the next. The same process continued during the edit and mixing work. A long one and a half-minute shot could become nine small shots. The film remakes itself. The rushes become the raw material and a new process begins. Only at the mixing does the film come together into its final shape and stops working.

In a way Hynothesis is a small companion piece to the feature film Private Detective I had written and shot the year before, but completed a year after Hynothesis. I feel Hynothesis and Private Detective are a couple together. Very different personalities,
different looking individuals, but compatible nonetheless. For instance, the feature film concerns itself with stasis, with slowness, and the short film with movement. Whatever was unfulfilled in me after *Private Detective*, found an outlet in *Hypnothesis*.

Each film tries out something different, something new, push the borders a little further, try and stretch your aims some more. With this particular film I have attempted to bring my work in theatre close to the film work. That has been satisfying and possibly a new direction for me. Performance has been a key concern for me. I think, I’ve attempted something more this time.

In truth there exists only time-space. It is one. If you can tell the two apart, if you can say this was the content and this is the form that it has, then the work doesn’t exist as an organism—one has been imposed on the other, the growth was not organic, not true to its essence.

Any work worthy of being called art finds an expression that is truest to its core and it is beautiful only because the form emerges from the content and at the very moment it changes and redefines the content. One acts on the other, then the other way round, and that is the process.

Usually film-makers complain a lot about actors, about their egocentricities their anxieties, their selfishness. My experience with actors has been very different. I don’t deny the existence of the above type, but there is another creed of actors—who think beyond their roles, who see themselves as a part of the complete work, who collaborate and contribute the process.

I have worked in theatre for many years, especially with a theatre troupe in Delhi called *Chingari*. And we have had actors who are passionate, generous, giving, courageously ready to try anything. But most important they’ve immense faith in themselves, in the process and in their partners in collaboration. Working with these actors has been a pleasure, a constant give and take process where the actor reshapes the overall design, even while submitting to it.

Of course, the work of an actor is different in film. The fears are also bigger, the anxiety greater. The actor feels more threatened, more fragmented and completely powerless. But then the truly creative process cannot begin till there is mutual trust. The film actor is in fact giving himself as completely to the director; he/she places enormous trust in the film-maker. The film-maker is responsible to never break or misuse this trust.

The experience of working with the cast of *Hypnothesis* was very pleasant. The actors worked on the film not for any remunera-
tion, but like it was their film. They were a part of the process from the very beginning. We discussed the script together at every stage of its development. Something even emerged out of the improvisation workshops we did before the shooting began. The specific work we did was for each one to find a walk. This work went on for many gruelling hours over a week or so. I felt once they found their specific way of walking (for the circus scene—and spreading backwards from there) they would discover the parts they were playing. And this is the only work we did on character definition.

All three films I’ve made to date—Tarana, Private Detective, and Hypnothesis—have been shot by Rafey Mehmood. We spend a lot of time together before the shooting begins. Sit over the script; once the script is finalised we work out the design element, the look, lighting (broadly), colours, textures, and the individual rhythm and feel of each scene.

Then we try and spend as much time together as possible at the location, work out the properties, costumes and other production details.

But the actual shot never, never gets planned before the moment of shooting. What lens to use, how does the camera move, the camera angle and framing/composition are arrived at while shooting. This process may cause a little more anxiety than going to the shoot with a good shot breakdown, but I feel it is more fruitful.

The cinematographer makes the film with the director. I think it is wrong to think of the cameraman as someone who comes in from the outside and does a good or bad job of composing and lighting. For films that are born at the moment of shooting, the cameraman is as much a part of the creation as the film-maker. For me, it is impossible to separate Rafey’s contribution to a frame from my own.

The sound recordist is a key technician, sadly overlooked and relegated to a background. We take sound for granted while watching a film—it is just there. And we don’t know how to listen. But the sound recordist, if he/she has a passion for the medium, can contribute enormously.

The audience comes to watch a film, to see something new—unfortunately they go back getting the same old thing. The impulse to go for a concert, a theatre performance, a film is to gain a new way of looking; to get a glimpse of some truth; to get a new insight into things; to understand life and living a little better; to be able to share another’s experiences, another’s world view. That is the intent. Or at least that is the kind of audience we are looking for. That
is what we want from the audience. Enough of the audience demanding this and that, let the film-makers demand something more from the audience, for a change.

The best thing that has happened in the Indian film world in the last five-six years is the Bombay festival for short films and documentaries. It is amazing how a singular initiative like that has resulted in a spirit of activity on the short film circuit. An example of what a little support can do to encourage the makers.

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A film could make us see.
Make us see things that we always looked at but never saw.
Make us see things that we didn’t know existed.
Make us see things that we never saw.
Make us see things that we always felt were there, but never grasped.
Make us live better, see better.

Rajat Kapoor
Synopsis:

The literary odyssey of the great writer M.T. Vasudevan Nair begins from his village, Kudallur, in Kerala beside the River Bharatapuzha. The documentary traces the evolution of the writer and explores his literary landscape. The film is an attempt to portray 'M.T.' as a person, a cultural activist, a film-maker and screenwriter, and above all, as a writer.
Harikumar:
He is one of the highly reputed directors in Malayalam cinema. While a student, he had actively worked in film societies, written articles on cinema and also short stories. Started his film career as screenplay-writer before turning to direction. His first film Ambal Poove won him wide acclaim. He has till date directed ten feature films of which Jalakam and Ayanam have been praised highly. Sukrutham fetched him National, State and other prestigious awards.

He was a member in the Screening Committee of the Kerala State Film Awards in 1992 and the National Film Awards in 1996.

Kadhayum Kalavum is his first biographical documentary.

Credits
Direction : Harikumar
Producer : Kerala State Film Dev. Corn.
Cinematography : Jayan
Editing : K. R. Bose
Sound : N. Hari Kumar

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What attracted you the subject of your film which has been selected for the Indian Panorama this year?
M.T. Vasudevan Nair's personality as a creative writer and filmmaker.
Have you realized your original conception in the completed film?
To a very large extent, yes. I, by and large, make feature films. This is the first time I did a biographical documentary. Within the parameters of this film, I have realised my cinematic aspirations to a great extent and it has opened new cinematic avenues for me.
What would you say are the best features of the film?
That I have highlighted the subtle aspects of M.T.'s personality and attempted a profound study of his works.
Your film would be located at specific locations, being a biographical documentary?
Yes, the film has been shot entirely on the locations connected with M.T.'s life and times.
How would you define your cinematic style?
It is the theme that decides the style of my cinema. Basically, I am an Indian director, but I am conscious that I work in an international medium.
My method of working is to have a perfect rapport with my cinematographer, editor and music composer.
First and last, I want to communicate with my audience, and want them to enjoy my films.
What is it that you wish to achieve through experiments you might make?
That it should be a new experience that enriches the audience. The people who have influenced you?
The great masters of the medium. I believe that art should reflect life and offer aesthetic pleasure.
What is the state of the cinema in your region, i.e., the Malyalam cinema?

Viewers of serious cinema are on the decline and hence producers are reluctant to invest in such films. The steady rise in production costs is yet another hurdle. But I remain optimistic, though the number of quality films dwindles.

The trends that you see emerging on the cinema scene?

As always, the success of formula-films is the most prominent trend in Indian cinema presently.

What is your personal definition of cinema?

Cinema is a dynamic art-form, that can epitomise the finest traits of the human mind and intellect. An ideal film should inspire man to do good to others.
MAHAKAPI 95

20 mins., 35 mm, col., Hindi

Synopsis:

Mahakapi 95 is based on an ancient jataka tale. Once upon a time, a whole group of monkeys lived on a mango tree which was on the banks of a river. One day, a ripe mango fell into the water below, and found its way into the fisherman's net. Since the fisherman had never seen a mango earlier, he took it to the king who also had never seen such a fruit before in his life. When he and his courtiers tasted it, they loved it. Soon, they decided to go and look for the mango tree and gather all its fruits. The king took his army for the plunder.

The monkeys saw the king's troops and they were worried. The monkey-king immediately wanted to save the other monkeys. So, to allow his folks to cross the river, he himself caught on to the branch of some trees, using his body as a bridge, so that everybody could walk across. In the process he was badly hurt.
When the king saw the supreme sacrifice, he apologized to the monkey-king for the attack and appreciated his greatness.

**Rani Day Burra:**

Trained as a sripwriter at the FTII, Pune, Rani Day Burra has had a hectic and chequered career in a variety of roles, both in film-making and as a professional journalist.

Among another assignments, she wrote the script of the feature-length animation film *Ramayana, Hangama Bombay Ishhtyle* and *Rakhee and Mausi*.

**Filmography:** as Director—Louse Story, Pheromones, Mahakapi '95.

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**Credits**

Direction-Screenplay : Rani Day Burra
Producer : N'YCP, Mumbai
Cinematography : Dashrath Thorali
Editing : Keshav Naidu
Music : Bhaskar Chandawarkar
ANIMATION: TOUGH AND TIME-CONSUMING

Rani Day Burra

I don’t know if I chose the subject or the subject chose me. *Mahakapi ’95* is based on the *Mahakapi Jataka*—the *Jatakas* being tales about the Bodhisattvas (previous incarnations for the Buddha) who were enlightened beings. While I was dipping into these near-2000-year old stories, Director of the Prince of Wales Museum, Dr. Kalpana Desai, specialist on our team (who had seen my earlier film, *Louse Story*) held out *Mahakapi Jataka* as a likely tale. A ‘Maha-Monkey’—suitable subject indeed for animation.

The monkey-king in the story, by precept and practice, teaches a young main-king the meaning of good governance. Having tasted the delicious golden flesh of a mango fruit for the very first time, man-king and army set out on a ‘mango march’ to plunder the tree-shelter and sustenance of the money-king and his tribe. Thereupon, the monkey-king uses his own body to complete the bamboo bridge so that all the other monkeys may cross over to safety.

The terrible injury inflicted on the monkey-king and his near-death at the hands of the human commander-in-chief opens the eyes of the young king who cries halt to the attack. Explains *Mahakapi*: What matter these wounds, as long as my tribe is safe?

The film makes some departures from the original story. For instance, the ‘monkey-business’ throughout the film, as also the ‘mango-business’, are for fun’s sake—not to forget the Palace Cook! For story-telling’s sake, some new characters are introduced (such as the Queen Mother), others are fleshed out (the late King, the young King), and the whole strung on songs and music. But, in essence, the storyline remains the same with its lesson for all times: a ruler’s well-being rests on his people’s will-being.

Overcome with awe and admiration for the selfless soul, the young ruler says: I will follow only the path you have shown me. No, advises Mahakapi, you must seek and find your own path (to fulfilment). First and last, let your people’s welfare be your guide...
Find your way to Cave 17 of Ajanta and you will find an ‘animated’ version of Mahakapi that’s more than 1,500 years earlier than our film. Mahakapi stretched high above, bamboo tied around his waist, forms the central feature of a detailed painting—one of the various Jataka stories illustrated on the caves walls.

Before launching on Project Animated Ajanta, we studied the paintings for form and style, not to forget details of daily life around 15 centuries ago. We also researched the mango which plays a key role in the film, discovering among other things that the green mango is a folk remedy for scorpion bites... and that Alexander in the 3rd century B.C. was perhaps the first foreigner to taste the Indian mango. Sanat Surti of Bombay took off from Ajanta frescoes to create Mahakapi’s storyboard designs.

Similarly, Mickey Patel with the earlier Louse Story—Based on a Telugu folk tale and Kalamkari drawings. Both films have an art-familiarization angle to them. That film was about a king—a wicked one—and a little louse which combines her strengths with a snake, a scorpion, a rock and a tiger, so as to overthrow the tyrant.

When we were growing up, Walt Disney’s was a magical world we entered all goggle-eyed and breathless, potato chips left notched as we watched the wicked stepmother feed Snowwhite the poisoned apple, or Cinderella’s pumpkin transform into coach under a shower of shining stars from a fairy wand...but, grown up, we learnt just how overbearingly expensive making magic was. And the big question then was how to produce our own Jungle Book or, better still, a Fant-Asian! How to escape those rosy-cheeked heroines, those twittering bluebirds, and give animated tales an Indian face and surrounding?

The answer is it’s very tough—even for shorts, forget animation features! Animation is a time and money-consuming animal. Indian animators number a handful, surviving on commercials rather than story films. Funds for such films are rare, even unheard of. As for TV serials, it’s cheaper to dub the imported ones in Indian languages.

To begin with Mahakapi ’95 has an animated TV anchorman as narrator, but as we got enmeshed in unravelling the tale, it was clear funds would not allow any such forays. Neither could we show, as in the original version, how Mahakapi fails to fix the bamboo bridge athirst attempt because of under-estimating the distance, then decides to make his own body part of the bridge. Both animation films (Louse and Monkey Tales) were made on minuscule budgets and both—with more than a 15 years gap in between—
were financed by the Children’s Film Society/N’CYP. Everyone (including children at the recent Children’s Film Festival in Hyderabad) asks why there are no Indian animated films for children, but no one’s willing to support them financially.

After 15-plus years however, there are some encouraging developments in the country—in the area of animation infrastructure, for instance. There are at least a couple of collaborations underway in Bombay and Hyderabad to undertake jobs for foreign cartoon producers, in the process providing hand-on training to tomorrow’s animators.

Lead animator Ram Mohan is quoted as saying that Indian animation needs a Prince Charming to wake it up. Today, Indian animation is not awake, but perhaps one could say it’s stirring in its sleep.
Synopsis:

The film captures, through incisive camera interviews, the fragile lives of girls and women in India, especially those belonging to subaltern and toiling sections of our society. Moulded by the needs and whims of others, they are treated as dispensable commodity to be used and thrown away at will.

The film purports to be a study of the plight of such women and girls. Based on a well-researched survey, it picks up actual cases representing a cross-section of women facing dowry-related violence, even death, a systematic denial of minimum opportunities of education and health care. Victims of prevalent son-preference, the girls and women shown in the film, however, do not accept defeat readily.

The film's message is a mix of despair and hope. The refrain songs at the end of each episode sum up the frustrations and aspirations of Indian girls and women and try to bridge the yawning
gap between their dreams and achievements. Their drive for strength and power is writ large on each frame of the film.

Debananda Sengupta

A graduate of law from the University of Calcutta, Debananda Sengupta is the son of Ramananda Sengupta, an eminent cinematographer, who worked with Jean Renoir in his film *The River*.

Debananda’s interest in cinematography grew from the interaction with his father. He is also fortunate enough to have the opportunity of learning film-making from Satyajit Ray and Mrinal Sen.

He was also involved in film journalism and animation filmmaking before embarking on independent direction. He has been making documentaries on video since 1989. *Matir Bhanr* is his first directorial work on celluloid.

Credit

Direction: Debananda Sengupta
Producer: Anjana Ghosh Dastidar
Cinematography: Avik Mukherjee
Editing: Sumit Ghosh-Sourav Sarangi
Music: Abhijit Bau
Sound: Pankaj Sil
THE LANGUAGE OF DIRECT CINEMA
Debananda Sengupta

Two things most attracted me to the subject of my film; the topicality and the gravity of the problem which we dealt with in Matir Bhanr.

I did not start off with a set script for this particular film. I had an opportunity to read a very interesting survey report on the girl child and the family, prepared by Professor Jasodhara Bagchi and others of the School of Women’s Study, Jadavpur University. There were about twenty case-studies which instigated me to make a film on girls and women in our country.

Instead of following the same case-studies, I discovered several other girls in comparable situations and initiated long conversations with them and with their family members. My film grew out of this process of getting to know the ways in which girls and women live and die in our society, at the threshold of the 21st century.

This is my first film. Previously I could make some documentary programmes on video. Those works were commissioned to be used for the adult education programme. In Matir Bhanr my aspiration was engaged in not permitting the formal aspect to swamp the content of the film. This, I think, has been fulfilled. I sincerely wanted to let other people see the fragile lives of the girls and their families.

The experience has strengthened my belief in the interview-based documentary film method, which permits us to get to the heart of things. The best features of my film are: The real-life stories narrated by the characters themselves; the well thought out camerawork done by Avik Mukherjee; and the songs summing up the frustration and the aspirations of the girls, written by Subhanjana Sengupta and set to music by Avijit Bose.

With reference to the context of a documentary-film on social problems, I strongly believe that content is more important than form. On the other hand, the way in which the cinematic
form emerges from the needs of the socio-political condition, also attracts me as a field for making film.

You will find almost no representation for the location in my film. It was deliberate, because my film is about the plight of women and girls in India, specially those belonging to subaltern and toiling sections of our society.

I was constantly appreciating Avik, for the compositions and the lighting he was creating. Only on rare occasions had I to shift the camera position, with the full understanding of the cinematographer.

Sumit Ghosh has done the major editing work. I would say he is a creative machine when he works and I wonder how he is able to do such a tremendous amount of work so coolly.

I call my style of cinema as direct cinema, but I also want to mention that I know that this style will change according to the subject of the film. I must communicate my feelings to the audience when I am making a documentary film which deals with a serious socio-political problem and I make sure that I communicate with the people.

We interact with different kinds of human beings and I feel that all these interactions have had an influence over my work in film making. Apart from that, I can say that my father Ramananda Sengupta is a veteran cinematographer. He worked with Jean Renoir as an operating-cameraman for the film The River. Renoir influenced my father a lot. I, in my boyhood, heard many stories from my father relating to their filming of the river. Probably, that was the first influence in my intellectual development as a filmmaker. After that, Satyajit Ray’s films created a great impact on my intellectual development. But I must say, instead of individuals, it is society as a whole which is much more important for my inner world. As a documentary film-maker, I think the most important idea is to use the medium of film as an instrument of communication which should be used to fight against social injustice in our county.

I am very concerned with the genre of the documentary film. In actuality there are three kinds of documentary film: one produced by the government, the second produced by the corporate sector NGOs and the third by independent producers, who are in most cases the film-makers themselves. The main strength in films by the independent producers is the freedom of expression. On the other hand the main problem for these films is how to get back the investment of money and energy. In many cases the producers and
directors of independent documentary films are compelled to sacrifice their freedom to an extent, to enable them to get a buyer, in most cases the government, specially in West Bengal.

I feel frustrated when I see that quality films are failing to arouse any interest among the cinegoers of our country. The subject Film Appreciation should have been introduced in the course of our school studies. India is the producer of the largest number of films in the world, but we do not really consider film and television as the most powerful medium even today. I think, the film language should immediately be included in the course, just as different languages are taught in schools today. Then only, after a few years, will the situation change for better cinema.
NABAKALEBAR
(Installation of New Idols)

20 mins, 35mm, col., English

Synopsis:

Nabakalebar means acquiring of new bodies by Lord Jagannatha, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarshana. The ritual of Nabakalebara must be performed once between roughly every 12 to 19 years whenever the Hindu calendar shows an extra month of Ashadha. The image of Lord Jagannatha is different from other idols. It is made of wood. Outside the main shrine of Puri, Kakatpur has the only other temple for Mother Bimala, the auspicious one. At night, the goddess arrives in Pati Mahapatra's dream and leaves precise instructions on the path to the holy trees from which the new idols for the deity are to be carved.

In accordance with tradition, the search can begin only with the first signpost, at the Sudarshan daru, a tree with reddish hue, which must be located according to exact specifications. The Balabhadra


daru is discovered according to its geographical position. The distinctive features of the Subhadra daru are equally specific.

The search for the Jagannath daru, from which the principal deity can be carved, is the one which has the most complex and exacting combination of auspicious features.

The ceremony ends in the great festivals of chariots, the ratha yatra, the grandest of the grand festivals of the Indian subcontinent.

K.G. Das:

Born in 1945, studied literature and completed graduation from Calcutta University. He was closely associated with the Bengali Group Theatre in Calcutta. He has written many short stories and plays. He joined Films Division as a director in 1989. Sadhana was his first feature film as a director (1993) and was telecast several times from Calcutta Doordarshan Kendra. He has directed a good number of documentary films.

Credits

Direction-Screenplay
Producer
Cinematography
Editing
Music
Sound

K.G. Das
Films Division
Om Chand-S. Chouhan
Atish Nandy
Ramanuj
S.K. Prusty
THE NECESSITY OF BEING PRECISE

K.G. Das

From my very childhood days I was aware that Puri, the land of Lord Jagannath, has a unique socio-religious culture. The land symbolises unity, harmony, assimilation and acceptance of diversity, in a fusion of several faiths and acceptance of diversity, in a fusion of several faiths and beliefs. To me, religion symbolises this uniqueness which I found in the idol of Lord Jagannath itself. It is like the spirit of the sea in Puri accepting all the divergent views that exist in our world of beliefs. With this concept I found strong visual effects of the image of Lord Jagannath, which is distinctively different from the Hindu iconography and which is symbolised and not supersensational. It is graphical, not at all sculpturesque. Here the idols are physically different from other Hindu idols which are mostly made of stone or metal. Here, the idols made out of wood must be renewed constantly. This physical requirement has translated itself into the unique ritual in the cult of Jagannath called Nabakalebara, acquiring of new bodies by Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarshana. The tradition which dictates the ritual Nabakalebara attracted me immensely as a film-maker.

Initially, I had no firm concept on how to make the film. The happenings of the rituals during the four months of iconography first inspired me to cover these in a news-magazine format, but ultimately I made a documentary.

I believe in the concept that "the script is the blueprint from which a film is made". My scripting tries to cover all the instructions, to enable the entire film unit to bring the scriptwriter’s ideas, complete in almost every detail, to the screen. I personally feel a script is a precisely worded document describing the visuals scene by scene. But in many cases, like Nabakalebara, dealing as it so often does with the real world around us, one cannot always be so precise. Sometimes the subject, as in the case of Nabakalebara, becomes unpredictable. Then one cannot know in advance what one
shall have to deal with at the shooting stage. This is exactly what happened in the case of Nabakalebara. So the script of a documentary film cannot always be precise. It must allow the director, cameraman and editor considerable latitude to deal with the unpredictable and the uncontrollable. So there always remains a scope of improvising and adding on to the original screenplay while shooting and editing the film. Though I do prefer scripting at the treatment stage, with sufficient details to indicate the method of presentation and the style of the film.

In the case of Nabakalebara it would have been better if I would have made the film of one hour duration, but I had been restricted to make the film within 20 minutes duration. So, naturally, improvisation has been done on the editing table.

My film Karmaveer Gourishankar Roy, a biographical documentary, had been selected in last year's Panorama and this year Nabakalebara got selected. Both films have a common aspect. Both the films depict the rich heritage of Oriyan culture and history. But there is an obvious difference in style and treatment. After completing Nabakalebara I completed Banglar Baul a documentary and two news-magazines—Poison in the Air and Mother Teresa—The Last Journey.

The necessity of being precise was something I learnt while making Nabakalebara, I understood that the religion factor cannot be ignored. It is as important, if not more, as the milieu, associated with religion and the prospect of putting it more confidently on the canvas of celluloid. Film-making is really a process of creation viewed as an outcome of one’s experience.

The changing of Brahma, literally, the passing of the soul from one body to the other. This is the most mystic and secret ritual of the festival of Nabakalebara. Barring a few, no one is allowed to witness the rituals which take place in the dead of night. I was not allowed to shoot inside the temple premises, but without incorporating this ritual the film would have remained incomplete. So, improvisation was essential to symbolise the mystic and secret rituals. To me, this is the strongest part of the film Nabakalebara, which has an air of finality and completeness.

As a director of Films Division, my work has its own limitations and restriction. It is difficult for me to go for an experiment with new forms and styles, but I always try, within the given limitations and scope, to experiment with the medium whenever required. And I think the simplification process itself is an experimentation with
form. I feel that it's much more difficult to make complicated things simple than to present complexity through an abstract cinema form.

I am a self-taught film maker. Foreign films like Bicycle Thief were a dramatic change from the kind of films I was used to. It introduced me to realise the power of the medium. Satyajit Ray and Ritwick Ghatak's films deeply impressed me and the polarisation between Ray and Ghatak has influenced my thought processes as far as cinema is concerned. And the words of the writer Tagore helped me a lot to visualise the world around me.

I was essentially interested in theatre and was gradually propelled towards the cinema. The philosophical aspects of Tagore's literature has had a great influence on my intellectual processes, like other fans of Bengali culture.

The reign of the electronic media has thrust some problems over the celluloid film. Television has changed the taste and mind of people, so it is becoming difficult for a director to communicate with his audience. But the positive thing, particularly in the eastern part of the country, is that people are still fond of the narrative story-telling effect. Financial constraint is another important phenomenon in the world of electronic sponsor corporate culture.

India has produced a number of good films and still new directors are emerging in the medium. New styles have emerged in the industrial arena and I have no doubt the country will maintain its heritage in producing serious cinema.

Motion pictures began as a novelty. It grew into a world-wide medium of entertainment and in its third phase it has become a tool and instrument with a thousand jobs to do. Cinema is a creative interpretation of reality. With this belief I have started a new feature film, The Saga of Dukhiram Mondal.
Synopsis:

Ineluctable solitude pervades the last moments of the lives of the female folk artists or nachnis dwelling in an area contiguous to West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. After death, the body that once danced indefatigably to the tune of folk-songs, is trailed by a buffalo-cart to some nearby river or some vast, forlorn tract of land.

A nachni is brought to her guru, Rashik, by social constraint which is a trinity—indigence, oppression, and coercion. The relation between a nachni and her Rashik is a complicated one with innumerable nuances and overtones. A nachni enthrals the villagers with her songs and dances for years, while she herself basks in the rapt attention and unrestrained applause of villagers. In a process of unification with art, she engrafts her own distresses into her songs and dances.
Nachni is an account of the lives of these folk-artists, their sorrows and pleasures.

In the westernmost district of West Bengal, an area declared backward, sleepy villages hitherto unknown and unpublicized, are brought to life by a team of daring and dedicated film-makers to make a film on nachnis, hitherto sketchily known or covered either in print, celluloid or video films. There flows the life of certain leading nachnis known to exist over the entire Chotanagpur region. The nachnis are rura-urban populist performers, criticized as 'poor man's baiji', quoting Ladly Mukhopadhyyay, the writer of the script and the director of the film and music.

Ladly Mukhopadhyyay:

Through the last 15 years, Ladly Mukhopadhyyay has established a reputation as a dedicated and hard-working film-maker. During a two year stay at Mumbai he also worked as an assistant director on some multi-star spectacles, including Andha Kanoon and Amar Akbar Anthony. He also served as chief assistant director for George Lunoe's 3-hour TV serial on the Bauls of Bengal. Projects on hand include a 13-part TV serial in Bengali, titled Nirman.

Selected Filmography: TV documentary on the sculptress Mira Mukhopadhyyay, Anugata Kolkata, 35 mm documentary on the Bengali poet Arun Mitra, Hastir Kanya, TV documentary on the novelist Hasan Ajijul Haque, Aksharamama, Beyond, a TV report related to the 1994 Soccer World Cup finals shown on German TV, Nachni.

Credits

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A DEAD DANCER IS NOT A HUMAN BEING

Ladly Mukhopadhyya

What attracted you to the subject matter of your film, now selected for the India Panorama?

In one word - Womankind. Those womenfolk who have not been provided with any social or family identity. In our country the existing semi-feudal structure has tagged these womenfolk as prostitutes or baijis (nautch girls). The nachmis, on whom the film is based, are musical and dance performers for the entertainment of the village folks. They are not just branded in life, but also after death when their bodies are dumped unceremoniously for the vultures to feed on without the right to cremation or burial.

To what extent do you think you have realized your original conception in the completed film?

Honestly speaking, this particular question seems irrelevant in the context of the situation prevalent in our country. Most of my films, although completed for viewing, have not given me the satisfaction of a complete work. After all, my works have largely been fragmented exhibitions of the totality of experience.

The question here revolves mainly around the satisfaction which one can derive in terms of completing one's work in the backdrop of the plans made. Without going into the discussions relating to backup support services, both for the filmmakers and the filmgoers, it is, after all, a very incomplete experience. For the cameraman or sound-recordist at work, their expressions remain incomplete. Cinema is a mode of expression which cannot be viewed in isolation, minus the quality of the color, sound etc. An incomplete support system leads to a work which is a part expression only of the original thought of the film-maker.

The constant contradictions between the film-maker's conscience, artistic temperament and financial needs, result mostly in a defeat for the film-maker in terms of his expression, where major compromises have to be made. This continuous defeat has a major impact
on the life and career of the film-maker—with his principal focus centering around the speedy recovery of the investor's money.

The lack of facilities for screening of short and documentary films for the people at large limits its prospects at the very outset. Moreover, the screenings of such films are currently limited to a section of the media and pseudo-intellectuals only. Thereby creating a further complex situation for the film-maker. There could be exceptions where short-films and/or documentaries are selected or screened at festivals, but it remains limited to the elite class of viewers only.

**Describe the nature of your method in approaching the script?**

In the case of **Nachni**, the film has developed gradually. On receiving the producer's nod, I along with my co-director Ms. Sutapa Ghosh, started staying with the *nachnis* regularly. We realized the rules of the game were spontaneity, some dramatic moments, some emotional moments that we cannot produce for the celluloid—it would be a matter of chance. We could and started acclimatizing with their way of life. From their side, slowly, the emotional barriers melted. In the meantime we were envisioning the shape of the film. I believe the whole film should be in the brain even before you start shooting. It is quite possible though that the whole film might change during the passage of pre shooting, during editing and before the final film. From the time of conceptualizing to the final print, may be, we had several films on *nachnis* which interplayed.

**What would you say are the strongest features of your film?**

At the threshold of the 21st century, when we are talking real time global connectivity, there are still women in India who shiver at death, not at the metamorphosis but knowing that their corpse would probably lie unattended, not cared for, in some forsaken place. Those who have been ostracized in their own villages, they have related their tales of woe, and also of their art and their innovations, to the camera. It is quite strange that when the whole world has woken up to the nuances of gender equity, we have not heard any mention about the *nachnis*, nor any awareness of a development work plan. People from the media, people from the political parties, even the intellectuals, are uncommonly quiet about their plight. Nothing has been done by the women's organizations either. I would say the strongest point of our film is this struggle to 'gain rights' for the *nachnis*.

I like the term communicator. My inspiration to films comes from my sociological and political duties. Of course, I do have an aesthetic sensibility, but basically I consider myself to be a commu-
nations activist. If I derive satisfaction by rendering songs, would I still make films? The main factor is satisfaction, how do I derive it? My aesthetic attitude is my cinematic style, which is influenced by my political identity.

**What is the nature of your collaboration with your team?**

I am one of the main cinematographers of my film. I had an intense brainstorming session with my assistant cameramen and I also explained what was required in minute detail, so we worked in unison. Even our production manager knew the direction and the shape the film was taking. For any film I lay a great deal of importance on my editor. Snehashis, who edited **Nachni**, is mainly associated with the commercial stream. **Nachni** being a documentary and the subject unusual, he devoted a large part of his time for discussions. We saw the full rush print together. He internalized my conceptions, and my style. We discussed these quite frankly. I should mention my associate, Sutapa, who is a stickler for details. She had worked as an inner co-ordinate for this film with my unit. We had a wonderful working relationship, which had its ups and downs, of course.

**As a film maker what are your views on the need to communicate your intent to the audience?**

I would compare this to the common fly, for whom garbage and honey are both sources of sustenance. It is for us to shake the viewer up, to make him differentiate, to ponder and to activate him. If the spectator remains passive throughout the film, if the film ends for him the moment he leaves the auditorium, then the cinema does not live, it does not carry any meaning.
Synopsis:

Vani, a young social worker, is frustrated at the passive role she is playing in bringing about social change. Inspired by her mentor, Professor Narayanan, she sets out for the Rajasthan interior to see whether she can do something concrete about the traditional custom of killing girl children prevalent there.

On the way to the small village of Gوردungar, she befriends the bangle-seller Bhaktu, who becomes her confidant and ally in her fight. She also befriends Dhuli, a young village woman. Dhuli is pregnant with her first child, but stubbornly refuses to accept that it could be a girl. Vani tries to reconcile her on the possibility of bringing up a girl child.

Vani is witness to the ceremonial killing of the infant daughter of one of the village women, and soon finds herself pitted against Kanta Bua, the old midwife who also carries out the killing. Unable to convince Kanta Bua, Vani is forced to try other means of convincing the village folk. Identifying the liquor den as one of the prin-
principal roots of the problem, Vani decides to campaign against it. Bhaktu and Dhuli’s husband, Darshan—whose aid Vani enlists—try to convince the other men to give up liquor and use the money more constructively. But they are ignored by the villagers.

In retaliation for Darshan’s involvement in the campaign, some hooligans break into his house and leave it in shambles. Dhuli and Darshan hold Vani responsible for their misfortune. Vani decides to take matters into her own hands and destroys the liquor still one night. Barely escaping from her pursuers, she returns to Kanta Bua’s haveli where Dhuli is in the throes of labour. And Vani’s worst fears come true: Dhuli delivers a girl child.

Venu Arora:

Venu is a postgraduate from the Mass Communication Research Center, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. Born in 1971, she was educated at Springdales School, where she gained a reputation as a writer and poet. She graduated from Delhi University’s Hindu College, gaining top honours in her English (Hons.) batch.

Venu has also published two volumes of poetry, besides being a regular writer and contributor to several Indian newspapers and magazines. Since 1995, she has been free-lancing as a director and editor, working on several projects with Feisal Alkazi, Amal Allana, and Saeed Naqvi, besides being part of and producing films under the Ideosync banner.

Nirankush is her first project in 35 mm.

Credits

Direction-Screenplay: Venu Arora
Producer: Venu Arora
Cinematography: Sudheer Palsane
Editing: Sirdala Swamy
Story: Venu Arora
Music: Susmit Sen
Sound: Hari Kumar M.
Art Direction: N. Ramakrishnan-V. Arora
The film *Nirankush* revolves around the prevalence of female infanticide in the backwoods of Rajasthan. But while a superficial look at the film may make it look like the only subject, I don’t really think female infanticide is all what *Nirankush* is about. The fact that female infanticide still exists in states like Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu is, of course, a statement in itself of the real levels of awareness, of women’s liberation/emancipation, call it what you will. The film merely picks up the threads from the existence of this fact. I think *Nirankush* is more about being a woman; about evolving as an individual within specific environs that mould and create individual beliefs, aspirations and thought processes. Moreover I think it’s a film about free will and the willingness to exercise that will.

Having been born and brought up in an urban environment and having been exposed to a public school education where a lot of the extra-curricular activities one participates in are termed social work, the question of the right to interfere, the urban-rural divide of ‘us’ and ‘them’, and the underlying superiority of the ‘educated’, ‘better exposed’ urban ‘we’ has been a disturbing quantity to me. There is no doubt that practices like *sati*, dowry, and female infanticide are reprehensible...but then reprehensible to whom, in whose context, by whose yardstick? The pendulum can swing back and forth without any concrete answers and I think that is what the film tries to deal with. In a lot of the situations I encountered during the research and recce for the film, the villagers gave very sound reasons for the traditions they followed (although an equally large number merely accepted as given certain rituals that have been part of their cultural psyche for many years).

There were a few crucial choices I made before embarking on this project: (a) I decided that I would deal with the subject in the fiction feature genre rather than by documenting real incidents or
portraying living people. This simultaneously simplified and complicated the task, because at one level it gave me the freedom to create situations that would best portray the ideas and the complex questions I was trying to raise. On the other hand, it threw up the challenge of having to build identifiable characters rather than have cardboard cutouts/representative figures acting as vehicles for those ideas. (b) Since the film is set in the interiors of Rajasthan, it was a choice between merely using the locale as a set/backdrop or going as far as possible with the use of dialect and non-glamourous portrayals of situations and characters in order to give the film the authentic feel that the subject demanded. It was important to me to reach out not only to the rural audience for whom the subject is of immediate concern but also to approach the wider general viewer—urban Indian, or international—because the references that I have attempted to provide are largely universal and need to be understood as such.

In the end, therefore, I feel the film has to some extent succeeded to go beyond its own subject-specific circle, although at times I think both the characters of the film and me as a director have fallen into our own traps.

To elucidate, in Nirankush, Vani, the young social worker who goes out ostensibly to do something concrete about the increasing incidents of female infanticide in the village of Gordungar, in interior Rajasthan, actually goes out in search of a meaning to her own desistance, trying to justify her own choices in her career, and giving vent to her own responses as a woman. And although she questions her right to interfere in the lives of a people whose concerns, traditions and understanding of circumstances is very different from her own, she nevertheless at times takes unilateral decisions for them.

This self-evident contradiction within the film is a conscious decision on my part and I think it proves to be one of the strengths of the film. The film by virtue of portraying such inconsistency comes that much closer to the human situation. Dhuili, the village girl who finally decides not to kill her first-born girl child, might or might not have done so. The fact that she does is merely an instance of the film; and if the last scene of the film is seen in isolation it may even seem to be the message of the film but if, as the credits roll, one takes a few moments to pause and look over the film from start to finish, it still stands as an open-ended film.

The script is the skeleton. I know which parts I have fleshed out before going on the shoot and am acutely aware of those that
require further inputs. But I don’t think I approach a shoot with the idea that the script is sacrosanct. That does not mean I don’t work on the story, the characterization, the shot breakdown or the story boarding camera angles and the lighting plan are more or less worked out and it is all there either on paper or in my head. But at every level I consciously try to keep myself open to suggestions (and it is tough: One does start falling in love with one’s idea, and it becomes difficult to see things any other way!)

But I have found that discussions with Sudeer, the cinematographer for the film, or my actors or Sridala (who edited Nirankush) have always been fruitful in some way or another, giving rise to new dimensions within the film.

Yes, some things I am adamant about. If a situation in the film demands an emphasis of some kind, and a sequence would not work unless that emphasis is created through lighting or by an actors performance, I don’t compromise. I don’t believe in an ultimate idea, although I do believe in the achievable one and when on shoot or at the edit I am trying to learn to strike that balance.

Cinematically, Nirankush was not so ambitious a canvas, and purposely so. It’s a story told in a linear fashion without frills. I have made use of repeated cutting between the protagonist’s recollection of conversations with her professor and the main story in the village. This, I thought was essential to fleshing out Vani’s constant self-questioning.

Cinema, to me, is a language you can write a paragraph, an essay, a story, a novel; you can coin phrases, put inverted commas, allow full stops to control the flow of sentences, and so on.

The strength of the film lies not just in the portrayal of characters, but in the fact that each character goes through his or her own personal doubts and contradictions, and grows as the film progresses. The Vani who figures in the end of the film is not the Vani we started out with; Dhuli learns to take her own decisions, be it with much trepidation; and Kanta Bua reveals her bitterness towards her own beliefs.

Both form and content are important ingredients. There has to be a story to tell; only then can the way it is told hold any significance. Conversely, if there is a story, and no specific way in which it is told, the story loses itself. The balance is a quantity that is achieved by each film-maker independently. It is different for every individual, and therefore, I feel, the balance is extremely subjective. I appreciate this subjectivity, but a badly balanced film fails to hold
interest, and I think that is the best criterion for cross-checking or fine-tuning one’s own judgement as a film-maker.

It is my belief that an intelligent actor/actress is capable of not only understanding the kind of person the director wants to portray, but is able to give his or her added input as well, thereby giving the character of the film the multi-dimensional quality it requires. To quote an example from Nirankush, I can tell Dhuli to look at her husband, Darshan, in a particular way; I can describe to her what that look must mean, at that particular juncture of the film, what that look is and so on. But it has to be Dhuli’s look that a particular actress is playing. Therefore, I feel that an actor or actress gives as much to a character as the director does to a film. I would find it difficult to work with actors who do not respond to directions with that little extra bit of thinking that goes with playing a part. In our film, Nirankush, I think all the actors gave their best.

Nirankush is the result of teamwork: My team understood what I, as director, was looking for. The production designers, Ramkrishan and Desmond, went on four trips with me to the location, figuring out the smallest of details. Sudeer Palsane, the cinematographer, made a pre-shoot visit with us to the location. We spent three days there with him, studying the light conditions and planning camera movements and lighting for the film. Although I had the storyboard and a complete shot breakdown, suggestions from Sudeer were always more than welcome. Unfortunately, however, budget constraints saw to it that we could not purchase some of the raw stock he would have liked. But I guess all small-budget films face that kind of problem. The editor, Sridala Swami, had a tougher time: not only did she have to edit the entire film with a black and white workprint, she constantly had to contend with a finicky director, who was always insistent on dictating the cuts. But I give her full credit for the intelligent pacing and rhythm that her efforts finally gave the film.

I knew the kind of music I wanted for the film. Susmit Sen of Indian Ocean has a keen sense of mood, movement and rhythm. And I had discussed the concept of music for Nirankush with him long before we went into production. Work on music, however, only began after Susmit, Ramkrishan and I went over the rough cut several times. Musicians were called from Rajasthan despite the meagre budget; and it was a great experience watching them respond and interact with Susmit, and churn out music that now is inextricably linked with the film. All in all, I think the crew was a great team.
I do like creating a cinematic experience that goes beyond a straightforward narrative, though *Nirankush* is not a good example to result in a deeper and richer layering of thought and expression. Interest-wise, I love to draw interest from what otherwise would be termed the mundane. I love to talk, and I love to hear, say, the milkman’s story of how he got late, or the village school teacher’s pride in being the only college-educated peson in the area. These things touch me at a plane of emotion and human comprehension that transcends any linguistic or cultural boundaries; and these are the things that go into the making of my films.

I make films to share my thoughts, my perceptions; maybe draw attention to certain observations on life, on people, on issues. I would like people to be able to relate to my films, identify with its characters and its story when they watch them. Communication and an ‘intent’ to the film form is an important part of my films, whether documentary or feature. Perhaps the worst thing I could imagine would be to have people walk out after one of my films saying: "It’s an okay film, but what was she trying to say?"
Synopsis:

The eighteenth century Telugu poet-composer Tyagaraj’s opera, Nauka Caritramu, forms the outer frame for an insight into three women musicians of the early twentieth century South India, in whose lives a sense of achievement coexists with a complete surrender to an art-form.

The thread of continuity is in fact a journey undertaken by a young traveller whose encounters with the three otherwise disparate worlds of Madurai Shanmukhavadiva Subbulakshmi, Damal Krishnaswami Pattammal and Tanjore Brinda, invest her search with the coherence, if not the comprehension that she looks for.
In a sense, she sullies the role of the *sutradhara*, that indispensable element of ancient drama which was curiously lacking in the original opera. Indeed, it was unclear if it was ever performed as was the reason for the composer’s occasional substitution of Krishna (who in actuality steers the *gopikas* to safety across the turbulent Yamuna), by Rama, who was Tyagaraja’s *manasikadervata*.

This element of ambiguity extends itself metaphorically into the cinematic narrative of quest, whose object remains shrouded in mystery. Further, the Bhakta element, implicit in Tyagaraja’s life and music, underlies both the play and the film; the river as *samsara*, the boat as the body that is constantly tested and exposed, the symbolic disrobing of the *gopikas* in compliance with Krishna’s command is a surrender to the absolute.

Historically, these musicians made a dramatic entry into the hitherto male-dominated territory of the public performance of classical South Indian music. Each, while rooting herself in a given tradition, exercised her personal inclination to include in her repertoire certain unusual and sometimes controversial choice of style and rendition—Pattammal, in her appropriation of the ‘male’ genre of Ragam-Tanam-Pallavi, Subbulakshmi in her inclusion of music of semi-classical origin and Brinda in her uncompromising adherence to her parasitic inheritance.

"I have treated the film as an impressionistic rather than a chronological journey into their personalities. Focal to this was the perception of their contemporaneity, all the more significant in the light of the socio-political upheavals and changes of the times, mirrored as they were in their lives".

What began as an archival project involving three living legends changed in intention, form and outcome over a series of moving personal encounters with them, the simplicity and devotion which characterises their lives providing me with an answer to my own quest for meaning: "Surrender, and you will no longer wander in exile".

**Madurai Shanmukhavadiyu Subbulakshmi** : Born 16th September, 1916, Madhurai, Tamil Nadu. At 15 cuts her first record with the Colombia Gramophone Company giving her first public performance at 17. In 1947 plays the lead role in the Hindi film *Meeru*. In 1954 receives the Padma Bhushan; in 1975, Padma Vibhushan; in 1974 Ramon Magsaysay Award; in 1981 becomes member de honneur of the International Music Council sponsored by UNESCO.

Performs to world audience at the United Nations in 1966, Edinburgh International Music Festival, 1963, Royal Albert Hall,
in handling Sanskrit vedic chants such as the Suprabhatam with
ease or a kriti involving complex elaborations of a Shankarabaranum
ragas or bhajans in eight Indian languages involving a mastery of
Hindustani music. Resides in Madras and is still actively involved
in recording rare compositions.

Dumal Krishnaswami Puttammul: Born March 19, 1919, Kancheepuram, Tamil Nadu, in the orthodox Brahmin community
facing social prejudices against the performing arts. Cuts her first
disc at the age of 13, and her first public recital in 1933 in Madras.
Created a stir of a traditional girl performing on stage for the first
time.

Makes a breakthrough with singing Pallavis that involve com-
plicated rhythmic beats as a main item in a concert, hitherto a male
forte, sometimes singing a piece for two hours. In 1962, received
the President’s National Award, in 1971, Padma Bhushan. Performed
at the international music festivals at Berlin and Bonn, West Ger-
many, and Rennes, in France followed by performances in Sri Lanka,
Switzerland, Canada and the United States. Resides in Madras,
teaching and performing on rare occasions.

Tanjore Brinda: Born November 12, 1912, Madras, Tamil Nadu,
India. Musical linkage dates back to the Tanjore tradition in music
and dance enriched by the devadasi community to which she be-
longed; Papammal and Kamakshi musician-dancers of the Tanjore
court of the Maratha rule in the eighteenth century, later to immor-
tal veena dhunam. One of the greatest exponents of the nuance of
Carnatic music, leaving deep impressions on her grand children, T.
Balasaraswathi, the legendary Bharatha Natyam dancer and T. Brinda
herself. T. Brinda’s repertoire included Padams and Javalis, a musi-
cal form sung in the Tanjore courts revolving around Shringara Rasa
coupled with coy eroticism and spiritual flavour.

Also included were the classical ragas of the trinity composers
handed down from the original sources to the Dhanammal family.
Recognised as a teacher to several senior musicians, she never
commercialised her music, preserving it only for a small group of
admirers. She passed away at her home in Madras in the later part
of 1996.
Saroj Satyanarayan:
Had an active participation in theatre. Professional background of twelve years of advertising, filming experience. Worked with post-production graphic facilities at London on advertising shorts, including scripting and in-house productions.

Branched out as an independent director, and initially associated with Zaffar Hai of Haimark Films, on his award-winning documentaries and advertising commercials, shot in India and abroad.

Nauka Caritramu has received two national awards in 1997, for the Best Arts/Cultural Film and the Best Editing Award.

Credits

Direction-Screenplay: Saroj Satyanarayan
Producer: Ministry of External Affairs
Cinematography: Madhu Ambat
Editing: A. Sreekar Prasad
Story: Saroj Satyanarayan
Music: L. Vaidyanathan
Sound: Elango
Art Direction: P. Krishnamurthy
What attracted me to the subject of my film was the fact that three women musicians of the early century—M.S. Subbulakshmi, D.K. Pattamal and the late T. Brinda, had broken social taboos to successfully emerge in a male-dominated musical scene, seeking their own liberation, ahead of their time; portraits of whom remained relatively unknown amidst the modern-day feminist ideologues.

My challenge in this film was to approach here definite personalities that necessitated an experience with them. Therefore, what began as an archival project changed in outcome, over a series of moving personal encounters, resulting in chronological details becoming secondary to the ‘spiritual’ depth of each artist, defined in her own expression.

It is almost as if each artist had reached the end of her search and the journey of events is submerged by the illusionary reality of her new world.

The balance, the form and content became yet another challenge, as did the one between the mythical surrender and reality of an entire life struggle. Creating this illusion or poetisphere, within the context of the subject, became my first concern during the making of this film; and unfolding the tapestry of the region with its folklore became integral, to sustain the ‘illusion’ throughout the film.
TAT TVAM ASI
(You Are That)

22.30 mins, 35 mm, col., Hindi–English

Synopsis:
Arya teaches in a college. One day he receives a telegram from his elder sister informing him that his younger brother, Arpan, who is supposed to take admission in an engineering college, is missing. Arya goes back to the city to search for his missing brother. The city brings back memories of the time when he himself was a student there.

A psychological search about one's life goes parallel with the physical search for the missing brother.
Sambit Mohanty

Sambit Mohanty, director of Tat Tvam Asi was born in Cuttack on 3rd January, 1962. Sambit Mohanty did his B.A. from Utakal University. He was a student of FTII from January, 1994 to December, 1996. Tat Tvam Asi is his first film.

Credits

Direction-Screenplay
Sambit Mohanty

Producer
FTII, Pune

Cinematography
Gururaj, R. J.

Editing
Vandana Kohli

Story
Sambit Mohanty

Music
Vandana Kohli

Sound
Nihar Ranjan Samal

Art Direction
D. Gupta-V. Varma
The sterility of a physical pursuit. In my film the sterility of the physical pursuit temporarily on a spiritual plane. One can say that two parallel searches, one physical and the other spiritual or psychological, grow and end on the spiritual plane. But one never knows if that is the end or the answer. The subject of the film is a kind of my own outburst, on being a part of a landscape, or time, in which it appears we are heading towards a physical sterility which will ultimately end with a spiritual sterility.

There are points in the film at which I feel I could have done better and could have come nearer to the idea on which I was working. But there are also points about which I have no regret and I do now think I could have thought of another alternative. I am happy about these.

I never work with a completed screenplay or any original screen-play. I do not think it is possible. The whole script takes place, or happens, from a seed. The seed of the idea. And as time passes, the seed started growing within oneself as naturally as possible. So, there is no complete script till the shooting is over. In fact changes can also happen on the editing table itself. I depend and listen to my instincts more than to any logic. Naturally, there are always lots of changes happening during shooting and editing. I know it creates a lot of problems for the editor.

In this particular film, cinematically, I have tried to realize more closely and concretely the limitations and the utility of the concept of mise-en-scene. There are shots in this film where there is time within which the time changes to the past from the present, and again to a further past. At times there are movements between a far past and a near past. And the camera placement is also determined by Time. The soundtrack is treated differently and the logic for a particular sound in the soundtrack is that it states the mind of the character at that particular point of time. Very little of the realistic approach in that. Sound work at a very sub-conscious level.
The strongest feature of this particular film is that though there is a physical narrative growth, the most important aspect behind that physical growth is the progression of a spiritual growth, psychologically, which I have tried to achieve through planned camerawork and an illogical soundtrack. That is what I have tried and to me this is the most important feature and everything was worked out for that end.

Actor is a property of the film. The only thing is that, the actor is a living property. It is more concrete in terms of communication. So one has to be very careful about the possibilities of communications by an actor. It should only communicate what the director wants to communicate. My emphasis is on what I do not want to communicate.

I am very happy with the performance I could get from Purva Naresh, who is the main female lead. She has an inherent nervousness in her appearance, although she played a more stable character. Her face and eyes were like concrete images of an internal nervousness. That was what I was looking for in fact.

Basically, I was looking for non-actors and I was looking for certain kind of faces and figures. I chose by the kind of looks I needed for my characters. The main male lead, Vijay, and Anindita who played the role of the elder sister, are students of National School of Drama at Delhi and are professionals. But they were nearer to the faces I was looking for.

I always prefer to sit with the cinematographer, editor and the sound recordist with the first draft of the script. But I think that becomes too demanding in the present state of affairs. But I make sure that the cinematographer lives with me at the locations and has an idea of the light conditions at different points of time at the location, before we start rolling. I prefer working with the natural lights as much as possible. As I keep on changing, even at the time of shooting and editing, it makes the work of the editor more difficult, for he is generally used to getting involved with the film only after he gets the rushes. An editor who can stay with the unit during the shoot, is of great advantage for me, a director who works without any tangible script. I generally work on the music and soundtrack while I am on the first draft of the script. So, generally, I have a general idea about the music of the film from the very beginning. But the most important thing is that all the unit members, the director, the editor, the cinematographer and the soundrecordist, all of them be of the same intellectual level. That makes things easier.
There is a need to communicate. But the first, basic thing is to try honestly. Try one's best without any pretensions to come as close to the truth as one is running after through this medium. And if one is honest, I believe, then it will definitely be communicated at some point of time. If not today, may be sometime in the future. But it will be communicated. The thing is to remain honest in one's attempt.
THE BHIWANDI TRAGEDY
(News Magazine No. 309)

14 mins., 35 mm, col., English

Synopsis:
This film depicts the event that took place immediately after the food poisoning in Bhiwandi. It also analyses the various health hazards and their implications in the life of the migrant labourers.

Bhiwandi, a satellite town of Mumbai ricocheting with the wounds of powerlooms, providing sustenance to over 500,000 people who are mostly migrant workers. On the 6th of August, 1996, in Bhiwandi, 120 workers took ill after eating their regular meal. One by one, as hours and days passed, they began to die. Within a few days of this man-made tragedy, more than 200 school children in the same district of Thane were poisoned by sweetmeats. Fortunately, the young victims survived. Why are such tragedies allowed to happen? Is the administration aware of the problems caused by adulteration and the neglect of environmental hygiene? Asks the documentary. "After 50 years of 'Independence' and 'Development'
what have we achieved? Only the capacity to deaden our consciousness?” wonders a woman in the film.

V. Packirisamy:

Hailing from a remote village in Tamil Nadu, Packirisamy, aged 33 years is an economics graduate from Madras University. After completing a three-year diploma course in film direction and screenplay writing in 1986 from Film and Television Institute of Tamil Nadu, Madras, he worked with Udaykumar, a popular director in Tamil mainstream cinema.

He joined Films Division in 1989. Since then he made several news magazines and documentaries. His films were selected for many national and international film festivals.

His film on child labour, *Lost Childhood*, bagged the Bronze Medal with cash prize of 1000 U.S. dollars at the 9th Film Festival of Damascus, Syria, in 1995.

Credits

Direction: V. Packirisamy
Producer: Films Division
Cinematography: Pradeep B. Rao
Editing: A.S. Patankar-R.M. Rathod-D.M.
Screenplay-Story: Arya
Music: Yash Chaudhary

K. Narayan
Almost everyday we read newspaper reports about some food poisoning case or hooch tragedy. In most of the food poisoning cases the victims are treated and discharged. But in Bhiwandi’s food poisoning incident of 1996 many innocent migrant workers started to die as time passed by. When we visited Bhiwandi we could see the appalling living conditions of the workers and the apathy of the government machinery. This motivated us to make an investigative film on this subject.

I did not have a written script. I read the newspaper reports and visited the hospitals where the victims were admitted. The very next day we reached the location. After seeing the place and after discussing with many people from different walks of life I decided that my approach to the film should be investigative.

As in my earlier films, I took an objective view of the whole problem. As a film-maker I did not take any sides. The film reflects the stark reality of haphazard development and the apathy of rich loom owners and officials.

This film got the National Award as the Best Investigative Film. This has given me a recognition as a documentary film-maker. But I would also say that my cinematic aspirations and ambitions will be realised only when I make a feature film.

The best features of the news magazine are its simplicity and its sincerity in approach. Although the film is made by a government organisation we allowed people to vent their feelings and frustrations. At the same time, the criticism is not for the sake of criticism.

In my view the subject matter, the content of the film, was considered more important than the style. As an artiste and communicator, while making this film I did not adopt any style. But I was always concerned that the film should not deviate from the subject.

When I was a student I was influenced by the great Russian Writers, particularly Gorky and Tolstoy. When I joined FTII, Madras, I was exposed to a different kind of cinema and I was influenced by Satyajit Ray’s films.
Synopsis:

This film essentially documents the history of Indian painting between the period of 1857 and 1920 and chronicles the influence of European art on Indian art. The first and most important influence was that the Indian artists were introduced to representing images as the human eye perceives an object. This meant introduction of new techniques like adoption of perspective 'artificial' which enabled the artist to introduce depth into their artworks. Three dimensional space was thus represented on flat surface. This method of painting was distinctly different from the centuries-old Indian method of painting, representations of which was found on miniatures, lacquer works, wall paintings and manuscripts.

With the telling defeat of the nobility in the Battle of Plassey and giving up of royal powers after the Mutiny of 1857, the artists no longer enjoyed royal patronage and started moving to the port cities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras in search of new clients.
Soon, they realised they had two sets of buyers—the European *sahibs* and the nouveaux riches Indians. To serve the former, traditional skills gave way to newer styles. As these painters were largely commissioned by Company servants, there emerged a school which came to be known as Company School. The paintings done by the latter were largely oils on canvas, but the theme was tailored for Indian tastes. This style came to be known as the French Bengal or Dutch Bengal schools.

Folk artists who had also migrated to these cities now started producing inexpensive art, as did the Patuas of Kalighat who now started producing woodcuts, caricatures, etc. Similarly, the *kalamkari* painters of Tamil Nadu took to glass painting as did the Tanjore painters.

Many artists now started experimenting with a blend of Indian and European art. However, all this came to a halt when the British started opening training schools, such as the School of Industrial Art in Madras (established in 1853), the Calcutta School of Industrial Art (1894) and the J.J. School of Art in Bombay. Also, for economic exploitation, the British required information which needed aid of maps, illustrations, etc. The students were thus instructed in the technique of copying, draughtsmanship, litho-printing, etching, etc. For students from upper class background provisions were made for training in higher drawing. The students were trained along the systems followed by the art schools in England. This blend of styles came to be known as the neo-classical style and was perceived as a scientific way of producing art.

Due to ready availability of market, portraiture became the most favoured genre of Indian artists. Portraits by Shashi Hesh, Peetsonjee Bemonjee, and of course, Raja Ravi Verma, are still regarded as fine examples of art. The artists had thus moved from painting idolatry images to real-life people and scenes.

By the turn of the century, however, some artists—both British and Indian—started opposing the rigidity of the curriculum. E.B. Havell, together with Abendranath Tagore, successfully managed to change the curriculum of the Government Art School in Calcutta. This movement was further fuelled by the national movement. Painters like Hemen Mazumdar, Pithawala, Atul Bose, A.X. Trinidadde, M.V. Dhurandar, however, still continued in the neo-classical style adapted to suit local requirements. This style has become a part of the history of Indian art and a large collection can be found in the NGMA today.
Suhasini Mulay:

At McGill University, Montreal, Suhasini moved from an active film career to agricultural technology and then graduated in mass communications in 1974. Films and film-making were the overpowering inspiration to her life. And not just because her mother happened to be a top-ranking documentary and short filmmaker.

Suhasini Mulay first arrived on the Indian film scene as the lead player of Mrinal Sen’s *Bhuvan Shome* (1969). But it is as a serious documentarist that she has dedicated her primary concern. Her work, along with her co-directors, on *Bhopal: Beyond Genocide* was to stir the national conscience. Suhasini’s short-films range from culture to the literacy campaign to issues of social concern.

**Selected Filmography:** as Director—Simurg, *Jadu ki Kitab*, *Likh Ke De Do*, *Bhopal: Beyond Genocide* (co-director), Chithhi, *Azadi*—a four-part documentary on Kashmir, a 3-part documentary on communalism, *Makan Ho To Aisa*, *The Official Art Form* (co-director)

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**Credits**

Direction : Suhasini Mulay-H.M. Gharekhan
Producer : National Gallery of Modern Art
Cinematography : J. K. Adway
Editing : Y.S. Rawat
Screenplay-Story : Suhasini Mulay
Music : H.M. Gharekhan
Sound : H.M. Gharekhan
Paintings and their appreciation are considered to be an elite activity in India. While the man on the street is exposed to drawings and paintings of advertisements, hoardings, especially for cinemas, are the popular forms of paintings, as are pictures of gods, goddesses and the pantheon of mythologies that surround us. In rural India people are also exposed to folk art. What was fascinating was that popular images like the painting of Rama used so widely by the BJP, or the portrait of Shivaji used so extensively by the Shiv Sena in their efforts to ‘cleanse’ India of ‘foreign’ and ‘alien’ elements, are in fact a form of painting that is definitely not traditionally Indian. By which we mean the very form that is to rally the masses to ‘clean’ this country of ‘impurity’ is in fact ‘impure!’ These icons are painted in the form introduced by the British to forward their own exploitation of this land. It was therefore interesting to trace the history of this art-form, which was in fact the official art-form that Indian artisans were taught to glorify the British Empire.

A documentary film really gets made on the editing table. While shooting, there is roughly a concept, some clear images that are evolved during the recce of the film and some ‘business’ shots to make comments on the subject at hand. But in this film we decided that we would tell the story without any live interview of experts. As it is more a film on the beauty of painting, we let the image of the paintings speak for themselves, which meant after exclusive research, we shape the various paintings.

The film was challenging for a very different reason. In this case the challenge was to tell the story of something as esoteric as an art form in the simplest language possible. To try and sensitize a lay viewer to the fact that even something as ‘natural’ as painting is in fact a tool. A tool of domination, where the concept of beauty, the very interpretation of what painting is meant for, was changed as a part of a deliberate policy of the ruling state.
Traditionally, we have created paintings to depict icons which are symbolic. This is true of Egyptian, Chinese, Japanese or even early Christian paintings. These forms of paintings were undertaken to glorify our gods, we were not interested in painting images as the eye perceives objects around us. The introduction of the post-Renaissance form of painting, and the desire of the British to ask Indian artists to paint everyday scenes, was in some sense a part of the domination of our colonial masters. The challenge was to convey this to a lay audience.

We have produced a simple and technically clean film. It's easy to make a simplistic film and hard to produce a simple, interesting film. We think we've pulled it off. For a film on painting, we think it's absolutely essential that the film does not tamper with the subject matter. We mean that the painting has been executed by another artist as per his/her sensibilities. If the film is made such that it intrudes or dominates the work of another artist, we as film-makers have failed the film, because we have intruded and dominated and stifled the creativity of our subject, i.e. the painting executed by another artist.

Also, this film was being made for a museum (The National Gallery of Modern Art) to educate their viewer about these paintings. That purpose had to be served first, and my artistic interpretations had to be subsumed to the more important artist, i.e. the painter. The cinematic style therefore is dictated by the subject of the film and the purpose it sets out to undertake. Paintings have to be seen up close and at a distance, because the artist has balanced the painting to suit a composition including the frame of the painting. Therefore we have taken care to show the full painting including the frames, so that the viewer has a flavour of the full work, even though it does sit happily in fixed 1:1.3 ratio of the standard Academy frame of the film.

Film-making is a team effort and two/three/four heads are definitely better than one as long as the director is clear what she wants. Film-making is a partnership and at least in my unit suggestions are welcome, from the spotboy to the artists. Because in my lexicon, a film-maker has the licence to do anything to the audience, except to make them fall asleep, and not communicate. If you don't communicate with any audience, find another business!

The major problem with making The Official Art Form was that it was a film about painting, which is a static object. It is also
a period of painting, from 1857. Also, in the 16mm film format even simple special effects like a dissolve, or a fade or a wipe, are not happily achieved, and complicated special effects to rotate or move these images is not easily possible and the results from our film processing labs are not the happiest. All the time one was fighting the static quality of the film.

I must say one thing about the festivals organised by the Directorate of Film Festivals (and it has particular significance, as one of the films I have directed in the Panorama). That for people who do not live in the 4-5 metropolises of India, a lot of talent in India is stifled for lack of exposure. It is the efforts of organisations like the Directorate of Films festival, and the Films Division that organises the International Documentary Festival, that allows people like me to get a vision of the range of international cinema. If the face of media in this country has to change, these institutions must be strengthened. There are a lot of young people in smaller towns and villages, who are simply passed over, because they are born in the wrong place.

I could have been one of them. So please show these films in places like Baroda, Ranchi, Nasik, Jaipur, Jalpaiguri, Dharwar etc. Is anybody listening?

— H.M. Gharekhan
THE LOST HORIZON

4 mins., 35 mm, col., English

Synopsis:

An animation film, it expresses the theme of villages as a national heritage. It stresses the need to allow village traditions and atmosphere to live on, for ecological balance.
Arun S. Gongade:
Specialising in commercial art at the Mumbai Art School, Gongade went on to join the Cartoon Film Unit of the Films Division of India. His work in short-films and animation has won several international awards, including the National Film Award for Animation, the Golden Statuette at Teheran, the Jury Award of Merit at the Chicago International Festival of Children's Films.

Selected Award-winners
Bidaai, A.B. See, End Game, The Lost Horizon.

Credits

Direction-Screenplay
Producer
Cinematography
Editing
Screenplay-Story
Music
Sound

Arun Gongade
Films Division
Prakash Parma-Anil Kumar
Harish Sutar
Arun Gongade
K. Narayanan
Subhashish Chaudhary
VAANAVIL
(The Rainbow)

18 mins., 35 mm, col., English

Synopsis:
Terroist Aravind was shot by the police and admitted into a hospital where he loses his leg. While he thinks that his whole life is in vain, he gets the company of Preethi, a little girl who declares herself to be a niece of the hospital’s chief and her house is nearby. She explains the incidents to Aravind that take place in her house and nearby, outside the window.

Aravind was very much impressed with her love and forgets his pain in her sweet little stories. As days pass, their friendship grows stronger and Aravind could not pass even a single day without seeing her. Aravind gets cured and suddenly, one day he was discharged. Hoping to see Preethi, he opens the window and gets shocked when he finds nothing except a broken wall. He comes to know that Preethi is an orphan and that the stories she related to him were only to get over his pain. She herself was suffering from
a heart disease and had only a few days to live.
After her death, Aravind changed his lifestyle and lived on the memories of Preethi, knowing the true value of human existence.

K. S. Ramakumar:
A graduate of philosophy from Madras Christian College, later joined the Film and Television Institute of Tamilnadu in the Department of Direction. Vaanavil was his first directorial venture and a student diploma project film. He has won the APT TV Award for the Best Short film and Santhome Communication Award for The Best Short Film.

Credits

Direction-Screenplay : K.S. Ramkumar Babu
Producer : Film & TV Institute of Tamil Nadu
Cinematography : G. Balamurugan-V.K. Sauda
Editing : Binunirmal
Story : K.S. Ramkumar Babu
Music : Varadha
Sound : Nandagopal Reddy
Art Direction : S.M. Sundaravadivelu
The perception of my concept is not in the form of the so-called short film, since I focused more on the content of the film rather than form. My film focuses on the meaning of human existence and human relationships. I was very inspired by Sartre’s philosophy and his concept of Being and Nothingness and I tried to reflect this in my film. In my film Vaanavil I make the point that we lose ourselves in some fixed ideologies we really don’t need and we live a false life, for the eyes of the society, wearing a mask and not daring to portray ourselves for what we really are. What Sartre says is living in Bad Faith.

In Vaanavil, the protagonist is a terrorist whose repressed thoughts of broken desires, ambitions and aims are reflected violently towards society, losing himself without knowing the true value of human existence. When he is accompanied by a little girl who gives him hope, it removes his mask (ideology) and makes him know the real meaning of life and the true value of human existence. He discovers his true self on the death of the little girl.

Even though I pre-planned my script carefully, I made some changes. I improvised and even added a scene while on actual shooting. I hate to be fixed with pre-occupied thoughts which restrict creativity. While editing I repeated some shots to maintain the emotional flow which is not in the original screenplay.

In Vaanavil my first film, I mixed up the childhood memories which I could not forget. Like any other film-maker I, too, had the aspiration to hit the headlines, if I got the chance to prove my creativity. It was very satisfying for me to receive the APT TV Award for best short film of the year 1997 and Santhome Award for best student’s film, which is considered to be one of the prestigious awards of our State.

Vaanavil is packed with various kinds of emotions. When the terrorist is confronted by the police, admitted in the hospital, accompanied by the little girl Preethi. Though the protagonist is a terrorist, I didn’t impose any views on terrorism, rather I expressed
a demand-less love of an innocent child to the man who thinks that he has lost everything, after he has been caught by the police and thinks only death can rescue him.

I added subtexts to my film. One is the mask which Preethi wears and it runs through the film. It refers that mask to the one everyone of us has in living a false life.

Though the theme is universal, a film is a personalised conception of the film-maker. According to his own culture and taste. An actor is a tool of communicating the personalised ideas of the film-maker. But we need a good tool to communicate our ideas effectively. Each and every character is very important, and I have designed the film like that.

An ideal cinematographer is one who interprets the thoughts of the film-maker and truthfully visualizes the subject, its language, mood as well as the taste of the film-maker. I am lucky to get such a cinematographer. Cinema to me should be a woven pattern of natural emotions. A perfect art is one which portrays true emotions, without that art is not fulfilled.

Excerpts from an interview:

When you try something new or experimental in a film what are the most important aspects you keep in mind and try to achieve?

An ideal film-maker always tries to achieve something new. The very thought of my film is experimental. It has the inspiration of a short story (author unknown to me) which I heard in my school days. I experimented by mixing it with my childhood memories.

The important aspect is, I conceptualized my theme with universal significance and raw emotions.

What is your personal definition of cinema? What should a film be, ideally?

Cinema doesn't have a particular definition, since each film maker has his own taste of film-making, there is no grammar for cinema. We cannot define cinema, how it should be, but we can talk about creativity. A creativity should be creative in itself. A true film is film which is truthful to itself, to its subject, to its approach and making. A film could be about anything, but should be identified by the audience of any class, i.e., it should pose universality.
Synopsis:

Once a poor boy named Victor lived on the outskirts of a city with his mother. He earned his living doing odd jobs. His one desire was to be an artist as he loved drawing and painting.

One night an old wise man appeared in his dream, and gifted him a magic painting brush. Whatever Victor painted with this brush, took shape. Soon he became very popular. The greedy king caught hold of him and asked him to paint something for him. Victor painted a huge golden cave and the king greedily ran into it and claimed all the gold for himself. Victor made another golden rock and blocked its exit so that the king was now a prisoner within the golden cave. He cried for his freedom. Victor had made the best use of his magic brush to teach the greedy king a lesson.
A.R. Sen:

Born in Calcutta 5 January, 1933, graduated in fine arts, worked as Chief Animator, Government of India and Head, Design & Graphics from 1973 to 1979 in the Faculty of F.T.I.I., Pune. One of the topmost animators and directors in India.

Received national and international awards. Availed U.N.D.P. Fellowship to study in National Film Board of Canada and N.B.C., Canada. Also took part in the cultural exchange programme with Czechoslovakia. Working now as a freelance animator and director for N’CYP and ad-films.

Credits

Direction : A.R. Sen
Producer : N’CYP, Mumbai
Cinematography : Bipin Samant
Editing : Vijay Sutar
Screenplay : Prof. Achintya Biswas
Music : K. Narayanam
VIDIYALAI NOKKI
(Awaiting the Dawn)

13 mins., 35 mm, col., Tamil

Synopsis:

This is the story of a blind man—blind from birth. What will he see if he is given a chance to see the world only for three minutes. Suryanarayanan at the age of seventy is going to see the world. Vidiyalai Nokki tries to capture this blind man’s emotions during those three minutes. This film is a sincere attempt to give acceptance to the blind within our life. We wish there are many more doctors like Sindhu of this film who would make the blind see the world.
P. Venkatesh

A graduate in visual communication, he specialized in television production at Loyala College, Madras. He is also a Certificate-holder in film, television and theatre acting.

He joined the Film and Television Institute of Tamilnadu and studied direction and screenplay-writing. His short film Vidiyalai Nokki has received the 1997 National Award for the Best Short-Fiction film.

He also has a novel Ido Oru Mugam Illathavan to his credit.

Credits

Direction-Screenplay : P. Venkatesh
Producer : FTI-Tamil Nadu
Cinematography : G.V. Movnic Kumar
Editing : S.M. Sundaraadivelu
Story : P. Venkatesh
Music : Ashok Joy
Sound : T. Saravana Kumar
The concept of short films for long has been perceived as something other than what it truly is. A short film, ideally, should be focused in approach and work around a simple knot of information. This is what led me, in my search, towards a simple yet significant message, that can be conveyed effectively. The inspiration for the film Vidiyalai Nokki is from a writing by the great Tamil philosopher-poet and saint Thiruvalluvar. He compares a lost friendship with the feelings of a blind man who gets vision and loses it again. I took this point, of a blind man getting vision and losing it, in an optimistic note and this resulted in the script for Vidiyalai Nokki.

Every move in this my first film, is predetermined. My script was prepared, improvised upon, and set before the actual shooting. Unlike most films, mine was not conceptualised to speak to a particular audience with its mind-set. I wanted to reach the lay viewer, too.

Vidiyalai Nokki is a much cherished work for me. Like any other film-maker, I too had the aspiration to hit the headlines with my creative endeavour. It was very heartening to receive a national award for the very first film. I have since been sought for by many a producer, but more than that, the distinctions Vidiyalai Nokki has gained have helped me to get an identity of my own.

Vidiyalai Nokki, to me, is a raw presentation of emotions. It does not talk about science, but pictures the after-effect of scientific advancement. Given only three minutes, after which you would be confronted only by darkness, what would be the mental state of a blind man? What would he like to see? This is the significant essence of this short fiction film. The performance of three real blind-kids is another strong feature which helped me to gain sympathy from the viewers.

I am more concerned about the content of a film rather than its form. The method on which I would concentrate is more towards the narrative style, than about cinematic style. Film must be knitted together only by emotions. What you say is always more to be pondered over than how you say it.
I would like to be identified as an Indian director. I want all my works to reflect my great land, my heritage, my milieu. But I would also love to work on films co-produced internationally.

_Ido Oru Mugamillathilavan_ (Here Is A Faceless Man) is a novel written by me and would be my film to the world. It would reflect an unknown Indian youth's interpretation of sex and death. Perhaps I will soon have an opportunity to make it as an international co-production.

The very concept of my first film _Vidiyalai Nokki_ was experimental. The basic factor that must be evaluated when trying to do something new or experimental is the interest the new thought generates. If it could not generate any positive reaction amidst initial listeners, I would abort it. Anything that cannot sustain interest on the screen is a misfit.

I am an ardent student of the cinema and two film-makers have become my models because of their films. They are Kamal Hassan and Bharathiraja: the perfection of Kamal Hassan, the scripting technique and the characterisations of Kamal Hassan; and Bharathiraja's capacity to poetise my countryside as it looks, has evoked a lot of inspiration for me.

For me cinema is presenting emotions on the screen. Ideally, cinema must have a human element in it. Without this a film would be incomplete.
NATIONAL FILM DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

With the macro-economic order changing from one of controls to that of free market economy in India, not many media experts had expected the NFDC to survive in the post-decanalisation period. NFDC not only survived the change, but saw for itself an opportunity in the rapidly changing economic and technological scenario in the media business as the corporate leader of the entertainment and culture industry.

The Corporation, during the year, grew at a rate of 39% and increased its profits by 117% over the previous year which, in the light of the competition, can be considered as outstanding. The Corporation was able to achieve this by strengthening its TV Marketing Division, outbidding the competition to bag major slots on Doordarshan, including Rangoli, slots of Tamil feature films, the Marathi film channel and, of course, continuing with its Friday and some Saturday films on DD-1 and Saturday and Sunday on DD-2. Despite the fact that the margin on these films has declined owing to high minimum guarantees, large costs of big budget films, provisions for no recoveries owing to bad marketing conditions, etc, the performance of the Corporation has been significant.

Distribution of films through TV has become a major profit centre for the Corporation which has helped it to cross-subsidise its activity of promoting good quality cinema. The growth of NFDC was ensured entirely through internal generation of resources with no budgetary support whatsoever.

Film Finance:

NFDC continued to promote small budget films based on fresh and original ideas but laid more stress on its own productions rather than financing of films. During the year the film Sanghat [Bengali] was completed. Two new projects Sundari [Hindi] and Sakhi Mazi [Marathi] were approved under this scheme during the year.

Co-production with Doordarshan:

The strategic alliance with Doordarshan for production and exhibition of films has been very useful in developing a synergy. The
scheme found ready exhibition outlets, promoted talent and brought laurels both to NFDC and Doordarshan. During the year seven new projects were approved and three films earlier approved were completed. **Phulwari Bachon Ki**, a children’s programme produced under this scheme, continued to be telecast on Doordarshan for the third year running.

**International Co-production:**

The productions under this scheme included:

- **Dance with the Wind**, a film by Rajan Khosha which is an Indo-German co-production. The film has been completed and was presented recently at the Venice Film Festival.
- **Ekti Nadir Naam** (The Name of a River), a film by Anup Singh which is an NFDC-British Film Institute co-production. The shooting of this film is nearing completion.
- **And the Show Goes On**, a film by Mrinal Sen. This film was also an NFDC-British Film Institute co-production. It is a documentary film made as part of the Cinema Centenary Celebrations.
- **Train to Pakistan**, a film co-produced with Pan Pictures and Rook A.V., was also presold to Channel 4, U.K. The film based on Khushwant Singh’s novel and directed by Pamela Rooks, was premiered on August 15, 1997.

**Theatre Finance:**

The Theatre Financing Scheme was formulated and made operative to ensure creation of additional seating capacity in the country and provide outlets for Good Cinema under this scheme. This scheme was started with an initial loan from the Government of India out of blocked funds of the MPEAA. Subsequently, this amount was augmented with NFDC’s own surplus funds. During the year, 2 new loans were sanctioned and Rs. 50.00 lakhs was disbursed in respect of 7 cases and 110 theatres have started functioning under this scheme upto March 31, 1997.

**Festival of Indian Panorama Films:**

During the year Indian Panorama Film Weeks were held in ten centres of the country in co-operation with State Film Development Corporations or Film Societies. Among the important centres were Pune, Nagpur, Calicut, Quilon, Bombay, Cuttack, Calcutta, Trivandrum, Pondicherry and Imphal.

The Panorama Festival continues to receive enthusiastic support from film circles and film societies, as this is the only source for many to see good quality cinema apart from watching it on
television. This scheme may, however, have to be discontinued if prints of Panorama films are not funded by the Ministry through the Directorate of Film Festivals.

Television:
NFDC continued exhibition in various channels of Doordarshan. This mainly included feature films on Friday and Saturday slots on DD-1 and feature films on Saturday and Sunday slots on DD-2, Movieclub films on DD-3, films on DD India, films on DD Movieclubs Malayalam/Tamil/Kannada/Bengali, etc.

NFDC Net:
NFDC has developed a software called NFDC-NET which has become operational and a large number of advertising agencies are connected by the internet for informations on programmes of DD. The software gives informations and details of programmes including synopses, cast, credits, TRP ratings, past performance, advertisement booking possibilities, rates of advertisement, etc. The actual booking of advertisements is also possible via the internet.

The system added a level of transparency in all operations and also gives useful Management Information Reports to the advertising agencies as well as to the NFDC and Doordarshan. The system is operational and is currently being used by major advertising agencies. Once the system proves itself, it is planned to upgrade it further to ensure on-line billing via the system. The NFDC web page continued to be popular all around the world and gave useful on-line information on NFDC’s activities. The site also includes information on import procedures, copyright laws, Cinematograph Act, shooting in India, IFFI, etc.

The strength of the NFDC films catalogue and its marketing was seen from the fact that on 15th August, 1997 when India was celebrating 50 years of Independence, virtually every important TV channel in the country was screening NFDC films. These included 1942: A Love Story on DD-1, Garam Hawa on DD Movieclub, Gandhi on Sony, Train to Pakistan on Star Plus, Making of the Mahatma on Astro [Malaysial] & SBS Austraila.

Social Campaigns:
NFDC entered in a big way in supporting socially relevant campaigns through the audio-visual media. In the previous year the NFDC had undertaken the Pulse Polio immunisation campaign. During the current year it has undertaken the National Literacy Mission campaigns and has successfully managed them through TV
serials, talk shows and message capsules produced for the Ministry of HRD. Campaigns for Birth and Death registration for the Home Ministry were also executed by the Corporation. The Corporation also produced three films for the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

**Future Vision:**

The Corporation keeps in mind the fast changing business environment. This includes entry of multinationals, appointment of Disinvestment Commission, emergence of Prasar Bharati, likely appointment of Broadcasting Authority of India and the emergence of DTH, appearance of new satellites, including INSAT 2D and 2E, Asiasat II, the emergence of multiplexes, the convergence of TV and computers, growth of internet, emergence of virtual reality, growth of 3-D TV etc. Its future strategies will keep these shifting sands in mind.
It was in December, 1947, that the Standing Committee of the Government of India approved of the scheme for the revival of the film producing and distributing organisation as a mass media unit of the Information and Broadcasting Ministry.

The central film media organisation of the Government of India, the Films Division, with its head quarters at Mumbai, forms a part of the set up of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, after being established in 1948.

As a Government organisation, the Division has a certain role to play in projecting schemes and plans pertaining to nation building efforts.

The Films Division, since its inception, has been instrumental in presenting to India and to the world outside, not only the India of today but also the rich heritage of the land, its vastness and variety that make the Indian panorama a dazzling tapestry of race and religion, custom and tradition, fairs and festivals. It has tried to keep pace with the sweeping changes that are taking place across the world. It has now become very much a part of the history of the documentary film movement in India.

The Films Division, in the last four decades, has produced more than 7,000 films. It has bagged more that 1,300 national and international awards. It has risen in stature to become the largest documentary and short-film producing organisation in the world and is to India what the National Film Board is to Canada and the Central Documentary and Newsreel Studios are to Russia.

The Films Division produces films through its own directors and producers. Most of the films being included in the annual production programme.

Normally, the Division reserves some films for allotment to independent film-makers in various centres to encourage individual talent and thus promote the documentary film movement in the country.

Every year, Films Division has to produce 26 documentaries and 26 News Magazines for theatrical release in commercial cin-
emas, and 30 special films for showing in rural areas through the mobile units of the Directorate of Field Publicity and of the State Governments and also for telecasting.

The Films Division is producing documentary films and special new magazines to coincide with the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of India’s Independence.

This division has received 14 proposals from different Departments and Ministries for the production of films on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee Year of Independence.

The Films Division has also initiated the production of films in video format, keeping in view the needs of the new generation. The Films Division has taken steps to develop and equip itself with video facilities for making programs in the video format, including computer graphics for certain film units. Recently, a video editing room has been set up in the Films Division complex to meet requirements.

The Films Division has a huge archive of historical material on celluloid. To keep this archival material in good condition, the Films Division is going in for modern amenities.

The News Reel Wing is headed by a Joint Chief Producer, assisted by several directors, newsreel officers, and asstt. newsreel officers, forming a network coverage of the main cities and towns, including State and Union territories capitals. The material collected goes into the making of the fortnightly news-magazines and also to the compilation of archival material.

The animation film unit formed at the Films Division head quarters in 1957, has gained distinction through a steady output of animation films. The unit also prepares animation sequences for the documentaries and new magazines and is now equipped for the production of puppet films. The Films Division has set up its regional centres at Calcutta and Bangalore for the production of rural-oriented featurettes of about an hour’s duration in regional languages, to benefit and for the upliftment of the rural masses.

The distribution wing of the Films Division spreads its branch offices in the ratio of one branch to 1500 cinema houses, with a network of 10 branch offices. The Films Division co-ordinates the distribution of its films in about 12,700 cinema theatres in the country showing films in 15 languages.

Since 1990, the Mumbai International Film Festival for Documentary and Short films and Animation Films is being held from March 1 to 7 March, 1998, when the country is also in the midst of celebrating its 50th year of Independence. It is then that the Films
Division will also be completing 50 years of its own existence. It’s only the Films Division that has cinematographically marched along with the nation: recording its great achievements, the wars that it has had to face, the natural calamities that it has had to survive and its chequered post-independence history.

Film-makers will be pleased to know that MIFF, ’98 will be offering cash awards with Golden Conch Awards in various categories, amounting to amount two million Indian rupees (over sixty thousand US dollars).

Films will be screened in Competition. Information, Retrospective and the Spectrum India sections. As usual, the Video Vista section will also invite entries in its national competitive section. MIFF ’98 will continue the Dr. V. Shantaram Award established in 1996 to facilitate a senior and outstanding documentary film-maker from India with a cash award of Rs. One lakh (2,500 dollars US) as a lifetime achievement award.
N'CYP: FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The National Centre of Films for Children and Young People (N'CYP), earlier known as Children's Film Society, India, was formed in 1955 with the aim of providing healthy and clean entertainment to children through the medium of cinema. Since then, N'CYP has been involved in both production/acquisition and distribution of films. Till date, N'CYP has produced over 250 hours of software consisting of feature films, short and short-animation films and TV serials. These are screened in theatres through district/citywise package programmes. They are also shown on various channels of the Doordarshan TV network.

N'CYP also conducts an International Film Festival for Children and Young People every alternate year.

During the year 1997, N'CYP has made concerted efforts to widen its audience base. Specific stress was laid on exhibition activity in the North-Eastern States. The highlights are as follows:

(a) Package programme of films covering the entire State of Assam in a period of 4 weeks. Package programme in the State of Tripura was conducted simultaneously.

(b) Special programme for the State of Mizoram involving circulation of video cassettes with subtitles in Mizo language through local cable networks.

(c) Large number of districtwise programmes in other States.

On the production front, two animation short films, Mahakapi 95 and Victor were completed during the year. A feature film in Kannada titled Innondu Mukha (The Other Face) was also taken up and completed. We are happy to record that both the above mentioned short animation films have been included in Panorama 1997.

The highlight of the year was the successful conduct of the 10th International Film Festival for Children and Young People at Hyderabad between 14th-23rd November 1997. In all, 119 films from 31 countries participated in the Festival. It has been decided that
henceforth the Festival will be conducted at Hyderabad only. The Festival has therefore been renamed as International Film Festival–Hyderabad, for Children and Young People.

Further, N’CYP’s long-pending project of a Children’s Film Complex received a boost during this year with the allotment of 10 acres of land at Hyderabad. The land has been taken over and construction work is expected to start in 1998.

Using the good offices of the Ministry of External Affairs, N’CYP is making efforts to reach its films to young audiences in other countries. A programme is presently on in the CIS countries with active assistance from our Consulates.
The premier film school of India, the FTII was established in 1961 at the premises of the famous Prabhat Film Studios. The film wing of the Institute imparts training in the art and craft of filmmaking. At present 96 students are studying in the following seven courses: (1) Direction (2) Motion Picture Photography (3) Audiography (4) Editing (5) Art Direction (Film & TV) (6) Production Management (Film & TV) and (7) Post Diploma in Direction.

Along with the regular faculty and experts, Institute students are also being taught by Indian and foreign visiting scholars, filmmakers and film technicians. Last year, guest lecturers Helma Sanders Brahms from Germany, Kriszstof Zanussi of Poland and Istvan Gaal of Hungary conducted workshops with students. This year, Dr. Christian Grote of Germany conducted a three-day workshop on Aspects of Editing: Time in Film. The internationally renowned French cinematographer Raoul Coutard conducted a week-long workshop with students in the month of November, 1997.

The TV Wing of the Institute caters mainly to the needs of Doordarshan staff. It has already conducted 44 Television Production and Technical Operation courses for Doordarshan. During the year a two-week course of Non-linear Editing was conducted for four video editors. The TV Production Orientation and Video Course was held for 5 IIS probationers and thirty-eight film students.

For the TV Wing, during the year, digital camera chains, Sony-BVP 500 were installed in the studio; Betacam A/B Roll Editing set-up was installed in the Post-Production Studio; two Silicon Graphics 02 Workstations were also installed with Alias soft-ware.

FTII regularly enters student-films in various national and international film festivals to provide exposure for the young film-makers.

The International Short and Alternative Film Festival at Dhaka celebrated A Century of Cinema: 25 Years of Bangladesh Independence.
At the festival, which was held from 2nd to 10th January, 1997, five FTII films were shown in two sections. In the International Short Films section, A Little War by Atanu Biswas, Still Life by Subhadro Chowdhary and In Short by Kuntal Bhogilal; and in the section of Films by Women: Phobhabai by Ms. Batul Malik and The Rebel by Rajashree.

The Rebel and A Brief Journey were shown in the 1996 Indian Panorama of International Film Festival of India held at Thiruvananthapuram.

Rondo by Bharat Solanki was shown in the Competition Section of the 9th edition of the renowned Clermont Ferrand Short Film Festival, France.

Institute films win one or two National Film Awards every year. This year our films won three National Awards. Atmeeyam by Nand Kumar Kavil won the Best Short Fiction Film Award, Yeh Woh Shahar To Nahin won the award for Best First Non-Feature Film of the Director and Nihar Ranjan Samal won the award for Best Audiography for Non-Feature Film for Tat-Tvam-Asi by Sambit Mohanty.

The 26th Worldwide Student Film Festival, Potsdam, Germany, included a special programme of student films from India. Seven FTII films were shown in the festival: Vilaap by Surendra Chowdhary, Man vs. Man by Shashi Anand, Pot Story by Zainnuddin A.Kechik, Wisdom Tree by Rajan Khosa, Aamukh by Rajkumar, The Riddle by Niladri Chatopadhyay and Playback Exercise by Charudutt Acharya.

Niyati by Mauleenath Senapati and The Riddle participated in the Competition Section of the 4th International Festival of Film Schools, Mexico City, and A Brief Journey was shown at the 3rd International Festival of Film Schools, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Atmeeyam, Tat-Tvam-Asi and Hypothesis are in the 1997 Indian Panorama of IFFI 1998 at New Delhi.

Each year Film and Television Institute of India and the National Film Archives of India jointly organise a course of Film Appreciation at the FTII campus. This year 65 participants from the fields of teaching, journalism and the media attended the four–week course from 19th May to 14th June, 1997.

During the last 37 years, Institute students have made their distinct mark in mainstream as well as the alternative cinema. Institute students were the forerunners in the movement and growth of regional cinema of India and became a major force in the development of Malayalam, Kannada, Oriya and Assamese cinema.
The Film and Television Institute of Tamilnadu, Chennai, is one of the two major film institutes in India; the other being the Film and Television Institute India, Pune. The Institute at Chennai is run by the Government of Tamilnadu and is functioning under the administrative control of the Director of Information and Public Relations. This is an advanced institute imparting film techniques and aesthetics.

The main objectives of the institute are to impart training in various film production and television production and allied subjects, and to appreciate the great sources of the medium of film entertainment. Nowadays, the film media play a very vital role in the field of communication for the masses.

**Activities:**

This institute is quite outstanding in imparting courses on film production. It was started in 1945 as a section consisting of cinematography and sound engineering attached to Central Polytechnic, Chennai. In 1960, this section was upgraded as an independent institution and the Institute of Film Technology was formed.

To start with, diploma courses in Cinematography, Sound Recording and Sound Engineering and Film Processing were offered. Subsequently, courses in Direction and Screenplay Writing, Film Editing and Film Acting were introduced from 1971.

From the academic year 1987-88 courses in Television Production were also introduced in the curriculum for Direction, Cinematography, Sound Recording and Sound Engineering, Film Processing and Film Editing.

It is worth mentioning here that this is the only institution in the country where diploma courses in Film Processing and Film Acting are conducted presently.

So far, a total number of 1200 students have undergone training in various disciplines at this Institute. Most of the alumni are well
placed in the film industry, State and Central government and other public/private undertakings and with Doordarshan Kendras.

**Details of Courses and Qualifications Required For Admission**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Name of Course</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Qualification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Diploma Courses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Direction and Screenplay Writing</td>
<td>3 Years</td>
<td>Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Cinematography</td>
<td>3 Years</td>
<td>Plus Two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Sound Recording and Sound Engineering</td>
<td>3 Years</td>
<td>Plus Two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Film Processing</td>
<td>3 Years</td>
<td>Plus Two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Film Editing</td>
<td>3 Years</td>
<td>Plus Two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Film Acting (Certificate Course)</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>S.S.L.C.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Every year, twelve students are admitted in each Diploma Course. For the Acting Course, twenty students (10 boys and 10 girls) are admitted. One seat is reserved in all the Diploma Courses for the students of States other than Tamilnadu. The selection of candidates for admission to the Diploma Courses are made out of the qualifying examinations (85% marks) and 15 marks awarded by the Selection Committee appointed by the Government every year.

**Students Film Production**

The students of different branches are formed into twelve units and each unit is given film production exercises in a graded manner by which they are trained in making a full-fledged short story and documentary film. Graduating students have to produce a short-film independently.

The Government is spending approximately, for each student unit, a sum of Rs. 2.00 lakhs per annum for their training programmes. The Diploma Films that are produced by the students in the final year as project work are assessed in the practical examinations by the State Board of Technical Education and Training, Government of Tamilnadu.

To give full-fledged training to the students, 30 teaching staff and 52 technical persons are appointed at the Institute. A total sum
of Rs. 70 lakhs is spent on salaries and under non-salary heads by the Government every year.

**Necessity For Modernisation:**

The students are given training in each discipline with the available machinery and equipments (costing about Rs. 4 crores) but this is considered somewhat outdated while compared to the film industry and the various TV satellite channels and Doordarshan. To procure more sophisticated equipment on par with the film & TV industry, the Government need to allocate sizeable funds for the Institute. But due to financial exigencies, the Government is not able to provide sufficient funds to modernise the Institute with the latest equipment required for students to get training in advanced technology. Students who gain employment with Doordarshan, private TV satellite channels and film industry have to handle modern equipment, but since they have trained on the outdated equipment available at present, they find the adjustment difficult. To overcome such difficulties, it is desired to procure modern equipment for the Institute, which will help students gain full-fledged training and work outside after studying at the Institute.
For sanctioning films for public exhibition in India, the Central Government set up the Central Board of Film Certification under the Cinematograph Act, 1952. It consists of a chairman and 25 other non-official members. The Board has its headquarters at Mumbai and nine regional offices located at Mumbai, Calcutta, Chennai, Bangalore, Thiruvananthapuram, Hyderabad, New Delhi, Cuttack and Guwahati. The regional offices are assisted in the examination of films by Advisory Panels consisting of eminent personalities from different walks of life. Shri Shakti Samanta, a distinguished film-maker, continues to be the Chairman of the Board.

Statistics for the Year 1996:

The number of Indian feature films (celluloid) certified during 1996 was 663. Region-wise, language-wise details of these films are given in Annexure I. Out of these, 126 were Hindi films and 482 were certified from the four southern regional offices, viz. Bangalore, Hyderabad, Madras and Thiruvananthapuram.

Of the 663 Indian feature films 545 films were on social themes and 79 on crime, 429 were granted "U" certificates (unrestricted public exhibition) (61.35%), 112 "UA" certificates (parental guidance for children below 12 years of age) (16.40%) and 152 "A" certificates (exhibition restricted to adults only) (22.25%).

Among the 139 foreign feature films certified in 1996, 25 were granted "U" certificates (17.99%), 33 "UA" certificates (23.74%) and 81 "A" certificates (58.27%).

The Board also certified 934 Indian short films, 209 foreign short films, 9 long films other than features (5 Indian and 4 Foreign) and 1,263 video films during the year 1996.

During the same year, 19 Indian feature films and 15 foreign feature films were refused certificates as they were found violative of one or more of the statutory film certification guidelines. Some of these films were certified later, either in a revised form by the Board itself or on the orders of the Film Certification Appellate Tribunal.
Statistics for the Year 1997:
(Upto 31.10.1997)

The number of Indian feature films (celluloid) certified during 1997 (upto October-97) is 566. Region-wise, language-wise details of these films are given in Annexure-II. Out of these, 96 were Hindi films and 383 were certified from four southern regional offices, viz. Bangalore, Hyderabad, Chennai and Thiruvananthapuram.

Of the 566 Indian feature films, 454 films were on social themes and 63 on crime. 391 were granted "U" certificates (unrestricted public exhibition (69.08%), 74 "UA" certificates (parental guidance for children below 12 years of age) (13.08%) and 101 "A" certificates (exhibition restricted to adults only) (17.84%). Among the 169 foreign feature films certified in 1997 (upto to 31.10.1997), 23 were granted "U" certificates (13.61%), 43 "UA" certificates (25.44%) and 103 "A" certificates (60.95%).

The Board also certified 651 Indian short films, 309 foreign short films, 16 long films other than feature (8 Indian and 8 foreign) and 1,169 video films during this period (upto 31.10.1997).

During the year 1997, (upto 31.10.97), 4 Indian celluloid feature films, 16 foreign celluloid feature films and 7 foreign video feature films were refused certificates as they were found violative of one or more of the statutory film certification guidelines. Some of these films were certified later in a revised form by the Board itself or on the orders of the Film Certification Appellate Tribunal.
# Annexure-I

Central Board of Film Certification

## Indian Feature Films Certified From 1.1.1996 to 31.12.1996

(Regionwise-Languagewise) (Celluloid Films)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>MUM</th>
<th>CAL</th>
<th>MAD</th>
<th>BAN</th>
<th>TRI</th>
<th>HYD</th>
<th>ND</th>
<th>CUT</th>
<th>GUW</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Tamil</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Telugu</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Kannada</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Malayalam</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Marathi</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
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**Central Board of Film Certification**

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# NATIONAL FILM AWARDS

## Best Feature Film of the Year

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(Compiled by B.B. Nagpal)
## INDIAN PANORAMA

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*One Film in Hindustani/Punjabi.

(Compiled by B.B. Nogpal)