

## Indian Cinema 1986

"The cinema, let us remember, is one of the biggest influences in the modern world. There are many other things which influence people—books, newspapers and so on. But I think it is perfectly correct to say that the influence of films in India is greater than the influence of newspapers and books combined."

—Jawaharlal Nehru

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*This book is dedicated to Smita Patil, a constant star of Indian Cinema.*

## Lost Presence

Someone once compared Smita Patil to Anna Karina, the iconic figure of the French New Wave of the sixties. I remember being slightly annoyed when I read this. Why turn someone so essentially 'Indian' into an imitation icon? But when I sat down to write this tribute (a painful task for me) I recalled a tribute to Anna which perfectly fits Smita... "how intense an impression a girl can make if she knows how to be filmed, if she divines how the camera exploits her, and yet still consents to it without mannerism, irritation, or prudishness."

Benegal, her discoverer, was right when he singled out 'presence' as Smita's first notable quality. Those who missed her early TV appearance missed something. I saw her on the box long before she became a star. Her mere presence became a pleasure. I remember one programme where she sat slightly outside the discussion circle, intervening rarely. One couldn't concentrate on the discussion. Smita's shimmering quality of radiance enveloped the small screen. It was when you met Smita that you realised that the screen image was less powerful than the real life one. Her eyes, her gaze had a special quality—it looked at you, sized you up, troubled you, occasionally looked beyond as if searching for some unattainable object. It was this intriguing, somewhat 'lost' quality of her look that Benegal marvellously captured in **Nishant** and **Kondvra** and **Rabindra Dharmaraj** in **Chakra**. The "presence" of Smita is unmatched in the history of Indian cinema.

To that presence was allied an enormous vitality. It was much more than effervescence, or ebullience (and this is where she went beyond Anna). It was vitality compounded of sensuality, earthiness and a certain rock-like (this may sound odd but I cannot find a better expression) integrity. What gave a special edge to this vitality was a kind of vulnerability, even fragility which went with it. Smita displayed a flash of all this in **Manthan**.

'Smouldering' was the word most often used to describe this quality. It did not do justice to Smita. In **Manthan** Smita showed sexual need and withering contempt for its lily livered rejection. **Bhumika** showed avidity for life, bitter marital struggle, the traps that await the bright and hungry-for-experience women. There were some ups and downs in the film, but the mixture of aestheticism and a tigerish sense of freedom was unforgettably rendered by Smita. A director very different to Benegal, Ketan Mehta, used Smita's brand of vitality in a very different way in **Bhavni Bhavai**. Here psychological individuation was not attempted. There was orgiastic revolt, abandoned carousal. Smita sparkled here in a kind of gypsy-impish-elfin-mocking, impulsive role.

In the week at Nantes (France) I spent with Smita, Girish Karnad and Adoor Gopalkrishnan, a few years ago (we had gone there as members of a film delegation), I experienced both the vitality and the sprightliness. If I struggled with a suitcase hurrying to the train in the freezing December air,



Smita would seize it and march off. Being with her was great fun but also a rollercoaster ride. She was no hypocrite. If she was bored with you, she was bored with you. But if you said something that held her, She would become alive.

I remember one particular incident. The Indian delegation were guests of honour at the Nantes mayoral function. As we marched up to the hall, Girish, Adoor and Smita decided I should introduce them. Then, to their horror, they noticed I wore no tie. "You are all climbing up, so you have to dress up. I am retiring this year, so I gladly dress down," I said. Just before she entered the glittering hall, Smita turned to me and said "You know you are slightly mad. So am I."

And that brings me to Smita's third quality. E.M. Foster said: "An artist tends to be an outsider." Smita was a genuine outsider, not a stage one. When she tried stagey 'outsider' roles, as in **Haadsa** or **Arth**, she failed. But her slightly off-centre attitude to life, her non-conformism, her bluntness, her inner fire ran like an enriching stream beneath all her performances. She has been called insecure, even neurotic. But all this was the very *sine qua non* of her screen persona. Take her roles in **Umbartha** or **Bazaar**. An apparently straight role in **Umbartha** rose to great heights in the few minutes she confronted the one-man commission with intensity and honesty. Even in an uneven film like **Bazaar** she brought off that unforgettably tragic scene where mothers press their daughters on her to be married off. The acme of the outsider Smita was of course **Tarang**—willing dupe

of the enemy class, yet their final betrayer. I have ambivalent feelings about her foray into 'mainstream' cinema. There were a few modestly good efforts: **Bazaar**, **Amrit**.

**Bheegi Palken** were among them. But these remained few. I had strong disagreements with Smita on this point on the few occasions we met. She tried roles of harrowing poverty, of 'heroic' stern women. No go. She came from the grey world of middle class complexity and she played best on home ground. I think she was a congenital outsider, desperately trying to become an insider in the formula-ridden mainstream cinema.

So how does one sum up Smita's achievement? At the risk of being misunderstood, let me say that she remained an actress in search of a director. An actress of her quality, with her concealed passion, despair and love of life, deserved a Bergman, a Bunuel or a Renoir. But at least young Sandeep Ray got a superlative performance out of her in his TV episode **Abhinetri**.

If her work is viewed in totality and if the history of our cinema were to be written at this moment, I shall rank her with Nargis and Nutan at the top. A few months ago she sent me a scribbled note, hauling me over the coals for my 'personal' criticism, praising one of my short stories. Then she added in a typical P.S. "People say I am undiplomatic. I shall become diplomatic when I grow old. And that's a long way off."

Today the memory of that note is both lovely and tragic.

—Iqbal Masud  
(Courtesy: Express Weekend)

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## FOREWORD

The Directorate of Film Festivals has great pleasure in presenting the Panorama of New Indian Cinema at the Eleventh International Film Festival of India held in New Delhi from Jan. 10 to 24, 1987.

The Panorama screens twenty-one select feature films made over the previous year. These films represent cultural and regional cinematic facets and talents of a diverse Indian community.

The Panorama was introduced in 1979 as a special feature of our International Film Festivals. Over the years, it has grown to be an immensely popular feature, both for delegates from abroad and audiences in India. The Panorama is now a unique showcase for New Indian Cinema.

The 1987 Panorama package conveys new trends. The number of Hindi films it contains has increased to ten, which is almost half the package. More and more Indian filmmakers are turning to the Hindi language in preference to their regional one, because Hindi allows for much larger audiences spread over a larger part of the country. Secondly, the sharply individual dictates of filmmakers are evident. Their pre-occupations range from personal and domestic crises (*Ek Pal*) to rural hardship (*Debshishu*), to creative artisans caught in the web of industrialisation (*Susman*), to recreating the lives of our ancient saints (*Madhvacharya*), or to examining the cultural truths in our ancient handicrafts (*Mati Manas*).



The twenty-one Panorama films include first films (Kalpana Lajmi and Pradip Krishen), as well as films by established directors (Aravindan, K. G. George, Shyam Benegal, Basu Bhattacharya). Two films (**Oridathu** and **Amma Ariyan**) have been made on individual contributions—of different dimensions though—pointing to yet another avenue for financing film.

Another two films have Indians looking at themselves in colonized British India. Both these films—**Massey Saheb** and **Mirch Masala**—are competitive entries in the Eleventh IFFI.

Finally, the shorts and feature-length documentaries selected for the 1987 Panorama present a colorful cultural patchwork. They represent several directors of note as well as the new works of students.

New features in the overall coverage of Indian Cinema at the Eleventh IFFI are 21 films representing the mainstream cinema made over 1985/86. These films convey the extraordinary sway of the popular film over the Indian film-adoring public.

A 'Tribute to Playback Singing' of some seven carefully chosen films, pays tribute to over fifty years of sound in Indian Cinema. They embody the inextricable link of sound to song that characterizes Indian popular cinema to this day.

The tragic death of one of India's most gifted actresses, Smita Patil, on the eve of the Eleventh IFFI, will inevitably be felt right through the festival. A homage to her will be accorded with the screening of seven of her outstanding films. The inaugural of the Panorama, Ketan Mehta's **Mirch Masala**, will be held in her memory.

Smita Patil was a dominating spirit and constant star of the Indian Panorama over the years. This year's companion book to the Panorama film is dedicated to her.

URMILA GUPTA

## TV TIDAL

## FEARS FOR THE NEW WAVE CINEMA

Is cinema an endangered species in India? There has been an endless series of articles and interviews on the subject; box office receipts in the theatres have gone down substantially in the metro cities; the streets are deserted on Saturdays and Sundays when there's a movie shown on TV; doctors tell you that toothaches, sore throats, even bronchitis, are deferred to the next day if 'Chhaya Geet' is on in the evening; the film community at large sounds dire and depressed and predicts a bleak future; theatre owners who think ahead speak of the time when the big auditoriums of old will be converted into numerous small ones.

While the alarmists write elegies, obituaries and requiems, the sedate and sagacious smile knowingly. They take the long term view, cite how cinema survived all the doomsday oracles of the '50s and TV in the West, especially in the States. They want the film industry to be patient for 15 or 20 years, take the losses philosophically and, despite the decimation of their audiences and their own numbers, wait for the second coming of cinema.

In the sound and the fury of the debate, the real issues tend to get side-tracked. We got together two art filmmakers who are also well-known TV serial makers, and a noted film critic to air their views and throw light not just on the dilemma facing the filmmakers but its consequences and how they see a way out of it. Participating in the discussion are Saeed Mirza (director of *Arvind Desai Ki Ajeeb Dastaan*, *Albert Pinto Ko Gussa Kyoon Aata Hai*, and *Mohan Joshi Hazir Ho*, as well as the popular serial *Nukkad*), Kundan Shah (director of *Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro* and associated with *Yeh Jo Hai Zindagi* and *Nukkad*), and Iqbal Masud, the noted film critic.

In statistical terms, only the commercial cinema is threatened. The new cinema never drew numbers. But the new cinema is not the conscious creation of just a handful of directors. It is also, laudably, the government's baby. For over 20 years despite all the genuine and picayune criticism of the government's film policies, it did finance and support the parallel cinema. Very slowly and gradually, the new cinema started to create an audience, albeit a very small one. Both the government and the new filmmakers agreed that the parallel cinema would take hold if there were parallel channels of distribution and separate cinema houses to exhibit their films. For 15 years the government has been promising to build small theatres or make the 'Akashwani Bombay' kind of theatre new films. For 15 years the government has done absolutely nothing about it. How does one get the government to keep its word?



Kundan Shah: There will be an explosion of creative talent if new cinema gets a Saturday night slot..'



Saeed Mirza: The danger of an entire cinema culture being written off.



In the meantime, cinema's arch rival, TV, has been showing art films. For the first time, the tube has made it possible for the art films to have a national exposure and audience. So what are the art film directors complaining about?

The major threat to cinema in the West was from TV. Video came much later. In India the sudden burgeoning of TV stations and transmission centres across the country and video cassette players came almost simultaneously. The twin threat is twice as deadly as that of TV alone. It is worth remembering that India is the largest filmmaker in the world. This is not the place to go into it but, for Indians, cinema is not just only entertainment, it is something more fundamental and personal than that. Otherwise you can't explain the NTR, MGR phenomena. When video, especially pirated video, brings cinema home or to the neighbourhood video parlour, ironically, it threatens to kill the very cinema on which it survives and makes it bucks. Because fewer and fewer people now see cinema in cinema houses. In the last year commercial filmmakers have entered TV in a big way. (So have art filmmakers.) What does this augur? Will TV too be inundated by the escapist and mostly mindless fare that our mainline cinema dishes out?

Cinema is the big screen. TV is the box. The two may seem interchangeable but the aesthetics, demands and disciplines of the two are different. They are and must remain different media. How can the two subsist and grow side by side?

How can we improve the quality of TV? Will we allow it to drift or will we take conscious decisions about what we expect the quality and programming of TV to be? If the answer is yes to the latter, what is our plan of action?

**Q:** Is the new wave cinema dying, dead, or very much alive?

**Kundan Shah:** As I see it, new wave or 'art' cinema is heading for a dead-end. In this sense, that though the films are made because of the patronage of the NFDC (National Film Development Corporation) or other bodies, they do not reach audiences, except when they are shown on TV. We were already having a tough time of it—when video came, and then a little later, commercial TV. The picture changed drastically. For nearly 15 years, there has been talk

of opening small theatres and alternative distribution channels ... but today, no one raises the question of why **Mirch Masala** is not getting distributed, a question which was pertinent even five years ago.

**Q:** Then is it not an improvement that **Mirch Masala** or **Party** or **Holi** will be seen by a large audience? Could you envisage that five years ago? Would a film like say, **Party**, have reached the screen at all?

**Saeed Mirza:** The question five years ago was how can we get a distribution outlet vis-a-vis



TV families: 'Yeh Jo Hai Zindagi's'—



—and Nukkad's.

commercial cinema. The sources of finance for parallel cinema were outside those financing the mainstream cinema, which were also the sources linked with distribution and exhibition. There was a clear-cut difference in terms of distribution of the two cinemas.

Today, what is called the 'commercial' cinema and what is called 'art' cinema are in the same boat—thanks to TV and video piracy. That's the difference. And now they're fighting out a 'Space War' on TV!

**Q:** So your situation, the new cinema situation, has not changed?

**KS:** TV and video have affected both new cinema and the big-budget cinema. The new cinema audience, an elite one if you like, now has access to our films on video. If you are making a film of our kind, generally speaking, the finance is inadequate. NFDC loans have now gone up to Rs. 10 lakhs, and with a budget of Rs. 14-15 lakhs, you are covered for 75% of your investment. Not that a release on TV will recover the cost for a **Anant Yatra** or a **Mirch Masala**—you get Rs. 8 lakhs for a Sunday premiere on TV. But today, because of TV, we can maintain a certain standard of payment for cast and crew. Today, a filmmaker has a choice at least: to work for cinema or TV. But, of course, for any film aesthetically made, you must have the option of a theatre release.

**Iqbal Masud:** The difficulties the new wave filmmakers are facing are not peculiar to India. It is the same cultural situation all over the world. **American Film** recently interviewed 20 of the leading filmmakers, and you hear the same wail or lament: 'We are now dying...' There is no sharp division there: you could call Coppola an

art director or a popular, but when a Coppola film like **One from the Heart** collapses, panic sets in among the people making the same kind of different film! In England, it is far worse. In West Germany, the situation did not exist, so to say. When the American cinema invasion took place, Fassbinder found an outlet only through TV.

To my mind, if good cinema is to be exhibited in theatres, the new wave cinema must enter the marketplace of entertainment, and prove its strength there.

**Q:** What is the aim of the new wave cinema?

**IM:** By 'entertainment' I do not mean a comedy film, or song or dance. I want to enhance the meaning of the word to mean films that seek to engage the people, as **Mohan Joshi** does—and it has its social concerns too. **Jaane Bhi Do Yaaron** is similarly entertaining. I see no real difference between the new cinema and the old cinema (say, of Guru Dutt, Mehboob Khan, Bimal Roy)—unfortunately, the difference is sought to be created.

As you have said, the situation of threat (from TV/video) prevails in the whole of cinema and not merely new cinema. But I would like to pose a question here: Were there no video piracy and no competition from TV, would that save the cinema, whether new wave or commercial? Let us not forget that commercial films are collapsing because they have run out of their own formulas. A commercial film fails as a commercial film because it fails to entertain. We cannot underestimate the public. For every **Nasm** or **Karma**, there are a series of flops. Of 700 films, 50 may succeed.

Filmmakers like Kundan and Saeed have broken out of the



ghetto of art cinema and trying to entertain the people. Ketan Mehta pointed out in a recent interview that the tendency to make films that win awards at foreign film festivals is fading out. The new filmmakers want to get into the distribution system too. What I would like to ask is: Are there not certain technical and aesthetic problems in trying to realise your conception of good cinema, and at the same time, make it acceptable to the masses, in the Indian situation?

**SM:** I took a decision at a personal level—it needn't apply to others—I will not be simplistic. It is very important for me that in the need to communicate with larger audiences, I do not condescend or stoop—come down a step or two. The fact is I have learnt from my own experience and, as I see it, there are 'shifts' or 'leaps' forward from the way I communicated in **Arvind Desai** to the way I communicated in **Albert Pinto** and then **Mohan Joshi**. I genuinely felt that **Arvind Desai** experiment was esoteric and lacked sensuality. Not because the masses said so, but because in reevaluating my work I saw its weak spots: the elitist quality, the lacunae. But I must add here that I am not against a cerebral cinema or a cinema purely of ideas; my position is, 'let a thousand flowers bloom.'

**IM:** Kundan, your **Jaane Bhi Do Yaaron**—to use Saeed's phrase—was one of the first 'leaps' into the entertainment arena, or the popular forum. It was a departure in the context of both the commercial and the art cinema. What were the technical/aesthetic decisions you had to take?

**KS:** I made **Jaane Bhi**...as an adventure, out of a desire to

experiment. My problem was how to reach out to audiences outside of TV and the festival circuit, at the same time fulfil certain aesthetic standards.

Today TV and video have affected the new cinema badly, the new cinema audiences can now watch our films on video. TV and film are different media and working for TV can be a handicap. TV tells me to take one shot, cinema, another; you don't, get the same creative satisfaction, there's an arbitrary 20 minute limitation. But the real issue is not the Big Screen or the Small Screen, it is how do you maintain a climate of creativity for our cinema? If this is not done, this country—which makes the largest number of films—will also suffer the most.

**SM:** Films are being made but you can see the writing on the wall. It's a fact that today a large number of filmmakers like **Mrinal Sen**, **Shyam Bengal**, **M.S. Sathyu**, **Govind Nihalani**, **Ketan Mehta**, **Kundan Shah**, **Saeed Mirza** are working for television,—and also that there's a widespread feeling of being stifled. But, since any platform is better than no platform; the question is: How do we make TV a venue for good cinema?

**IM:** I do not accept the argument that the new cinema has no hope of succeeding in the more conventional commercial channels of distribution simply because I believe the battle has not been fought organisedly. The distribution, as in the case of **Party**. There are exceptions, of course. **My Beautiful Laundrette**, for instance, commissioned by Channel Four, was a tremendous hit in commercial theatres both in UK and America. Maybe it was a freak success, the one that got away, but

the fact of the matter was it was a 'new cinema' script.

If NFDC makes an honest effort to set up and work a chain of alternate theatres of 40/500 capacity, I have a feeling—and I don't think its groundless optimism—that films like yours, and future kinds of these films, have a good chance of succeeding. Firstly, the budgets are not exorbitant and secondly, they can become the instruments of change in building audience taste for the new cinema.

A showing on TV may reach 70 or 100 million people but remember, they are at home, relaxed, probably had dinner—and will forget the film next morning! But repeated shows in theatres where people buy tickets to see films will have a greater impact in the long run, though the audience may be only 20 or 30 million strong. I feel this situation can be brought about for your kind of cinema.

**Q:** A desirable state of affairs. But in the (unlikely) event—that the government does set up these theatres, and given TV as it is today, is there a chance of building an audience for the new cinema in say, the next 10 years?

**SM:** Masud Saheb is describing an ideal situation. The fact of the matter is at the moment, we have no choice—the impact of TV has been phenomenal. What we need is not a pragmatic or political formula for TV but a creative one, that will simultaneously enhance theatrical distribution for the new cinema. TV and cinema need not be at daggers drawn; Doordarshan and NFDC can combine forces so that a decent budget is available to new

filmmakers. But if you determine the seriousness of the government's intentions from the decisions taken on TV today, it is difficult to be hopeful.

**IM:** Let me correct you on one point. I am not describing an ideal situation, that is the written down policy of the NFDC: to establish an alternative chain of distribution. It is on paper, it can be rectified.

**Q:** What other measures can be taken, apart from special theatres? Should ticket prices be lowered, or exempted from tax, to draw audiences to theatres showing your films?

**KS:** On paper, it exists. All Panorama films, all National Award films, are supposed to get tax exemption, but they do not get it necessarily because the actual decision rests in the hands of the State authority—and that decision could be a political one.

If the measures you suggest are taken, I don't say cinema will become viable, but it will draw audiences to the halls.

It is very important that experiments in cinema continue. Somebody up there should realise this. Otherwise, the years of labour put into nurturing India cinema, the Film Archive, the NFDC, the film festivals, the FTII will all be lost, they will be reduced to nought. The question for cinema today is how can it co-exist with TV?

**Q:** The government will say the same fears were voiced in America, yet American cinema survived...

**IM:** What Kundan is saying is that if you write off cinema, you are writing off a whole culture.

**SM:** But does the government of India understand this?

**KS:** Hollywood survived the





*Genesis': Om puri, Shabana Azmi and Naseeruddin Shah. An Indo-French co-production for TV.*



*Re-recording in Bombay: Sandip Ray, Hitendra Ghosh, Satyajit Ray.*

onslaught from television because of the international market.

Besides, when you launch a film—even if you are a Coppola or a Spielberg—a viability report is prepared first.

Our cinema does not have a world market. It is confined to India, much of it to regional TV. Our reality is that of Pakistan and Bangladesh, where very few films get made... It will be our turn next.

**SM:** The government of India has to decide, 'Which way do we go—this way or that?' The impact is there for all to see.



*Video film from Mudra Videotec, who produced 'Janam'*

## DECREASE IN NEW CINEMAS

An estimated 13 million people see films in India, everyday. Or, over two months, an audience as large as India's entire population (the second most highly populated nation in the world!) flocks into its cinema houses...

Cinema is the most popular form of entertainment in India—and it is more popular here than anywhere in the world.

Yet—even when compared to other developing countries—the ratio of theatre seats to population is alarmingly low.

According to norms worked out by the UNESCO World Communication Studies, India needs about 30,000 theatres for a population of nearly 700 million people. Instead, she has less than half that number—12,701\* (as on March 31, 1986) as against 12,448 theatres the previous year.

Thus a mere 253 theatres were constructed all over India during the course of 1985-86, a marginal growth of 2.03 per cent. This almost negligible increase was due to the fact that while the number of theatres increased in quite a few states, they decreased in others.

Though the number of cinemas constructed during 1985-86 came down to half of the average construction during the decade, the consolation was that it was still an improvement on the previous year.

It is common knowledge that

theatre construction has gone down due to the impact of video and TV. Added to this is the increasing cost of theatre construction and maintenance. Independent entrepreneurs and investors have lost interest in theatre construction.

It has been said often, and it needs saying again that the number of cinemas can come up only when the state governments provide incentives, like reduction in entertainment tax, tax holidays for new cinemas etc.



In the seven years since the National Film Development Corporation launched its theatre financing programme, loans have been sanctioned for 118 theatres, of which 63 have been constructed (till October-end, 1986 that is —(Courtesy: Screen/NFDC).

\*7992 permanent, 4632 temporary and 77 military



Less than 10% of Indian TV time is devoted to cinema—what you can call the cinematic experience. TV has many forms: the sitcoms, the soap operas, the talk shows, the quizzes etc.—all this apart from cinema. Also, certain films would be ruined by being telecast. **Mirch Masala**, for instance.

**Q:** Should not TV promote its own creativity within its own format?

**SM:** Of course, but in our country it has to carry the burden of supporting creativity in cinema too.

**Q:** The commercial filmmakers got together to petition the government for tax relief. What have the new wave filmmakers done?

**KS:** We had a meeting with the Secretary of the Information and Broadcasting Ministry in Bombay recently. We asked that one of our films be shown on television every Saturday night, in the 9.50 slot. Sunday you allot to mass entertainment. The Saturday night

enthusiasts will stay up—while the disinterested need not lose their sleep. 50 to 80% of the costs would be made viable by sponsors. 52 new films would be made every year! Imagine the explosion of talent there would be.

We should take a look at the German scenario. Films are pre-sold to their television, which underwrites a proportion of film's costs. Two or three years before the TV screening, the filmmaker is free to seek theatrical release.

**SM:** We can be a lobby or some kind of a moral force, but the decision rests with the Doordarshan authorities. They must be open to a dialogue.

Otherwise, within five years...

**IM:** In my opinion, **Nukkad** and **Yeh Jo Hai Zindagi** have been two of the most successful serials on TV. Can you tell us your individual experience and problems?

**KS:** A Secretary from Delhi approached me to make a comedy



'Baniyood': Romesh Sippy directing Anita Kanwar.

serial for TV—**Yeh Jo Hai Zindagi** emerged. What was important was to make a very successful serial, at that time there was an avalanche of western fare. Programmes like **Yes Minister**, **I Love Lucy** were on the air and they had a 20% audience at best. Ours, they found, had a 60-70% audience immediately! People realised that making serials here was a far better proposition than importing foreign serials.

**SM:** It happened in cinema too. Hollywood was stopped at the gates of Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Delhi and popular films from these centres were far bigger draws than any Hollywood ones. This is not true of cinemas elsewhere, Latin America, Europe, and other parts of Asia...

**IM:** Hollywood may have been shut out Saeed, but there's the danger of the spirit of Hollywood creeping into our serials (excepting **Nukkad**). It's already there in Pakistan. There's a popular Pakistani Soap, **Tanhaiyan** which is popular on the Bombay video circuit too. It is really Neil Simon Islamised, with the gags in elegant Urdu, and given respectable Islamic settings. There's a clash of generations—with the young women going out to work—but there's no real conflict and its upper middle-class audience is kept happy.

**SM:** When we started out on **Nukkad** we decided our approach would be sociological as well as reflective, a quality more inherent in cinema. We wanted to see which way the wind was blowing, whether hearts were in the right place at the mass level! At the 70-million level. **Nukkad** was a kind of litmus test for us.

**KS:** **Nukkad** was planned more

thoroughly—but I must admit it's difficult being creative week after week!

**SM:** In **Nukkad** we had a team of three directors.

**KS:** In **Yeh Jo Hai Zindagi**, we were two directors to start with (the other was Manjul Sinha) and after 23 programmes we took on yet another director, also from FTIL.

When serials first arrived, nobody knew that they would become so successful. It started on an experimental level with **Hum Log** and then snowballed. The people who benefit most are the sponsors—that's why serials are succeeding. Money is coming in from outside, and the commercial industry too has realised that the future lies in TV. Everything has happened so fast in the last two or three years, that events have overtaken thinking. No one has sat down to work out a creative programme for TV, how to use TV, what kind of sociological impact of serials should be made, what kind of non-serial entertainment...

**Q:** If films like **Tree of Wooden Clogs** can be made for television...

**SM:** What was the nature of the state that made **A Tree of Wooden Clogs** possible? We need a lobby or force or body that will take creative—even visionary—decisions.

**Q:** Cannot new filmmakers break the ice or show the way by making outstanding telefilms? I mean, for the **Janam** kind of slot...

**SM:** Certain upper middle class values-systems—conducive to the selling of goods and services—operate on television. The programmes are underwritten by companies which sell goods and services, and which have their own social, philosophical and maybe, political viewpoint. The other party





Anil Tejani's 'Shahdada', made for video by Hiba Films.

determining formats is the government—which too has its own philosophy and standpoint. Any creative programming has to account to both these.

**Q:** In there a system of censorship on television?

**SM:** There's an internal system which operates, but I don't know on what basis. Scripts have to be approved, pilots are approved before production, and serials before telecast. We have argued against some decisions, and at times we have succeeded.

**IM:** In a serial on the forts of India, a Rajput surrenders his daughter to the Sultan, one of the Khiljis, and saves himself. The incident has been portrayed poignantly but TV vetoed it. I agree with them in

this case because in the present unpredictable circumstances, it could have sparked off trouble. The government has to be more careful with TV than with films or plays because the programmes go out to so many millions.

**Q:** How are the TV serials, which are 100% in Hindi received by people in the south?

**IM:** The national network programmes, of course, reach all India, but in the south it is very difficult. Certain dialogues in **Buniyaad**, for instance, would make no sense in Erode, Bangalore, or Ernakulam!

**SM:** I believe, in TamilNadu, the Sunday Hindi film is shown the next Saturday, and on Sunday evening, a Tamil film is shown. For



*Soumitra Chatterjee turns director: on sets of 'Streer Patra', being made for TV.*

**Hom Log**, before each episode there was a summary.

In **Nukkad** we tried to keep the language as simple as possible, but there were people in Delhi who said the Hindi language had been destroyed!

**Q:** Do the gains in reaching 70 million outweigh the problems, the compromises, the censorship?

**SM:** I am not an idealist. No matter where we live, there are bound to be contradictions. Some form of censorship is inevitable.

**IM:** I believe there is a tendency to vulgarise things on TV.

**KS:** There lies the heart of our concern—Vulgarisation!

**Q:** What about Anand Patwardhan and John Abraham who have sought their own channels of distribution?

**SM:** They take their films village to village and town to town, and we give our films to them gladly. But I personally of distribution and exhibition.

**IM:** A new experiment is with video-films. In Bombay, Hiba Films make five to six films a year, with budgets of three to six lakh rupees.

They cast newcomers as well as well-known names, like Kanwaljeet (of **Buniyaad** fame) or Persis Khambatta. These films do not contain too much violence or sex, and they take up social problems. So here's a new channel for the future: video films.

**KM:** The level of these films is generally at the level of **Tanhaiyan**. Besides, they are not financially viable at the moment. Hiba Films manage because they have already built up a sound infrastructure for themselves.

**IM:** In America and UK, young directors like you—despairing of TV—have turned to video to make their counter-culture films. There are about 4000 video parlours all over India, not a small number. You could begin to build your parallel film culture, influence the attitude of the younger people, below 25 or 30, who form 70% of the population.

**SM:** Yes, let a thousand flowers... or perhaps we should say lotuses?...bloom.

—Kiran Nagarkar.



## FTII IS 25 YEARS OLD

It was on the recommendation of the Film Enquiry Committee of 1951 that a Film Institute was set up in Poona, ten years later. There had been different kinds of film teaching institutes in Madras and Bangalore and subsequently, Bombay and Calcutta but, as time has proven, the FTII's had something of a unique history: no other has permitted so sustained a training of both the technical and aesthetic areas of filmmaking to the extent it has. The 'new' Indian cinema comprises almost entirely of Institute products, and certainly the technical values of filmmaking brought in by 'new' cinema technicians, in camera, sound and editing, that have influenced every area of filmmaking practice in the country, have come from the FTII.

Which is not to say that it's not had, and not having, problems. Instituted mainly as a means to provide the film industry with technically competent personnel in 1961, it took off in its true purpose as a school for advanced learning in filmmaking and film aesthetics when Ritwik Ghatak came there on a brief stint as Vice Principal in 1963. Since then, the effort to acknowledge film as a significant art-form has had to fight an effective rearguard to the commercial industry and the mass-communication tendencies, and the Film Institute has had its share of the backlash. In 1972, the Khosla Committee did a report on the Institute, and suggested the integrated course, which meant that all students would have to do "all the courses with special emphasis on the particular course chosen by them." The point of it was precisely the effort to provide

all-round competence to defeat the technician tendency. In 1975, a four year course was organised, the first two years being common, the second two leading to specialisation in the four traditional courses: direction, screenplay, sound, editing and camera. Meanwhile, two major changes also took place: the Institute became an autonomous body in 1974, and at the same time there was added to it the television wing.

All this didn't prevent extreme pressure being brought on it, to re-start the acting course (including horse-riding and judo) which had been stopped). Since then, often, there has been some concern at the fact that FTII graduates do not readily get jobs in the industry, nor are any means provided for them to be able to make films on their own. It has led, at times, to the re-surfacing of pressure to its becoming a 'polytechnic.' At present, television offers the major threat, for the TV wing, rushing students through four month crash courses, is receiving the largest share of the budget—which has, anyway, been vastly whittled down in the present five-year plan. Of course, TV does offer newer avenues for employment.

Every year, however, every batch, does see the few students who reveal their promise, nurtured in a way that is yet only possible at the Institute. Diploma Films are getting better than they have been, and in this, its 25th year, the FTII lives on—performing the functions that only it is still capable of performing.

—Ashish Rajadhyaksha

## सिनेमा और वीडियो—यह परिवर्तन का संकट है!

भारतीय सिनेमा पर अगर एक साथ गौर किया जाये तो यह स्वीकार करने में किसी को कठिनाई नहीं होनी चाहिए कि भारतीय सिनेमा सामाजिक परिवर्तन का माध्यम नहीं, बल्कि वह मूलतः मनोरंजन का साधन रहा है। यह सही है कि मनोरंजन की मूलधारा के साथ-साथ सार्थक फ़िल्मों की धारा भी चलती रही है और हमारी फ़िल्मों ने अपने-अपने तरीक़े से सामाजिक संदर्भों में हमेशा महत्वपूर्ण सवाल भी उठाये हैं, परंतु मनोरंजन की चमक-दमक और शोरगुल में इन सवालों की आवाज़ बहुत ज्यादा और पुरजोर तरीक़े से नहीं उभर पाई।

किसी भी देश को अपने मनोरंजन के तरीक़े खुद विकसित करने पड़ते हैं... हर समाज अपने तीज-त्यौहार और उत्सवों को विकसित करता है, अपने नृत्य, लय और गान निर्धारित करता है, अपने रंग चुनता है

और अपनी जीवन तथा सामाजिक पद्धति की सरहदों में रहते हुए अपने भीतर के उल्लास, उत्साह तथा आनंद को विराट् सांस्कृतिक स्वरूप देता है... इस आनंद, उत्साह और उल्लास में एक प्राकृतिक अनुभूति होती है, जो आत्मा को सवालों और समस्याओं से परे ले जाती है... जब कोई नर्तक नाचता है तो वह समस्याओं और सवालों का उत्तर नहीं देता... वह केवल अपने शरीर और उन्मुक्त आत्मा की तरंगों में डूबा होता है, और यह तन्मयता ही कला का सारतत्व होती है...

मनोरंजन के क्षेत्र में गंभीर सवाल उठाने वाले हमारे बुद्धिजीवी यह भूल जाते हैं कि सामाजिक मनोरंजन हमेशा कई स्तरों पर विकसित होता है... वैसे ही जैसे दीपावली के पीछे छुपी प्रकाश की भावना का मुकाबला होली की उन्मुक्तता से नहीं किया जा



1985 के सफल अभिनेता का पुरस्कार जीतने वाले अभिनेता एवं कलात्मक फिल्मों के निर्माता गणेश कपूर अभिताम बच्चन को लेकर नई फिल्म का निर्माण करने जा रहे हैं।



सकता...अपने को सुस्कृत कहने वाला समुदाय होली के पर्व की उन्मुक्तता को मंजूर नहीं कर पाता...क्योंकि उसके मन का उल्लास सामूहिक नहीं रह गया है...वह व्यक्तिगत हो गया है...

सिनेमा और वीडियो का रिश्ता भी कुछ इसी तरह का है...भारतीय सिनेमा सामूहिक उल्लास और मनोरंजन का माध्यम है और वीडियो उस नवमुविधा प्राप्त और नवधनिक वर्ग के व्यक्तिगत मनोरंजन का साधन है जो अपने को अपनी मूल सामाजिक जड़ों से अलग कर चुका है और अब इस देश में औद्योगिक संस्कृति को जन्म दे रहा है.

खेतिहर संस्कृति से औद्योगिक संस्कृति में बदलता हुआ समाज अपने कला-रूपों और मनोरंजन के साधनों को बदलने की मांग भी करता है, क्योंकि उसके दुःख-सुख के सवाल बदल गये हैं, उसके जीवन की समय सारणी बदल गई है, अब उसे चिड़ियों की चहचहाहट या मुर्गे की बांग नहीं जगाती, उसे उसके ग्रहर का शोर या फैक्टरी का सायरन जगाता है...इन बदलती सच्चाईयों के साथ ही अनजाने में मनोरंजन के मूल्य भी बदलते हैं जो अपने बदलते समाज को सार्थक और निरर्थक—दोनों ही तरह की राहत देते हैं.

मूल्यों के सक्रमण का यह दौर पिछले बीस-पच्चीस वर्षों में और तेज हुआ है और सार्थक तथा निरर्थक मनोरंजन के क्षेत्र में सिनेमा का एकछत्र राज्य रहा है—जिसने आती हुई औद्योगिक संस्कृति के तनावों, सवालों, समस्याओं को सतह पर झूठे हुए मनोरंजन के अपने मानदण्ड स्थापित कर लिये हैं...

जहाँ तक मनोरंजन की दुनिया के मानदण्डों का सवाल है—सिनेमा बहुत आश्वस्त था

कि उसने अपने फर्में और फार्मूले बना लिये हैं, इसलिए जहाँ तक 'मनोरंजन देने' या 'मनोरंजन का उत्पादन' करने का सवाल आता है, सिनेमा के लिए अभी इस देश ने कोई बड़ा खतरा या चुनौती पेश नहीं की है... क्योंकि वीडियो मनोरंजन की कोई नई उत्पादन शैली या फार्मूला अभी इस देश में स्थापित नहीं हुआ है... वीडियो ने अपने कार्यक्रम भी अभी विकसित नहीं किये हैं और वीडियो कार्यक्रम बनाने वाली कोई महत्वपूर्ण कम्पनियाँ भी अभी इस देश में स्थापित नहीं हुई हैं. वीडियो कार्यक्रमों को बनानेवाली या पेश करने वाली केवल एक ही कम्पनी इस देश में है और वह है सरकारी दूरदर्शन.

दूरदर्शन भी कोई बड़ी चुनौती सिनेमा के सामने पेश नहीं कर पाया है...बल्कि यह कहना ज्यादा सही होगा कि दूरदर्शन भारतीय सिनेमा के सहारे ही वह लोकप्रियता प्राप्त कर पाया है जो किसी हद तक उसे मिली है...दूरदर्शन का कोई कार्यक्रम आज तक सिनेमा के लिए खतरा नहीं बन सका है...भारतीय सिनेमा को दूर दराज इलाकों में पहुँचाने और उसकी साख को बनाये रखने में दूरदर्शन ने अपनी मजबूरी में एक महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाई है, साथ ही दूरदर्शन सिनेमा का मेटेलाइट बनता गया और वह भी मनोरंजन की उसी संस्कृति का वाहक बना जिसे सिनेमा ने स्थापित किया था. यानी भारतीय सिनेमा को वीडियो या दूरदर्शन से जो पहला और आधारभूत खतरा था, वह टल गया और जिस मुकाबले की संभावना की जा रही थी, उसका रूप ही बदल गया और स्पर्धा का बाजार ठण्डा हो गया...दूरदर्शन भारतीय सिनेमा का पूरक या सहायक बन गया यह निकट इतिहास की सच्चाई है. यानी भारतीय सिनेमा का पहला संकट टल गया.



भारतीय सिनेमा ने जिस संकट की संभावना की थी, कुछ कुछ वैसे ही संकट की संभावनायें समाचार पत्रों की दुनिया ने भी देखी थीं, पर समाचार पत्रों की दुनिया का वह आसन्न संकट भी टल गया और यह तथ्य हिंदी तथा समस्त भारतीय भाषाओं में सामने आया कि समाचार पत्रों और पत्रिकाओं की बिक्री तथा उनके आर्थिक स्तर में आशातीत सुधार हुआ। समाचार पत्रों और पत्रिकाओं का प्रचार-प्रसार बढ़ा और उनकी विज्ञापन की आय में भी बढ़ोतरी हुई।

इस ठोस तथ्य का महत्वपूर्ण पहलू यह है कि वीडियो या दूरदर्शन हमारे सिनेमा या समाचार पत्रों के लिए कोई खतरा पैदा नहीं करता, बल्कि वह मनोरंजन, समाचारों और जानकारी की भूख पैदा करता है—भारतीय संदर्भ में, जहाँ मनोरंजन की संस्कृति एक जबरदस्त संक्रमण से गुजर रही है, वहाँ दूरदर्शन ने मनुष्य की जानकारी की मांग और ज्यादा पैदा की है और उस भूख को बढ़ाया है जो कि औद्योगिक संस्कृति में बदलते समाज की जरूरी और आधारभूत भूख है... इससे यह बात अकाट्य रूप से साबित होती है कि जिस संकट की पहली लहर की संभावना की जा रही थी, वह संभावना बेबुनियाद साबित हुई है।

संकट की दूसरी लहर प्रायोजित कार्यक्रमों के रूप में सामने आई है—वे वीडियो कार्यक्रम जो प्राइवेट सैक्टर में तैयार होते हैं और दूरदर्शन पर समय खरीद कर पेश किये जाते हैं... पिछला वर्ष—यानी सन् 86 वीडियो पर बने प्रायोजित कार्यक्रमों का एक बहुत व्यस्त वर्ष रहा है... और इस व्यस्त वर्ष के नतीजे भी अब सामने हैं... संकट की यह दूसरी लहर भी गुजर चुकी है और प्राइवेट सैक्टर में उत्पादित होने वाले वीडियो कार्यक्रमों ने भी भारतीय सिनेमा को कोई नुकसान नहीं

पहुँचाया है। भारतीय सिनेमा की जानी-मानी हस्तियों ने प्रायोजित कार्यक्रमों की शृंखलायें तैयार करके अपने व्यवसाय की सरहदों को विकसित किया और अपने खाली समय को वीडियो उत्पादन में लगाया है। सत्यजित रे, मृणाल सेन, श्याम बेनेगल, यश चोपड़ा, रमेश सिप्पी जैसे फिल्मकारों ने ही वीडियो उत्पादनों को सबसे अधिक प्रतिष्ठा दी है और अपनी रचनात्मक कमजोरियों को उजागर किया है—यह सचमुच एक अत्यंत शोचनीय और तकलीफ देह सच्चाई है कि हमारे यह दिग्गज फिल्मकार—जो भारतीय सिनेमा के मनोरंजन में सामाजिक सवाल भी जोड़ना चाहते हैं, वे ही अपने फिल्मी मूल्यों को नकार कर वीडियो कार्यक्रमों के निर्माण में व्यावसायिक सफलता को तरजीह देते हुए अपने रचनात्मक मूल्यों को तिलांजलि दे देते हैं! यदि भारतीय सिनेमा में सत्यजित रे, मृणाल सेन, श्याम बेनेगल आदि ने एक 'सार्थक सिनेमा' की शुरुआत की थी तो अब इनके द्वारा उत्पादित प्रायोजित वीडियो कार्यक्रम इस बात का पक्का सबूत हैं कि इन्हीं प्रतिभाओं ने निरर्थक वीडियो कार्यक्रमों की जमीन भी तैयार की है... यह इसी कारण हुआ है क्योंकि हमारे इन फिल्मकारों और सांस्कृतिक व्यक्तित्वों ने संक्रमणशील मनोरंजन की संस्कृति को अनदेखा किया है और उससे आंच मिलाने से यह व्यक्तित्व या तो घबराते रहे हैं या जानबूझ कर कतराते रहे हैं।

अपने समय के सही सवालों से कतराने के कारण 'संकट की दूसरी लहर' का संकट भी समाप्त हो चुका है—इसका साक्ष्य बीता हुआ वर्ष दे चुका है।

संकट की तीसरी लहर—जिसका खतरा सबसे बड़ा खतरा बन चुका है, वह व्यावसायिक क्षेत्र में है, यानी मुनाफे के

मैदान में! मनोरंजन का उत्पादन अब नैसर्गिक उत्साह या उल्लास पर निर्भर नहीं है... वह अब एक 'कन्स्यूमर आइटम' की तरह उत्पादित होता है और मनोरंजन मुनाफे का माध्यम बन चुका है...

मुनाफे के इस बाजार में वीडियो का खतरा एक बड़ा खतरा है और संकट की यह तीसरी लहर एक ऐसी लहर है जो भारतीय सिनेमा की नींव हिला सकती है—इस लहर ने भारतीय सिनेमा की चूल्हे तो हिला कर रख ही दी हैं... यह मसला 'वीडियो पायरेसी' का है जो इस देश में तस्करी की तरह जड़े जमा चुका है और इसके कारण भारतीय सिनेमा किसी भी समय ध्वस्त हो सकता है. 'वीडियो पायरेसी' का यह काम इस देश में बड़े पैमाने पर चल रहा है और सिने निर्माताओं के मुनाफों को खाता चला जा रहा है...

यानी यह रचनात्मक संकट नहीं है, बल्कि व्यावसायिक संकट है... और यह संकट भी उन्हीं फिल्म निर्माताओं के सामने है जो फार्मूलाबद्ध मनोरंजन का उत्पादन करते हैं... यह संकट सत्यजित रे, मृणाल सेन या श्याम बेनेगल का नहीं है क्योंकि उनकी फिल्मों की 'पायरेसी' में मुनाफा नहीं है... मुनाफे के बाजार की यह मारकाट वीडियो की आसान टेक्नोलॉजी के कारण है... मनोरंजन की सांस्कृतिक जरूरतों के कारण नहीं... अतः इस प्रश्न या संकट को सांस्कृतिक संकट के रूप में देखना गलत है, इसे एक आर्थिक संकट के रूप में ही देखा जाना चाहिए... और इस आर्थिक संकट से भारतीय सिनेमा को बचाने के लिए जरूरी कानूनी और व्यावसायिक कदम उठाने चाहिए. अतः यह कहना कि वीडियो के आने से भारतीय सिनेमा के सामने संकट पैदा हो गया है, एक गलत धारणा है... वीडियो का संकट केवल मनोरंजन के मुनाफे के बाजार

में है और उसके लिए किसी हद तक हमारी सिनेमा इंडस्ट्री भी जिम्मेदार है.

मैं बहुत विनम्रता परंतु जोर देकर कहना चाहूंगा कि हमारी फ़िल्म इंडस्ट्री ने अपने मुनाफे का बाजार चाहे जितना बढ़ाया हो या हमारी सरकारों ने मनोरंजन के इस बाजार से चाहे जितना कमाया हो, लेकिन दोनों पक्षों ने सामूहिक मनोरंजन की उन जरूरतों को नजर अंदाज किया है जो एक संक्रमणशील समाज में पैदा होती है... औद्योगिक विकास ने हमें एक उभरता हुआ नया मध्यवर्ग दिया है... जो अपने मनोरंजन की तलाश में भटक रहा है... यह नया मध्यवर्ग अपनी रुचियों में काफी परिष्कृत है और वह अपने मनोरंजन के स्थलों को भी सुरक्षित, साफ और निरापद पाना चाहता है... लेकिन हमारे आज के सिनेमाघर पान बालों और असामाजिक तत्वों के अंडे बन गये हैं... जहां उभरता हुआ यह मध्यवर्ग डूब जाने से कतराता है... और अपने लिए ज्यादा सुरक्षित, निरापद, साफ और आरामदेह मनोरंजन के स्थलों को अपनाना चाहता है... इस बनते हुए रुचि सम्पन्न मध्यवर्ग के लिए, इन हालातों में, वीडियो पार्लर या अपने ही घर में वी सी आर की सुविधा एक बड़ी सुविधा बन जाती है... और उनकी मनोरंजन तथा जानकारी की भूख को वीडियो-सुविधा बहुत हद तक शांति करती है. आज कोई भी महिला किसी भी सिनेमाघर में अकेली नहीं जा सकती, क्योंकि वह सिनेमाघरों को सुरक्षित नहीं पाती... कोई शर्मनाक हादसा पेश न भी आये, तो भी वह सिनेमाघरों में बुद को एक औरत के रूप में कमजोर और निस्सहाय पाती है. यदि वह बहुत हिम्मत भी करे तो मनोरंजन के बदले में वह हस्ती का अपमान झेल कर ही वापस आ सकती है.





अमोल पातेकर कृत 'नकाब' में अनिल चटर्जी

सिनेमाघरों की इस संकट पूर्ण संस्कृति ने ही भारतीय सिनेमा के सामने खुद एक संकट पैदा कर दिया है और इस संकट के बारे में फिल्म उद्योग और सरकार—दोनों ही बेखबर बने हुए हैं। मनोरंजन की तलाश में भटकता हुआ मध्यवर्ग ही सिनेमा की आर्थिक ताकत का स्रोत है और सांस्कृतिक संक्रमण के इस दौर में अब मध्यवर्ग अपने घरों और अपने दोस्तों परिचितों के घरों को ही ज्यादा सुविधाजनक पाता है और इन घरों तक सिनेमा को पहुंचाने का साधन वीडियो ही है। जो धीरे धीरे व्यक्तिगत मनोरंजन की आदत को बढ़ावा देने का जरिया भी बनता जा रहा है। और इस परिवर्तन को रोकना नहीं जा सकता, क्योंकि परिवर्तनशील और संक्रमणशील समाज के साथ साथ उसके जो साधन बदलने से इनकार करते हैं—वे साधन और माध्यम व्यर्थ होते जाते हैं।

और यही इस दौर में भारतीय सिनेमा के साथ हो रहा है—उसके सामने वीडियो का



गोविंद निहलानी कृत 'तमस'

खतरा उतना नहीं है, क्योंकि वीडियो की व्यावसायिक तस्करी को नियमित किया जा सकता है परंतु मनोरंजन की तलाश में भटकते इस मध्यवर्ग को न तो निरर्थक फिल्में देकर संतुष्ट किया जा सकता है और न इसे इनके घरों से निकाल कर असुरक्षित, गंदे और धटिया संस्कृति के सिनेमाघरों में पहुंचाया जा सकता है!



## Mainstream Cinema '86

### And the Show Went On

And there was razzmatazz. Despite crises of the most undaunting kind the show went on in Bombay, the hub of the country's entertainment business. The regular staple of two feature films a week continued, regardless of the muscle-packed competition offered by television and video. The movie moghuls moaned that it was the end of the road for them; in the same breath, they announced their next extravaganza featuring more stars than you could find in heaven.

If there was any departure from the norm, it came in the form of the month-long strike launched by the film fraternity to protest against the never-ending levies, taxes and what actually amounts to an ongoing oppression. The entertainment tax on a ticket is the steepest in any part of the world.

When a new sales tax increase was announced by the Maharashtra state government, the showbiz community said enough was enough. This wasn't the last nail in the coffin, this was death itself.

In the first-ever show of solidarity, rival film makers and stars came together to form a United Front against the Establishment. They were supported by the usually-apatetic tribe of distributors, financiers and exhibitors. Technicians, junior artistes and daily-wage workers joined public rallies and demonstrations. Over a 100 cinema halls in Bombay itself padlocked their gates and all studio activity screeched to a halt. On November 10 the strike was suspended. Close to the Christmas week, the government conceded relief measures.



*On Strike!*

Above all, the strike demonstrated that the workers toiling out there behind the cameras have been neglected, if not wretchedly remunerated down the decades. The feeling that these little faceless people have been sidetracked by the glamour and glitz of showbusiness, prodded the conscience of the movie sultans. The outcome was the setting up of a film industry welfare trust. The trust's first splash towards collecting funds was the organisation of a musical fiesta at Bombay's enormous Brabourne stadium. An entire who's who of stars and music greats showed up to perform on the stage for Hope '86, an eight-hour event that was cheered by a throng of 30,000 till four o' clock at daybreak.

Like the movies, the show was chockablock with excitement, comedy, drama and nostalgia. Veterans like Dilip Kumar and Lata Mangeshkar held centre stage with newcomers like Govinda and Neelam, and present-day rages like Amitabh Bachchan, Rekha and Sridevi.

Otherwise, Bombay cinema persisted in dreaming impossible dreams. Fantasy is still the watchword here. Thematically, the films remained concerned with improbable heroes and their even more improbable deeds. Ask any movie watcher what he likes up there on the screen, and the instant reply will be entertainment. Entertainment that's still beyond the reach of the small television screen which is stuck in the quagmire of sitcoms, soap operas and homily-strewing storylets. Entertainment for the audience—a

vast cross-section of people with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds—has come to mean riproaring action, a dollop of sentiments (the moviewallahs call this 'the emotional track') and if possible, a happy ending.

Sense and logic aren't important. A swift pace, crazy fun and games, are. That's why the two top directors are still Manmohan Desai and Prakash Mehra. Even with their setbacks, they are banked upon to take you on a magical mystery tour. Never mind the mayhem that you might have to encounter along the way. The key to success is to conduct this tour with élan, seduce the viewers into suspending their faculties for the space of three hours and give them the sort of thrills that are beyond the realm of their imagination. This might mean the hero takes on a pack of nasty lions and tigers bare-handed, or he may uproot pillars with the strength of an all-in one Hercules, Samson and Superman.

Manmohan Desai, perhaps, understands the formula better than any one of his colleagues. His films have a lining of child-like wonder, a comic-book sweetness and a delicious taste of the absurd. The only thing you regret is his recent lapses into vulgarity (**Mard**) or the overpitching of his belief in religious harmony and secularism (**Allah-Rakha**). Neither were they satisfying in terms of box-office collections. Manmohan Desai is best when he employs a measure of control and check (**Amar Akbar Anthony**) instead of going haywire, like a bull that has just seen a matador. All said and done, he's the closest film maker in India to Spielberg, they both share a feel



for adventure and crayon-coloured dreams.

Every second film maker, incidentally, wants to be a Spielberg. Many of the younger lot like Mukul Anand (**Sultanat, Main Balwaan**), Raj Sippy (**Jeeva, Boxer**), Rahul Rawail (**Arjun, Samundar**) and also Ramesh Sippy, the maker of India's all-time box-office buster **Sholay**, do have the requisite technical expertise. Where these movie brats fall short is in working with scriptwriters and choosing stories that measure up to their craft. Each of these directors has his own special virtues, its the ensemble support that they don't get. When they do, they're matchless. Like Sippy was inspired with **Sholay** but under the weather because of the boy-meets-girl, boy-loses-girl, boy-once again-meets-girl ritual in **Saagar**. Sippy could rule the screen if he chose the right material. That he's waiting for opportunity to knock is evident from his dalliance with television. By relative standards, his **Buniyaad** is one of the better soaps on the box.

As for as hardware is concerned, Bombay cinema, is in pretty snazzy shape. It's the story-department, as it's termed, that has never been in such dire straits. Ever since **Zanjeer** (1975), the obsession with plots about vendetta, has become a near-pathological sickness. Except for a fluke hit once in a very blue moon, all the money-spinners have revolved around men (recently women too, in a calculated concession to the feminist spirit) out to wreak revenge for the deaths of their parents, sweethearts or a close buddy. That things became quite hair-brained is obvious from **Teri Meherbaniyan**, a gore-and-guts saga in which a trained mongrel's bite became worse than his bark because of the murder of his master by a pack of felons.

The two scriptwriters who can still give a touch of skill, style and suppleness to the revenge epics are Salim and Javed, a team which split five years ago. But both have survived—their solo careers are on an up graph. Javed's with



Sunjay Dutt in 'Naam', one of the year's few hits.





Ketan Desai's 'Allah Rakha'

successes like **Arjun**, though in **Saagar** he bit the dust. Salim's back in the arena after an absence of five years with the punch-packed **Naam**.

As for music, an essential part of the mainstream cinema, the quality has been tumbling disturbingly. The compositions of Laxmikant-Pyarelal, Kalyanji-Anandji and R.D. Burman just don't match upto the fingersnappers, and the songs in a mellow mood they have contributed earlier. The relative newcomer Bappi Lahiri is stuck in a disco groove while Annu Malik specialises in pinching tunes from the 'oldies'

Moreover, whether it's the song, the story, or the camera angle, the obsequiousness to Hollywood cinema remains. When plots and scenes aren't actually lifted (**Jalwa: Beverly Hill Cop; Janbaaz: Duel in the Sun**) ingredients are. Like Michael Jackson's **Thriller** will suddenly find echoes in a Mithun Chakraborty disco number in **Kasam Paida Karnewalleki** or

Jennifer Beals of **Flashdance** might find a first cousin in Meenakshi Seshadri in **Main Balwaan**. A snatch of a Bappi Lahiri-song may sound like Madonna, Phil Collins or if the composer's being specially secretive, even Lalo Schiffrin. Lately, the Ann Margret weepie **Who'll Love my Children?**—about a terminally-ill woman worrying about the future of her kids—excited at least half a dozen hacks to work overtime in getting to the finishing line. As the first 'adaptation' started rolling with Raakhee in Ann Margret's role, the others admitted defeat. Funnily enough, two filmmakers were shooting versions of the Hayley Mills sugar-and-spice film **The Parent Trap**. And it already inspired **Do Kaliyan** more than a decade-and-a-half ago!

That's the way Bombay cinema is. Endearingly comic and maddeningly money-minded. Nothing matters as long as it sells. A hit is the ultimate criterion for quality. One way to vend the tickets is, of course, by including as many hot-selling stars in the



Naseeruddin Shah, Jackie Shroff,  
Anil Kapoor: 'Karma'.

marquee. It draws what the trade terms 'an initial crowd'. That's why those who can afford it, release as many as 30 prints of a single film all over Bombay city and the suburbs. But no matter how solidly entrenched the producer/director may be, he has a acute case of jitters on the eve of his film's release.

Though the multi-starrer (a phenomenon of the mid-70s) is near extinct, it jumps back to life now and then. Like the prime factor in the success of an otherwise bloated and banal *Karma* are its leading stars ranging from Dilip Kumar, Anil Kapoor, Jackie Shroff, Sridevi and Poonam Dhillon to the import from the parallel cinema, Naseeruddin Shah. "For the price of a ticket," its director boasted, "the audience gets to see half-a-dozen or more of its favourites."

The star system, then, might have died in Hollywood. In Bombay, however, it persists. Even idols of

the '60s continue to have a long innings—such as Dharmendra.



Dharmendra: Enduring bonds





*'Made in South India'*

Jeetendra and Hema Malini—because audiences identify more closely with them, taking to newcomers with a great deal of hesitation. A star, in the event, can rule for years unless his films flop in a row. It isn't surprising, therefore, that Amitabh Bachchan presides over the scene, his superstar status unassailed by time and fads that flit past without making a dent in the price he commands—said to be in the region of Rs. 60 lakhs a film. The next, in terms of popularity, is currently Mithun Chakraborty whose fee is within the range of Rs. 15-20 lakhs per film. That's a wide chasm, then between the first and the next-best.

The actresses don't make the kind of big bucks the men do. In an overwhelmingly-chauvinistic industry, that's natural. But in the

last decades the woman star has fought for her fee (about Rs. 10 lakhs, sometimes even more) and has been paid it. The actress who first called the shots was Hema Malini, to be followed by Rekha and Sridevi.

While the give-and-take ethos is all very clear in Bombay, the process of filmmaking isn't. As scripts are never ready before the shooting commences (except in a handful of cases), films are completed on an ad hoc and erratic basis. On an average, it takes at least a year to wrap up a picture that should have normally taken three months, if not less.

When the wave of Hindi films produced in the south (Madras, Hyderabad) hit the shores starting three years ago, there was a consciousness that Bombay needed





'Love and God'—by K. Asif, director of one of the all-time greats of Indian Cinema, 'Mughal-e-Azam'.

was discipline. The South Indian banners churned out films by the dozen in a matter of weeks and for a span, it even looked as if they would take over the box-office completely. But what they gained by way of discipline, they lost by way of a lack of imagination. Every film from Madras—usually showcasing Jeetendra, Sridevi, Jaya, Prada—looked like a clone. The 'idli sambhar' movies, as they were referred to derogatorily, eventually lost their spicy aftertaste. As of now, the production of Hindi films from the south has been reduced to a trickle.

In spite of all its shortcomings, the Madras-made film still holds in fact, the three major hits of the year come from the southern region of the country. They are **Swarag se Sunder**, an economically-made family saga of two self-sacrificing sisters-in-law; **Aakhree Rasta** with Amitabh Bachchan in the double

role (the Corsican Brothers influence still holds) of a father seeking revenge and a son who comes in his way, because the dignity of the law has to be upheld; and **Insaaf ki Awaaz** about a woman cop who can't take it any more when her husband is slayed by foul industrialists. These were the certified hits in a year that was notable mainly for a harvest of also-rans.

And what were the turkeys? The three distinct ones were K. Asif's **Love and God** that was left incomplete by the late filmmaker and perhaps should have stayed that way; **Dhileez**, a faint-hearted love story set against the topical backdrop of terrorist forces on the country's borders; and **Allah-Rakha** produced by Manmohan Desai and directed by son Ketan who attempted to make the kind of larger than-life film that has been associated with the persona of Amitabh Bachchan, but couldn't find an adequate substitute.

But then entertainment has always had its moments of highs and lows. Television and video (pirated cassettes) have mainly affected the middle-rung cinema. Medium isn't beautiful anymore and directors (like **Shyam Benegal**, for instance) who had at least a sizeable audience find that even their loyalists are watching their films on video.

The pirated cassettes have affected the high-profit, big budget cinema, too. But the optimistic news is that the Bombay filmmakers aren't the kind who'll ever say die. They go into '87, with hope.

—Khalid Mohammed

## GETTING TO KNOW THEM BETTER

### NEW GENERATION



Shekhar Kapur's 'Mr. India'.

In the Hindi mainstream cinema too, a talented new generation is rising. young directors—who while they have their fling with slick technique—are consciously setting out to learn their Indian audiences better. Rahul Rawail. Mukul Anand. Shekhar Kapur. B. Subhash. Raj Sippy, and we should include here Mahesh Bhatt, whose **Naam** was one of the year's few and major hits. A more recent addition is Pankaj Parasher (director of **Karamchand**, the popular carrot-chewing TV'tec) whose frolicsome **Jalwa** draws equally on his Film Institute training, commercial cinema elements, and TV talents too. (Its heroine is a model turned TV actress, and the ruthless villain—played by a TV newsreader—is named 'D.D.', the abbreviation, for Doordarshan itself!)



Naseeruddin Shah, Star of 'Jalwa'—disillusioned with 'art' cinema?

## Film Archive

### IT'S NEVER TOO LATE

A few years ago a well known Indian film pioneer told me that out of the 40 odd films made by him, only two or three would he consider worth preserving in the National Film Archive of India. This, in a nutshell, reflects the attitude of most of our filmmakers to archival preservation of their films.

The average filmmaker in India does not believe what he is doing is of any historical consequence, let alone of cultural value. To him, like his colleagues elsewhere, filmmaking is first and foremost a commercial proposition, meant for mass consumption.

Besides, it is a fact that 'Cinema' has always had a low level of priority in the country. The authorities discarded it as an entertainment commodity for the masses and a means of extracting tax money for the exchequer. While for the intelligentsia and educationists, cinema was often bracketed with other social evils—like betting, gambling, drinking and prostitution. But the masses were all for it and found in cinema 'an instant escape medium'

from their daily drudgery. And they patronised it so religiously that Indian cinema has by now become the most prolific of all national cinemas.

With a stupendous annual output of over 750 feature films in fourteen major languages, which find their outlet through the ten thousand odd permanent cinema houses in the country, 'cinema' has been very much a part of the Indian reality. Our audiences have lived with it, laughed with it, wept with it and virtually grown with it. But, unfortunately, the cultural importance of cinema to the country's developmental needs was not recognised, till recently. That's why, though we started making films at the turn of the century.



New 'housing' for Archive



## One Man Archive

Noted film historian Bhaskar V. Dharap died of a heart attack in Pune on November 21. He was 74 years old. In his death, India has lost a research scholar and a pioneer in the field of film documentation.

A graduate in mechanical and electrical engineering, Dharap's first association with cinema was as assistant sound recordist and editor for **Vishvaman**, an early talkie made in Jabalpur and financed by a **bidi** merchant. He was assistant editor (Ed. : Bharucha) for the 1938 Yearbook of the Motion Picture Society of India, the industry's mouthpiece and the first major publication of its kind. He also edited and published the Motion Picture Year Book of India 1942, and was among the first to be selected for the advisory board of the National Film of India when Archive it was set up in 1964.

A one-man archive himself, Dharap

has been editing and publishing Indian filmography annuals, titled **Indian Film** from 1972. Each volume from 1975 on brings together production, distribution, exhibition details and statistics, with special sections on foreign markets and Indian film festivals.

Dharap has also compiled an invaluable filmography of the silent era, listing 1268 feature films in all, censored between 1920 and 1934, and complete with available information on the production companies, length, running time, censor certificate number and credits. The filmography is based mainly on censor records recovered from the Bombay, Calcutta and Madras Censor Boards (set up in 1918), and Lahore (1927).

This religiously-collected material was to come together in a book, **History of the Indian Film Industry Silent Era (1896-1934)**, which he was giving final touches to, when death came suddenly.

simultaneously with the rest of the world, nobody thought we should have a Film Archive to take care of our film heritage. Even after independence it took us nearly seventeen years to start collecting films in an organised manner. By that time nearly sixty to seventy percent of our pre-independent cinema had vanished. They were not available for love or money. Their negative had crumbled and

turned to powder, or after extracting silver from the nitro cellulose base, became bangles and ladies handbags. One such film happened to be **Alam Ara** (1931/Hindi)—the first Indian talkie which is still not traceable. Some remaining reels were disposed of by the maker's son because of fire hazard. Thus disappeared an important landmark of Indian cinema.

## KRISHNA GOPAL

Krishna Gopal—popularly known as 'K.G.'—veteran cinematographer, inventive film technician, passed away after a brief illness on August 2, 1986. He was 83 years old. A pioneer cinematographer and technical adviser who worked with major studios and directors of the '30s and '40s, K.G. won the **Variety** award for Best Cinematographer for Prince Barua's **Apradhi**,—the first Indian film to be shot with artificial lights. K.G. played a key role in building technical facilities for film, and later television, in India.

A gentleman of many talents, a pioneer of Indian cinema, J.B.H. Wadia, died on Jan. 4, at the start of 1986. Writer, producer, director, since the silent era; founder of Wadia Movietone (1933); maker of the extremely popular action films of the '30s and '40s starring Fearless Nadia (his sister-in-law); Raddical Humanist, intellectual and industry leader; humorist; short film and documentary pioneer, music lover and early maker of music films... J.B.H. Wadia was all this and more. Many stars who would shine on the Indian screen began their careers with J.B.H., as Meena Kumari and Sanjeev Kumar.

## NITIN BOSE

A stalwart of the Indian cinema

from its earliest days, responsible for many of its technical achievements, Nitin Bose died on April 13, 1986, at the age of 89. His interest in film dated from frequent visits to the tent cinema, and he acquired his first film camera in 1917. He shot an early topical on the Belgian royal couple's visit to Calcutta in 1921, and sold to newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst—from this early success began his career as cinematographer. He joined B.N. Sircar's famed New Theatres as a cinematographer and went on to become a leading light in this premier institution; and a successful film director, whose films combined social consciousness and craftsmanship expertly. His hits include **Gunga Jumna** made later when he migrated to Bombay. (The film, an all-time box-office success, gave to Indian popular cinema one of its most enduring themes—of dramatic confrontation between good brother and bad.) Samiran Dutta has directed a long documentary on the life and work of this great pioneer of the Indian cinema.

Kashinath Ghanekar, the extraordinarily popular stage and cine-artiste of Maharashtra died of a heart attack on Mar. 2, 1986, at the age of 56. He gave up his dentist's profession to woo the hearts of his audience on stage and screen, inevitably drawing full houses.



## BRING ON THE SONGS!

If critics have dismissed song and dance, it's because they have had their heads buried in sand too deeply to hear the music.

The music certainly goes back a long time. It is said that the Hindi film (and all its language progenies) is a filmed version of the Parsi theatre, and who can doubt that when a typical Parsi play would probably have been advertised as: Come and see this Exciting Melodrama! Full of Contrived Situations! With Dozens of Mistaken Identities! The Final Victory of Good over Evil! Listen to Thundering Rhetoric and Thrill to Spectacular Songs and Dances on the Biggest Sets you have ever seen!

But the Parsi Theatre itself was a derivative, a hybridised form with parents so dissimilar that only a contrived coincidence (which we sometimes call history) could have brought them together. The father was the cloak-and-dagger melodrama of 19th century British theatre which rich Parsis, eager for English culture, found so much nearer their hearts than Shaw or Shakespeare. The mother was Indian folk theatre with its songs and dances, broad humour and mythological themes.

The mother is nothing if not broad-minded. Theatre in Maharashtra, where Dadasaheb Phalke was to make his first film, flourished with a zest born of the cross-fertilisation of cultures. Take the theatre of Bal Gandharva, still remembered with the reverence due to a deity. The

songs in his plays, as composer Bhaskar Chandavarkar points out, are "**lavanis**, **sakis** and **dindis** from folk music. There are fast **khayals** and **thumris** from North India, there are **ragas** like **Kirwani**, **Arabhi** from Carnatic **sangeet**." Melodies were also borrowed from Urdu theatre. Other states have their own equivalents: the **Jatra** tradition of the East, the **Keertan** tradition of the South. All of these, of course, have the same source: Sanskrit theatre.

The mythological themes which early films concentrated on (there were three **Tukarams** and five **Harishchandras** in the first five years of our talkies!) made it inevitable that songs would play a dominant role in our cinema. After all, as musicologist Ashok Ranade points out, "in all cultures, music is invariably employed to establish links with the supernatural—the element which enables mythology to have a firm base.

There were other reasons too for music's complete dominance over our cinema. Cinema and radio were the first art forms which could hope for an all-India audience; the common thread running through them was music, and music was the easy way to cross linguistic and cultural barriers.

Easier said than done. Agreed that music, in an intensely music conscious nation, would have a knee-jerk reaction, but look closely at the musical tradition we were all reacting to.

Classical—that is serious—music

had nothing like a national tradition. North Indian music was founded on the principle of **gharanas**, schools of singing with their own distinctive styles. Cinema, somehow, had to unify these different styles.

Then take the question of pace. Classical singing, even today, involves a leisurely development of a **raga**; a full bodied rendition might take 90 minutes. Even a **khayal** or a **thumri** from a Marathi play could last 15 minutes. On the other hand, the constraints of early film magazines and 78 rpm recordings gave a maximum of 3 $\frac{1}{2}$



*Nightingale of the South, M.S. Subbalakshmi in 'Meera'.*



*'Indra Sabha', an early musical has more than 40 songs.*



*Saigaal: Hello Seduction*



*'Dhoop Chhaon': Dawn of playback.*



minutes per song. Compression, of a most ruthless kind, was obviously required.

Consider, also the central point of our classical music: the principle of improvisation. A **raga**, after all, was only the broad framework within which your creative skills interpreted notes in your own image. What could poor cinema, already overworked compressing time and unifying cultures, do about that? Nothing—but ignore the principle.

Another snag to be overcome was that plays normally had an all-male cast, with men playing women's roles (a Bal Gandharva speciality). Cinema with its ability to probe make-up, could hardly do this. So it was that the women who first sang in Indian films were professional singing girls who normally performed at **mehfils**. Since the main purpose of **mehfil** singing was to be as suggestive as possible, this style came somewhat in the way when a mournful song was to fill the soundtrack.

This theatrically come-on style dominated much of early film songs. Ragunath Seth, the music director, points out that most of these professional singers had "husky voices ranging one octave on the harmonium scale from **Kali panch** to **Kali panch**. They had a tendency to sing nasally and pronounce the lyrics in a deliberate and mannered style." In other words, these were voices which had not known microphones.

This began to change with K.L. Saigal, whose voice it is said, cracked under the strain of the

loudness requirements of those days. His voice's accidental softness became the romantic standard to which all future singers aspired. With Saigal, the singer became superstar.

The music itself followed the well-laid down aesthetics of **Natya Shastra**: certain instruments earmarked for certain moods, use of the conventional **raga-rasa** theory: Bhairavi to express **karma rasa**, Malkauns to express **veera rasa**, and so on.

The form that finally evolved is described by Chandavarkar as songs which had "quick tensions along with their rapid resolutions, several tiny crests and troughs and a multi-layered structure." Each song has an opening statement, followed by three stanzas, each interspersed with a musical interlude (generally repeated).

The popularity of the results have been with us for all to see. Indian cinema's most memorable moments have to do with songs and that goes for films from any period: that may have something to do with the care lavished by directors on each song sequence; it may also have something to do with the greater retentivity of aural images than visual ones. That's why even today, films are pre-sold on just two factors: stars and its music director.

In the fifties, the government, conscious of the role it had inherited from the maharajas as patron of the serious arts, and aware of the inroads that film music had made with the audiences for classical music, acted in the only way known to governments: ham-handedly. It

banned the playing of film songs from All India Radio. But it didn't control all airwaves, so Radio Ceylon took over, drawing away most listeners and much advertising revenue. It took a while for the government to reverse its decision, but when it did, it went the whole hog: it started Vividh Bharati **only** for film music.

But inspite of its popularity, film music has stagnated. If you hear a song of the sixties, its much like todays, even in the colouration of sounds and in its use of the orchestra. When you consider that

ten new songs are written composed, sung and recorded every day, six days a week, year in, year out—that's a lot of opportunities for innovation gone waste.

One reason may be that the use of harmony and the orchestration of **ragas** is a task which even a Ravi Shankar has not been able to master inspite of years of effort. So a much less gifted composer sticks to the tried and tested.

The other failure has been the filmmakers inability to **integrate** songs into the story line. Even in



*With the kiss come back to Indian cinema, film critic Chidananda Das Gupta wonders what it portends for commercial cinema's song-and-dance caper which, he points out, has been built up as "an elaborate metaphor for orgasm over four decades of kiss-avoidance."*







Mithun Chakraborty, Meenakshi Sheshadri in 'Main Balwan'.

its original **avatar** in the theatre, songs were musical interludes, generally used as a device to underline an emotion. Only in a rare case like **Pyaasa**, where Guru Dutt's melancholy poet, Sahir Ludhianvi's coruscating lyrics and S.D. Burman's memorable music, all worked together with the script to become a complete whole.

New Cinema's directors, largely influenced by films from the West, have by and large reacted to film music with their noses in the air (which, strangely, is the same as having your head stuck in the sand). Ketan Mehta's films are really the exception rather than the rule. When someone like Saeed Mirza makes an attempt to use a song (Albert Pinto Ko Gussa Kyon Ata Hai) his self-conscious **West Side Story** inspired attempt is best quickly forgotten. In Mohan Joshi, the attempt improved somewhat.

Dance has had a background very

similar to song. To start with: purely classical, with a tradition going back to Bharata's **Natya Shastra**, then adaptation of its forms—with a dash of folk dance—into the theatre.

But dance had become more hybrid far more quickly than song in our cinema. Could that be because dancing is not as universal an impulse as singing is? Or that a film dance doesn't need to have a life outside cinema as a film song does to be successful? To be that, a film song has to be melodious, original **and** simple, so that even you and I can sing it. Dance has to have no such constraints. It's an odd metaphor to use, but for a director looking for visual crutches, what better device than a dance? The heavier the load the crutch has to carry, the lighter and headier it can be.

—Anil Dharker



## पार्श्व संगीत: संगीत में ठहराव

बहुत पानी जब किसी अवरोध के कारण एक जगह रुकने लगता है तो उसकी मधुर कलकल तो बंद हो ही जाती है, उसकी निर्मलता भी जाती रहती है। भारतीय फिल्म संगीत की सरिता ऊपर से भले ही प्रवाहमान लगे, भीतर न निर्मलता है न वह कलकल स्वर जिसे जीवंतता का प्रमाण कह सकें। यह ठहराव काफी अरसे से चला आ रहा है और पिछला वर्ष इसी 'काफी अरसे' का अहम हिस्सा था।

इस बारे में सभी संगीतकार एकमत नजर आते हैं कि इस जेट रफ्तार जमाने में फिल्मों की गति भी जेट जैसी होनी चाहिए क्योंकि नयी पीढ़ी को यह पंसद है। और जब फिल्म की रफ्तार तूफान मेल जैसी होगी तो उसके संगीत में घर लौटती गाय बैलों के गले में बंधी घंटी और शाम के झुटपुटे में मंदिर से उठती आरती की आवाज का माधुर्य पिराने की गुंजाइश ही कहा निकलेगी?

आज का दर्शक सिर्फ तेजी का दीवाना है, इस बयान को ज्यों का त्यों मान लेने में भुके एतराज है। सिर्फ आज का दर्शक ही क्यों, क्या इनसान सदा से ही रफ्तार में तेजी लाने की कोशिशों में नहीं रहा है? लेकिन इसका यह मतलब कैसे निकलता है कि उन चीजों में भी उसे तेजी ही पंसद है जिनका सौंदर्य ही उनकी मध्यम गति में निहित है? आंसू से आंसू अगर भरने की तरह बहने लगे तो बीमारी मालूम पड़ेगी लेकिन पलक में आकर ठहर गयी आंसू की अकेली बूंद कविता हो जाती है। इस कविता को

बीमारी बनाने का अनुरोध नौजवानी की किसी भी पायदान से आता अपने आज तक सुना! अगर नौजवान पीढ़ी सचमुच इस कविता को सराह नहीं सकती तो ऐसा क्यों है कि शाम के धुंधलके में सट कर बैठे जोड़े गुलामअली, जगजीतसिंह और भूपेंद्र को सुनते हुए बिना कुछ कहे हुए भी अपनी बात का इजहार कर जाते हैं? क्यों उन्हें आशा भोंसले की गायी 'उमराव जान' की गजले आशा के किसी चंचल गाने की अपेक्षा अधिक सुकून देती है?

संगीत मशीन से पैदा नहीं होता, उसका संबंध सीधे दिल से है। रफ्तार के लिए मशीन की जरूरत होती है। अच्छे संगीत की सबसे बड़ी क्षमता है कि वह दिल में सीधे उतर सकता है। पिछले साल की उपलब्धि यदि इस दृष्टि से आंकने जाएं तो उंगलियों पर गिन सकने भर को भी ऐसे गीत नहीं हैं जिन्हें लय, ताल, शब्दरचना अथवा पार्श्वगायन की किसी भी कसीटी पर कसने लायक कहा जा सके। लेकिन ऐसे गानों की फहेरिस्त लंबी है जो बरसों पुराने होते हुए भी पिछले साल न सिर्फ रेडियो से बल्कि स्टेज कार्यक्रमों और टेलीविजन के जरिये भी श्रोताओं को बीते समय की सुहानी स्वर लहरियों के भूले में भूलाते रहे। 'ओ दूर के मुसाफिर...', 'मेरी याद में तुम न आंसू बहाना', 'मेरे साजन हैं उस पार', 'अबके बरस भेज मैया को बाबुल', 'ओ जाने वाले, हो सके तो लौट के आना...', जैसे गाने सुनकर आज भी मन जैसे भनभना उठता है। ये गाने पुराने होकर भी पुराने नहीं पड़ते और पिछले बरस के गाने नये

होकर भी याद नहीं आ रहे तो इसके पीछे कोई तो वजह है! और निश्चित ही वह वजह इन गानों के माधुर्य से ताल्लुक रखती है रफ्तार से नहीं।

यह बात सही है कि जिन कलाकारों ने अविस्मरणीय गीतों की ये लड़ियाँ पिरोईं उनमें से बहुत से अब हमारे बीच नहीं हैं। लेकिन यह भी सही है कि उनमें से बहुत सारे अब भी हमारे बीच हैं। पार्श्वगायन के क्षेत्र को देखें तो किशोरकुमार, लता मंगेशकर और आशा भोंसले जैसी वे प्रतिभाएं मौजूद हैं जिनके सुर और स्वर के कमाल के कायल, श्रोता बार-बार हुए हैं। तो फिर इनके रहते पार्श्वगायन का क्षेत्र पिछले वर्ष भी इतना श्रीहीन क्यों बना रहा?

अनेक बार इस बारे में इन लोगों से मेरी विस्तृत बातचीत हुई है और हर बार उसका स्तर संक्षेप एक ही निकला—मेहनत करने की आदत का अभाव। इन कलाकारों का स्पष्ट कहना है कि वे गाने, जिनमें इतनी जान होती है कि इनसान में नयी जिदगी फूंक सकें, जी जान लगा कर बनाये जाते हैं, जल्दबाजी में नहीं। पहले एक गाना तैयार होने में कई-कई दिन लग जाते थे। संगीतकार धुन को कई-कई बार मांज कर चमकाता था उसमें संगीत की बारीकियाँ पिरोता था और इन बारीकियों का ताना बाना समझने में गायक गायिकाओं के पसीने छूट जाते थे। काम आज जितना आसान नहीं था कि शाम को धुन सुनाई और सुबह गाना रिकार्ड। लेकिन पिछला साल उन संगीतकारों का रहा है जिनको इस बात का गर्व है कि उन्होंने एक दिन में पांच गाने रिकार्ड कर डालने का रिकार्ड स्थापित कर दिया।

इसका स्पष्ट अर्थ यह भी है कि महत्व और मान्यताओं में मूलभूत परिवर्तन हुए हैं। आज मान्यता इस बात को नहीं है कि गाने में मेलोडी कितनी है, शब्द चयन में क्या सौंदर्य है और गायक ने उसमें स्वरों के आरोह अवरोह को कितना साध कर कैसे चमत्कार किये हैं। आज मुख्य बात यह है कि गाना कितनी जल्दी रिकार्ड हो गया! यह बात नयी पीढ़ी के संगीतकारों और गायकों को भले ही सुख देती हो, फिल्म संगीत के वे स्तंभ जिनकी कारीगरी पर सुरों का भव्य महल खड़ा हुआ, इससे निराश हैं। अगर वे इस स्थिति से समझौता नहीं करते तो धंधे से बाहर हो जाते हैं और करें तो घटियापन का दोष उन पर भी आता है। इसी उहापोह से परेशान होकर किशोर कुमार ने पिछले वर्ष पार्श्वगायन से संन्यास ले लेने की कोशिश की थी और यही उहापोह आज भी उन्हें बंबई में बने रहने पर मजबूर किये हुए है।

पिछले वर्ष किशोरकुमार के संन्यास ले लेने की खबर, जो मात्र पब्लिसिटी स्टंट नहीं थी, एक महत्वपूर्ण सवाल को कई गुना बड़े आकार में प्रस्तुत कर गयी। किशोरकुमार संन्यास लें या न लें, यह वे स्वयं स्वकार करते हैं कि बढ़ती उम्र और गिरता स्वास्थ्य अब उन्हें पहले जैसी दौड़-धूप और मेहनत की इजाजत नहीं देते। यह बात सिर्फ उन्हीं के साथ सही हो ऐसा नहीं है। लता मंगेशकर, महेन्द्र कपूर और आशा भोंसले भी इसी स्थिति में हैं। बढ़ती उम्र का प्रभाव इन बेजोड़ आवाजों पर होना स्वाभाविक ही है। अहम सवाल यह है कि इन लोगों के बाद पार्श्वगायन के क्षेत्र में आशा की किरण किसे देखकर जागती है? मन्ना डे, हेमंत कुमार, तलत महमूद जैसी



प्रतिभाएं पिछले वर्ष से भी पहले लगभग इन्हीं कारणों से फिल्म पार्श्वगायन के क्षेत्र से बाहर हो चुकी हैं। यहां वहां होने वाले स्टेट कार्यक्रम ही इनका एकमात्र सहारा बने हुए हैं।

इन महारथियों का स्थान लेने जो पीढ़ी आई है, फिल्म संगीत के बहाव पर ठहराव का बांध उसने ही बांधा है। अपने बचपन से ही इस पीढ़ी ने इन कलाकारों को गाते और अपनी कला से धूम मचाते सुना। इसके अबचेतन मन में सदा एक ही तमन्ना रही, 'काश हम भी इन सा गा पाते।' जब इस नयी पीढ़ी के लोगों ने गाना शुरू किया तो एक निश्चित उद्देश्य हरदम मन में बना रहा, 'मुझे मोहम्मद रफी बनना है,' 'मुझे मुकेश की तरह गाना है।' नतीजा यह है कि आज एक भी आवाज ऐसी नहीं है जिसे मौलिक कहा जा सके। अनवर, रफी बनने की तमन्ना लेकर आए थे और आज भी कहते हैं कि वे रफी की कला का दस बीस प्रतिशत भी सिद्ध हो सकें तो स्वयं को सफल समझेंगे। रफी की सी ही आवाज वाले शब्बीर कुमार रंगमंच

कार्यक्रमों से फिल्मों में आए। वे रंगमंच पर रफी बनने की कोशिश कर रहे थे, जहां दूर बैठे थोता तक अपनी आवाज रहुंचा पाना ज्यादा जरूरी होता है बजाय स्वर माधुर्य की चिंता के। किशोर कुमार के पुत्र अमित कुमार अपने यशस्वी पिता की और नितिन मुकेश अपने पिता स्वर्गीय मुकेश की कीर्ति के वटवृक्ष के नीचे से निकलना ही नहीं चाहते। इन्होंने कभी अपने पिता की आवाज से स्वयं को अलग सिद्ध करने की चेष्टा ही नहीं की। संभवतः इसका कारण है किसी रिआज अथवा मेहनत का अभाव। इन लोगों ने



मोहम्मद रफी,



संगीतकार एस.डी. बर्मन पार्श्व गायक तला मणेशकर के साथ,



यशुदास



सुरेश वाडकर

संगीत उस तरह नहीं सीखा है जैसे किशोर और मुकेश ने सीखा था और न ही उस तरह कदम कदम चलते हुए लोकप्रियता की ओर धीरे-धीरे बढ़े हैं जैसे इनके पिता बढ़े थे. इन्हें तो अपने पिता की छत्रछाया में, सीधे ही अवसर मिलने लगे थे और लोग इन्हें इनकी आवाज इनके पिता की सी होने के कारण ही सुन भी लेते थे. लेकिन जब इन्होंने इससे आगे निकलने के बजाय उनका विकल्प बनने की कोशिश शुरू कर दी तब श्रोताओं ने इन्हें अस्वीकार कर दिया. श्रोता संगीत में वही प्रवृत्ति प्रदत्त कलकल सुनना पसंद करता है. ठहरे हुए जल में कंकड़ डालकर पैदा आवाज का पुरानापन उसे बहुत जल्दी पकड़ में आ जाता है.

पुरुष गायकों में दो ही आवाजें थीं जिन पर पिछले कुछ वर्षों में आशाओं के कुछ कंगूरे बनने लगे थे. लेकिन पिछले वर्ष ये आशाएं भी दुराशाएं साबित होकर रह गयीं. इन दो गायकों में से एक हैं सुरेश वाडकर और दूसरे दक्षिण के येशुदास. सुरेश वाडकर ने वर्षों गुरु के पास रह कर संगीत सीखा है. संभवतः वह ही एकमात्र युवा गायक है जिन्होंने संगीत

पर परिश्रम किया है. उसकी विधिवत शिक्षा ली है. संगीतकार रवींद्र जैन ने, जो सारे साल राजकपूर की फिल्म 'राम तेरी गंगा मैली' के कारण चर्चित रहे, सुरेश को एक से एक अच्छे अवसर प्रदान किये. किंतु संगीत की सारी व्याकरण कंठस्थ होने के बावजूद सुरेश स्वर माधुर्य में कहीं इतने पीछे छूट जाते हैं कि सारा गीत केवल व्याकरण ही लगता है. मनमोह लेने वाली भाषा नहीं. रवींद्र जैन के लोकधुन प्रधान संगीत की मिठास सुरेश के स्वर में सपाट हो जाती है. इसमें उनके प्रयत्नों की कमी नहीं किंतु प्रवृत्ति प्रदत्त गुण अथवा कमियां कलाकार के विकास में सहायक अथवा बाधक होती ही हैं.

दूसरे गायक येशुदास ने अपनी मौलिक मीठी आवाज का सिक्का जमाना शुरू कर दिया था. वे भी रवींद्र जैन की खोज माने जाते थे और संभवतः यही कारण था कि व्यावसायिक सिनेमा के उन महारथी संगीतकारों ने उन्हें अपनाने से इनकार कर दिया जिनके पास 65 प्रतिशत फिल्मों का काम जाता है. रवींद्र जैन 35 प्रतिशत का एक हिस्सा थे. अपने प्रयत्नों के बावजूद वे उन





किशोर कुमार एवं अमित कुमार

पार्श्वगायकों को, जिन्हें उन्होंने निरंतर अवसर दिये, लोगप्रियता की उस चोटी, तक नहीं पहुँचा सके जहाँ पहुँचने के हकदार उनमें से कुछ तो थे ही। पिछले वर्ष की रवींद्र जैन की सफलता के बावजूद उनके पास उतनी बड़ी बड़ी फिल्में नहीं आई जो 'राम तेरी गंगा मैली' जैसी सफलता के बाद आ जानी चाहिए थीं। इसी बीच बंबई सिने चित्र की राजनीति से उकता कर येशुदास दक्षिण वापस लौट गये जहाँ उनकी मांग निरंतर बनी हुई है।

प्रतिष्ठित गायक गायिकाओं की गिरती साख और नयी पीढ़ी से प्राप्त निराशा ने संगीतकारों को बाध्य किया है कि वे बंबई से बाहर प्रतिभाओं की तलाश करें यही तलाश किसी को बाल सुब्रमण्यम, किसी को पी. सुशीला तो किसी को एस. जानकी तक ले गयी है। लेकिन इनमें से कोई भी बंबई में दिन पर दिन बढ़ रही पार्श्वगायकों के अभाव की खाई को पाट सकेगा, इसमें संदेह ही है। अनुराधा पौडवाल और चंद्राणी मुखर्जी, जिस स्तर को पहुँच चुकी हैं, वहाँ से ऊपर उठ

पाएंगी इसके कोई लक्षण अभी नहीं दिखते क्योंकि लता आशा का एकाधिकार अभी पूर्णतः समाप्त नहीं हुआ है। पिछले वर्ष में अनुराधा और चंद्राणी दोनों को ही विशेष कुछ कर दिखाने के अवसर भी नहीं मिले। कल्याण जी आनंद जी की खोज साधना सरगम का नाम पिछले वर्ष बड़ी उम्मीदों से लिया गया क्योंकि वह उम्र की छोटी है और उसके पास बहुत समय है स्वयं को सफल सिद्ध कर सकने का। किंतु जिस तरह एक समय लता के गीत 'आएगा, आएगा आने वाला' ने धूम मचाकर यह साबित कर दिया था कि एक बेजोड़ नयी आवाज का जादू चल चुका है वैसे कोई चमत्कार अभी साधना सरगम की सरगमों से समृद्ध हुआ नहीं।

इस हताशा के बाद भी यह मान लेना उचित नहीं कि परिस्थितियाँ कभी सुधरेगी नहीं। बादल जितने ज्यादा गहराते हैं, प्रकाश की किरणें, जो भले दो एक ही होती हैं, उतनी ही ज्यादा उभरती हैं।

# Regional Cinema



## Every Silver Lining Has A Cloud

In the East, it would seem these are times of mixed blessings. You would not think so, looking at the ambitious proposals and projects to provide technical and infrastructural facilities: a sprawling colour laboratory at Salt Lake near Calcutta; excellent editing, recording and dubbing facilities at Bhubaneshwar; a unique film centre aspiring to the National Film Theatre and the Museum of Modern Art in one, in the heart of Calcutta; and the coming up of the first theatre complex in Manipur.

But the signs read adverse for a new film culture taking root. Five years ago, you could always hear some of the younger rebels talking of social and artistic commitment, some seeking State support to realize their films.

In 1986, they are still seeking State support—and the State continues to oblige by way of awards, television & premieres and Foreign trips. The private industry and large sections of the audience pay no heed to these. And the film makers themselves have begun to talk less and less of commitment.

The debate continues as to whether it has been at all worthwhile—from a larger point of view—to work for the, no doubt, more lucrative exposure on the national television network. That is a persisting dilemma, but in a situation where the commercial channels are blocked increasingly

by an alarming array of popular entertainment, there seems to be no easy way out. Besides, there is the argument—convincing up to a point—that filmmakers must continue to find ways to keep working.

When **Paar** ran for a 100 days in a single theatre, it seemed that a breakthrough had been made and Goutam Ghosh, at least, could canalize his kind of cinema into the mainstream. That was not to be. It transpired that commercial exploitation was by no means a simple business—Ghosh turned his thoughts to serials since the small screen was there in a big way. But he discovered it was not really his metier.

Goutam Ghosh is still considered one of the most promising talents in Bengal—sound in technique, fresh in approach, and level-headed in deployment of resources. In the intervals between one success, one misadventure and the next big project, he made two notable documentaries. One was for the Festival of India on unique ways of perpetuating the traditions of Indian classical music. The other was **Tribute to Odissi**, on the revival of this dance form under the inspiration of the renowned Kulu Charan Mahapatra, with a commentary by Aparna Sen. Included in the Panorama of the current festival, it is visually arresting, especially in its evocation of the myths with which the dance form is closely tied with.

More exciting, however, the challenge posed by his next bilingual venture, located dramatically in a cremation ground. Based on the story **Antarjalir Jatra** by Kamal Majumdar, it will get off the ground soon after the '87 festival. The Goutam Ghosh-Shatrughan Sinha collaboration in this venture was surprising enough. The two intensified speculation when they arrived at Writers' Building rather suddenly one afternoon to meet the Chief Minister with a proposal to bring about all-round development of the Bengali cinema.

A surprise of a different sort came from Buddhadeb Dasgupta in his latest Bengali film, **Phera**, in which he brought back Alokannanda Ray, the Satyajit Ray discovery in **Kanchenjunga**, after a lapse of 25 years. His rather unfortunate experience with the earlier **Andhi Gali** (his first Hindi film) was followed by a period of uncertainty. It had set out to complete the trilogy

with **Dooratwa** and **Grihajuddha**, but was generally considered to be its weakest link.

Dasgupta's understanding of the medium is still readily acknowledged and 'seasons' of his works have been held in many countries. His new film, based on a story by Narendranath Mitra (writer of **Mahanagar**), skirts direct political issues and explores the inner conflicts of the creative artist who resists all suggestions to renounce his basic commitments. "I cannot say my protagonist is altogether apolitical or unrelated to those in the trilogy, says Dasgupta. "He merely functions in a different milieu." And, indeed, for the first time he turns his camera away from the teeming city to ruins in the Bengal countryside.

If Dasgupta has preferred to be more cautious and apparently keen to return to his familiar method of poetic exposition, Utpalendu Chakraborty has been more



Alokannanda Ray and Subrata Nandy in 'Phera' Directed by Buddhadeb Dasgupta.





*Utpalendu Chakraborty directs Anupam Kher for TV serial, 'Aparichita'.*

venturesome in tackling diverse formats. On the last occasion that he was seen at an Indian festival, he had brought along a long documentary, **Music of Satyajit Ray**. It won a major award and went to Cannes. Next, switching to a broad social canvas in **Debshishu**, an NFDC-sponsored film, he sought a new angle to the theme of illiteracy and ignorance lying at the root of unending exploitation. It fetched him an award for Direction at Locarno, and now comes to the Delhi festival with the promise of revealing an effective flair for drama in the context of harsh contemporary realities.

Chakraborty has, meanwhile, completed two television films. One is Doordarshan-sponsored and of the usual length of around 55 minutes. Called **Rang**, it too deals with exploitation in an urban industrial setting. The other project is of equal length and forms part of the series based on Tagore stories now being telecast. His story is **Aparichita**, a telling commentary on the dowry system.

The pity is that the young trio from Bengal (Goutam, Buddhadeb and Utpalendu) could have been joined by Purnendu Pattrea, Saikat Bhattacharya, Nitish Mukherjee, Biplab Roy Chowdhury, Sankar Bhattacharya and Inder Sen. Their talents have been largely wasted through futile experiments and sheer lack of professionalism. Each has made his mark after his fashion, but the initial burst of inspiration never seemed to last. But for Sandip Ray, not the son of Satyajit) who completed **Himghar** on time, some of the filmmakers even failed to make effective use of NFDC's financial support. The one who holds out hope is Aparna Sen. The frenzied response to the Bengali version of **Paroma** was largely an intense debate on its basic premises. More important is her sensitivity towards the medium and the widespread expectation that she is capable of giving us bigger surprises.

The time is come to think in terms of a change of guard. Satyajit Ray has, for all practical purposes, been



Mrinal Sen at Nandan, the 'unique film centre'.

severely restricted in his movements since the making of **Ghare Baire**. He is still prolific in turning out stories and sketches but there is some doubt as to whether he can return to his exacting manner of direction. For his countless admirers, however, the scripts he writes for the television serial directed by his son Sandip, are still something to look forward to. Popular ratings as well as critical opinion have chosen some of these 23-minute films as the best produced so far on the national network, bringing together an exciting array of acting talent from Bombay and Calcutta. Much the same style will be followed in the second serial now under production. The 13 parts will consist of science fiction in the first two parts (with Sadhu Meher in the lead), psychological suspense in the next three (with Anupam Kher, Om Puri and Sharmila Tagore) and detective Feluda in the final eight (with Shashi Kapoor playing the professional investigator). The telecast is slated for June. The big question is, of course, whether the master will start on a full-length feature after that.

In his inimitable way, Mrinal Sen

has also been keeping everyone guessing. The French version of **Genesis**, an Indo-French-Swiss co-production, has been released. In India, it has so far been restricted to private screenings and there is yet no word on when it will be seen publicly. Sen is also at work on his television serial but, unlike Ray who has been able to adjust remarkably well to the new format, the aging rebel seems uneven in his tele-works. But a mellowing of the temper and a wider range of interest brought new elements into Sen's style sometime ago, and there is a lot of cinema left in him yet.

Prevailing standards in Tollygunge (the seat of filmmaking) however give us little room for hope. Never before have such films, with all their borrowed commercial gimmicks, won such big success. In the past, one used to look to Tapan Sinha and Tarun Majumdar as the leaders of polished entertainment. In the present situation, their work has been somewhat rudely brushed aside by the new crop of potboilers. Enduring sentiments are now reinforced by daring action and ear-splitting music in one composite package—bringing



Bengali entertainers on par with the old Bombay formula films. It has inspired an unprecedented inflow of finance and a large section of Tollygunge is not at all perturbed about the serious setback in audience taste.

The state government is not very worried either. A bitter lesson had been learnt from the 'good' films which incurred heavy losses—and some which could not be released of all. The satisfaction of offering opportunities to young talent has been buried under a heap of criticism over misuse of funds. So the government decided to turn its attention towards permanent structures. This was what resulted in 'Nandan', the multi-purpose film centre housing a wide range of activities from screenings to study sessions, and Rupayan, the colour laboratory complex at Salt Lake. Both were christened by Satyajit Ray. It was hoped that while one would serve the needs of film buffs and students, the other—opened last September—would come as a boon to the Bengali film industry which was hopelessly dependent on Bombay and Madras for its postshooting work.

Nandan has been in existence for over 15 months and already it has provided exceedingly rich fare. The complex is still in the hands of the Information and Cultural Affairs Department but with a promise that it will eventually be run by an autonomous authority. Meanwhile, different organisations—ranging from film societies and foreign cultural centres to social groups—utilise the excellent facilities to give us such programmes as a Mrinal Sen Retrospective (with a final day's encounter between Sen

and Goutam Ghosh before a vast audience); a variety of film exhibitions; a focus on women's cinema; a Bergman season with films rarely seen here; a first-ever festival of films from non-aligned countries; a five-day illustrated lecture on 'Film and Politics' conducted by a West German visitor; a trip down memory lane with Indian films of the pre-war years; and weekly screenings of Indian and foreign classics by the National Film Archive. And there is plenty more to look forward to

It is still too early to assess the performance of the laboratory complex, especially when the optical and sound sections are yet to be added to the rest of the post-shooting facilities. There is, in any case, a feeling of relief that the Rs. 6-crore project has been commissioned after such a long delay. The West Bengal Film Development Corporation is in charge of its administration and has the daunting task of injecting a sense of professionalism to enable it to compete with similar establishments in the eastern region. Surprisingly, the Corporation, which is in charge of exploiting government-sponsored films, has also taken over a studio in Tollygunge where some of the same technical facilities will be available.

There is the difficult prospect of generating enough work to feed the Salt Lake complex, the NFDC centre at Behala which already maintains a busy schedule, and the Kalinga studio complex near Bhubaneshwar. All these centres will be in competition with one another. While this should have a healthy effect, the fact remains that

the number of films made in this region may not be enough to allow these institutions to function to their maximum capacities. This puts a question mark on their viability although the equipment installed in all of them is easily comparable to the best in the country.

The fact that more films are being made in Calcutta has put the NFDC centre in a somewhat happier position. Otherwise, the natural setting, the working atmosphere, the facilities ranging from air-conditioned cottages and make-up rooms to editing rooms and a sophisticated recording studio would have given the Kalinga studio complex a slight edge. Built by the Orissa Film Development Corporation in a record time of one and a half years, it was designed to give a boost to the Oriya cinema. Coming, in top of the term and soft loans given for production, it generated considerable enthusiasm and boosted production by almost 20 films a year. To outside units, it

also offers a substantial subsidy against actual billing of upto Rs. 50,000. Several filmmakers have already taken advantage of the offer. Among them, Mrinal Sen, Buddhadeb Dasgupta and Biplab Roy Chowdhury.

The incentives have not, however, inspired the growth of a more enlightened cinema. On the contrary, they have spurred box-office values; there are stars (Prashant Nanda and Uttam Mohanty) to match their flamboyant counterparts in



*Dhiru Biswal, veteran actor/producer.*



*Uttam Mohanty and Aparijita stars of Oriya cinema.*





*'Sasu Nanad Bhaugjee', in Bhojpuri.*

Bombay; and producers as established as Dhiru Biswal ready to put in anything up to Rs. 20 lakhs for an Oriya film. With a protective state policy for the Oriya cinema and a spurt in the construction of theatres, the 'small cinema', led by such talents as Nirad Mahapatra and Manmohan Mahapatra, continues its battle to survive. Manmohan, in particular, has survived rather well after three of his films—**Seeta Rati**, **Nirab Jhada** and **Klanta Aparanha**—made it to the Panorama and two of them subsequently found slots on the national network. While Nirad has one short film in this year's Panorama, and is working on his next feature, it was a pleasant surprise to learn that Manmohan is giving finishing touches to three more films—**Trisandhya**, **Kuhuri** and **Majib Pabacha**—and will begin yet another with NFDC support towards the middle of the year.

Not many know that Sadhu Meher likes to return to make films in his home state when he can break away from his acting assignments. On the last occasion, he made an Oriya film for the Children's Film Society at the Kalinga studio. The

CFS, incidentally, has made some kind of a breakthrough in this region by joining hands with a private producer to sponsor Tapan Sinha's latest film, **Aaj Ki Robin Hood**—during the shooting of which the veteran director was near-fatally attacked by an elephant in the Betla Reserve Forest in Bihar.

Such locations have been the favourite spots for both local stalwarts like Girish Ranjan, Shivendra Sinha and Prakash Jha as well as a host of filmmakers from Bengal. Surprisingly, the natural advantages have not fostered a regular cinema in Bihar. Recently, however, the state government set up a Film Development and Finance Corporation to help the construction of mini theatres, purchase of equipment and production of Bhojpuri films. The first state-financed Bhojpuri film, **Sasu Nanad Bhaugjee**, is a modest venture, with a simple message on the dowry evil, presented with conventional excitements, and, no doubt, drawing inspiration from the happy results of earlier ventures like **Ganga Kinara More Gaon**.

It is also a matter of some satisfaction that these Bhojpuri films make use of local talent, although the biggest source of inspiration now in Bihar is Shatrughan Sinha—both as actor and producer. The state government refunds part of the amusement tax collected from every locally-made film. But the general feeling is that it can do much more to utilise available resources and make Bihar a regular film-producing state.



*Dr. Bhabendra Nath Saikia briefing Malaya Goswami on the sets of 'Agnisnaan'.*

Surprisingly, Assam, which celebrated the golden jubilee of its film industry a couple of years ago, has had to do serious thinking on the state of its cinema. The problem here, unlike in Bihar, was not so much lack of enthusiasm as lack of professional competence. About ten Assamese films are made each year with help from the Assam State Film (Finance and Development) Corporation—most of them being poor local variations of the Bombay formula. The old-fashioned methods of the more senior directors do not always result in successes (like *Pooja*). Nevertheless, Nip Barua, Bhupen Hazarika and Shiv Thakur are still very active.

However, hopes in the future of the Assamese cinema have been raised with Bhaben Saikia taking over as Chairman of the State Film Corporation. He has set out with a two-point programme: building a chain of small theatres to generate new tastes and discouraging the "misguided young" from plunging

into the business of filmmaking. Fortunately, there is another set of young filmmakers like Juhnu Barua and Hem Bora (both graduates from the Pune Film Institute) who are concerned with their immediate surroundings and have dealt with the Assamese students' problem in varying degree in their latest films. Saikia, having proved himself well above the others in *Agnisnaan*, has now turned to Tagore's *Darpaharan* (in Hindi) for the national network.

Television, indeed, has sprung a series of surprises: That accomplished actor, Soumitra Chatterjee for one, is switching to direction, and there is a general exodus from theatre to television. The results so far have not been uniformly bright, but the prospects are exciting as all kinds of people, prominent stars and directions as well as untested talent, bombard the new format with new ideas. Far-reaching changes lie ahead.

**Swapan Mullick**



## GUJARATI CINEMA

The pioneering contribution once made by persons from Gujarat to developing the infrastructure of the Bombay film industry during its formative years is yet to be evaluated. But the present day Gujarati industry would do well to recall the glory of those days. How a stalwart like D.N. Sampat dominated the film scene during the twenties, how vigorously that veritable giant, Sardar Chandulal Shah, led the industry in spelling out its demands during the Second World War; and how **Mouj-Majah**, a Gujarati film periodical and India's first cine weekly, reported these events—all chapters of a bygone era that must be retold to inspire the Gujarati film industry of today.

The hope generated in the '70s that the state film industry would stabilize with the state

government's granting of full tax exemption, has gradually faded away. The number of productions this year has come down to about 20 from the 30 to 32 films of the previous years. Though 80% tax exemption to nine prints for the first 26 weeks is still in force, as many as 16 films ready since August this year, were not released till the month of October. The reason for this poor show glare one in the face: the prolonged riots and the consistently disturbed situation in the state during 1985. Again, two fresh waves of communal riots swept over Baroda and parts of Ahmedabad, in August and September, '86. Besides, the lack of adequate rain in the state this year in the urban areas, and the famine situation ruling in the rural areas of Saurashtra and Kutch has taken the overall picture from bad to worse.



Muharrat of 'Char Shoorveer' at Baroda.

According to official figures, tax exemption was given only to seven films this year. The government has relaxed the restriction on the number of prints to be released in view of the adverse situation facing the industry, and producers may further benefit from good performance of films by releasing more than nine prints. This may provide relief to some.

Producers, actors and studio management are worried about new proposals to impose surcharge on the industry, in protest against which the film industry in Maharashtra went on a long 31 day strike in October/November '86. They fear that if the surcharge is imposed in Maharashtra, Gujarat will be the next to be hit. Leaders of the Gujarati film industry have already made their representation to the Chief Minister on this issue. They have also suggested the Government grant subsidy to Gujarati film production in view of

the adverse situation in the state in general, and the present critical position of the industry in particular. But thus far the Government has been non-committal. It is in this light that the state of the Gujarati film industry is to be viewed.

A look at the films already released, yet to be released, and under production this year, confirm that by and large the preference of audiences, is for entertainers based on folk themes **Malo Nag De, Ujali Meraman, Lohi Bhini Chundadi, Baba Balia Deo, Kul, Kasunbo Ane Kanya and Ma. But Bhavani** are sample titles. These films largely run in rural centers, mofussil towns and theatres located in the industrial labour areas. The educated Gujarati urban mass keeps its distance from this cinema, and its main patrons are the blue collar workers. The purse strings of production are held by



Naresh Kanodia in 'Lohi Bhini Chundadi': top of the charts.



predominantly trading communities actuated by profit margins rather than any concept of social responsibility.

It's interesting to note that on the departure from the scene of hero Upendra Trivedi, Naresh Kanodia has moved into his place, an actor belonging to the 'scheduled' castes, now risen to stardom. The state which has suffered heavily these last few years from riots against seat reservation for students of scheduled castes has nevertheless elected one of them to the top of the movie popularity charts. Cinema, it seems, is above caste, creed or religion; its creed, if any, is only of popularity among the masses!

Even the group of Film Institute graduates who set out to produce 'parallel' films in Gujarati some years ago, decided to weave in elements of folk entertainment into their work. **Bhavni Bhavai**, made by young and talented director Ketan Mehta, and a group of highly qualified technicians, achieved a standard of aesthetic and technical merit reached by no other Gujarati film, and was acclaimed nationally and internationally. That was '81 and the film sparked off hopes that a parallel cinema movement would emerge in Gujarat too. Unfortunately, the flame was not kindled and the 'Sanchar Film Corperative', as they called themselves, too soon dropped out of sight.

Director Ketan Mehta preferred to switch over to Hindi for his next film. **Mirch Masala** which has been shot on Gujarat locations and projects the Gujarati ethos, has entered the panorama section of

this festival. But unfortunately no current Gujarati folk entertainer manages the vigour and quality of **Bhavni Bhavai**, and no Gujarati film of any kind is included in this year's festival selection.

The recently-formed Gujarat State Film Development Council has raised hopes all round but under Chairman, ex-hero Upendra Trivedi, it is still to open its innings.

As for the growing popularity of TV entertainment vis-a-vis the film industry, Gujarati films are largely patronized by the economically lower strata of the society, the majority of whom do not possess television sets. But the general effects on the business of cinema exhibition in the state has certainly been negative. Three movie houses located in the prestigious Ashram Road business area in the capital, Ahmedabad, have been shut down. Similarly, an old but leading cine-theater in the heart of the big city of Baroda, has been demolished and transformed into a shopping centre. All in '86.



Rita Bhaduri and Arvind Kirad—outsider-insiders.



Adi Irani with Bombay's Jayshree T. in director Kishore Vyas' 'Janetana Sogand'.

Here's an intriguing detail about the Gujarati cinema. The leading female stars of numerous Gujarati films produced during the tax exemption era (including **Bhavni Bhavai**) are almost inevitably non-Gujarati: as witness heroines like Snehlata, Rita Bhaduri, Sushma Verma, Smita Patil, Jayshree T, Bandini, Priyadarshini. On the other hand, there are many Gujarati actors participating in the popular Hindi-language serials on the national hook-up: Satish Shah, Swaroop Sampat, Tiku Talsania, Kishore Bhatt, Sujata Mehta,

Shernaz Patel, Sameer Khakhar, Ajit Vachhani, for instance. The names of director Kundan Shah and music director Uday Mazumdar could be added to these. Noted classical dancer and heroine of some Gujarati films, Mallika Sarabhai was selected for Peter Brook's international stage production of **Mahabharat**... No one can doubt the multiplicity of cinematic talents in Gujarat, yet this region's cinema—vexingly—has yet to make its mark on the national scene.

—Ushakant Mehta



## In-laws in, outlaws out?

In 1986, Marathi films faced battle on two fronts: on the one hand, they had to struggle against the Big Brother of the Hindi film industry and, on the other, heavy state taxation levied at different stages of production. Even though the Entertainment Tax Refund Scheme, a grant-in-aid which gives substantial subsidy to the Marathi film industry, is still in operation—in actuality it seems to work to the benefit of a coterie, rather than the majority of film producers.

The recent decision of the Maharashtra government to impose additional tax burdens on the film industry in the state had the entire industry up in arms against the decision, and on strike for a whole month. During this period, every aspect of films suffered a setback, and the Marathi film industry was no exception. While the strike has been suspended temporarily, concessions are expected from the government which has yet to convey its final decision.

In terms of production of films in '86, the general average was maintained. Twenty films made it to the screen and five more have been censored recently, though they await release.

Of the 20, only one, viz. **Dhumdhadaka**, was a noteworthy success. Actually the film was rereleased in 1985 but completed its golden jubilee run (50 weeks) in 1986. No other Marathi film could manage even a silver jubilee (25



*'Dhumdhadaka', Mahesh Kothare's golden jubilee hit.*

weeks), which run could be called a commercial success. About 75% did moderate or average business while the balance had terrible problems with even recovering costs.

Thematically, family melodrama continued to fascinate Marathi film producers in '86. Almost one-third of the productions featured mother-in-law/daughter-in-law conflicts with the daughter-in-law generally being oppressed, and with equal chances of a happy or a tragic denouement. **Dhakti Soon** (Youngest Daughter-in-law) was a typical—and it did decent business too.

Bhalji Pendharkar re-made his own hit of the '40s, **Soonbai**, now rechristened **Shabas Soonbai** (Bravo Daughter-in-law). Bhalji is a freedom fighter and the oldest living filmmaker in India! Born in



*'Dhakti Soon'.*

1899, he began his film career in 1924.

Next in popularity were the comedies, abounding in hilarious situations and exaggerated acting. Veteran actor Ashok Saraf dominated the scene since he stars in the majority of them, including the lone hit **Dhumdhadaka** (produced, directed and acted by Mahesh Kothare who made his debut in this film.)

Two other comedies recently released are Raja Bargir's **Gadbad Ghotala** and Dada Kondke's **Muka Ghya Muka** which typically has a pun in the title ('Muka' means both 'kiss' and 'dumb') and as typically ran into trouble with the censors. (See box.) Both these films are reported to be drawing in the crowds.

In contrast, the Misdeeds of the Villainous Village Patil—which theme was very popular in the '60s—are on the way out. Veteran producer/director Anant Mane who has made any number of films on



*Bhalji Pendharkar's 'Shabas Soonbai'.*



*Comedy hit—Raja Bargir's 'Gadbad Ghotala'.*

the subject, found his '86 film a dismal flop. (Incidentally, his **Sangte Aike** on the same theme



holds the record for the longest run in Marathi film history.)

There were stray attempts to focus on contemporary subjects: the evils of the dowry system (**Pudhacha Paool**), the struggle of bonded labour (**Nikhare**). **Maphicha Sakshidar** was based on the Joshi-Abhayankar murders that actually took place in Pune; and on the confessions of one of the quartet of young men who began by murdering one of their own college-mates, then held an entire city in a grip of terror for over a year. The film ran into enormous problems with the censors, was begun by one director and completed by another, and is claimed by neither. Nevertheless, there was a mind-chilling performance from Nana Patekar, the prominent Marathi theatre personality, as the leader of the group, and the film did sizeable business when it was finally released.



*Nana Patekar: chilling performance*



*Bombay film stars to pep up Marathi films:  
Aruna Irani in 'Khara Warasdar'*

The general diagnosis is that the Marathi cinema has got bogged down in its own formulas and stereotype/escapist themes. Spectators, it seemed, had—had their fill.

There were attempts to salvage the situation. Some films were made in 16 mm and blown up to 35 so as to bring down costs. Stars of Hindi cinema were introduced in Marathi films to attract the crowds: the late Sanjeev Kumar, Dharmendra,

Amjad Khan, Satyen Kapoo, Aruna Irani etc. Hindi film actress Vidya Sinha produced a film in Marathi, **Bijali**, in which she had a minor role too.

With the success of television serials in Hindi, efforts are being made to launch more such serials in Marathi. At present, two serials are being telecast which have caught the people's attention. They are **Zopi Gelela Jaga Zela** about an absent-minded cashier, and **Nasti**

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## Only Gold or Silver



*With Usha Charan in 'Muka Ghya Muka'*

Dada Kondke who began life as a mill worker launched on his career in show business by entertaining friends and others, mainly in the slums. The real break came in the '60s with **Wichha Mazi Puri Kara** (meaning suitably enough 'Make

My Wish Come True') a folk play which brought him instant popularity and paved his way into the film world. Veteran director Bhalji Pendharkar placed him in films with **Tambadi Maati** (1969) but it was hardly in Dada's nature



**Aafat** about the misadventures of a newly married couple. Both of them are comedies, and both dominated by Marathi filmfolk.

It is, however, a sad truth that Marathi-speaking film personalities of stature such as Smita Patil, Mohan Agashe, Chinu and Jayoo Patwardhan, Bhaskar Chandavarkar, Girish Karnad etc. are generally keeping themselves away from Marathi cinema. Veteran Director Jabbar Patel, who has many good Marathi films to his

to stay in place. From actor he turned producer and subsequently director, song writer, also script writer and dialogue writer. Working not only in Marathi his mother tongue, but in Hindi and Tamil too, according to one report.

**Songadya** (1971), in which Dada made his debut as producer, lifted him to stellar heavens and pinned him there. It won the Maharashtra State Government's award for Best Feature Film that year, celebrated a golden jubilee (50 weeks) and set the pattern for his films to come which have, invariably, been either silver (25 weeks) or golden jubilee hits. In fact, his successes in succession have reportedly immortalized him in the Guinness Book of World Records.

After his series of successful Marathi films Dada broke into the Hindi market with **Tere Mere Beech Mein** (1984) and **Andheri Raat Mein Diya Tere Haath Mein** (1986) which did not let down his record at the box office. He has recently completed the Hindi version of his latest film **Muka Ghya Muka** the hero has his first dialogue only after the interval!), **Goonga Bachcha**

credit, is busy with a Hindi project.

Competition from Hindi films, a dearth of young and aspiring artistic talents, paucity of funds, lack of experimentation in handling themes and techniques, have blocked the progress of the Marathi film industry. For the last few years it has been struggling for its very survival and it will indeed be a Herculean task to put new life in it.

—Shashikant Kinikar

**Subse Achcha** which literally would read 'It's best to be a dumb kid'.

In the Marathi version, **Muka** means 'kiss' and **Muka Ghya Muka** is translated as 'Kiss me, kiss me.' On the other hand, **Muka** also means 'dumb', which adds another dimension. This is typical of Dada's works. The hilarious situations and the slapstick comedy, the double-meaning dialogues and the hardly-subtle sexual innuendoes, that could qualify for obscenity. Also, satirical barbs aimed at politics, political leaders and a range of social evils.

It's no wonder then that Dada has a long history of clashes with the censors—and he has probably set some kind of record there too. **Ram Ram Gangaram** (1977) was formerly entitled **Gangaram Weeskalame**, to which the censors objected on the grounds that it poked fun at the government's 20-point programme. The bouts with the censors and the appeals to higher-ups against lower-down decisions have, of course, served to boost publicity and ensure that 25 weeks/50 weeks run. For Dada Kondke only silver or gold will do.

## CINEMA KANNADA

Once upon a time, there was a new Wave Cinema...

Let me begin by relating for you an unusual and unprecedented incident that occurred December 19, this year: A Kannada film belonging to the school of art or offbeat cinema was premiered in a tent theatre! In Sampige, a tiny village far away from the capital city of Bangalore.

The film was **Shankanada**, and its maker, Umesh Kulkarni, one of the early graduates of the Film and Television Institute of Pune. This was his first independent venture in production and direction, though he had already made his mark as an award-winning film editor. The shooting of the film, a take-off on political machinations in a rural setting, was completed in September 1985 and from then on it was one long wait for the young filmmaker, as he ran from pillar to post looking for a buyer for the film and a theatre to screen it in Bangalore. He drew blanks everywhere.

In a desperate move, he decided to premiere the movie in a tent cinema, but there was at least some method in this madness. Sampige is a picturesque village and he had shot the entire film there. But then that was only making a virtue of necessity.

On the occasion, Umesh issued a rather stirring statement to the Press. He said: "Many Kannada films outside the mainstream are left in the can for want of distributors. Perhaps the Gods of

Gandhinagar (Bangalore's film centre) think they can subject my film too to the same humiliation. But I have something to say to them in return: 'Sirs, we are not silent pieces of stone waiting to be transformed into works of sculpture by your blessings. You cannot ride roughshod over us

Melodramatic? Yes. But the incident is revealing pointer to the state of the offbeat cinema in Karnataka, which, not so long ago, promised to take the entire country by storm by its new and artistic cinema!

But all those rosy forecasts have come to nought. The Hegde Government announced a special incentive scheme for art films in its budget for last year, enhancing the subsidy from Rs.1.5 lakhs to three lakh rupees but that hasn't helped revive the movement, as expected, and in 1986 it continued dormant if not defunct. There were a couple of stray attempts though, but hardly enough to reverse the downslide. Today, there seems to be little hope for 1987 either.

The Kannada screen made around 65 films in 1986, but hardly a couple of them could be classified as 'new wave'. The only two films completed during the year were G.V. Iyer's **Madhvacharya**, Umesh's **Shankanada** and there is cinematographer Gowrishankar's first foray into film direction. **Benki Male**, which is stuck with the





*G.V. Iyer: on location for Madhvacharya.*

censors, **Madhvacharya** is a film of great visual beauty and rich philosophical content, but the doyen who made this worthy successor to **Adi Shankaracharya**, a major contribution to Indian cinema in 1985, has virtually written off the Kannada market and is looking for release avenues elsewhere. The film is an entry in the Indian Panorama section during this festival, the only Kannada film, incidentally, to achieve this distinction. Time was when so many Kannada films used to vie for this honour.

There were the few brave ones. Girish Kasaravalli, director of **Ghatashraddha**, has nearly completed **Thabarana Kathe**, based on a short by Purnachandra Tejaswi, on the plight of the common man in today's bureaucratic and political jungle.

A group of Janata intellectuals, including a couple of ministers,

who once belonged to the erstwhile Socialist Party of Dr. Lohia are filming Dr. U.R. Ananthamurthy's introspective novel, **Awasthe**, about an idealist politician exposed to the realities of career politics.

Virtually based on the life of a volatile and colourful Socialist who left as much of an imprint on Karnataka as Dr. Lohia left on India—S. Gopala Gowda—the film has some fertile talents involved in it and is more than half way complete. But one should keep one's fingers crossed for the smooth passage of this film as well. Because this brand of cinema is badly grounded, and mere good wishes cannot raise it up again.

For a stray Girish Kasaravalli or a G.V. Iyer who are determined to carry on regardless, look at the number of creative filmmakers who find themselves more or less on the shelf—Prema Karanth hasn't even started another film after the much-acclaimed **Phaniyamma**; T.S. Ranga



Nalini Murthy in Girish Kasaravalli's 'Tabarana Katha'.

of Savithri is struggling to extricate his Hindi Giddh from a similar fate; T.S. Nagabharana of *Grahana* and *Banker Margayya* is suffering from a serious crisis of identity after being unable to sustain himself in offbeat cinema and running aground in mainstream cinema; Shankar Nag of *Accident* has preferred the security of making a TV serial, *Malgudi Days*, and is not planning another film in the near future; M.S. Sathyu is busy with two national network serials; P. Lankesh has found big money in running a widely-read political journal; and Girish Karnad and B.V. Karanth, we may take it, are lost to the Kannada cinema. And the harsh realities of the box-office are enough to put off the most intrepid newcomer.

In a situation such as this, it is difficult to be enthusiastic about the future of offbeat cinema in Kannada, which finds itself overtaken rather overwhelmingly by Malayalam, Bengali and even Hindi, after having enjoyed a clear lead over them not so long ago. It is also difficult to blame the traditional trade channels alone for

this dramatic turnabout in its fortunes since box-office records have shown that films of this kind are just not drawing large enough audiences.

By contrast, popular cinema fared reasonably well, at least 25% did. The tentative efforts of some of the middle-of-the-road filmmakers were conspicuous by their absence, and the accent was heavily on remakes of hits from Telugu, Tamil or Hindi. Almost every successful film was a remake, perhaps with the exception of *Anand* and *Rathasapthami*, starring Shivaraj Kumar, son of superstar Raj Kumar, who claimed superstardom in his own right through both the films. While *Anand* had a silver jubilee week run, *Rathasapthami*, which hit the screens in early December, seemed to have settled down for an even longer innings.

That music-and-dance fantasy in Cinemascope, *Malaya Marutha*, plummeted at the box-office. The enhancement of subsidy for all kinds of films from Rs. 1.5 lakhs to Rs.2.5 lakhs, and a Government order, denying the facility of 50% tax exemption to Kannada films not making use of the facilities available in Karnataka, have not helped to the extent expected in building the industry on sound lines within the State. In any case, the Government went back on the latter order under pressure from a powerful lobby of big producers who complained that the facilities available within the State were not good enough to make big-budget glossies. So the producers were allowed once again to make their films outside the State, and they still get the benefit of tax exemption for one more year! This





Vishnuvardhan and Savita in 'Malaya Marutha': musical that went off-key.

sudden change in policy came as a shattering blow to entrepreneurs who had sunk lakhs of rupees in creating a new infrastructure, in the hope that the industry would put down roots within the State itself. There ensued much bad blood between big producers and small producers whose fond hopes were once again dashed to the ground.

The year also brought fresh confrontations between producers and distributors on the one hand, and exhibitors on the other, on the question of the meagre playing time given grudgingly to Kannada films, particularly in Bangalore and some other big towns in the state. The burden of rising theatre rentals also proved to be a major irritant, but despite threats hurled by the Karnataka Film Directors Association and hectic efforts by the Karnataka Film Chamber of Commerce to find a solution, no satisfactory end hove in sight.

Then there was the unabating threat from television and video.

The small screen was a troublesome fly in the ointment for the offbeat filmmakers because viewers got all the non-formula entertainment they wanted from the numerous soap operas on television. Collections dipped even for commercial films, thanks to the week-end movies on television and even the better-made serials during the week. Producers of popular cinema were driven by fear to make more and more remakes. For creativity, it was a slow fade-out.

The only bright spot came from achievements in the technical field. Camerawork in colour seemed to have improved by leaps and bounds, and editing was innovative. But none of this could help conceal the poignant situation of an industry desperately searching for a new identity. With art cinema, which was once the real soul of Kannada cinema, lying in a moribund state and commercial cinema engulfed in a variety of serious problems too, 1986 proved a really bleak year for the Kannada cinema.

—V.N. Subba Rao.

## Before Chidambaram/After Chidambaram



*G. Aravindan receives the award for 'Chidambaram' from President Zail Singh.*

1986 was the year of the Malayalam Cinema. In the National Awards Kerala bagged the prestigious Best Film Award for Aravindan's **Chidambaram** and Best Documentary for his **The Seer who Walks Alone**, Best Playback Singer awards for K.S. Chitra and Jayachandran and the Best Film on National Integration award for P.A. Backer's biographical, **Sri Narayana Guru**. In the 1987 Panorama, which puts together the pick of the year, as many as seven of the 21 films are in Malayalam. Incidentally, three of these seven examine the impact of the communist/extremist movements in Kerala.

If the Malayalam Cinema has gone ahead of other language cinema, the credit should go to celebrated filmmakers like Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Aravindan, Actor Gopi, Bhaskaran Nair, and other

committed people who started the film society movement and nurtured it. The statewide awareness generated by film society screenings and the opening up of the tremendous potentialities of the film medium inspired many young people. Indeed, today every third young man in Kerala wants to be a filmmaker or a scriptwriter — while novelists and short story writers prefer screenplays.

A couple of years ago, the situation did not seem hopeful for the good cinema movement. When Aravindan did not get a producer after the commercial failure of **Pokkuveyil** (Twilight, 1982)—a slow, sensitive study of the disintegration of a young man—he had to turn to making documentaries in the interim. Meanwhile, in collaboration with some close friends, he bravely undertook to produce his next film himself.



The commercial success and public acceptance of **Chidambaram** reversed the trend of recent years, of the apparent distaste of the audience for offbeat films. Featuring actress Smita Patil and Gopi, the film ran for more than 50 days. Even hardened distributors who dismissed the parallel filmmakers as 'noon show makers' were impressed. **Chidambaram** proved that if a good film is distributed in the proper manner, there are certainly audiences for it. Thereafter many established distributors have approached the parallel cinema directors to make films for them. For these directors it has meant renewed confidence.

State government aid, in the form of subsidy and package-deal concessions, has attracted young filmmakers like Pavithran and John Abraham, for instance. The government gives a subsidy of Rs.75,000 to filmmakers shooting in the state and using production facilities here. And the package scheme, introduced by the Kerala Film Development Corporation (KSFDC) in '85, permits filmmakers depositing Rs.50,000 with KSFDC to use Corporation facilities such as dubbing, theatres, lab, etc. and obtain credit facilities for production, including for raw stock.

Signs of resurgence are everywhere. Adoor Gopalakrishnan is completing work on his new film **Anantharam**, again produced by Ravi, his collaborator of two-films standing (**Ellipathayam** and the controversial **Mukhamukham**).

After a gap of 15 years (Adoor's **Swayamvaram** '71), the National Film Development Corporation has

sanctioned loans for as many as five Malayalee films. One, G.S. Panicker's **Pandavpuram** is already completed, while others who plan to launch their films in '87 are K.R. Mohan (**Purusharthan**) Cameraman Shahji (**Piravi**) Ravindran (**Oru Thooval Keezhil**) and Kulathoor Bhaskaran Nair (**Marthanda Verma**).

The introduction of the film circle scheme by KSFDC and the National Film Archive (NFAI) and the setting up of an NFAI branch in Trivandrum has revived in film society movement which was languishing for lack of good films. But good days or bad days, the Soorya Film Society of Trivandrum manages to be very active, screening films from other states and inviting directors/actors from outside the state for seminars and discussions. If Soorya has become a prestigious name in the cultural life of the capital it is because of the inexhaustible enthusiasm of workers like its Secretary, Krishnamoorthy.

At a time when prospects seemed bleak for the film society movement, that always unconventional filmmaker John Abraham, along with like-minded colleagues, launched 'Odessa' to expose people to good cinema.



*Crowd-Puller Mammootty and Mohanlal.*

Odessa is unique in that it is a film movement in which the common man—whether in village, town or city—actively participates. While the shows are free, volunteers go round the audience after, for donations but there's no compulsion to pay. Initially projections were hired and films borrowed from embassies, but as the movement gathered strength and funds flowed in, Odessa was able to buy seven of its own 16mm projectors, and later even launch its own production (**Amma Ariyan**). Odessa's bill of fare includes films like Chaplin's **The Kid** (an all-time favourite everywhere), Girish Kasaravalli's **Ghattashraddha**, Pattabhirama Reddy's **Samakara** Buddhadeb Das Gupta's **Dooratwa**, John Abraham's **Agraharathil Kazhuthai** and Cheriyaachante **Kroorakruthyangal**. Anand Patwardhan's **Bombay Our City** has had screenings in 140 places throughout Kerala. Patwardhan also participated in discussions arranged after the screening.

The so-called 'blue movies' with suggestive titles seem to have vanished from the scene—thanks to protests from Malayalee organisations and women's organisations outside Kerala. The central government's amendments to the censor regulations have curtailed the exhibition of such movies outside the state.

Meanwhile, with a Regional Censor Board functioning in Trivandrum, it is no longer necessary for producers to go on a pilgrimage to Madras for film certification.

Though number of films made in the Malayalam in '86 dipped to 120 from 128, barely 20 to 25 films were commercially successful. The failures of their films has forced filmmakers like Bharathan, Balachandra Menon, P.G. Viswambharan, Joshi, and others to change their approach and look for subjects not calling for high budgets. In '86, more villages dotted the film landscape than city dwellings. Fortunately or



*Balachandra Menon in Tamil-land: directing Shivaji Ganesan and Padmini.*



unfortunately, songs have started fading out in cinema. There was a time not so long ago when people saw films because Vayalar was the lyricist and his teammate,

Devarajan, the music director. But the five to ten songs of a decade ago have been reduced to a mere one or two per film today.

Balachandra Menon who made 18 feature films in four years (all of them 'family dramas') did not draw the crowds with his latest, **Parvathi**, so he travelled northwards to try his luck in the Tamil film arena.

Director I.V. Sasi (of **Her Nights** fame) tried his hand at Hindi cinema in 1986, but having only gained in bitter experience, he decided that particular forum was not for him.

Remakes from Malayalam to Hindi dropped to just one, from five in the previous year.

In recent years, actresses from the Hindi film world have off and on graced the Malayalee screen, such as Rameshwari, Moon Moon Sen, Zarina Wahab as well as TV artists like Pallavi Joshi and Sujatha Mehta (in Mohan and K.R. Mohan's forthcoming films respectively). Recently Girish Karnad arrived to play the role of an ex-serviceman in Bharatan's new film. In the other direction, there's been notably Gopi who gave a remarkable performance in Govind Nihalani's **Aaghat** (Blood of Brothers, 1985) but unfortunately, for the time being he has stopped acting whether in Malayalee or in Hindi, due to ill health.



Gopi—enriching Hindi cinema.



*Girish Karnad goes South.*

By and large, the Malayalee film makers seem reluctant to venture into Hindi cinema, unlike their counterparts working in Bengali, Tamil, or Kannada. Serials and soap operas have still to catch on here, and television yet to make dramatic inroads into the film scene. Though Trivandrum Doordarshan has offered TV films to Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Aravindan, K.G. George, Padmarajan and K.R. Mohan, nothing further has been heard after that announcement.

True, video piracy has adversely affected exports—particularly to the Gulf area which was the main market for Malayalam cinema. But

veteran filmmakers do not feel cinema is threatened by the onset and expansion of electronic entertainment. This, in spite of the fact that the state of Kerala boasts the highest number of TVs and videos per 1000 population. The Battle of the Big Screen will not be lost at least in Kerala, is the feeling.

1988 should confirm this prediction; Filmotsav '88 is scheduled at Trivandrum and those who have had the opportunity to know Kerala only from the films of its artistes, will then be able to see the reality too.

—Sasi Kumar



## Quality Down Down

At the close of 1986, one thing is for sure. The Tamil film industry is in dire need of plastic surgery. And if you're going to ask why, try to count just three films-out of the 100-odd made—that stand out as any good.

Still trying? Look at the 'Big B's' for starters. Veteran K. Balachander may have started the year well enough with his '85 effort **Sindhu Bhairavi**—one of the six films of the previous year to carry over to the next for a 'double century' run; besides fetching Suhasini a National Best Actress trophy. But his '86 production of **Punnagai Mannan** hardly does him credit.

From film to film, Balachander has surely bettered his craft as a filmmaker, but you cannot look to him anymore to give us flesh-and-blood characters like Major Chandrakanth or Server Sundaram. Nor for that matter that delightfully effective amalgam of comedy and pathos achieved in films like **Neer Kumizhi** and **Edher Neechal**.

Bharathi Raja too seems to be losing his fire. He too opened the year with an '85 Panorama Sivaji-starrer, **Mudhal Mariadhe**, crossing the 200-day marker in a year that boasted of 15 hundred-day runners of its own! But, thereafter he seemed jinxed. **Kadalora Kavithaigal** bombed so miserably that poor Raja took off for the Telugu galaxy in search of brighter prospects.

What a shame. Because the Bharathi Raja whose films we waited for was the Bharathi Raja who, to date, remains supreme in the suspense-thriller genre with his **Sigappu Rojakal**. Try as they may, none of the younger aspirants seem able to match this combination of slick treatment, fast cutting, and crisp screenplay that once made for gripping cinema, whether it was a suspense tale or a pastoral love story.

In '86, Mannivannan, who had looked a likely successor with his thriller, **Nooravathu Naal**, fell flat on his face with **Vindinga Kalyanam**, while Sakthi-Kannan's efforts (**Unnai Onru Kaetpaen**) aren't honestly even worth the mention. S.A. Chandrasekar defected—a trifle uncomfortably to the love triangle with **Vasantha Ragam** but with no greater success than he had with **Sivappu Malargal**.

This little director—who had once showed more dynamism and drive



Bharathi Raja—no successor in sight?

than a well fizzed up beer—had made his box office bid earlier in '86 with a Vijayakant-starrer **Ennakku Naane Neethipathi**. True to style, Vijayakant was the one-man-army taking on a barrage of anti-social elements as fast as they could come on in two hours running time!

The easiest thing is to typecast Vijayakant with his dark complexion and a mop of hair he tosses about, as a poor man's Rajnikant. But sitting easily atop the year's popularity charts—with Satyaraj following close behind—Vijay soon grew tired of the "stifling, cliched roles" being handed out to him. So, he plugged for change in Sunderraj's **Thazhivaadai Kaigal**. And as the dark, dapper, conscientious cop in **Oomai Vizhigal**, he has made a lasting impact as an actor who's well worth his salt.

Three cheers for **Oomai Vizhigal**. It is the only Tamil film that unpretentiously managed to combine artistry and popular elements. As a critic rightly observed, its makers—a band of Film Institute alumini—showed a "level of intellectual appreciation of the need for detail as well as a passion for the nuances of the art of filmmaking that is rare in Tamil cinema today."

Due to its plot with its series of macabre murders and expose of political criminals, the film ran into censorship problems at both Madras and Bombay. When finally cleared at Delhi, it gave a needy Tamil cinema two new admirable talents: Director Aravindraj, the only new director to survive a year that clean washed away G.M.

Kumar, Gajendran and Bhoopathy. And second, the Bombay-based Manoj-Gyan duo, whose music lifted **Oomai Vizhigal** to loftier heights. The enduring songs, the lovely symphonic background score, had the distributors making a beeline for the duo.

The injection of two big labels from the north—CBS and T Series—into the local fray created yet more excitement on the music scene. With both companies fishing for talent to back, the battle of royalties has begun in earnest—without, however, any telling effect on the quality of product. Sad.

While T Series grabbed Manoj-Gyan, CBS retaliated by signing on US-returned Jerry Amaldev. Neither fusion-master Ananda Shanker nor Usha Khanna, nor even the coming south of R.D. Burman, have been able to steer the general trend away from a kind of unpalatable east-west goulash.

Though Ilaya Raja may have chalked up another National Award for **Sindhu Bhairavi**, it was T. Rajender who proved the record companies' darling. Producer-actor-director-story and scriptwriter-cameraman, the floppy-haired tinsel idol decided he had to direct music so as to round off his one-man-band style of filmmaking. His debut effort **Mythilli Ennai Kathali** proved that 'folk' elements have the audience's ear, by selling a record 80,000 cassettes for the Echo Recording Company (Ilaya Raja's label). Much to his disgust, Rajender now finds himself more in demand as a music director these days rather than what he fancies himself to be: an actor!





*Greener Pastures for K. Bhagyaraj? A scene from 'Aakhri Raasta'.*

Rajender's screen and political rival, K. Bhagyaraj, couldn't allow himself to be overtaken in the one-man-band race. So, with a little help from wife and friends, he composed the music too for his latest, **Kavadi Chindu**.

Unfortunately, not much else from this intelligent and earthy storyteller who seems to be headed for greener pastures up north. His **Aakhree Rastha** was such a roaring success that Nadiadwala has booked him to direct another Amitabh starrer, **Laadla**.

The last of the Big B's, and the last of the oldies, Balu Mahendra, who we could previously bank on for pleasant and appealing fare, disappointed. The director who stood apart from the humdrum crowd with polished works like **Nenjithe Killathe** and **Uddiri Pookal** came out of a long hibernation with his **Kannuliku Mai Ezhudhu**.



*Silk Smitha in Balu Mahendra's 'Pulli Petra Pillai'.*

It was a disaster, a semi-tragic film, drenched in the director's own feelings of self pity. Life itself is the villain here. The heroine has terminal cancer and dies calmly in



From Kamalahasan's 'Vikram'.

her husband's lap while her daughter is playing badminton in the frontyard...Mahendran tried to do on screen what he couldn't do for himself in real life: create a utopia where people behaved precisely as he wanted them to.

There have been several other dubious landmarks as well: both superstars, Kamalahasan and Rajnikant, dabbled in big budget productions and took quite a tumble. (Kamal's **Vikram** was the first ambitious attempt to xerox James Bond here, while Rajni's **Maaveeran** borrowed from nearer home: Manmohan Desai's **Mard**. (It kept the remake trend alive and kicking anyway.)

National Award winner Sridhar Rajan decided there was more money perhaps in prostitution, murder and blackmail, and made his **Iravu Pookal** on those lines.

The genre of political film got a face lift: Palaiyankottai



Radhika and Rajnikanth in 'Nallavanukku Nallavan'.

Shanmugam, a criminal lawyer who produced **Ezhaavathu Manithan**—a film that tackled the problem of environmental pollution caused by a cement factory long before Bhopal—has made **Kaani Nillam** with Cho playing a corrupt minister. Unlike other pseudo-political films made in '86, there is no dashing, single champion who prances along just in time to undo the wicked politician's doings. The people show their power in this film.





The negative effects of video were magnified sufficiently to give the Tamil film industry a scapegoat for their failures. And television serials came like a good fairy to pull bigger and smarter producers out of the rut. "The future lies definitely with TV and video movie productions, whether we like to accept it right now or not," said Suresh Balajee, son of 'Remake Mughal' K. Balajee. His *Amluo*, heavily inspired by John Huston's *Annie*, is the most popular serial running here now.

"Already in Bombay," Suresh went on, "there is more video shooting going on in the studios than film shooting. Madras, I feel isn't too far behind really. Although film actors were initially shy to do serials, thinking them *infra dig*, the attitude is changing fast, especially since they've noticed that in the United States, for example, TV stars are often a lot more popular than the Hollywood types!"

AVM and Kamalahasan's brother, Charuhasan, have plunged into the video race with gusto, setting a

lead others will undoubtedly soon follow.

For, as Charuhasan noted, seven lakh video cassette recorders have already passed through Madras Customs and the figures are soaring higher everyday. About 2500 video libraries cater to these VCR owners. For Goodwill Home Movies, Charuhasan has signed on known directors like R.C. Shakthi, S.P. Muthuraman Mouli, Lenin, C.V. Rajender and music director Ilaya Raja to make the sort of video movies that could compete with video copiers of popular films.

"The sort of people," he said, who own VCRs don't really relish too much of the commonplace masala fare dished out here. They'd rather watch more sensible entertainment. I'm confident we can give it to them, because unlike the huge mass of cinemagoers, no such diversities of taste exist here." This note should ring out more than once in Tamil cinema—right through 1987.

—Brian Laul

## (Sons and Fathers)

## TELUGU CINEMA

1986 was an year of extremes for the Telugu film industry. About 25% of the year's 130 odd films were a success at the box-office. There was a clear pattern: a film was either a tremendous success—or a total flop!

Though some films have made considerable money, they are still regarded as failures, because of the heavy expenditure on production. The trend that began a couple of years ago, of small buyers purchasing films for different areas, continued and a number of new film distribution concerns have sprung up. As a result, the producer who was always at the end of the queue to receive money for his film, is now the first to collect his costs, plus profits, on his production.

This peculiar trend of the market has destabilised the established

and traditional distributors; some have closed shop, some are lying low hoping for better days.

For the cinegoer in Andhra Pradesh there is a wide choice. Every week, on an average, three Telugu film are released, besides one or two Hindi films. If the word spreads that a Telugu film is good, it makes a record collection—at the cost of other releases. Audiences have also developed a taste for Hindi and English fare.

In 1985, 110 films were released while this year, two dozen more films hit the market.

The year opened with the record success of *Pratighatana*, a film made by Usha Kiran Movies. This film is being remade in Hindi too as *Pratighat*. It is a political film—with a sentimental thrust too—and has won the audience over with its



Rohini Hattangadi, Sujata Mehta and Nana Petekar in 'Pratighat', Hindi remake of the runaway Telugu success, 'Pratighatana'.



highly dramatic depiction of how rowdy elements, with criminal records and police cases against them, become MLAs and MPs; oppressors and law-breakers have graduated into champions of justice.

The industry sat up and noticed that a film could be a hit, even with artistes not of the top rank. Thus **Pratighatana**—with its small budget and its record collections—has become a trend setter. Many more films were made in this style and unknown artistes like Charan Raj and K. Srinivasa Rao have become famous overnight. They are much in demand now.

Sadly **Pratighatana's** director, T. Krishna, died of blood cancer in October at the young age of 34. He was just six films old, and his demise is considered a major setback to the Telugu film industry. His six films, starting from **Neti Bharatam** (Today's India) and ending with **Repatipourulu** (Citizens of Tomorrow), have given a new direction to progressive filmmakers in the Telugu industry. T. Krishna was meant to direct the Hindi remake too.



Radhika and Kamalahasan in the Tamil version of another Telugu hit 'Swati Muthyam'.

The recent **Ardharatri Swatantram** (Freedom at Midnight), produced and directed by Narayana Murthy, is said to have inspired Krishna. The film features for the first time (and for the last time too)

T. Krishna in the opening scenes, as the guru of the revolutionaries waging war against the exploiters of tribal people living in backward areas. The film released in the third week of November is still going strong; it brought alive, for the public, the news reports about 'encounters' between the police and revolutionaries working in villages.

K. Viswanath made two outstanding films this year, **Swatimuthyam** and **Sirivennela**. K. Viswanath's name is become a synonym for artistic films imbued with social purpose. **Swatimuthyam** is the story of a childlike, good-hearted imbecile, with the exceptionally talented Kamalahasan in the lead role. This film was entered for the Oscar. **Sirivennela** features Sarvadaman Banerji (of **Adi Shankaracharya** fame) in the main role, of a blindman who is a natural flautist; his talent is recognised, and he becomes known nationwide.



T. Viswanath, director of 'Swati Muthyam'.

Jandhyala, another notable director, made the successful semi-commercial 'social', **Sitarama Kalyanam**, featuring Balakrishna—Chief Minister N.T. Ramarao's son. He also experimented with creating for hero-of-the-masses Chiranjeevi a comic, Chaplin-type image in **Chantabba**. However, for Jandhyala this year is the 'Year of America' for he has spent almost three months in the States, making two films for Telugu people settled there.

The year saw the rise of new stars in the Telugu film field. While Balakrishna retains his lead among the new generation of heroes, Akkineni Nagarjuna (veteran A. Nageswara Rao's son) hit the headlines with **Vikram** which was also his debut film. However, with his second film, **Capt. Nagarjuna**, a flop, it was time for him and his producers to work out where they had gone wrong.

The other newcomer of promise is Venkatesh (producer D. Rama Naidu's son). Venkatesh is being considered as the most likely alternative by producers who want to make films with Chiranjeevi, but cannot get dates from him. Venkatesh's first film, the lavish **Kaliyuga Pandavulu** made by his father, is a runaway success. So is his second film, **BrahmaRodhulu** in which he is co-starred with veteran Nageswara Rao (who is his father-in-law too now, in real life).

Others to watch are Kalyana Chakravarthi, who played the main role in **Athagaru Swagatham** directed by Kodi Ramakrishna, and Tulasiram, whose semi-comic **Pasupu Thadu** has done well.

For the established actors like A. Nageswara Rao, Sobhanbabu, Krishna and Krishnamraju, the year has brought a mixed bag of successes and failures. Krishnam-



Bhanupriya, 'Sitara's' star.





Akkineni Nageswara Rao and Sharada in B. Subba Rao's 'Guru Brahma'.

raju breathed a sigh of relief with the big success of his historical, **Thandra Paparayudu**, released in October. It is a big budget film, and still doing well in many centres. He plays the title role.

For Krishna, this is also the year he took on the new role of director. His own banner, Padmalaya Movies, made **Simhasanam** simultaneously in Telugu and Hindi. The Hindi production is titled **Singhasan** and was a miserable flop. The Telugu version ran averagely, but compared to the money spent, the returns were meagre. With **Naapilupe Prabhanjanam**, Krishna recovered lost ground. The film is a broad caricature of N.T. Rama Rao's rule of Andhra Pradesh as Chief Minister. Krishna made this film for political ends, as he belongs to the Opposition (Cong-I). The film would have been a failure, but for the help rendered, ironically, by a Telugu Desam party MLA, Sripathi



N.T. Rama Rao as Rama

Rajeswar, President of the All India NTR Fans Association. Rajeswar started a campaign in the second week of the film's run, demanding its withdrawal—as a result, the audiences grew from week to week, culminating in the film's hundred day run.

Chiranjeevi's films were all big budget ones and they did not to well; generally speaking, it was an unsuccessful year for this superstar of Telugu cinema.

There was a definite trend among producers to opt for low-budget films. **Talambralu** produced by M.S. Reddi and directed by Kodi Ramakrishna, Vishwanath's **Swatimuthyam** and **Sirivennela**, and others like **Sravana Sandhya**, **Sravanti**, **Anadiga Aadadi** etc. show which way the wind is blowing.

The big disadvantage in Andhra Pradesh for film producers who want to make small films, is the 'slab system' imposed by the State Government in collection of entertainment tax. Whether the theatre gets filled or not, a certain percentage of the house collection has to be paid as tax. For the low-

budget cinema, this amounts to suicide, as theatres are not likely to fill in the early days—not until the word has gone around that the film is good and worth seeing.

Meanwhile, the tax amount exceeds total returns. Besides, theatre rental charges are high. TV wields its own sword to cut into weekly collections. On Saturdays and Sundays, when films are shown on TV, income in theatres falls nearly by 25%. Even on weekdays, collections have come down due to the serials telecast in the evenings. This must be a national phenomenon.

But Andhra Pradesh with the maximum number of the theatres in the country, and making the maximum number of films, is facing that much more hardship.

In Telugu, there are as yet no TV serials worth the name. A former film artiste, young Pradeep, ventured on a couple of productions which are still to hit the TV screen, while the one being telecast currently **Oka Sobha Katha**, is poor in quality. Another serial, made by veteran film director Tatineni Prakasa Rao, is yet to find a sponsor.

1987 will hopefully see the industry turn the corner. There is enough potential among young and upcoming directors like Vamsee, for instance (**Sitara**, **Manchu Palliki**). But the producers' taste is still the villain to overcome. Very few directors—like Viswanath, for instance—can dictate terms to them, or change their attitudes.



Rising Star Venkatesh in first film

—Gudipoodi Srihari





Tapan Bose/Suhasini Mulay/Salim Shaikh's 'Beyond Genocide' on the Bhopal Disaster.



'Jado-Jahed', and 'In Secular India', video films made by Samia-Miha students on the Shohbano controversy and the resulting Muslim Women's Bill. The former made by Suhail Abbasi has ordinary poor Muslim women speaking on the issue; the latter concentrates on the views of leaders on both sides.



*Samadhan*, produced by M.K. Shanker of Aditya Creative Film makers and directed by B.P. Singh, uses a story format to highlight the prevalence and harmful effects of female foeticide.



Ritu Sarin directed 'Sikhs of Yuba City': a look at an immigrant community coming to terms in an alien country.



International award winner, 'Eau/Ganga' (Water/Ganga) is Paris-based painter Vishwanadhan's film saga on the Ganges, India's most sacred river, photographed by no less than Adoor Gopalakrishnan.



Bappa Ray's Hynniew Trep travels to Meghalaya, 'the abode of the clouds', in the north-east of India, to document the original beliefs, customs, rituals and folktales of the Khasis.



## A Case of Drought in Cherrapunji

When two years back the Film Division documentary started disappearing from the theatres with the sudden growth of television, it was not something unexpected: all over the world television had become the widest-reachig medium for documentaries. However, in India, the decline of the FD documentary was not accompanied by a spurt in TV documentaries. Whatever used to be shown in the theatres before the feature film was now shown on TV i.e. hearty-voiced stories on development projects. These were always shown after 10p.m. ensuring that nobody had to miss their sleep because of them.

Thus an opportunity to revive the documentary in India—which, after a brief 'golden era' in the mid and late '60s, lapsed into worse-than-mediocrity—was left unrealised.

Yet, without intending to, television did give a spurt to the documentary: through its news-based reportage programmes which have been appearing over the last one-and-a-half years. Although the most impressive of these, **Newsline**, was soon stopped, it was seen that, having once tasted blood as it were, viewers were left with an appetite for more. And were no longer satisfied with the old, static discussions conducted in a TV studio. Thus **Roving Eye** had to replace **Newsline**, for Doordarshan to retain whatever little credibility it had. And even though the topics

discussed were 'safe' and their treatment safer, the format remained the same, and gave this official 'investigative programme' a touch of truth. **Sach Ki Parchaain** (when handled by Nalini Singh) is another bold, exciting series which uses the documentary format getting ordinary citizens to speak about official apathy, taking the camera to villages or inside workshops to show the grim situation there.

The latest to shed its old garb is **Focus**, which on most Sunday nights used to signal switch-off time, with its group of learned personalities sitting around discussing a serious topic in the dullest possible manner. The new **Focus** is handled by the old **Newsline** team, with M.J. Akbar directly interviewing the political heavyweights involved, not hesitating to ask them embarrassing questions. The same **Newsline** technique is used here too, of cutting swiftly from one protagonist to another, allowing them to contradict and expose each other and themselves, to the delight of the viewer.

Foreign documentaries like the **Ascent of Man**, **Life on Earth**, **Secrets of the Sea** have also won over viewers for documentary programmes.

But it is with **Pradakshina** that, one hopes, the documentary has finally arrived on Doordarshan. The first sponsored documentary-serial



*The crew of Pradakshina on the Ganges at Banaras.*

on Doordarshan, **Pradakshina**, which traces the Ganga and life around it from its source to the Bay of Bengal, will be shown on prime time and has already received as much pre-publicity as any of the high profile soap operas. It has big names involved in it (L. Subramaniam, Dhritiman Chatterji, Sanjay Kak, R.K. Bose, Nand Kumar), is produced by ITV, and one can be sure that the first few episodes will be watched as avidly as any soap opera. Better still is the news that **Pradakshina** is the first leg of a larger programme called **India Watch** which will explore various aspects of the lives of Indians.

The IDPA (Indian Documentary Producers Association) has, after a year of petitioning, won from Doordarshan authorities some recognition for its area of communication, though not as much as it deserves. Sponsors of documentaries will now be entitled to as much free advertising time as they get for soap operas. What IDPA wanted was additional free time, which would act as an

incentive and without which, they rightly feel, sponsors would not be interested in documentaries. Without sponsors, Doordarshan would telecast these films much after prime time or use them as fillers). IDPA members feel confident that they can convince a few sponsors to spend money on documentaries on specialised subjects like wildlife, history, art, science, education and mythology, for which animation can also be used. An animation series on the **Hitopadesha** tales and another on science education has been approved in principle by Doordarshan—but sponsors have to be found. Animation filmmakers know they may not get prime time—the 9 p.m. slot—but they would be quite happy with a space on Sunday morning.

Animation filmmakers have also wrested some concessions from Doordarshan authorities. But given the high cost of animation, they have made their case for two minutes and time or  $\frac{1}{2}$  minute more than the sponsors' time on a 23-minute live action episode.



Documentary makers feel Doordarshan has a large role to play in boosting the documentary movement. In line with its new policy of premiering NFDC films for Rs. 8 lakhs, they see no reason why a first-rate documentary should not be shown by it at the same rate, and with the same amount of publicity. The strict censorship controls on Doordarshan also need not put one off: as Paresh Mehta, whose documentary is being shown in the Festival said, there are any number of subjects in India on which one can make inspired documentaries, even on subjects sponsored by official agencies. Speaking of his own experience in making a documentary on drought in Cheerapunji—where the heaviest rain in the world falls—he recounted how, while making the film, he discovered that what had been dismissed as superstitions by the British were beliefs based on the villagers' sound environmental knowledge; his film has a lot to do with environmental protection, a subject quite the rage in official circles today. Similarly,

Doordarshan has screened all of Meera Dewan's documentaries on women and child labour, though they have been disturbing, and have—if seen between the lines—exposed those in control of our society. Film & TV Institute documentaries too can be screened. There are many subjects which can be dealt with without taking on the State and may well be approved by Doordarshan. Of course, the manner in which they are telecast may be typically Doordarshan—no announcement whatsoever, so if you're lucky enough to have switched on the set, you get to see the film. Contrast this with the way the coverage on the PM's tours in our villages are publicized by Doordarshan.

What about the primary producer and distributor of documentaries in India? The Films Division? As one IDPA veteran said, "Nobody will regret its passing away." But what of the fact that a majority of documentary makers are dependent on FD? And should its vast distribution network be allowed



*Meera Dewan's documentary on child labour, focusses on the child bangle-makers of Faridabad. Children speak about their jobs with an innocence and fatalism—even pride.*

to be wasted? In a petition to the PM, the IDPA, with signatures of filmmakers ranging from Satyajit Ray to Anand Patwardhan, has appealed for a revitalisation and restructuring of FD "to enable it to play a role similar to the NFDC in catalysing the growth of the creative information and documentary film movement in India."

While some young filmmakers maintain that it is the FD which has given the documentary a bad name, and it should be left to die a natural death, active IDPA members believe that their organisation can intervene and revitalise FD to the benefit of documentary makers. They have worked out some reasonable-sounding suggestions too.

FD must share its 20-minute free screening time (before every show of every feature films in every theatre) with independent documentary makers. This can be done through IDPA. Their films, once approved by the Film Advisory Board, should not have to go through another

approval by FD before being screened.

Such films need not be bought by FD, but only distributed by it, with the filmmaker getting 1% commission on the takings. FD can afford it, feels IDPA: after all what has it done with the Rs. 200 to 300 crores it has earned till now after screening for the last 39 years, one hour of documentaries everyday in every theatre in the country free of charge, and getting 1% of the weekly collections?

Secondly, NFDC theatres must screen documentaries selected for the Indian Panorama section in the film festivals held every year, along with NFDC films which are not always three hours long. These documentaries must be advertised as much as the feature films.

IDPA members believe it possible to get some distributors interested in documentaries. Trailers of documentaries should be shown wherever they are to be released.

These channels can be a real help,



Anand Patwardhan's 'Hamara Shohar' formed part of Bombay slum dwellers' protest movement against brutal slum demolitions. His 1985 Best Documentary Award was received by a slum-dweller.



since the rigid censorship that exists in FD and Doordarshan does not exist in theatres, where a Censor Board certificate is enough. These are the only channels through which exciting and moving films—made so far only outside of FD, in the last 20 years at least—by people like Anand Patwardhan, Tapan Bose, Deepa Dhanraj, Meera Dewan, Ranjan Palit, Uma Sehgal, and also students, can be screened.

Video is another channel through which documentary makers can reach out to wider audiences, now that feature films are being made and released exclusively on video; with the filmmaker himself/herself explaining why this channel is being used.

Most dependable of all is the network built by the documentary makers themselves, where mobile screening vans take films out of the theatres and into residential colonies, slums, even villages, not to mention schools and colleges, factories and, if course, film societies all over India. This is already happening most successfully in John Abraham's movement 'Odessa', which has once again broken the myth that cinema appreciation is the privilege only of the urban intelligentsia. Patwardhan's own 'Samvaad' and Opender Chanana's 'Movement' are two other attempts to show films in this manner.

However, not all documentary makers are as enthusiastic about



*Clemente Baptista, a pioneer in Indian Short films, died in 1986.*

distribution, feeling—with good reason—that it leaves you no time for creative work. But, say the others, this is the only way you can ensure that your film reaches the people it is aimed at, and also becomes part of a broader movement of creating social awareness.

The 1987 festival is the first in which a separate retrospective of documentaries will be screened: This year, the films of the late Clement Baptista. IDPA has also won the right of organising, along with FD, a separate documentary film festival which can also serve as a marketing outlet—and where documentaries are not overwhelmed by feature films as they are at every IFFI or Filmotsav.

Perhaps all these together will help the documentary movement in India to attract viewers to this form of cinema. However, as long as official control over FD and Doordarshan remains as pervasive as it today, one will have to continue to look outside for the best documentaries.

—Jyoti Punwani

## GROWING UP



*'Aaj Ka Robin Hood', National award-winner, 'Karuna Ki Vijay'.*

The Children's Film Society of India took a major step last year, second only in importance perhaps to the setting up of the Society itself in 1955.

In 1985-86, the Society acquired land in Bangalore (donated by the Government of Karnataka), for setting up a children's film complex, which will have film production and viewing facilities, a children's library, and—to make animation and puppet films—equipment not available in India today. The complex is planned to generate much-needed interest in making children's films.

Further, new professional modalities have been introduced for vetting film scripts and production. In producing famed director Tapan Sinha's **Aaj ka Robin Hood** in collaboration with

a private producer, the CFS has once again struck out in new directions. International co-productions, with Mauritius and Czechoslovakia, are also on the cards.

Three children's features and one short film were completed in the year, two of which were in Hindi and the third in a regional language. The features were **Kuk Doo Koo** by Parvati Menon (on the misadventures of two children and their apple-cheeked, outsized grandmother); **Babula** by actor Sadhu Meher (on an extra-terrestrial who is forced to make an emergency landing on earth); and **Dhoomketu** by Gopal Krishnan, about an amateur astronomer who discovers a new comet—based on a story by noted physicist, Dr. Jayant Narlikar.



**This Time  
Next Year**



Jahnu Barua's 'Halodhia Choraye Baodhan Khai' (The Catastrophe).



Adoor Gopalakrishnan's 'Anantaram'.



Anita Kanwar in 'Om Darbdr'.



Naseeruddin Shah and Anuradha Patel  
in Gulzar's 'Izaazat'.



Master Santhosh in Girish Kasaravalli's 'Tabarana Kathe'.



## WRITTEN WORD

B.K. Karanjia's book **A Many Splendoured Cinema** was released in May this year. Erstwhile Chairman of the Film Finance Corporation (the former *avtar* of the NFDC), and editor of leading film journals, the book is a collection of his editorials written for the film weekly, **Screen**.

The fourth volume of **Hindi Film Geet Kosh**—Har Mandir Singh's monumental tribute to the Hindi film song—was released in July.

The series details the first line of every song, the music director, singer, and disc number in Hindi and other North Indian languages, for the years 1961-1970. Other production details are also given.

Arun Khopkar's was the year's national award winner for his book on Guru Dutt.

A new book from Aruna Vasudev, co-editor of **Indian Cinema Superbazar** on the new Indian Cinema.

### **The New Indian Cinema**



Aruna Vasudev



**Panorama  
Films 86/87**



# AMMA ARIYAN (A Report to a Mother)

B&W/Malayalam/115 mins/1986

**Production** : Odessa Movies  
**Direction/Story**  
**Script** : John Abraham  
**Camera** : Venu  
**Sound** : Krishnanunni  
**Editing** : Beena  
**Art Direction** : Ramesh  
**Music** : Sunitha

## SYNOPSIS

'No man is an island'... is the thread which runs through the allusive narrative of **Amma Ariyan**. The film, in the form of an open letter of a son to his mother, weaves facts and fiction and fragments of memory as the protagonist goes looking for the identity, and then the home, of a young man who has committed suicide and who seems hauntingly familiar. The search takes the young student, Purushan, all the way from the northern highlands of Kerala to the southern port of Cochin.

**Cast:** Joy Mathew (Purushan), Maji Venkitesh (Paru), Nilamboor Balan (Balettan), Harinarayanan (Hari), Kunhulakshmi Amma (Purushan's mother), Iringal Narayani (Hari's mother), Nazim (Satyajit) & others.

**Enquiries:** Odessa Movies  
Farook College P.O.  
Calicut 673 632  
Kerala  
India

Purushan leaves home, promising his old mother to write regularly. He is to meet a friend en route, then proceed to Delhi. His friend,



അന്ധനായിത്തീർന്നുപോയ  
 പെട്ടെന്നു മാത്രം  
 മാത്രം മാത്രം  
 മാത്രം മാത്രം



Paru, is completing her thesis on the Mother Goddess concept. (This theme is once again taken up by Purushan's mother who recites passages from the **Devi Bhagavatam**, a scripture in praise of the Mother Goddess, both her benign and destructive aspects.

On the way, the jeep Purushan is travelling in is commandeered by the police for transporting a body they have found hanging from a tree. Obsessed by the identity of the familiar-looking young man and what led to his suicide, Purushan abandons the Delhi trip.

A journalist friend takes him to a doctor in the hospital which is on strike protesting against the privatisation of medical education. Accompanied by the other two, Purushan now approaches Balettan, a veteran communist. One clue leads to another. Balettan thinks the boy is a **mridangam** (traditional percussion instrument) player who used to accompany Satyajit, a guitarist. Satyajit immediately recognises his friend Hari.

As the group moves on to Cochin, to inform the dead boy's mother, it gathers in number. All along the route, from Calicut through

Beypore, Crangannore, Trichur, Kottapuram, Vypin and finally to Fort Cochin, they come across different people who knew Hari. Through their recollections and reminiscences, his rather muddled up past is unfolded. The muddled up convictions, erratic commitment and politco-anarchic vagaries of a young man who ended up killing himself are woven into the fabric of the contemporary social history of Kerala. The film juxtaposes personalised sentiments; factually documented topical issues with real-life persons and events (the quarry worker's strike is actuality coverage of the event); insights into the historical past of the land they travel through; as well as cross-connections with the macro-structure of a global reality.

As the young men wait for Hari's mother, they engage in searching analysis. They debate and admit the shortcomings and romantic evasions of the extremist movement.

The money for this film, made in B&W, came from thousands of people in contributions of two and ten rupees and shares of Rs 100. The concern of the producers, Odessa Movies, is to initiate a people's movement for good



cinema. **Amma Ariyan** is Odessa's first offering for the movement—by the movement.

## THE DIRECTOR SAYS

"This film is an analysis of the extremist movement in Kerala during the late '70s. Many of my intimate friends connected with the extremist group committed suicide in that period. They were very intelligent, sensitive and had high aesthetic sense. Their deaths were haunting me and this provoked me to make this film.

"The way I see it, films should speak to the people—and people should speak through cinema. The cinematic experience should rouse the social consciousness of the audience. Through *Odessa*, I will show my films to the people. If they don't have money I'll show them free.

"**Amma Ariyan** is an open letter from a pampered child to his mother and it is also a letter from all those of my generation who can communicate. I am writing on behalf of them to Mother."

## ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

John Abraham, earlier a clerk in an insurance corporation, graduated from the FTII in 1969. He was associated with Mani Kaul and assisted in the production/direction of **Uski Roti**. His first film in Malayalam, addressed to students, **Vidyarthigale Ithile Ithile** won the National Award for the Best Story. Then he made the iconoclastic **Agrharathille Kaludai** (Donkey in a Brahmin Village) won the National Award for the Best Tamil Film in 1978. Later in 1983, he made



**Cheriyachente Kroora Krityangal** (The wicked deeds of Cheriyan) which won the State Best Actor award for Adoor Bhasi. All his films, including the latest, have been in *Black and White*. He claims he is a 'Black and White' filmmaker in every sense of the term.

# ANJUMAN

Col/Hindi/140 mins/1986

**Production** : Shobha M. Doctor

**Story/Script/  
Art Direction/**

**Direction** : Muzaffar Ali

**Camera** : Ishan Aray

**Sound** : Jagmohan Anand

**Editing** : B. Prasad

**Music** : Khayyam

**Cast:** Shabana Azmi (Anjuman),  
Farouque Shaikh (Sajjid), Rohini  
Hattangady (eye-doctor), Shaukat Kaifi  
(Chidiya Khala), Mushtaq Khan (Banke  
Nawab).

**Enquiries:** Muzaffar Ali  
A-1, Mandar  
Juhu Village  
Juhu  
Bombay 400 049

TEL: 574703

## SYNOPSIS

The crumbling walls of old Lucknow enclose a fading world. Pride in aristocratic heritage is salve to shabby gentility; courtly refinements, colourful festivals survive amid peeling plaster and ruined courtyards. In this decaying ambience, the young Anjuman finds escape through poetry and romance. But Anjuman is also hardcore realist. Her father had deserted the family. So she, her mother, younger brother and sister live with their maternal uncle. Everyday, Anjuman is made aware how much her aunt resents this additional burden on the frail economy of the family.

Anjuman contributes to the family income like many poor women of





Lucknow by doing **chikan** work. Chikan is delicate, painstaking embroidery, a speciality of this city—and ruinous to the eyes! The women are paid just a quarter-rupee for each floral motif, while the owners who commission the work pile up the profits.

Anjuman is the unwilling object of the attentions of Banke Nawab, a poetaster and self-proclaimed patron of the arts in the best traditions of Lucknow city. The avaricious Chidiya Khala plays Cupid for a price. Meanwhile, romance blossoms on the rooftops. Sajjid is the scion of the aristocratic family living next-door to Anjuman—one which is still privileged and wealthy. Sajjid's widowed mother wants a brilliant marriage for her only son. The outlying ruins provide shelter to the courting couple. But Sajjid seems to lack the courage to down social barriers.

Life takes a new direction for Anjuman. Inspired by the eye-doctor Suchitra Sharma, her friend and mentor, Anjuman begins to actively question the fairness of being a paid a pittance for work that fills the pockets of the owners. In response to the workers' demands, the businessmen raise wages by a paltry five paise per motif but even here, the middle-woman, Chidiya Khala, cheats the workers by manipulating accounts. So Anjuman begins to keep her own account of the work done by each woman. And, of course, the two don't tally.

Banke Nawab is anxious to marry Anjuman, even though she had scorned his romantic overtures. Sajjid's mother hears of the burgeoning romance between her son and the chikan worker and sweeps into the dusty courtyard to confront the impoverished upstart who has dared cast eyes on





her son. The congregation of women has yet another piece of juicy gossip to chew on. But Anjuman soon gives the orthodox community plenty more to be scandalised about.

Marriage to Banke Nawab now seems inevitable. On the wedding day with wedding guests assembled in all their finery, when the priest asks for her formal consent to the marriage, the bejewelled Anjuman throws back her bridal veil to announce resolutely that she is not willing to marry this bridegroom! After all, she is only claiming her birthright as given by Islam to say 'No' to a marriage contract.

Her humiliated bridegroom will have his revenge by disrupting the

chikan-workers movement—spearheaded by Anjuman and backed by the progressive eye-doctor—for better rates. He goes so far as to incite riots between the Sunni and Shia (Muslim) sects, an endemic problem of Lucknow city, often exploited by politicians.

Anjuman is hurt in the rioting but her spirit is unbroken. There is a new admiration in Sajjid's eyes as he watches her rousing the growing audience of womenfolk—the Lucknow poor, predominantly Muslim. And on their faces, young and hopeful or wrinkled with age, shines the light of battle.

### THE DIRECTOR SAYS

"I had been deeply touched by the plight of the **chikan**-weavers, whose acquaintance I had



developed over the years. A lot of these women lived around my mother...she had been brought up by her aunt, who was Rani of Bilhara. Attached to the feudal house of Bilhara were about 500 families with some profession or other, including chikan-weavers. Mother got involved with their problems and, through them, also knew everything that happened in the city.

"In that period (while growing up) I felt a lot of things going wrong. A certain commercialism had crept in. The influx of refugees after the Partition and the abolishment of the **zamindari** system in 1952 had an impact on the emotional and economic conditions of the zamindari family. And gradually, the traders began to exploit both the rich and the poor. Every situation was converted to profitable use and they had their hands on the pulse of the people. They still do. For instance, I have shown how the Shia-Sunni riots are simulated to exploit the people.

"Religious, caste or communal bias basically works against the working class and is used as a tool for exploitation. And as I have shown in **Anjuman**, most of these chikan-workers cannot even identify exploitation, they take it as part of their fate."

## ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Muzzaffar Ali graduated in science from Aligarh Muslim University. From advertising, he moved to an executive job with Air India, but the call of films was irresistible. His painter's eye was his only training for cinema when he started. He made **Gaman** (on rural



migration from Uttar Pradesh to Bombay) in 1978, which won a Special Award of the Jury at the 7th International Film Festival of India, as well as a special commendation of the jury at the 26th National Film Festival. His next, **Umrao Jaan**, about a fabled poet courtesan of Lucknow was made in 1981. The film won many popular awards for music, acting and art direction. The film starred Rekha, the stunning Bombay actress. His third film **Aagaman**, made in 1982, dealt with the sugarcane growers' co-operative movement. Music and lyrics play an important role in all Ali's films and he takes great care over these elements. He has made eight documentaries, on diverse subjects, the most recent commemorating the courage of survivors of the Bhopal gas tragedy. His TV serial, **Jaa-e-Alam** was on the life and times of Wajid Ali Shah, the last ruler of Lucknow.

# ATANKA (Terror)

Col/Bengali/112 mins/1988

**Production** : M/s Charu Chitra

**Direction/Script/**

**Music** : Tapan Sinha

**Camera** : Kamal Nayek

**Sound** : Durga Mitra

**Editing** : Subodh Roy

**Art Direction** : Asoka Bose

**Cast:** Soumitra Chatterjee (Master),  
Sumant Mukherjee, Prasanjit  
Chatterjee, Mhataboli Roy (the  
daughter), Anil Chatterjee.

**Enquiries:** M/s Charu Chitra  
77 Lenin Sarani  
Calcutta 700013.

65-year old retired school master, affectionately called Master Moshai returning from a private tutorial on a dark rainy night, finds himself witness to the political murder of a friend's son. To Master Moshai's horror, he recognizes the murderer as an ex-student, Mihir, a handsome young man who in his boyhood had exhibited a keen and promising mind and character.

"You have seen nothing," Master Moshai is warned. The old master is severely shaken by this nocturnal experience. Wracked with fear, confusion, and moral frustration, the Master becomes physically ill. His children, son Subinoy and daughter Subrata, are





helpless as their father steadfastly denies that anything is wrong.

The next day the murder has been discovered, and a large crowd has gathered in morbid curiosity at the scene of the crime. Master Moshai sees Mihir in the crowd and recognizes with dread the menace on the young man's face. The amorphous threat of political terrorism has become a

himself enmeshed in a vicious web which bears little resemblance to the political cause that had earlier justified to him the taking of a human life. Increasingly, his involvement with the party's anti-social elements sickens him as he recognizes the implications of their senseless violence against the innocent. But for Mihir, there is no going back: his own hands are bloodstained.



dangerously real personal dilemma for Master Moshai. A murder has been committed—but what of the welfare of his children and the chilling menace of Mihir and his gang? And what of his conscience? Several times, Master Moshai musters the resolution to go to the police, but each attempt is thwarted by a renewed threat.

Meanwhile, Mihir has sought out his patron MLA. But protecting murderers is not necessarily good politics and Mihir's request for protection—by way of an alibi—is denied him. Mihir gradually finds

In response to the master's attempt at contacting the police. Hebo, a member of the gang, attacks the master's daughter Subrata, as she gets off from a mini bus. A young man, Prabir, comes to her aid, suffering a knife wound in the process. It is the beginning of romance, the first inkling is in the air.

Again, the school-master is driven to attempt contacting the police. This time son Subinoy is attacked and beaten severely. After this, Master Moshai has no choice: the police must be told. But on the steps of

the police station, he encounters Hebo. No longer able to control his pain and rage, the schoolteacher swings out at Hebo with his stick ... Master Moshai tells the police his story, but the MLA, after all, comes to Mihir's rescue. It is only after a well-known barrister warns him against protecting anti-social elements in the name of politics, that the MLA backs down and Mihir is apprehended for his part in the murder.

There is a final and irreparable tragedy. In retaliation for Hebo's beating on the very steps of the police station, acid is thrown in the innocent Subrata's face ...

## ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

### TAPAN SINHA

Like many veterans of Indian cinema, Tapan Sinha graduated from the New Theatres Studios in Calcutta. He began his career as a sound recordist. Subsequently he worked as an audio engineer in Pinewood Studios, London. Tapan Sinha's first film was **Ankush**, made in 1953. Since then he has directed about 30 films, for which he has won as many as 16 national awards, including the President's Gold Medal thrice. He has won numerous awards abroad as well.

The most well-known of his films are: **Kabuliwala** (1956) which won an award for its music at the



Berlin Film Festival; **Laukhapat** (1957), **Kshudita Pashan** (1960), **Hansuli Banker Upakatha** (1962), **Atithi** (1966) which was awarded a Certificate of Merit at the Venice Film Festival; **Hatey Bazarey** (1968) which won the Royal Cup in the Asian Film Festival in Cambodia; **Sagina Mahato** (1973) which received the Afro-Asian Award in the Moscow Film Festival; **Harmonium** (1975) which was given awards for the Best Music and Acting in the 22nd Asian Film Festival, Seoul, Korea; and **Safed Hathi** (1978) which won the National Award for the Best Children's Film. **Aadmi Aur Aurat** (1984), originally made for television, won the Best Film on National Integration Award in 1985.



# DEBSHISHU (The Child-God)

Col/Hindi/107 min/1985

**Production** : NFDC  
**Direction/Script** : Utpalendu  
**Music** : Chakraborty  
**Camera** : Soumendu Roy  
**Sound** : Robia Sengupta  
**Editing** : Bulu Ghosh  
**Art Direction** : Suresh Chandra

**Cast:** Smita Patil (Sita), Sadhu Meher (Raghubar), Rohini Hattangady (Lila), Shyamanand Jalan (Tantric pries) Om Puri (Prasadji), Sushant Sanyal (Ganesh).

**Enquiries:** National Film Development Corporation  
Discovery of India Building  
Nehru Centre  
Dr. Annie Besant Road  
Bombay 400 018

TEL: 4949751

## SYNOPSIS

**Debshishu** starkly illustrates how commercialisation of religion and the exploitation of superstition are hard facts of life in the Indian hinterland. A cycle rickshaw adorned with garish posters of a three-headed-god weaves along the dusty roads of a small town on the Bihar-West Bengal border. The announcer lets loose a publicity blitz at the throng of curious villagers and excited kids. A ticket priced at nineteen paise is all the panacea you need for all mortal ills, he promises, be it unemployment, litigation or sexual problems. There's nothing the child-god, born on this earth, cannot cure. As the mobile megaphonist passes by, a travel-weary family comes into



view. They are Raghubar and Sita, a babe in arms, an older child between them; they belong to the rural middle class. Driven from their dwelling by successive floods, they are now headed for the home of Sita's elder brother, the henpecked Ganesh.

For his wife, the plump and propertied Lila, rules the household. As the religious discourse within the house winds to a finale, out in the compound the poor and exhausted relations wait to pour out their tale of how the floods swept away their house and

only too quick to point out their state of dependency. The entire family—now housed in the cowshed—is put to work.

Raghubar, on the way to the market to buy grain, sees the crowds making their way to the fair ground for a **darshan** (an auspicious glimpse) of the miraculous child-god. Perhaps this divine creature will restore good fortune to him? Raghubar too joins the serpentine queue of village and city folk awaiting their turn. Pictures of gods jostle with those of film stars and national leaders,



Raghubar's old father too. Only Ganesh lends a sympathetic ear.

The childless Lila is jealous of Sita. She taunts Sita about her lack of education, and her lack of foresight in bringing forth children into the world when her incompetent husband is unable to feed them. Sita dare not retaliate for Lila is

posters, depicting the awful fate of sinners, promote virtue, the 'Q' lengthens. At long last, Raghubar enters the improvised sanctum. The child-god is a pitiable figure, dressed up in tinselly grandeur, and needs to be revived with oxygen. The misshapen three heads and feeble four arms are a travesty and exploitation of Hindu



iconography. The god's ochre-robed custodian—now immersed in a lurid paperback—Raghubar is horrified to see is none other than Prasadji, the trickster from his own village... Not so long ago, Prasadji son-in-law of the village **tantric** priest earned his livelihood by performing magic at fairs. When Sita gave birth to their first child, a freak with three heads, the shocked Raghubar was sent by the midwife to the priest. He and Prasadji's combine to terrorise the ignorant Raghubar, convincing him that possessing a freak child is a crime for which the government will punish him. They persuade Raghubar to hand over the child while Sita is still unconscious and in return part with thirty rupees—unexpected largesse for Raghubar.

Raghubar now realises that the child-god is none other than his deformed son! He demands his share of the enormous profits the crooks are earning, but the cunning duo turn the mob on Raghubar for his 'blasphemy'. Raghubar, richer only by some coins snatched from the collection plate, runs for his life and plunges into the river. Wet and shivering, he sits brooding in the grove outside the village. An anxious Sita waits for him till late at night.

When Raghubar returns and finally tells her the truth, Sita is overcome with emotion and wants to see her child. Surely, her own child will recognise her? In despair and rage, Raghubar grabs, and rapes her, demanding she bear him another 'child-god'. What use are normal children? They can only beg, he rants. A deformed child can reign as god, earn thousands in a day! An equally angry Sita pushes

him away, taunting him that if he were man enough, he would kill Prasadji. Together in the cowshed, alone in their hopelessness, they drift off to sleep....In a dream, Sita becomes the Goddess Kali, brandishing her fearful weapon. She confronts Prasadji leading the ceremonial procession and smites him with a blow....

Dawn is about to break when Sita wakes up, suffocated. She emerges into the empty courtyard and breaks into bitter tears by the barbed wire fence. The morning train streams past in muted thunder. Modern civilisation juxtaposed with medieval blind faith is the reality. The shrill advertising of the child-god—the very last show!—is carried back to her on the air...

## THE DIRECTOR SAYS

"Religion is one thing, but its abuse is another. India, famous for her spiritual heritage, now seems to have more than a fair share of the latter. With India's progress in science and technology, religious obscurantism should have beaten a hasty retreat. But the Indian reality paradoxically presents a happy co-existence of these two incompatibles. Raghubar and Sita represent the millions and millions of simple villagers who, because of their blind faith, are victims of religious exploitation. It is time urban sophisticates came out of the charmed circle of westernised India and looked the Indian reality in the face. I can't suggest in concrete terms a way out; but here is the face. I can't suggest in concrete terms a way out: that is the task of social reformers and politicians. All I can do is to call attention to the

need for protest against exploitation of man in the name of religion. Sita's protest in the dream sequence in this film will become a reality when people will be able to take a collective stand against all forms of religious repression."

## ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Utpalendu Chakraborty started his film career with a documentary **Mukti Chai** (Cry for Freedom) and as a leftist, he uses the film medium to raise issues. **Mukti Chai** was based on his participation in the Students' Movement (1967-71) when he worked as a non-formal teacher among tribals. His first feature film **Moyna Tadanta** (Post Mortem) won him the National Awards for Best Director and Best First Feature Film in 1981. **Chokh** (The Eye), where the eye symbolises the ideals of the struggling working class, was his second feature film. It won a National Award for 1982, the Special Jury Prize at the 1983 IFFI and won a cash award with a citation at the Berlin Film Festival, 1983. He has made three documentaries of which his **Music of Satyajit Ray** also won a National Award in 1984. **Debshishu** has won two awards at the 39th Locarno



international film festival, 1986: the Jury of Youth gold medal for Best Direction and a second award from the Ecumenical Jury.

Chakraborty says he will never make a documentary for a government, Congress or Communist or whatever, and prefers not to make TV serials too. He is currently busy directing two telefilms.



## EK PAL (A Moment)

Col/Hindi/135 mins/1986

<b>Production</b>	: Kalpana Lajmi Bhupen Hazarika
<b>Direction</b>	: Kalpana Lajmi
<b>Story</b>	: Maitreyi Devi
<b>Script</b>	: Kalpana Lajmi Gulzar
<b>Sound</b>	: Hitendra Ghosh
<b>Editing</b>	: Bhanudas Divkar
<b>Art Direction</b>	: Nitish Roy
<b>Music</b>	: Bhupen Hazarika

**Cast:** Shabana Azmi (Priyam),  
Naseeruddin Shah (Ved), Farouque  
Shaikh (Jeet), Dr. Shreeram Lagoo &  
Dina Pathak (parents), Sreena  
Mazumdar (gardener's young wife)

**Enquiries:** C/o. Atma Ram Films  
194, Kurla Road  
Andheri (East),  
Bombay-400 069  
TEL: 6042139/6040972/  
6042371

### SYNOPSIS

An invisible chastity belt imprisons women in Hindi cinema. The heroine's sex appeal is needed for the box-office, but her celluloid self is a puppet unaware of her own sexuality. The honest acceptance, then, of a woman finding fulfilment in an extra-marital affair and deciding to have the child born of it, is a major step for womankind on the Hindi screen.

**EK Pal** meticulously recreates the leisured life style of the Assam tea estates, the lush gardens, the spacious bungalows. The beauty serves to underline the essential isolation of women who have not much more to do than take up gardening or attend parties frequented by the same insular crowd. At one such gathering during the spring festival (Bihu), Priyam, a shy young woman waiting for her MA results, is



wooded out of her reticence by Jeet Barua, a practised playboy. The son of a socially prominent family of Jorhat, Jeet follows up the chance meeting by a visit to her home in Shillong. Her parents watch with mixed feelings the progress of the whirlwind courtship. The bubble bursts soon enough, Jeet going off to America for management studies—blithely assuming that Priyam will marry someone else. That someone is Ved Hazarika, a rising young engineer and the son of her father's old friend. He is attracted to Priyam; and she, stoically, accepts Ved's proposal.

The marriage soon settles down to boredom. Priyam's miscarriage and the subsequent failure to have a child over the next eight years exacerbate an already humdrum relationship. Ved is a workaholic, intelligent but insensitive to this wife's loneliness.

Priyam is concerned for young Rukmini, wife of the gardener who is many years older than his bride. There is an unspoken bond between the two women so vastly different.

Rukmini is physically and mentally tortured by her husband who suspects her fidelity when she becomes pregnant. Priyam is a helpless onlooker. Ved goes abroad on a year's assignment—and Jeet returns, to a situation tailor-made for him. Priyam has an affair with him, at first unwilling since she knows him for a cad. But the old infatuation is re-kindled: she is sexually fulfilled.

Priyam finds she is pregnant and her happiness overshadows her misgivings. The gardener killing Rukmini's new born baby in jealous frenzy underlines Priyam's own vulnerability. But she is determined to have her baby, though Jeet does his damndest to dissuade her. In that small closed community of the tea estates, scandal is inevitable. Priyam brushes aside Jeet and his protestations and she returns to her parents. Their initial joy turns to bewilderment when she tells them the truth.

The acid test comes when Ved returns. Ved is exuberantly tender







when he sees is pregnant, but Priyam shatters his joy with the truth that she is carrying another man's child ... After a silent struggle with himself, Ved welcomes Priyam and her baby, a new maturity and understanding between them.

## THE DIRECTOR SAYS

"What attracted me to the idea of making **Ek Pal** was the completely different image portrayed by an Indian woman. For the first time on our Hindi screen, I felt I was able to portray a woman who could express her sexuality without having any regrets. It was a total breakaway from the existing 'Sati Savitri' concept.

"I chose this subject for my first film because I wanted to handle the man/woman relationship with a difference. I do not believe that

characters should be developed in black and white but with tones of grey, as in life. I was also very familiar with the tea-world, so, placed the entire story against this backdrop. Environment plays such a vital role in the making of human decisions so I utilised Assam's vast natural beauty and had the heroine's loneliness entwined in it."

## ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Born in 1954, niece of the late Guru Dutt, Kalpana Lajmi has been assistant to Shyam Benegal from **Nishant** till **Mandi**. She directed her first documentary in 1977, on the life of film pioneer Dhiren Ganguly. She has also made documentaries for the Tea Research Association, British Paints, and a five reeler documentary to promote tourism for the Government of Assam in 1981. **Ek Pal** is her first full length feature film.

## IRAKAL (The Victims)

Col/Malayalam/143 mins/1986

**Production** : Sukumaran  
**Direction/Script** : K.G. George  
**Camera** : Venu  
**Sound** : P.Devadass/Chandru  
**Editing** : Appa  
**Music** : M.B. Sreenivasan

**Cast:** Ganesan (Baby) Sukumar  
(Sunny), Sree Vidya (Annie), Tilakan  
(Father), Chandran Nair (grandfather),  
Gopi (Bishop), Asokan (Raghavan)

**Enquiries:** K.G. George Deepam, TC  
49/170 Kalashwaram,  
Manacoude, Trivandrum  
695009.

TEL: 75995

Is a psychopath born or made? Perhaps both, as in the case of Baby, a young engineering student. A senior in a residential college, he nearly kills a junior who resists ragging. Baby favours a nylon wire noose as his weapon. He returns to his home on the rubber plantation to the surprise of his family. He tells them the college is on strike.

Home is an inharmonious living together of people, each with a political clout (The father, Mathukutty's is a totally ruthless businessman with considerable political clout. (His amorality is what Keralites dub 'rubber morality'.) Koshy, the oldest son, lives in another house on the same





estate with his wife and son. He adds to the family wealth through not-so-clandestine dealings with marijuana smugglers. Baby accompanies his brother and sees for himself the cheating and violence involved in the illegal trade. Sunny, the second son, spends his entire day with the bottle, to the constant nagging of his childless wife. They both want to leave the family house in the Kerala highlands to set up an independent home, but the father is totally opposed. Mother spends her time in constant prayer, troubled by her husband's insatiable craving for more and more money. Mathukutty has no time for his own old and bedridden father who's left to the ministrations of a manservant.

Baby is thoroughly in disgrace when the truth of the college episode appears in the press. Baby toys with the idea of surrendering to the police, but the family prevent him. Only his father's ability to bribe the inspector come to arrest him, saves Baby from a possible trial for manslaughter. The father and older brothers decide that Baby had better drop out of college, in which he is not interested anyway, and learn the family business.

For a while, Baby seems less disturbed as he listens to his grandfather's tales. He is genuinely fond of the rambling old man. Baby is attracted to Nirmala, a nubile girl from a poor family whom he keeps meeting in the woods. She is willing to sleep with Baby, though she knows they will never be allowed to marry. Mother takes Baby to the Bishop, who happens to be her brother. The Bishop soon

understands that the boy has grown up in a loveless home. Baby bursts out that he doesn't love anyone in his family at all. The family seems particularly unlovable with the return of Annie, the only daughter of the house, after yet another quarrel with her simple and staid government-servant husband. On one occasion when the husband arrives to patch things up, he clashes with Annie's father and elder brother, Koshy. Koshy is infuriated by his brother-in-law's speaking of unpalatable truths. They come to blows.

Meanwhile, Baby stumbles on the liaison between his sister and the strapping manservant. He is morally repulsed. Baby kills the servant with diabolical cunning. Next morning, the body is discovered hanging, in the storeroom. Presuming suicide, the father orders secret disposal of the body since he doesn't want the police anywhere near the premises. For Koshy, wounded and caught during one of his nocturnal drug dealings, is now out on bail.

Baby is on the hunt, blood lust aroused. He hallucinates about strangling his grandfather and Annie. He finds a victim soon enough. His girl-friend Nirmala tells Baby that her marriage is arranged with the village shopkeeper. Baby plans and executes her fiancé's death. People think it is the work of a thief, but Nirmala knows differently. She accuses Baby of having killed her fiancé and escapes with her own life just in time. The only friend Baby has is Raghavan, the estate labourer of his own age, with whom he smokes pot and talks freely. The superficial calm at home

erupts into violence with yet another visit from Annie, who had gone back chastened by her paramour's death. She now wants to separate permanently from her husband who can't take her unfaithfulness anymore. Annie's daughter, who would rather remain with her father, is kidnapped by Kosby to spite his brother-in-law. Annie squabbles with her brothers and the quarrel turns violent. Baby watches in disgust. He later accuses Annie of the manservant's death, revealing that he knew of her affair. In terror, she begs him not to tell the others, affording him sadistic pleasure. A frightened Annie now wants to go back to her husband but her father will not let her.

Meanwhile, friend Raghavan proudly displays the simple gifts he has bought for his bride-to-be none other but Nirmala! Baby smoulders with murderous rage but can't bring himself to strangle his only friend. Soon, jealousy overcomes scruples. Raghavan grapples with his assailant and unmasks him. Nirmala persuades Raghavan to lodge a written complaint with the police. The hunter is now the hunted, as he cowers in the store room. Baby slashes his wrist but soon stems the bleeding. Clutching his father's revolver he broods in his hiding place while the police and his family search for him. Late at night, Baby approaches the house and aims his revolver at his father. His shot goes awry. The father emerges with a gun and shoots down his killer son like he would a mad dog.



## ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Forty year old George was born at Tiruvalla in Kerala State. Son of a painter of signs, George graduated in Political Science from the University of Kerala and later joined the Film & Television Institute of India and took his diploma in Film Direction in '71. He worked as an assistant director for three years with one of the leading filmmakers of Kerala, the late Ramu Kariat. George's first feature film was **Swapnadanam** in 1975 which won the National Award for the Best Regional Film in Malayalam and six State Awards, including one for the Best Film. He has been busy ever since, with a total of 14 feature films to his credit.

Six of George's films have been included in the Indian Panorama Section of the International Film Festivals in India since 1976. His important films are **Swapnadanam**, **Kolangal Yavanika**, **Lekhaydue**, **Maranam: Oru Flashback** and **Adaminte Varjyellu**.



# MADHVACHARYA

Col/Kannada/164 mins/1986

**Production** : Ananthalakshmi  
Films  
**Direction/  
Script** : G.V. Iyer  
**Camera** : Madhu Ambat  
**Sound** : Kitty/  
Govindaswamy  
**Editing** : V.R.K. Prasad  
**Art Direction** : P. Krishnamurthy  
**Music** : Balamurali  
Krishna

**Cast:** Srivatsa & Ravindra (as the boy & older Madhvacharya), Poorna Prasad (Madhvacharya) G.M.Krishnamurthy (Achyuta Prajna) Hayagrivachar (Pandit Trivikrama) G.V. Shivanand (The Old Monk)

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2277 4th Cross R.P.C.  
Layout  
Vijayanagar  
Bangalore 560 040  
TEL: 356222

## SYNOPSIS

Hindu philosophy admits many different schools of interpretation though the **Vedas** and **Upanishads** are the bedrock of faith. The point of metaphysical debate is the relationship of the individual soul—the **Jivatma**—with the Absolute—the **Brahma**. One of the great exponents of the principle of **Dvaita** or Duality is the 13th century sage Madhvacharya who lived in Karnataka. Normally, the life of such men is the stuff of legends. But in the case of Madhvacharya, a biography by Narayanacharya, a younger contemporary, is available. The life of a seeker of Truth passes through many stages: Sage Madhva was born Vasudeva. When he took the ascetic vow, the initiate was named Poorna Prajna by his teacher. He took the name of Ananda Tirtha when he was



ordained. And he was hailed as Madhvamuni, or Sage Madhva when he attained the state of total self-realisation.

The film recreates life in an orthodox Brahmin household. Madhvacharya is born into a family of **Advaitins**, ardent followers of Sankaracharya the great Hindu philosopher who had rescued Hinduism in the 8th century against the onslaught of Buddhism. **Advaita**, or Monism, propounds that every individual soul is in essence the Absolute—**Aham Brahmasmi** or I am **Brahma** is the basis of **Advaita**. Five centuries later, Madhvacharya enunciated the philosophy of **Dvaita** or Duality. "It is true that light emerges from a kindled wick, as long as the lamp holds the oil. The glow may not be eternal, but it is definitely true that the light from the flame existed." Depiction of this unmistakable truth is the quintessence of Duality. Neither did Madhvacharya accept the Sankaracharya concept of the world as **Maya** or illusion.

Madhvacharya's father is a simple man who gives discourses on the life of Krishna to the villagers. Even as a young student learning the **Vedas**, Madhvacharya constantly questions accepting Sankara's interpretation of the scriptures as the final word. His staid teacher rebukes the boy for daring to do so. His father's opinion—that one must either occupy a seat of power like Achyuta Prajna, the head of the monastery, or be an eminent scholar like Pandit Trivikrama, before people accept the truth of one's interpretation—makes a lasting impression on Madhvacharya.

He resolves to become an ascetic. Achyuta Prajna, impressed by the brilliance and resoluteness of one so young, delays accepting him as an initiate, since he is the only son of his parents. Madhvacharya's mother, grieving over her two sons who died in infancy, cannot dare let the boy out of her sight. So Madhvacharya waits for his teacher's prophecy that a younger brother will be born to him—to come true before he is initiated.

Madhvacharya's ceaseless questioning shocks his fellow students and disturbs his teacher. But Achyuta Prajna is a man open to new intellectual ideas. Ordinary folk and scholars alike have by now heard of the young and brilliant ascetic.

Madhvacharya defeats an eminent Buddhist monk in debate and expounds his new interpretation of the sacred **Brahmasutra**. Accompanied by his teacher, he travels extensively over the land to propagate his new philosophy to the common folk. He recognises that there are many different paths to self-realisation, and that the path of devotion to a personal deity may be more accessible to people at large.

Madhvacharya undertakes a pilgrimage to the Himalayas, to the shrine of Lord Badrinarayana, an incarnation of Vishnu. By now, he has written a new commentary on the **Bhagavadgita** (Krishna's exposition on 'right action' to Arjuna on the battlefield in the **Mahabharatha**). In the Himalayas, Madhvacharya is inspired by his encounter with a kind, old monk—who is none other than the Lord





come to test, and guide, his devotee. In the Himalayas, Madhvacharya has a mystic vision of the Ultimate Reality.

Madhvacharya's philosophy is by now widely accepted by eminent scholars of the land. The volume of commentaries written by him is ever increasing. But ultimate success still lies ahead. He has yet to convince the monastery head, Achyuta Prajna, and Pandit Trivikrama, the learned scholar. He does so, after impassioned debate. They, like others before them, join his monastic order. External marks are branded on the body's centres of spiritual energy—which distinguish orthodox members of the sect to this day—and are symbolic of the awakening of the spirit within.

Petty enemies vanquished by Madhvacharya in dialectical metaphysics try to thwart his triumphant march across the land—but fail. Kings, Hindu and Muslim alike, do him honour as he expounds the oneness of all faiths and the Dvaita philosophy. On the day of a total solar eclipse, Madhvacharya offers oblation to

the sun. Seeing the deliverance of the sun from the eclipse, Madhvacharya seeks his own release—and disappears into the snow topped peaks of the Himalayas.

## THE DIRECTOR SAYS

"There is a basic difference between Sankara who related to a shapeless God and Madhva to whom God was not a shapeless being. Also, Madhva is more relevant to contemporary life since his theories can be easily applied to our everyday experiences even after seven centuries. Sankara, Madhva and Ramanuja had the same approach to life, but their paths were different. Of them, Madhva recognised that disparities of different kinds, including caste differences, are a part of the world. This shows the inveterate realist in him.

"Compared to the life of Sankara, there is more drama in Madhva's life. He lived upto the ripe age of 79 and went round his land twice. Like Sankara, he also became a monk at a very young age; but he spread his net wider—he was a

grammarians, musicologists, composers, writers and a fighter for causes. He followed a powerful drive to spread literacy and so made himself more socially relevant. He involved himself actively in several public causes. Apart from being a profound thinker, he was also a practical man. He symbolised the growth of the intellect from the 8th to the 13th century and even pre-empted Einstein's Theory of Relativity in his *Apala Suktha*."

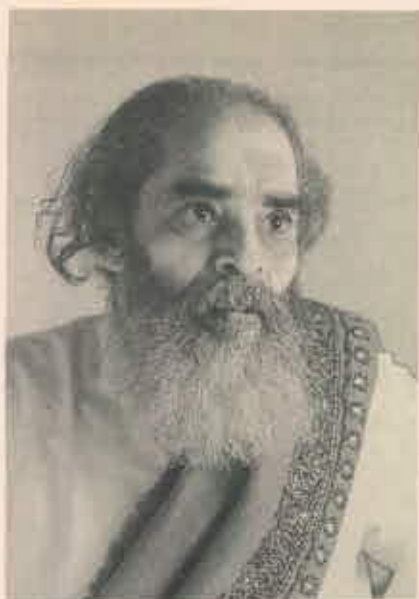
## ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

### G.V. IYER

When *Samskara* (which sparked off the New Wave in South India) was shown in Madras at a noncommercial theatre 1970, a barefoot, elderly man in a *lungi* announced that he too would make a progressive film but no one in that enthusiastic audience paid him any particular attention. By 1971, that same man—no other than G.V. Iyer—had produced *Vamsha Vriksha* (The Family Tree) and given to Kannada cinema two directors, Girish Karnad and B.V. Karanth, who went on to establish Karnataka as a key centre for serious cinema in India.

G.V. Iyer, then in his 50s, had already acted in, directed, scripted any number of run-of-the mill Kannada films but he now proclaimed himself a humble disciple of the new school.

Iyer began his colourful career in traditional theatre in 1928. He



undertook all manner of jobs—right from pasting posters, assisting scenery painters, sign-board painting, to acting, writing, and directing. His career in films took off in 1942 when he acted in *Radha Ramana*. Subsequently he has worked in as many as 67 films, as actor, scriptwriter, dialogue writer, lyricist, director and producer.

Many of his later films like *Vamsha Vriksha*, *Hamse Geethe*, *Bhoodana*, *Ranadhira Kantheerava* have won National and State Awards. He has the unique credit of producing the first ever film in Sanskrit, *Sri Adi Sankaracharya*, which bagged the President's *Swarna Kamal* for the best Indian film in 1984. Iyer is currently making elaborate preparations to shoot the next chapter of his series on seminal Hindu philosophers—Sri Ramanujacharya.



# MASSEY SAHEB

Col/Hindi/124 mins/1986

**Production** : NFDC  
**Direction/Script** : Pradip Krishen  
**Camera** : R.K. Bose  
**Sound** : Nanda Kumar  
**Editing** : Mohan Kaul  
**Art Direction** : Sanjay Prakash  
**Music** : Vanraj Bhatia

## SYNOPSIS

The encounter between the steel frame that is the British Civil Service and the ingenuous but naive native (named Massey), makes for tragi-comedy. A human tragedy and one of cultural incomprehension.

**Cast:** Raghuvir Yadav (Francis Massey), Barry John (Charles Adam), Arundhati Roy (Saila), Jacqueline Garewal (Ruby), Sudhir Kulkarni (Fazal Abbas).

**Enquiries:** National Film Development Corporation  
Discovery of India Building  
Nehru Centre  
Dr. Annie Basant Road,  
Bombay 400 018  
TEL: 4949751/52

The place is Seopore in Central India, the Collectorate office, the outpost of the Raj in this backward area of scrub, jungle and tribals. The time is 1929. Francis Massey, a Christian, has risen to the dizzy heights of a clerk (Third Division) chiefly through his dubious but charming skills with the English language. He lords it over the town folk as the 'Type-





babu' of the government office, borrowing merrily from them to fulfil his taste for things English. An unflinching source of largesse is the tailor-cum-draper Fazal Abbas, who gives grudgingly but is good friend to Massey.

Massey believes that he too belongs among the White Sahebs. After all, he shares both their language and their religion. With gratitude, he serves the government in his own fashion, for traditional society would have given him no such opportunities to rise. His sentimental faith in the British rulers and in the infallibility of their wisdom crystallises in his attitude to the new Deputy Commissioner Charles Adam (who has a passion for building roads). Besides, Adam's starchy predecessor had pulled up Massey for incurring debts to the local people. And in the presence of the rabble too, with no thought to the dignity of the English Type-babu. Massey's pecuniary problems become more pressing when he is smitten by the silent tribal beauty, Saila. Her father and brother see their chance of extracting as much as they can from the impassioned suitor by way of bride price. The negotiations are hilarious, the demands escalate. Massey is stripped to his underpants and boots, but he is hugely satisfied.

Massey does his best to get his bride into a frilly white dress for the wedding, like a proper Memsahib, but Saila resists. Massey's friend, the postal clerk performs a hurried version of the Christian wedding service in the post office. The wedding leaves Massey indebted to Banaji, the wily minion of the ex-feudal ruler of Seopore. He gives in, and copies confidential information from the government files for Banaji's benefit—which he'd indignantly refused to earlier. For he wants his Saila back. Her family has taken her away since Massey has not paid her price in full.

The many-hued character of Massey comes into its own when Adam's obsession with building a road through the jungle comes to a standstill, since they have used up the year's allotment for roads. Massey who is nothing if not resourceful, suggests that they borrow money from other departments and adjust the accounts—only temporarily for this good cause—so as to complete the project. Adam's protests ring feeble. The auditing official, unfortunately doesn't appreciate Massey's ingenious book-keeping. Massey is suspended, and Adam is away getting married to his Anglo-Indian fiancée.

Adam returns to Seopore to discover that without Massey's support, his dream of completing the road has come to a dead end. The village headmen have stopped supplying labour. Massey, now an itinerant salesman of charms and amulets, uses his persuasive powers, mixed with some plain blackmail, to get the gangs back on the road. Massey's happiness brims



over. His adoring wife has given him a son whom he names Charles after Adams. He threatens, cajoles and enthralls the workers to complete the road. But at the moment the road is to be ceremonially opened by Mrs. Adams, and Massey's contribution acknowledged appreciatively, Adam finds that Massey has been personally levying an unofficial road-tax. Massey can't understand why Adam castigates him though he has kept account of every small coin. Adam who had acquiesced in diverting funds to complete the road now proves implacable, and refuses to listen to Massey's explanations.

Massey's troubles do not end with this fall from grace. Saila and his son have been taken away yet again. He goes to Banaji for help. But since Massey is a nothing now, Banaji spurns him. Massey's frustration now turns to blind rage and he attacks Banaji. Massey is arrested for Banaji's murder.

In jail, Massey continues to have touching faith in Adam's ability to get him off the hook. Adam advises Massey to plead guilty to causing death by accident—but Massey just cannot understand how that will help him. And, it didn't happen that way either.

Massey is sentenced to be hanged. He fantasises... Adam has come to the jail to free him from the hangman's noose, and promises to make his son Charles a clerk of the British Raj...



## ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Teaching History at a Delhi college. Pradip Krishen's interest in cinema took him Bombaywards to work as apprentice to Shyam Benegal. He also worked as asstt. director to George Luneau for **Ballade de Pabuji** made in 1975. In 1976, he finally gave up academics to join TVNF where he collaborated on the design of an early serial, **The Science Feature**, a fortnightly programme of popular science; in all, he supervised the production of 80 films in this series, photographing and directing 24 of them.

In 1980 he resigned and set up independently. Prior to Massey, he directed and Photographed **By Word of Mouth**, a documentary and **Katputhli—the Animated World of String & Wood** for the Smithsonian Institution. He launched on **Massey Saheb** (freely adapted from Joyce C Carey's **Mr. Johnson**) and won prize in the first script competition held by NFDC in 1980. He is currently working on a TV serial that looks back to the struggle for Independence.

# MATI MANAS (Mind of Clay)

Col/Hindi/92 mins/1985

**Production** : Infrakino Film Production Pvt. Ltd.  
(Sponsors: Development Commissioner for Handicrafts)

**Direction** : Mani Kaul

**Script** : Kamal Swaroop/  
Mani Kaul

**Camera** : Venu

**Sound** : A.M.  
Padmanabhan

**Editing** : Reena Mohan

**Music** : T.R. Mahalingam (flute)

**Cast:** Anita Kanwar (girl), Robin Das,  
Ashok Sharma

**Enquiries:** Infrakino Film Production  
Pvt. Ltd.  
21, Chitrakoot  
Altamount Road  
Bombay-400 026

## SYNOPSIS

Towards the beginning of Mani Kaul's **Mati Manas**, a potter says "The potter's creations aren't conscious beings, but man, Brahma's creation, is. The nonconscious cannot speak, but without these creations, man wouldn't be able to live." In a magnificent movement as the film draws to a close, the last myth says, "The potter is Brahma. These mud vessels we make will last forever. But man's body will decay..."

What happens when this generative principle between the encounter of man and material—the basis for civilisation itself—is threatened by a new economic and social order? When the mud vessels last forever only behind the glass of a museum? From Harappan civilization, the potter has defined in his work the rhythms of his life, and beyond that the cosmic rhythm of life, death, and life again. From the clay





you first make the shape of a *linga* (phallus/the procreative principle), says the potter, and then you can make any shape at all. The pot becomes a metaphor of the creative seed, taking in the essence of life and perpetuating life. Or, as with the myth of Sariya Mata, in the beginning of Mani Kaul's film, the pot becomes as the protective womb.

**The myth of Sariya Mata, the cat mother, recounts the story of her new-born kittens who had been left in an unbaked clay pot. Inadvertently, this pot along with others went into the kiln for baking. But in the morning, when the kiln was opened, the kittens were found safe in the womblike interior of the pot.**

The association of the pot with the womb goes back in history to the earliest known civilizations. In late Harappan archaeological sites, skeletons have been discovered buried in large pots shaped like a woman's body. Sariya Mata, the cat mother, is worshipped by potters in many parts of India.

In a tradition that saw a close fusing of mythology and daily practice, Mani Kaul makes his film. Kaul charts a course from the dim-lit museum exhibiting terracotta works of the past, to present-day potters who carry on those traditions in their work; and in the process, re-imbues those 'museum pieces' with new life. In traversing the vast Central Indian plain (Rajasthan, UP, Bihar and Bengal)—which saw the rise of one of the most ancient civilisations of the world—moving on to the extreme South, Kaul seeks to bring us back to a

material history with which we have lost contact.

The film weaves through a complex narrative of monologue, dialogue and the potters' voices. In encountering the potters, and their own understanding of their craft, Kaul also encounters a super-structure of mythology revealed in this understanding. He re-locates those very myths in a contemporary relationship, with three characters: the girl, the photographer and the friend. In one scene, the photographer is seen lighting up a mother-goddess figure. As the two technologies face each other—the ancient terracotta object, the modern camera—we hear the photographer's voice, "The light filtered is like that of an ancient star, emitted several thousand years ago, but received by us today." While these three characters seek, on the one hand, to understand what is around them, they themselves are cast into the myths they speak of.

The widely-known myth of Renuka and her son Parsuram relates directly to changing techniques in pot-making and the struggle between matriarchal and patriarchal societies in our tradition.

**Renuka was the wife of a practising ascetic, Jamadagni. Each morning, she would go to the riverbed and pick up the wet river sand which would fashion itself into a pot in her hands, to be used by her husband for his sacrificial rituals. One day, as she bent over the water to pick up the clay, she saw reflected in the water, a Gandharva (a celestial figure). For**

a fleeting moment she was lost in admiration of his handsome physique. But the pot now would no longer form in her hands. When she returned home without the pot, her husband knew at once that Renuka's devotion had been deflected, even if only momentarily. In rage, he ordered any one of his sons to behead her. Only the youngest, Parsuram, complied. Pleased at his son's unhesitating obedience, Jamadagni granted him a wish. Parsuram asked for his mother's life. The wish was granted but the son, although he could recognise the mother's head, could not recognise her body—and Renuka's head had to be joined to the body of a lower caste woman.

This myth precisely chronicles the change—Renuka, the woman, initially made the pots. The husband who ordered her killed for her fascination with another's body, is clearly of a patriarchal system, presumably represented by the arrival of metal (Parsuram's axe). The wheel was invented and pot making transferred from the female to the male domain.

The productive space generated between the work—that which is produced, with labour—and the meaning of the work, is the space that Kaul uses as his own site, from where to view a civilisation. He seems to not draw upon the many contemporary 'references' of mythology (chiefly those of psychoanalysis) but grasps the very substance of his material. **Mati Manas** is itself crafted like its content—with artisanal virtuosity.

Within this encounter between a new technology (cinema) and a new way of seeing things, and an

ancient tradition, there is also the space for an emergent modernism of vision, which will not destroy the past but intervene into it, to invigorate that tradition. This has been for some years the specific area of Mani Kaul's concern, reflected by a gradual blurring between the conventional idea of 'documentary' and feature: **Satah Se Uthatha Admi** (on the works of writer Muktibodh), **Dhrupad** (on the ancient Indian classical school of music) and **Mati Manas**, are all films based on a non-fictional 'reality', but which extend far beyond the conventional limitations of documentary to permit an imaginative poetic extension to film form itself.

## THE DIRECTOR SAYS

"Artistic activity does not lie in deciphering the sensuousness that people experience, but in reaching a new sensuousness through each film.

"...In **Mati Manas** I tried to make a poem-like film that dealt with the transition that had occurred over the centuries."

## ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Mani Kaul, a graduate from Rajasthan College, Jaipur, and an early student of the Film Institute of India, Pune, made his first feature film **Uski Roti** at the young age of 26. The energy to improvise and the vitality to draw from traditional sources has been a characteristic of Kaul's in his features and shorts, which has finally converged on very personal cinematographic poems like **Satah Se Uthatha Admi** and **Mati Manas**.





His work is fed by two major sources—Indian classical music, in particular, the continuing ancient tradition of Dhrupad; and the 'semiology' of Indian aesthetics as formulated in the early Sanskrit texts like the 9th century **Dhyanyaloka**. But this is repeatedly

countered by a completely modernist sensibility and the influence of modern writers and painters. All this results in the generating of an intellectual energy around his own work and his thinking that is perhaps unparalleled in the contemporary Indian art situation.

Despite the extreme difficulty of finding finance for his kind of austere films, Kaul has yet succeeded in putting together a fairly substantial body of work. This work establishes a distinct aesthetic relation with the practice of filmmaking itself. He wrote once, "The fact that the realist image (and not line, shape, colour, or harmonic sound) is the idiomatic norm of cinema determines to a considerable extent the filmmaker's attitude towards life... Commercial films exploit 'communication' (in the sense of reaching out to an audience) only to the detriment of youth and values in this country."

# MEENAMASATHILLE SOORYAN

(Midsummer Sun)

Col/Malayalam/135 mins/19.6

**Production** : C.G. Bhaskaran  
Sauhrudd Chitra

**Direction/Script** : Lenin Rajendran

**Camera** : Shaji

**Editing** : Ravi

**Sound** : Devadassi/J.  
Manikkyam

**Music** : M.B. Sreenivasan

**Cast:** Gopi (Master) Venu Nagavalli  
(Appu) Vijay Menon (Chirukantan)  
Murali (Abu Backer) Ravi (Kunjambu  
Nair) Shobhana (Revathi)

**Enquiries:** C.G. Bhaskaran, Govin-  
dalayam, K.R. Puram, Sher-  
tellai, Kerala

## SYNOPSIS

**Meenamasathille Sooryan** charts the stirring course of a people's movement. Four young men, Chirukantan, Abu Backer, Apu and Kunjambu Nair await the carrying out of their death sentence. They are to be hanged for subversion and treason against the government. The warden asks them for their last wish. In unison, they give the answer—to meet their mentor, the village school master. The poignant meeting occasions a flashback to the events that led up





to this moment.... We go back to 1943, the air thick with news of the Quit India movement, the war in Europe and the course of the Russian revolution. In this unspecified corner of Kerala, it is the ruthless and cleverly conniving landlord who is the symbol of an exploitative system to the oppressed peasants. The landlord, waited upon by his obsequious and illiterate manager, tries to set one section of the peasants against another over a piece of disputed land. One group arms itself with sticks and sickles, the other only with red banners and fraternal feeling. They explain how futile it is to fight amongst themselves which only serves the landlord's interest. For the first time, the peasants are made aware of their own oppression and draw up a charter of minimum demands; the landlord tears it up in contempt instead of passing the charter onto the higher authorities. But he is worried enough to find out that it is the school-teacher—

whose wage he pays moreover—who is stirring up 'trouble'.

The people depend on the master not only for education but for medicine as well as news of the outside world. Committed youngsters who are his disciples, like Chirukantan, Abu Backer, Appu and Kunjambu Nair, rouse awareness of exploitation among the ignorant people of the village. Like a groundswell, the movement gathers force, even drawing in young girls like Revathy, Chirukantan's sweetheart, Appu's brave wife and Abu Backer's resourceful old mother... and countless other anonymous people who shelter the four young men who are forced to go underground.

For, the village is swarming with the police. The landlord entertains the police force—come to flush out two unnamed communist leaders who are reportedly sheltered in these parts. A comically inept policeman is hurt as he tries to flee



which led to his being shot by the police.

Now that he knows of this involvement, Chandra keeps a scrupulous distance. He takes her to a lawyer to file for divorce by mutual consent. It is just a week since their marriage. The middle-aged lady lawyer, after a fruitless attempt to dissuade them from a hasty decision, informs them that they have to wait for a year before the divorce can come through.

There is a gradual change of heart on Divya's part but now it is Chandra's turn to withdraw. However, Divya manages to cajole her husband into taking her to see the Taj Mahal. When they are returning home late at night, Chandra is attacked by a disgruntled worker from the office, whom he had sacked. A bleeding Chandra is rushed to hospital, his life in danger. Divya's fervent prayers are answered and Chandra recovers. But, back home, he curtly rejects all her offers of help, refusing to recognise that her feelings have changed. A chagrined Divya decides to return home to her parents. At the station, Chandra hands her the divorce decree, but to his utter joy, Divya tears up the papers. Explanations wait—as they are tenderly reconciled.

## THE DIRECTOR SAYS

"My pictures speak best for me. But I must point out Revathy's very fine performance in **Mouna Ragam**."



## ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Director Mani Ratnam is a Commerce Graduate from Madras University and a Master of Business Administration from Bajaj Institute of India, Bombay. But since he belongs to a family of film personalities (his father is Venus Ratnam) perhaps his entry into the world of films was inevitable. With no period of apprenticeship, in 1983, he straightaway launched his first directorial venture, **Pallavi Anu Pallavi** in Kannada, which won him the Karnataka State Award for the Best Screenplay. He then directed a Malayalam picture, **Unaru**. But the main body of his work is in Tamil, and before **Mouna Ragam**, he directed two films, **Pagal Nilava** and **Idhaya Koil** (1985).

Mani Ratnam is presently working on two more Tamil films, one titled **Viragyam**, and the second, **Nayaka** starring the south's superstar, Kamalhasan.



# MOUNA RAGAM (Silent Raga)

Col/Tamil/145 mins/1986

**Production** : Sujatha  
Productions  
Pvt. Ltd.

**Direction/Story  
Script** : Mani Ratnam

**Camera** : Sri Ram

**Sound** : K. Duraiswamy  
S.P. Ramanathan

**Editing** : B. Lenin  
B.T. Vijayan

**Art Direction** : Thota Thorini

**Music** : Ilaya Raja

**Cast:** Mohan (Chandra Kumar), Revathi  
(Divya), Karthik (Manohar)

**Enquiries:** Sujatha Productions Pvt.  
Ltd.  
27, Wallace Garden III  
Street,  
Madras-600 006  
TEL: 471523/478575

## SYNOPSIS

A young girl's dream of romantic love and the system of arranged marriage do not always mesh in a traditional society. Divya is an impish, fun-loving collegian from a middleclass family in Madras. Her father is a government official who faces retirement in four years. He is anxious that Divya should be married as soon as possible, since he has two other schoolgoing daughters to settle. Divya's married brother and his wife complete the joint family.

The father wants Divya to come home early since a very eligible young man, an MBA working in Delhi, is to visit them that evening. A rebellious Divya deliberately comes late, thoroughly soaked from





the rain. Her anxious mother sees to it that she is properly groomed before meeting Chandra Kumar, who is still waiting to view the 'bride'.

Thoroughly unrepentant, Divya charms Chandra Kumar with her honesty. She tells him that she is lazy, wilful and moody, and not at all the conventionally docile girl her parents have no doubt painted her to be. To her utter shock—and the family's delight—Chandra announces that he would like to marry Divya and without the enormous dowry that would normally be expected for a groom of his eligibility rating.

The family's delight is short lived, for Divya adamantly refuses the flattering offer. Her father has a mild heart attack. Divya feels overwhelmingly guilty as the mother begs for her husband's life. The marriage is performed but the

wedding night finds the bride in tears. Chandra Kumar is understanding and leaves her alone.

Coming to Delhi, Divya continues to keep the patient Chandra at a distance, telling him that his touch is repulsive. She repeatedly asks him for a divorce. Advised by his boss, Chandra Kumar takes her out and woos her with presents.

At last, Divya confesses as to what holds her back from accepting her marriage emotionally and physically. A brief, tempestuous relationship with the exuberant Manohar ended with his tragic death—just when she had decided to marry him without her parents' knowledge. Manohar was an impulsive young man, who had the same impetuous approach to wooing a girl as to radical politics. It was his political involvement



from the combined force of two columns of villagers, marching from opposite sides and accidentally drowns in the river. Now begin their tribulations, of running from one shelter to another, snatching sleep and food when they can—as the police close in on them.

The police have no compunctions about using brute force on the old and infirm. The women rise magnificently to the occasion. Revathy had resented in girlish fashion Chirukantan's dangerous activities.

Now, she survives the loss of her old father, and supports her sweetheart's old parents—who had been subjected to police torture. She acts as a fearless courier. So does Apu's wife who had longed for a child, so that she could tell him of the father's heroism. But Apu and she had postponed their personal happiness so that any child born to them would know, and be assured of, basic human dignity. Abu Backer's widowed old mother is quickwitted, throwing the police off the scent, at least temporarily. The four who have gone underground are anguished to know of the increasing brutality the police have unleashed on innocent people. Two have been captured, and the other two decide to surrender in order to spare the unnecessary torture of innocents.

Sixty-four people are arraigned before the jury for the murder of one policeman. One of the British jurors feels that there is not enough evidence but he is quickly overruled. The four who emerge as leaders are sentenced to hang after a protracted trial lasting two years, and the others acquitted. The four

heroes go to their death, protesting their innocence. What they have fought for is human dignity—not just against a foreign government. The saga, like many others, becomes part of a people's history to inspire later generations.



## ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

After graduation he joined Kerala Financial Enterprises, a state government undertaking and still works there.

Earlier he made **Venal** and **Chillu** (love stories set in a small town). His other film is **Prem Nazirine Kananilla** (Prem Nazir is Missing), on matinee idol Prem Nazir, who made it to the Guinness Book of Records for acting in the largest number of films (more than 400). He plays himself in the film.

# MIRCH MASALA (Spices)

Col/Hindi/128 mins/1998

Production	: NFDC
Director	: Ketan Mehta
Story	: Chunilal Madia
Script	: Hriday Lani & Tripurari Sharma
Camera	: Jehangir Choudhary
Sound	: Bhagat Singh/ Suresh Kathuria
Editing	: Sanjiv Shah
Art Direction	: Meera & Ashish Lakhia
Music	: Rajat Dholakia

**Cast:** Naseerudin Shah (subedar), Smita Patil (Sonbai), Suresh Oberoi (headman), Om Puri (watchman), Deepti Naval (headman's wife), Benjamin Gilani (school teacher), Mohan Gokhale & Supriya Pathak (the young lovers).

**Enquiries :** NFDC

Discovery of India Building  
Nehru Centre  
Dr Annie Besant Rd  
Bombay 400 018.  
TEL: 4949751/52

## SYNOPSIS

Sonbai is something of a legend in her lifetime. She was the one who dared defy the village **subedar** and lived to tell the tale! In **Mirch Masala** (based on a short story by the Gujarati writer Chunilal Madia) director Ketan Mehta transforms the legend into potent cinema. It is not just the story of one woman, but of the social and moral upheaval that takes place in a village submitting to tyranny.

The time is the early '40s, the place, sandy Saurashtra. Suddenly, the quiet of the small village is shattered by the arrival of the local subedar (the official tax collector) and his hordes. Despotic and insane, vulnerable and comically gross all at the same time, the subedar twirls his moustaches, ogles the women, sets up palace in a tent, and leaves the villagers a trembling with his wrath. The shining voices that emerge from his magical, hand-cranked gramophone







leave them stunned... The subedar has set his heart on the sensuous Sonbai. She spurns his advances with a resounding slap but her rebuff only spurs him onwards... the chase is on!

Sonbai escapes from his clutches into a chilli factory which employs many of the local women. The old muslim watchman of the factory barricades the gates and challenges the soliders to break them down. While the subedar plots ways and means to capture Sonbai, life goes on amidst the piles of fresh, red chillies waiting to be pounded... a young girl exchanges notes with her Romeo, a very pregnant lady prepares to deliver her baby... The by now enraged subedar threatens to burn the village down. The village mukhi (headman) and other men of the village are all willing to strike a bargain with the subedar and hand over Sonbai if he spares the village. And some of the

women in the factory abuse Sonbai for bringing trouble upon their heads. "You won't find a lover like him," urges one woman, who's already visited the subedar's tent.

There are few voices of dissent. The khadi-clad school-teacher has already once clashed with the headman over encouraging his daughter to attend school. In the melée, the teacher gets thoroughly beaten, up. The mukhi's much oppressed and progressive-minded wife, gathers a small force of **thali**-beating women (thalis being brass plates) but they are all too easily brushed out of the way.

Outside the factory-cum-fortress, the subedar and his soldiers; within, the besieged women of whom Sonbai would rather die than surrender. Between the two groups, a very courageous but aged watchman...

## THE DIRECTOR SAYS

"I think we are unnecessarily scared of melodrama, when, in fact, we (in India) are much more responsive to melodrama as we are to bold colours. Yet, a very arrogant attitude has grown towards such reasonably well-developed Indian traditions, and this has done more harm to the vitality of the Indian cinema than good. Take Om Puri (the watchman) for instance. His is a very finely tuned performance when it was so easy to turn it into a cliché. The point is what we abusively call stock characters have emerged over centuries of performing arts traditions and they are, somewhere, grassroots representative characters. To laugh them off as stock characters seems to me almost blasphemous. They have degenerated into stock characters primarily because of unintelligent misuse by film makers."

## ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

An economics graduate from St. Stephen's College, New Delhi, Ketan Mehta's interests rapidly shifted to Delhi's flourishing theatre movement of the mid '70s, and to film. In theatre developed Mehta's engagement with Brechtian theory, which forms a vital backdrop to his first film **Bhavni Bhavai**, 1980. Says Mehta, "What I was clear about, was what I had to overcome the kind of impact that was regressive in not leading either to thought or to action. I was opposed to the identifying of the audience with the destiny of the hero-protagonist, to create a purging of emotions and satisfactions that would substitute for social processes of change."



Much of Mehta's political concerns with communicating emerged directly from experience. Working in SITE (Satellite Instructional Television Experiment) after his graduation from the Film & Television Institute, Mehta produced a series of video programmes on untouchability, which had a tremendous impact, and earned him the wrath of the local upper castes. This experience too contributed to **Bhavni Bhavai**, woven around the problem of untouchables. Film and theatre once again converged in his second film, **Holi**, 1984, a long anarchic film on student violence on the campus. Mehta's films have won both national and international awards: he has been hailed as 'the voice of the rising generation.'

Post **Mirch Masala**, 1986, Ketan Mehta began on a TV serial entitled **Mr. Yogi**, a satire on matrimony.



# ORIDATHU (... And There Was A Village)

Col/Malayalam/112 mins/1986

**Production** : Suryakanti  
Film Makers

**Direction/Story/  
Script/Music** : G. Aravindan

**Camera** : Shahji

**Sound** : Devdas

**Editing** : Bose

**Art Direction** : Padma Kumar

**Music** :

**Cast:** Nedumudi Venu (*electrical  
overseer*), Sreenivasan (*Kuttan*),  
Thilakan (*Manager*), Vineet (*Jose*),  
Krishnakutty Nair (*Comrade*),  
Chandran Nair (*school teacher*).

**Enquiries:** G. Aravindan  
Suryakanti Film Makers  
Leela Sadan, Shankar  
Road  
Sasthamangalam  
Trivandrum 695 010  
TEL: (0471)-63279/68998

## SYNOPSIS

Does technology really lead us from darkness to light? If so, at what cost? **Oridathu** poses this problem with gentle humour, discursive narration and unexpected poignancy. A satirical parable of our times told with deceptive simplicity and disarming candour.

The time is the mid-fifties, when the Indian states were being reorganised. The place is a remote village in Kerala. There is a palpable hum of excitement as the village Panchayat, led by the Brahmin landlord, is determined to bring the benefits of electricity to this backward place.

As the story unfolds, it introduces us to an array of characters in the village ... the Communist tailor given to fiery speeches, laced with quotations; the landlord's bossy





manager; Kuttan, the odd job man, hitching his star to the influential newcomers; the wise school teacher, the adolescent boy and girl, the braggart overseer ... Families and groups are deftly sketched with a cartoonist's sharp eye. Each group has its own story to tell, in self-contained episodes which are all interrelated. The 'vela' or the festival of the local temple is a symbol of the harmony that prevailed in the village in those pre-electricity days.

After the executive engineer from the Electricity Department has surveyed the place with becoming solemnity, there follows a flurry of activity. The overseer, flatteringly called 'engineer' by the villagers who don't know the distinction, has an eye for the girls. Kuttan, the man for all jobs, becomes the overseer's faithful servitor. He induces the girl he hopes to marry to join the electricity workforce. A doctor following in the wake of electricity sets up a dispensary in the village. Kuttan decides he is a more prestigious master to serve.

The village soon stops treating the overseer with awe. He displays a taste for the arts and 'theatricals',

forms an amateur group and earnestly begins rehearsing for a romantic play about separated lovers. Young Jose plays the heroine's role. Jose is a bright, ambitious boy who plans to leave the village to work outside Kerala, once the coming festival is over.

The disenchantment with electricity is gradual. The location of the electric pole makes old friends and neighbours fall out. There are dire omens of death. At first, crows are electrocuted atop the wire, then a cow, fallen in a huddle. Death also comes to Kuttan's girl-friend who is pregnant. Kuttan cannot afford to support her, and an abortion seems the only way out ... next morning, her dead body is found in the temple pond. The doctor, who has finalised marriage negotiations with the manager's daughter is unmasked—as a quack and a would-be bigamist to boot. Kuttan's simple trust is betrayed by the overseer who seduces his sister.

Before the larger calamity strikes, there is a symbolic burial of the beautiful old temple lamp-post, whose wick was ceremonially lit every evening. Its gentle glow has now been replaced by harsh



electric glare. The story moves inexorably to its culmination. At the temple festival every year, Kuttan traditionally dons the vestments of the Black Kali, the avenging goddess. He decides to wreak vengeance on the overseer who he sees as the root cause of all calamities in the village. But in the clash, it is young Jose, who gets electrocuted. The cry of the innocent victim is drowned by the pyrotechnical dazzle of the festival fireworks, which are sparked off in the melee ... a parable of nuclear holocaust? The frame freezes on a parachuting mannikin headed for the earth, arms outstretched as if in crucifixion.

## THE DIRECTOR SAYS

"**Oridathu** can be seen as the continuation of my earlier film **Thampu** and my cartoon series, **The Small Man and The Big World**. The theme demanded a caricature treatment so I made it that way.

"My film is not against modernisation. I was trying to look at the changes taking place in the life of the people and the village. I still fear one day that technology will take over.

"I was born in a small village and upto the age of ten I hadn't seen electricity. I still remember with nostalgia those times, when people moved through the night with burning flares. When electricity came, they went out."

## ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Aravindan, an overwhelmingly large and bearded man in his early



forties, was born at Kottayam, the district capital of Kerala's spice and rubber heartland. He was raised in a neighbouring village, and mourns its passing because small towns have replaced what he remembers as so typical of Kerala.

It was later, as a Biology student in Trivandrum, the State capital, that he was first introduced to cinema. He recalls seeing Kurosawa's **Rashomon** several times. There were no film schools then to nurture his new-found interest. He turned to painting and drawing cartoons instead. He was also actively engaged with a folk theatre group.

After graduation, he joined the Rubber Board, a Government department, where he has continued to work till recently. It was then that he created his popular cartoon serial, **The Small Man and The Big World**, about the life and tribulations of a middle-class, idealistic young man, for a well-known Malayalam weekly. The gift for cartooning was perhaps inherited from his father, an eminent humorist of his time.

The transition from cartoon to cinema was so smooth that it belied the controversy it raised about Aravindan, as filmmaker. An embittered social criticism, a nostalgia for private realities, a strong sense of individuality had been conveyed through his cartoons for a decade. It was followed by an uncompromising cinema which departed stylistically from tradition with a vengeance. His films were marked by a stark purity and pervaded with a lyrical passion, and won him accolades and awards many times over.

**Uttarayanam** (1974) received two National and six State Awards. **Kanchana Sita** (1977) and **Thampu**;

(1978) won him the National and State Awards for excellence in Direction; **Thampu** was also given a National Award for the Best Regional Film as well as the All India and State Critics Awards; **Esthappan** (1979): the State Award for the Best Film and excellence in Direction, along with four other awards. **Kummatty** (1979): was judged the Best Children's Film of the year. **Pokkuveyil** (1981) brought him a State Award for excellence in Direction and a National Award. **Chidambaram** (1985) won the Best Film, Best Director and Best Actor Award from the Kerala State Government, and also a National Award for Best Film (**Swarna Kamal**).





# PANCHAGNI (Five Fires)

Col/Malayalam/140 mins/1986

**Production** : G.P. Vijay Kumar  
M.G. Gopinath

**Direction** : Hariharan

**Story/Script** : M.T. Vasudevan  
Nair

**Camera** : Shaji

**Editing** : M.S. Mani

**Art Direction** : S. Vannanadu

**Music** : Ravi (Bombay)

**Cast:** Geeta (Indira), Mohanlal (Rashid),  
Nadia Moidu (Savitri), Tilakan  
(Ramettan).

**Enquiries:** Seven Arts Films  
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Rd  
Madras 600 014

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## SYNOPSIS

There are idealists and idealists. For some, idealism remains an intellectual commitment, others opt for action without counting the cost to personal happiness. Panchagni which centres round one such activist, was a box-office success in Kerala, though its theme would generally be considered daring for wider audience appeal.

The film opens with the protagonist Indira on hunger strike in prison, where she is serving a life sentence for murder. Her hunger strike sets off curious tongues wagging in the prison and the outside world as well, as the press pick up the story. Indira is given a two-week parole to visit



her dying mother in her ancestral home. (Indira's mother had been a noted public figure in her time, associated with the freedom struggle.)

Indira has come home after eight years in prison, and it is suggested no one from her home town has visited her all this time. The only real welcome she gets is from her bedridden mother, an uncle of sorts who has been tending the house and the young servant girl, eager to serve and please. But Indira is pained by the hostile rejection of her young, unemployed brother, Ravi. Ravi would like to sell the old and sprawling house so that he can bribe his way to a job. While Sarada, her childhood friend and neighbour, is genuinely sympathetic and affectionate. Sarada's husband, Raján, is rude and scornful. Reporting at the police station as she is required to, is a humiliating ordeal for Indira. It exposes her to avid curiosity and covert insults.

Indira's younger sister, Savitri, arrives with her college lecturer husband and small son. Savitri is affectionate and curious. She recalls how Indira's ire was roused by the dirty old man who would spy on the young women bathing at the tank, and how Indira lampooned the old man cleverly. Later, Indira became part of a radical student group. Rejecting many offers of marriage that came her way, she devoted her time to political and feminist study. Savitri recalling the past, making plans for Indira's future, is unaware that the parole is temporary.

Meanwhile, a freelance journalist, Rashid, persists in trying to

interview Indira. Indira is angry, construing his interest to be voyeuristic. But the journalist is persistent in visiting the household—now mourning the death of the old lady. Indira's elder brother, present for the funeral, is furious with the family for allowing in the 'outcaste'. He feels his promotion was stopped because of his sister's notoriety and threatens her with violence in a drunken fit. Friend Sarada's home is no refuge either since her husband attempts to molest Indira, once his wife is asleep. A single source of warmth is her young nephew who has grown attached to her. But yet another painful misunderstanding awaits Indira. Sister Savitri becomes suspicious of her though her husband is only comforting the grieving Indira. Unable to bear her sister's taunts, Indira turns for refuge for the rest of her parole to the journalist she started out resenting—Rashid.

In the short time she has known him, Indira's feelings have undergone a great change. And, at last, it is to Rashid that she unburdens herself about how events led to murder... Indira was a welfare officer in an area where a powerful landlord had let loose a reign of terror. She was eyewitness







to the gruesome killing of a tribal couple by the landlord's ferocious dogs. The victims 'crime' has been to demand redress from the landlord for having got the woman pregnant. In counterattack, Indira then let a group of radicals who hacked the landlord to death... Having heard her story, Rashid and his lawyer friend and mentor, Ramettan, apply for a remission of sentence. Ramettan is cynical but under the rough exterior he is a passionate man. The two don't hesitate to use blackmail on a junior minister for access to higher political authority. A sense of time running out and mutual understanding bring Indira and Rashid to physical intimacy. Indira's happiness is complete when her repentant sister comes to beg forgiveness. And her young brother, overcome by her generosity when she gives him all she has earned in prison, sees Indira with new eyes.

When Indira next reports at the police station, the usually taciturn Inspector hands over her remission order. Eager to share her happiness, Indira rushes to her friend Sarada's house, only to find that her husband and his friends have gang raped the teenaged servant girl...

Rashid comes in search of her. Indira looks back, rage spent, rifle in hand—she has shot Rajan dead. Indira whispers 'sorry' to Rashid, who understands that she had to do what she did.

## THE DIRECTOR SAYS

"In the late sixties and early seventies, there was an extremist revolutionary movement in Kerala in which a number of highly motivated young people were involved. The movement was mostly directed against big landowners who were known to be

tyrannical towards their tenants. While it lasted, the movement resulted in the 'execution' of a few such tyrants, which, in turn, invited repressive measures from the law enforcement agencies. Later, most of the people involved were disillusioned and the movement itself lost momentum. My film is set in this period."



## ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

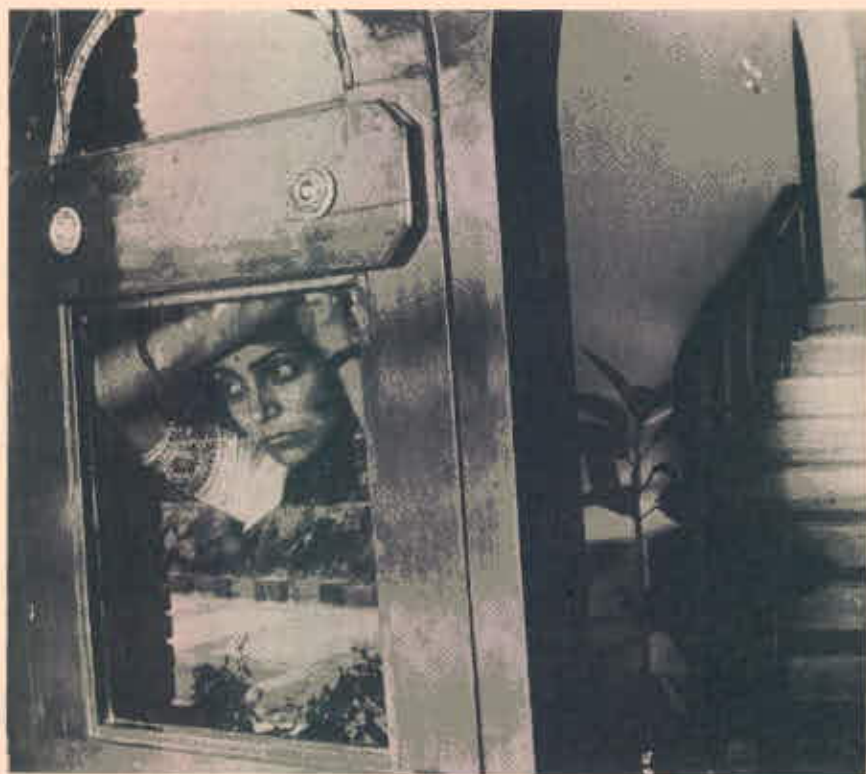
Hariharan started out as a drawing master in a Kerala high school. He was also keenly involved with the theatre (he was associated with the famous cine actor, Bahadur) and wrote film criticism too. Coming to Madras in 1960, he joined as assistant to editor/director M.S. Money and later worked with famous successful directors as M. Krishnan Nair, S.S. Rajan, J.D. Thottan, A.B. Raj and others. His first independent movie as a director was **Ladies Hostel** which was a big box-office hit, followed by **College Girl**, **Ayalathe Sundari**, **Love Marriage**, **Raja Hamsan**, which were all commercial successes. So far Hariharan has directed numerous films, of which several have won **Filmfare**, film critics and other awards. Apart from direction, he has also written stories, screenplay, dialogues for many of his movies. He has directed films in Malayalam, Tamil and Hindi.



# PANCHVATI

Col/Hindi/150 mins/1986

<b>Production</b>	: Shobha Doctor, Basu Bhattacharya (in co-operation with Royal Nepal Film Corporation and Time and Space.)	<b>Sound</b>	: Pradeep Kumar
<b>Direction</b>	: Basu Bhattacharya	<b>Art Direction</b>	: Bhaswati Bhattacharya
<b>Story</b>	: Kusum Ansal	<b>Music</b>	: Sarang Dev
<b>Script</b>	: Kusum Ansal and Basu Bhattacharya	<b>Cast:</b>	Suresh Oberoi (Vikram), Dipti Naval (Sadhvi), Jatin (Akbar Khan), Anuradha Tarafdar (Neera), Nabendu Ghosh (the old painter).
<b>Camera</b>	: Rajsh Joshi	<b>Enquiries:</b>	Time & Space Eruchshaw Bldg. 249, D.N. Road Bombay-400 001
			TEL: 266761/2/3.



## SYNOPSIS

The marriage of true minds is the rarest of rarities, specially in a milieu where the pursuit of wealth and power push the man-woman relationship to the periphery of priorities. **Panchvati**, the first Indo-Nepalese co-production, examines the web of changing relationships in the lives of two brothers, and the sensitive young painter who comes into their midst.

Sadhvi is a talented painter from Kathmandu, Nepal, who is having her first exhibition in Delhi. The landscapes of her native land, the majestic mountains and turbulent rivers, speak of her response to nature and its moods. Her simple, yet profound discussion on her paintings with the art-critic has a fascinated onlooker. He is Vikram, a successful businessman with an artist's soul. Vikram is a poet, and a man of integrity in his business dealing. Essentially a loner, he has built for himself a tasteful home set in lovingly tended gardens, far from the madding crowd. He invites Sadhvi to come home with her paintings. The luxurious bungalow is lovely—but not a home. Vikram's marriage had been a business deal according to Neera, his disillusioned, childless wife who spends her time at the club, socialising and playing cards. Jatin is the dilettantish younger brother—dilettante when it concerns the hard work demanded by business—to whom Vikram has made over all the assets. Everything may be Jatin's, but it is Vikram who gently rules both the house and business. Jatin is attracted to Sadhvi.

Vikram visits Kathmandu quite

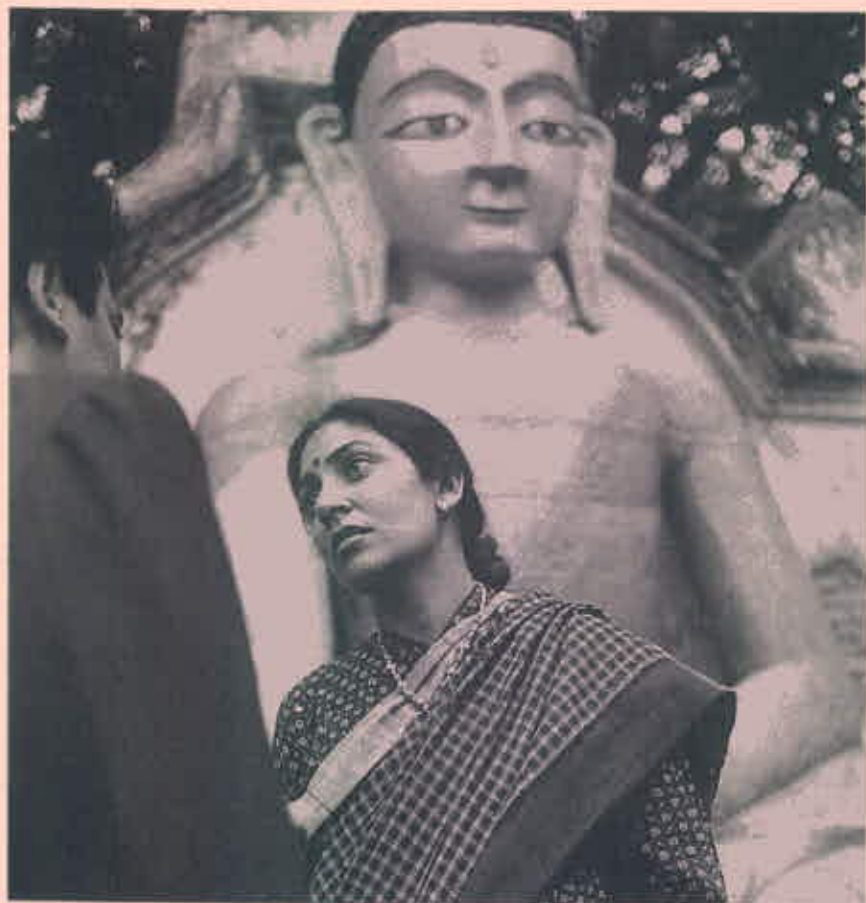
often since he has a garment business there. He asks Sadhvi's hand for his brother and the overwhelmed middle-class parents leave the choice to their daughter.

In time, Sadhvi realises that she and Jatin are basically incompatible. Marriage means mainly sex to Jatin who has no time for Sadhvi's interest—her painting, music and basic love of simplicity and solitude. Moreover, she has struggled to educate herself through scholarships, and doesn't appreciate the enforced idleness of her new, affluent life. The distance between the couple grows more unbridgable when they come back to Delhi.

Jatin is for once left in charge of business when Vikram goes abroad for three months. Anxious to prove himself as more than competent, he tries to make some easy money, but his unethical dealings backfire. It is left to Vikram to set affairs to right once again.

Frequent quarrels which were temporarily patched up with lust on his part, and silent protest on Sadhvi's—finally lead to physical violence. Sadhvi has suffered his constant taunts about her middle class background, her inability to socialise with his business associates, and jibes about her paintings. Jatin accuses her of trying to breaking up the home, when she suggests they live independently so that their marriage will be strengthened by greater emotional and mental intimacy. Vikram watches Sadhvi's growing loneliness but he can do nothing. And Jatin cannot dream of leaving a brother who has brought him up after their parents' death.





At last, Sadhvi asserts herself and tells Jatin that he has no right to touch her after hitting her. For Sadhvi, the marriage has ended. Vikram takes a desolate Sadhvi to Kathmandu since he is required there to repair the damage done by Jatin. Already there is an unspoken bond between the two. Now within sight of the Himalayas, a marriage of true minds takes place—a physical, mental and spiritual coming together, at last, of two people who share the same sensibility and the same values.

Sadhvi does not return to her parents but goes back to her teacher, a reclusive painter of

traditional religious scrolls. She is pregnant and serenely happy. Sadhvi tells her spiritual mentor that one moment of perfect bliss is enough to last her a lifetime. A chastened Jatin tries to bring Sadhvi back when he learns of her pregnancy. Softly, but with implacable finality, Sadhvi tells him that he is not the father of her child, and frees him from all responsibility to her.

... Sadhvi has twin boys. As the wise old artist looks on, in that shaded grove of the idyllic home Vikram has bought her, Vikram and Sadhvi seem a modern-day Ram and Sita separated by

circumstances—fated to meet and part eternally.

## THE DIRECTOR SAYS

"**Panchvati** is not a film only about conjugal bliss or maladjustment. Underneath the socio-emotional structure lie other significations: mythological, metaphysical and even political. Some explicit. Some subtle. But always flexible. Subject to individual interpretations.

"The mythological references are implicit in the locales. The place of bliss for Sadhvi and Vikram is named Panchvati, the mythical hermitage in which Ram and Sita spent part of their exile. It was also the place where they saw the golden deer, an illusory vision which was instrumental in separating the ideal couple. The other reference, not so obvious, is the image of the Himalayas. To Sadhvi, Vikram's touch conjures up the majestic peaks, forever associated with Shiva, the ascetic whom his consort, the younger Uma, had to win with penance.

## ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Born into a brahmin family who were hereditary priests to the Cossimbazar royal family, Basu Bhattacharya came to Bombay straight from his studies in Calcutta to work in films. He recounts how he would get a film projectionist to tape the soundtrack for him, which he would listen to



before seeing the film. This was in the mid fifties. He began his film career as assistant to the late Bimal Roy.

He won the President's Gold Medal for his very first film, **Teesri Kasam**, in '66, about a simple cartman's unattainable love for a **nautanki** dancer. **Anubhav** ('72), **Aavishkar** ('74) and **Grihapraves** ('79) where a loose trilogy exploring the stresses and failed expectations of urban marriage. He produced **Sparsh** ('79) directed by Sai Paranjpye. An important film was the Indo-Czech-Swiss co-production, of **Bitter Autumn with the Scent of Mangoes**, about a Czech documentary filmmaker discovering Nehru and India. He has also made two documentaries, **Science India** (about the evolution of science from pre-Vedic times to the present) and another, **Solar Energy**, for the Department of Science and Technology.



# PANDAVAPURAM

Cal/Malayalam/90 mins/1986

<b>Production/ Direction</b>	: G.S. Panicker
<b>Story</b>	: Sethu
<b>Script</b>	: Sethee/G.S. Panicker
<b>Camera</b>	: Divakara Menon
<b>Sound</b>	: Devdas
<b>Editing</b>	: Suresh Babu C.A.
<b>Music</b>	: Mohan

**Cast:** Jamila (Devi), Appu (Jaran), James (Unni), Master Deepak (the son).

## SYNOPSIS

The dividing line between reality and fantasy becomes blurred for a sensitive woman betrayed by life. But paradoxically, she retains her sanity precisely because the world of fantasy offers the only escape from her empty existence.

**Pandavapuram** captures the two planes of existence of Devi, created in the well known novel of the same name by Sethu, an outstanding writer of Malayalam literature. The novel, in the style of magical realism, won the Sahitya Akademi award in '82. Devi lives in a remote village in the





crumbling, ancestral home of her absconding husband. She is a striking woman in her thirties, teaching at the local school. She has an eight-year-old son, Raghu, who keeps asking awkward questions about his absent father. Living with her are the husband's old mother and Syamala, his unmarried sister. A distant relative of her husband is the middle-aged Unni Menon, a fellow teacher. Unni had made overtures to Devi in her husband's absence which she rejected—and the man has been nursing a grievance ever since. Devi is aware of this and the knowledge permeates her two levels of existence. The position of a cast-off wife in a traditional society exposes her to malicious gossip, specially in that small, off-the-track village where only one train stops everyday.

It is at the railway station that Devi keeps a daily vigil, waiting for someone to come from 'Pandavapuram'. Does this place really exist or has Devi invented it

to explain her husband's absence? The one-man staff at the station and passersby look on pityingly when Devi performs her daily ritual of waiting for the mythical man to alight from the train...but one day, someone does get off and asks his way to Devi's house. Unni looks askance when the man gives his name as 'Jaran'—which means a paramour. Devi fails to recognise him at first. But Jaran begins to talk of the life they led in Pandavapuram where he first met her at her wedding reception. He reminds her that her husband and he worked together at a cement factory and he lived in the flat opposite hers. He talks cajolingly of how they were attracted to each other, exchanging speaking looks from windows; of their outings to green meadows outside the city; of how unhappy Devi was with her husband's drinking, insensitivity to her emotional needs, and fits of jealous rage. Till one night, Jaran comes to her bedroom when the husband is night duty...



Devi meets all his reminiscences with stony silence and outright denial. She asks him to leave the same night and when he doesn't, makes him sleep outside on the verandah. But she is disturbed when Jaran and Syamala engage in flirtatious talk or her son gets friendly with the stranger. The stranger doesn't leave the next day either... Unni and others from the village threaten him with dire consequences if he stays in Devi's house any longer.. But now, in a dramatic volte face, it is Devi who imprisons Jaran and he, desperate to leave, A hunted look comes upon his face when Devi asks him why he didn't come to claim her earlier, after ruining her marriage. How could he forget her so easily after hounding her with his unwanted attentions? Did he really love her at all? She gives her own version of the night he came to her bedroom, taunting him with impotency. Her rage grows hysterical as she shuts him in a small, dark room. Dressed in red sari, her hair streaming, Devi claims she is Durga come to destroy him. She vows to dance on his bleeding body as he cowers in a corner. She makes love to him against his wishes...

Next morning, Devi, wakes up to find that the paramour has gone. She asks everyone about the man from Pandavapuram but her sister-in-law and others are bewildered. No one had come there, they had not even heard of the name Pandavapuram. But Devi is sure that Jaran had come, inexorably summoned by the strength of her will. Many more will come true, and she will revenge

herself on all men.

All believe she has gone mad. But calm and determined as ever, Devi sets out to keep her tryst at the railway station..... certain that 'he' will come one day.

## THE DIRECTOR SAYS

"It is not everybody's film. I don't know if all will be able to appreciate it. It can be enjoyed by those who are interested in literature and have a literary/artistic background. I have not compromised on quality for the commercial success of the film. But finance always restricts the striving for perfection."

## ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

G.S. Panicker is a graduate in Film Direction from the Film & TV Institute of India, Pune. He had been making short films for TV in Canada before he produced and directed his first feature film **Ekakini**, based on a story by M.T. Vasudeva Nair, which won an award in 1975. But it remained in the cans for three years for want of distributors.

His second film, **Prakruthi Manohari**, was based on the freedom struggle. His third film, **Sahyante Makan**, was a children's film which won him a State Award in 1982. It was based on a poem by the famous Vailoppuli.

**Pandavapuram**, based on a famous novel by Sethu, is his fourth feature film. He has also recently completed his first feature in Kannada, titled **Romanchana**.

# PAPORI

Col/Assamese/144 mins/1986

**Production** : M/s. Patkai Films  
**Direction/Script** : Jahnu Barua  
**Story/Editing** : Heu-En Barua  
**Camera** : Binod Pradhan  
**Sound** : Vijay Divekar  
Y.M. Wagale  
**Music** : Satya Barua  
P.P.Vaidyanathan

**Cast:** Biju Phukan (Sub-Inspector), Gopi Desai (Papori) Sushil Goswami (husband), Dulal Roy (Lawyer), Runjun (daughter), Amulya Kakoti (eye surgeon).

**Enquiries:** M/s Patkai Film  
C/o Jahnu Barua  
9 Dutt Kutir  
Plot 20/12m Wadala  
Bombay 400 031  
TEL: 4123927

## SYNOPSIS

A mass political movement does not spare bystanders. The repercussions of the student movement in Assam, demanding the boycott of elections called for by the central government in 1983, and the holding of the elections in the face of mass opposition, form a frenzied background to the story of a simple housewife. Papori is the traditional young wife of Binod, the village schoolmaster. Her life revolves round her husband and only child, a nine-year-old daughter, at present undergoing treatment in a Jorhat hospital. Papori is shielded from the knowledge that her daughter is dying but Binod knows the truth.

Binod visits the Secretary to the local MP whose nephew is







similarly afflicted by paralysis. He wants to find out if there is some cure available in Delhi, which the aide boasts of visiting often. Later, the Secretary's dead body is discovered and so also Binod's cigarette lighter. The Sub-inspector of the local police station, innately polite and respectful to the teacher has no option but to arrest Binod on charge of murder.

Now begins Papori's nightmare existence, of trying to tend to her sick daughter, of seeking out a lawyer to defend her husband. Binod's uncle refuses to help them because they had married against his wishes.

Strangely enough, it is the Inspector, who is also a poet, who puts Papori in touch with an old college-mate of his. A Muslim, this struggling lawyer makes a joke of it that he still has to win a case.

The Inspector comes to Papori's aid, helping her meet her husband in jail, giving her a ride to the city hospital when the buses go off the roads in sympathy with the movement, and visiting the sick child in the hospital.

In the same hospital, is a young blind boy, son of rich parents who are prepared to pay any price for a cornea transplant. The eye-surgeon emotionally blackmails Papori into donating the eyes of her daughter, who by now she knows is dying. There's an unexpected ray of hope in that the conscientious doctor attending the girl finds a favourable line of treatment but that hope is tragically put out. The young doctor is manoeuvred out of the country by the ambitious eye-surgeon who does not hesitate to put the rich man's contacts to his use.

The little girl's condition worsens and Papori is heartbroken. The court hearing goes badly for her husband and her daughter who seemed to be recovering, has died. Papori's grief is poignant as she recalls how often she scolded her bright and spirited child...

Meanwhile, Papori's lawyer does not give up hope, he buys time for the case. The processes of law take their own time as Papori ekes out her lonely existence. The story of Papori is interwoven with political events that have Assam in turmoil. The All Assam Students Union had asked for the revision of electoral rolls since foreigners illegally entering the country have been taken advantage of by political parties, to promote bloc votes. The students have asked the local people to boycott the coming elections because the central government has not revised the rolls. These events are reported indirectly, through the villagers who gather in the village square to discuss politics and gossip. They speculate loudly on the relationship existing between Papori and the compassionate Sub-Inspector.

The Sub-Inspector continues to be worried about Binod's arrest. He nabs the real murderer on the strength of evidence supplied by an informer. But the murderer, a local hoodlum, controls a large bloc of votes, and pressure is put on the policeman since the elections are imminent. Indeed, the local MP is the Sub-Inspector's uncle. But the Sub-inspector resists.

Papori is raped by a petty smuggler who has had an eye on this woman living all by herself. At

first she plans to report the rape but when she sees how helpless the Sub-Inspector is against the evil forces arraigned against him she tears up her complaint. The Sub-Inspector is transferred to a remote outpost. And with him, goes Papori's last moral support.

Her husband is now convicted of murder, the flimsy evidence regardless. Papori has nothing to continue for, she contemplates suicide. But she chooses to live and fight. Her naivete has cost her dearly...Her agonised sobs fill the sky.

(In an epilogue statement we learn that Binod was acquitted finally, and the Sub-Inspector, promoted.)

## THE DIRECTOR SAYS

"Many thousands of people died due to the 1983 elections in Assam. Almost all of them had nothing to do with politics, yet they paid the price of their lives. I made frequent trips to Assam (I live in Bombay) at this time and found a lot of innocent individuals were being harassed and exploited. I do not belong to any particular political party but I decided I wanted people everywhere to see the Assam movement in human terms.

"I had earlier tried to make a documentary film on the Assam movement but that proved impossible because of government blocks. So I decided to make a fiction film instead, to show that all Paporis, all ordinary folk, whether men or women, should become aware of how they can end up victims in political crossfire."





## ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Jahnu Barua is a Science Graduate from Gauhati University, Assam. Graduating in Direction from the Film & TV Institute of India in 1974, he worked on various film projects till he joined ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation), Ahmedabad/Bombay where he made more than 100 educational television programmes for SITE (Satellite Instructional Television Experiment). He resigned his job to return to film making, producing and directing his first feature film **Aparoop** (about the loneliness of a woman married to a tea planter) in 1982—the first Assamese film to be financed by NFDC. The film won the National Award in 1983. It was also made in Hindi as **Apeksha**. Following **Papori**, 1986, he has recently completed shooting for the latest film **Halodhia Choraye Baodhan Khai** (The

Catastrophe), on the politicisation of a simple farmer. Jahnu Barua also teaches cinema at the Xavier Institute of Communications, Bombay.



# RAO SAHEB

Col/Hindi/123 mins/1986

<b>Production</b>	: Pahlaj Bajaj and Co.
<b>Direction/Script</b>	: Vijaya Mehta
<b>Story</b>	: Jaywant Dalvi
<b>Camera</b>	: Adeep Tandon
<b>Sound</b>	: Ravindra Sathe
<b>Editing</b>	: Avudhoot
<b>Music</b>	: Bhaskar Chandavarkar
<b>Art Direction</b>	: Shyam Bhutkar

**Cast:** Anupam Kher (Rao Saheb), Vijay Mehta (Mawsi), Neelu Phule (Nana Saheb, the elder brother), Tanvi (Radhakka), Mangesh Kulkarni (Bhaorao)

**Enquiries:** Pahlaj Bajaj & Co.  
63 Nariman Bhavan  
227 Nariman Point  
Bombay 400 021  
TEL: 2021024

## SYNOPSIS

Brahmin bigotry and its cruelty to widows was a subject of heated intellectual debate in the 1920s. Emancipation of women was much discussed but remained at the level of intellectual exercise. **Rao Saheb** — based on the novel by Jaywant Dalvi evokes that bygone ambience in a mood of calm reflection.

The small town Brahmin ethos, somewhere in Maharashtra, is in a state of flux, buffeted by change without and troubled by ferment within. Bhaorao, a 20-year-old municipal clerk, brings home Radhakka, his 15-year-old bride. Home is the small outhouse at the back of the decaying mansion of Rao Saheb. Once upon a time it was known for its aristocratic wealth and progressive views. Now, the bleak rooms house three people who live in self-imposed isolation from each other. Rao





Saheb, the 35-year-old England educated barrister, creates his own oasis of English elegance in a suite upstairs. The heavy Victorian furniture echoes the Western music played on the gramophone. Hibernating in a rocking chair under the mildewed porch below is Nana Saheb, the older brother. He is stricken by the family malaise, (or is it a curse?) which had afflicted their father as well. It is an unbalanced withdrawal from the world, a craven retreat from life's challenges.

The only woman of the house is Mawsi, their widowed aunt in her mid-40s. This younger sister of their late mother was widowed when she was a girl of just ten. She leads the strictly regimented life of a widow, head shaven and given to a frugal diet. Mawsi has not lost her zest for life. She is a gregarious soul, starved for

company, hungry for someone to reciprocate her generous affection and laugh at her sly humour. Rao Saheb has in effect banished her from his presence out of a sense of guilty revulsion. Guilty, because neither he nor his father had the courage to rescue her from a stringent tradition that punished a woman for being a widow.



More than events, it is the psychological interaction of the characters that change each of them. The silent, unhappy house seems to be waiting for the new bride, her shy charm, her laughter and innate intelligence. Radhakka is soon enveloped by Mawsi's warmth. She is intrigued and fascinated by Rao Saheb's alien ways—talking directly and looking her in the eye to her initial consternation. Rao Saheb is a bundle of nervous energy, hinting at an underlying instability. There is the picture in his room of Gloria, the English girl who was ready to marry him. No explanation is offered as to why he did not, except for the inference that he shied away from a difficult reality. His is the classic dilemma of a man trapped between two cultures—one intellectual, the other emotional.

Husband Bhaurao is the flattered (and slyly amused) recipient of Rao Saheb's half confidences and lectures about bringing his young wife out of seclusion. She does accompany the men to the theatre and what is more, sit with them. The scandalised community looks askance even though Radhakka is the mother of a son by now. The baby brings joy to everyone, with the exception of the disturbed brother. He walks off into the rain one night, never to return. Bhaurao sets out in search, catches pneumonia and dies soon after.

Bhaurao's drunken father, Tatya, a traditional Brahmin, insists on shaving Radhakka's hair and sentencing her to a widow's harsh existence. Rao Saheb, having failed to change the father-in-law's mind,

is left feeling impotent and helpless. But, in a fortuitous accident, Tatya drowns in the well in the grounds—watched by Radhakka and Rao Saheb.

Rao Saheb orders Radhakka to start growing her hair and begins her education. The frisson of sexual awareness between the two now grows into palpable tension. Radhakka dreams of marrying her mentor. Mawsi's pragmatic suggestion that Rao Saheb should wed Radhakka breaks the sense of time suspended. The 'progressive' Rao Saheb agrees in principle but keeps evading the issue, making vague plans for all of them to live in England. Vacillation leads to a paralysis of will—the first signs of the madness inherent in the family are now manifest in Rao Saheb. In protest, Radhakka decides to revert to her outward state of widowhood and summons the barber, even as Rao Saheb sinks deeper into lethargy...the growing boy is a symbol of distant hope as life proceeds to a standstill around him.

## THE DIRECTOR SAYS

"The original source of Rao Saheb is a very popular play, *Barrister* which in turn was based on a novel by Jaywant Dalvi. The period it covers, according to me, is very colourful and very important as sociological history. It began from the early 20th century and went on till the '30s. I have always been interested in the complexity of this period. On one side, you had high intellectuals going abroad for education, to Oxford and Cambridge, and exposed to Western thinking. At the same



time, they were very nationalistic and wanted to apply Western modes of thinking to change our attitudes and traditions. They called themselves 'sudharaks' and you can compare them to the Brahmo Samajists of Bengal. They believed in a Western way of life, not just thinking. So you had them dressing in three-piece suits and using cutlery in their homes.

"One of their major aims was upliftment of women. They wanted to educate women and give them equality. But they had two problems. Because they were educated abroad, they couldn't find their roots. They couldn't relate to their environment—like Rao Saheb. I have read many biographies of the period and they were present in my mind when I did the play and the film. The problem was that these men educated their wives, and other womenfolk, brought them out into society. But when it came to widow remarriage, which they advocated with passion, none of them would marry a widow. The only exception was Karve. All the others remarried girls of sixteen or so because the high mortality rate among women occasioned a lot of remarriages.

"...I have tremendous respect for Indian women, especially of the early part of this century. We might now pity them as confined to their homes, uneducated, unable to go out into society with their husbands. I know my mother, and my grandmother who was a widow with a shaven head. In their little world, they ruled as matriarchs. They had tremendous capacity, such tenacity that they wouldn't give up. Even in **Smriti Chitre**, Lakshmibai Tilak had this

immense capacity for change. You really can't pity her as a woman who had a nervous breakdown. In **Rao Saheb**, the widowed Mawsi has the courage to own up that she lives vicariously through the younger Radhakka. She acknowledges it with her kindly humour. I have known so many women like that. And remember, Mawsi had no one to help her come out of her situation..."



## ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Vijaya Mehta is a stalwart of the theatre, acclaimed by audiences at home and abroad, honoured by awards and prestigious appointments. Her association with films is comparatively recent but she has already left an imprint, both as actress and director.

Mehta took a post-graduate degree from Bombay University; she was given a government scholarship to study theatre with the legendary E. Alkazi (then director of the National School of Drama, New Delhi) and Adi Marzban, a veteran of the Bombay stage.

In '60, Mehta formed 'Rangayan', an experimental theatre group which became a nucleus of progressive playwrights and actors. A British Council Scholarship led to a two-year study of training methods in the UK. Mehta's innovative interaction with European theatre traditions and study of Indian folk and classical forms led to a collaboration with the eminent director Fritz Bellowitz, and Marathi folk adaptations of Brecht's plays. Her **Caucasian Chalk Circle** was invited to the Berlin Arts Festival, the first time that an Indian play was invited abroad. Her productions of **Mudra Rakshasa** (a Sanskrit classic) and Girish Karnad's **Hayavadana** have been staged in German at the Weimar National Theatre. Mehta has won state and central awards for her work in theatre; she is associated with theatre training programmes in Maharashtra, and is also on the governing council of the Film and Television Institute, Pune.

Bengal first induced her to act in

films, in his **Kalyug** (1981) and Govind Nihalani made her the hostess of his **Party** in '85. Mehta made her debut as director in **Smriti Chitre**, a meticulous recreation of a real life Brahmin couple of the late 19th century, and the searching questions they asked of the fossilized Brahmin tradition. Mehta played the role of the wife, Lakshmibai, on whose memoirs the film made for TV is based. **Smriti Chitre** won the National Award for Best Marathi Film. Her role in **Party** won Mehta the Best Actress Award at the '85 Tokyo International Film Festival. **Rao Saheb**, her first Hindi film as director, won two awards at the last National Film Festival: Best Supporting Actress for Vijaya Mehta's 'Mawsi' and another for Art Direction.

Vijaya Mehta has also produced telefilms of her own stage productions. In this theatre series, **Shakuntalam** (the Kalidasa classic) and **Wada Chirebandi**, on the inevitable disintegration of a joint family, have been telecast so far.



# SUSMAN (The Essence)

Col/Hindi/140 mins/1986

**Production** : ACASH (Assoc. of Co-operatives and Apex Societies of Handloom)  
**Direction/Script** : Shyam Benegal  
**Camera** : Ashok Mehta  
**Sound** : S.W. Deshpande/  
Hitendra Ghosh  
**Editing** : Bhanudas  
**Art Direction** : Nitish Roy  
**Music** : Varraj Bhatia/Shurang Dev

**Cast:** Om Puri (Ramulu), Shabana Azmi (Gauramma), Neena Gupta (Mandira Rai), Pankaj Kapoor and Anita Kanwar (labourers), Jayant Kripalani (textile mill official), Kulbhushon Kharbanda (Narsimha).

**Enquiries:** ACASH (Assoc. of Co-operatives and Apex Societies of Handloom)

Care Shyam Benegal/Sahayadri Films  
19A-20A Everest, Tardeo Rd  
Bombay 400 034. TEL: 892977

## SYNOPSIS

One of most the intricate weaving techniques in India is that of **ikat-tie-and-die**. **Susman** unravels undercurrents in the lives of a particular family of ikat weavers living in Pochampalli (a leading centre of this art) in Andhra Pradesh. The family consists of Ramulu, the father, Gauramma, the mother, and their two children, Chinna, a girl of marriageable age and a school-going son. Ramulu, though a skilled weaver, is not an independent artisan. He is bound to Narasimha, a middleman or 'master-weaver', his distant uncle.

Living with Ramulu are his younger brother, Laxmayya, a wastrel and wife-beater, and his wife Janaki. Janaki feels that only when they break away from the joint family will Laxmayya learn to be responsible. Then, there is the possibility of Chinna being married to Nagulu, the son of a widowed neighbour, who has hired a



powerloom set-up in Bhiwandi (a small textile town near Bombay). Bhima, Nagulu's friend, a city educated weaver, belongs to the Village Weaving Co-operative. He is greatly resentful of the corrupt practices of the Co-operative, which he feels functions to the advantage of the master-weaver and not the actual weavers.

Ramulu, bonded to his uncle, Narasimha, feels a prisoner of the loom and of the master-weaver, but is unable to break away as he knows no alternate occupation. He prefers that his young son be spared such a fate and urges him on to study. Narasimha secures a prestigious order for an exhibition of Indian textiles in Paris. Mandira Rai, the designer of the exhibition, impressed by Ramulu's work, gives him the order. Her boyfriend, a textile mill official, is skeptical of the need for handloom in an industrialised society.

Narasimha tries to secure silk for the order by bamboozling the Co-operative, but his attempt is foiled

by Bhima, and he is forced to buy silk from the market. Nevertheless, he manages to get a better price from Mandira. When the silk is given to Ramulu, his wife insists on keeping aside a little for their daughter's wedding sari, despite Ramulu's protests. Laxmayya hires a couple of live-in wage labourers, Gundayya and his wife. Janaki resents this as the wife is a flirt and husband Laxmayya has a roving eye. The sari made from the 'stolen' silk by Ramulu at his wife's insistence, is discovered by Mandira. She thinks that Narasimha is trying to sell her exclusive designs. Narasimha berates Ramulu, who feels very humiliated.

Meanwhile, Laxmayya's affair with the labourer's wife leads to a storm of jealous accusations, and physical violence. It results in Laxmayya leaving home, unaccompanied by his wife despite her earlier desire to do just this. The hired labourers also leave for the cramped quarters and industrial squalor of Bhiwandi.





along with Nagulu and Chinna whose marriage has finally taken place, to Gauramma's satisfaction.

Nothing cheers Ramulu who sinks deeper into apathy. Retreating into humiliated silence, he refuses to work the loom and complete the order. Gauramma tries her best—apologies, tears and angry recriminations—but Ramulu continues his silent protest.

In Bhiwandi, the tension between the striking textile workers and the powerloom owners culminates in violent rioting. Before the riots, the squalor and enforced idleness of her existence force Chinna to return home. Ramulu refuses to have her in the house, so she goes to stay with her mother-in-law. When the labourers bring news that Nagulu has been hurt, Chinna wants to be with him.

Ramulu is suddenly activated into weaving again, and the Paris order is finally completed. Meanwhile, Bhima manages to get the corrupt Co-operative Secretary charge-sheeted and there is talk of Bhima becoming the new Secretary.

Mandira invites Ramulu to Paris. At the exhibition he makes a definitive statement on what he feels to be his position in life. Mandira makes an impassioned plea on the need to preserve the traditions of the handloom craftsman, even in an industrialised society.

The film is punctuated by the poetry of the 16th century weaver—poet Kabir, who used common terms of weaving and dyeing to explain the larger meanings of life.

## THE DIRECTOR SAYS

"Weavers, in this case of the famed Pochampalli fabrics, unfortunately have not got a fair deal. The reasons for exploitation are many—maybe the inability of the people themselves to cope with the circumstances is at the root. I have tried to present the two worlds—the world of industry and of the artisan. On the other hand, the film is of a very personal and family situation, interacting with its environment."

## ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

The work of Shyam Benegal has achieved a rare combination for Indian cinema—films that don't make concessions to popular appeal and yet pay for themselves. His achievement is the more laudable considering he works in Hindi, the language of 'Bombay-Babylon', unlike the greater freedom of directors working in regional languages.

Benegal was born in Hyderabad in 1934, son of a photographer. His



16mm camera was one of young Benegal's earliest prized possessions. An inveterate film goer he remembers pedalling through a cyclone to catch a favourite film! He has a Masters degree in Economics from Osmania University, Hyderabad. While at university, Benegal started Hyderabad's first film club, the inaugural film of which was **Pather Panchali**. Benegal moved to Bombay for a career in advertising, starting as a copywriter and film assistant at Lintas.

When **Ankur** was released in '74, critics were astonished by Benegal's control over the medium. Fourteen years in advertising and over six hundred commercials made Benegal that rare bird—the veteran novice. His apprenticeship also included many short films and documentaries and work as an associate producer on an American TV channel. This last experience as well as study of children's television at the Children's Television Workshop in New York was made possible by the prestigious Bhabha Fellowship which he won for '70-'72.

By the time government honoured him with a Padmashri in '86, Benegal was a veteran of a much acclaimed 'trilogy' on feudal exploitation of the rural poor. **Ankur**, ('74), **Nishant** ('75) and **Manthan** ('76). The films have been honoured by national film awards

and screened at various foreign film festivals. **Nishant** won the Golden Plaque at the Chicago Film Festival in '76. In '77, Benegal made **Bhumika**, based on the biography of a film heroine of the '40s. **Bhumika** won Smita Patil, a Shyam Benegal discovery, her first National award for Best Actress. Smita Patil, Shabana Azmi, Naseeruddin Shah, Om Puri are the best known of the repertory of talent discovered by a perceptive casting eye. In the same year, Benegal made **Anugraham** (Telugu) and its Hindi version **Kondura**, a densely complex study of religious puritanism and sexual suppression in a feudal milieu. Then came **Junoon** (1978) an interracial love story set amidst the turbulence of the first uprising against the British in 1857; and **Kalyug** (1981), a loose re-working of the fratricidal Mahabharat war in the context of a modern industrialist family. **Arohan** (1982) based on the real life story of a sharecropper's fight for his land, won him yet another National Award for the Best Hindi Film, besides others for acting and editing. In 1983, he made **Mandi**, a black comedy set in a bordello, and in 1986, **Trikal** which goes back in time to a Goa waiting for liberation from the Portuguese. This film fetched him an award for Best Director. Two recent documentaries were on Nehru (an Indo-Russian co-production) and Satyajit Ray. One of the projects he is currently working on is a series based on Nehru's **Discovery of India**.



# UPPU (The Salt)

Col/Malayalam/117 mins/1986

## Production/

Story/Script : K.M.A. Rahim

Direction : Pavithran

Camera : Madhu Ambal

Sound : Devdas

Editing : Venugopal

Music : Sarath Chandra  
Marathe

**Cast:** Mohammad (Abu), Vijayan  
Kottarathil (Moosa), Sree Raman (Kazi),  
Madhavan (Moidutty), Jayalalitha  
(Amina).

**Enquiries:** K.M.A. Rahim  
Eranadan Films  
281/13 Guruvayoor Road  
Kunnamkulam 680 503  
Trichur, Kerala.

## SYNOPSIS

Meleri Moosa was once a fabulously rich man but he lost all his property—and a good part of his life—because of his obsession with endless civil litigation. The film begins with his journey to the other shore of the Bharathapuzha river along with his only daughter, Amina, her husband Abu (an orphan who was brought up by Moosa), and what belongings are left to them.

The local kazi (religious head), helps to resettle the Moosa family, since in his younger years, the kazi was a dependant of the Meleri House. He introduces Moosa to one of the richest men on this side of the shore, Moidutty Mudalali.



Moidutty has heard a lot about the legendary Moosa and is glad to give him shelter. Moidutty is religious and kind of heart, and rich to boot, but for long has been a frustrated husband. He feels his wife, a pious lady, does not love him enough.

Visiting Moosa, Moidutty meets Amina, and is immediately fascinated by her. Uncaring for the world around, he reveals to kazi

Moidutty is no more. In his chair, Moosa sits, surrounded by bundles and bundles of civil cases lost or won. Amina has two children, but she is all alone in that huge mansion where she has everything except love and happiness. Her son chases wine and women, and her daughter, her only solace, elopes with the car driver.

One night, Amina walks away into the distance...



his intention to marry Amina. The kazi approves since the girl will be looked after well. Besides, the religion is not against re-marriage. Moosa is naturally happy too, to hear of the new proposal.

Thus religion and wealth work hand in hand to push Abu and Amina apart. Moidutty marries Amina. In spite of all his heartfelt entreaties, his first wife and his daughter are taken away by her family.

Twenty years pass...

## THE DIRECTOR SAYS

"Salt is a trifle bitter—the truth always is. The religious laws are almost unknowingly misused by people, leading to the exploitation of those who succumb or resign themselves to religious and social pressures.

Our intention was not to victimise or ridicule the Muslim community. Why, in the second half of the film, we also expose a Nair family who run a prostitution den—but are very particular about their prayers!



It's not religions that are bad as those who misuse it."

**K.M.A. Rahim (script writer/producer)**

The villain in the film is the distorted perception of Muslim personal law. When I wrote the script, I kept it in mind that I must do my best to translate the reality I know onto the screen. That is why the film does not sound didactic. We did not intend to teach—the reality itself is thought provoking.

### ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

After graduation, Pavithran wanted to join the Film Institute in Pune. When he failed two times over, he joined the Law College—within calling distance of the FTII—instead. Instead of studying law, he spent his time in the Film

Institute seeing world classics and how films were made.

During the emergency time he produced **Kabani Nadi Chuvannappol** (When the River Turned Red) on the extremist movement, which was banned. This film won a State Award for Best Direction.

In 1978 he directed **Yaro Oral** about the travails of urban life and identity crisis in the city. This won State Awards for Best Direction, Best Editing and Best Cinematography. He has also composed the music for **Krishnan Kutty**, a Malayalam film. After a long gap, Pavithran returns to directing with **Uppu**.

K.M.A. Rahim is an advocate by profession.



# YEH WOHI MANZIL TO NAHIN (DESTINATIONS)

Col/Hindi/133 mins/1986

**Production** : Sudhir Mishra  
Productions

**Direction/Story/  
Script** : Sudhir Mishra

**Camera** : Devlin Bose

**Sound** : Inderjit Neogi  
Hitendra Ghosh

**Editing** : Renu Saluja

**Art Direction** : Robin Das

**Music** : Rajat Dholakia

**Cast:** Manohar Singh (Shamsher Singh),  
Habib Tanvir (Akhtar Baig), Murl  
Manohar Joshi, (B.M. Shah) Pankaj  
Kapoor (Rohit, a student leader),  
Naseeruddin Shah (the industrialist),  
Ajit Vachani (police superintendent),  
Raja Bundela (the industrialist's son),  
Sushmita Mukherjee (the journalist),  
Kusum Haider (Ismat).

## Enquiries:

Sudhir Mishra  
D-8/16 Inlaks Park Yaari Road  
Versova, Andheri (W), Bombay.

## SYNOPSIS

Akhtar Baig, Shamsher Singh and Murl Manohar Joshi are three old men who live a rather aimless existence in the large metropolis that is Bombay. Retired, not knowing what to do with their time, they entertain themselves with childish pranks and when they run out of those, they quarrel.

Once they studied together in a town called Rajpur. But that was a long time ago! A time almost erased from memory! Perhaps by a subconscious guilt which they constantly evade. Between them, nothing is sacrosanct as they know the most uncomfortable facts about each other's lives. That Singh's wife committed suicide by jumping out of a tenth floor window; that Joshi has never done a spot of work in his life; and that Baig has led a rather mediocre life all in all.





But the conversation becomes acerbic at times: college lecturer Baig wonders aloud if selling brains is any better or worse than Singh selling tyres! All This is not to say they are not friends. They are, in fact, extremely close and touchingly concerned for each other. Hearing that the university in which they studied is celebrating its hundredth year of existence, the old men decide to go back to their home town after a gap of over 40 years.

Poor old men! They should have stayed at home! Their town is no longer the mythical idyll their memories have made it out to be. Instead they are led to a dramatic confrontation with the past, and their darkest secrets are uncovered. There's a hint of coming events in the train journey itself, as Baig's sleep is disturbed by a recurring nightmare. In the train, they meet and avuncularly adopt a young girl, a journalist, on her way to Rajpur for a story on the simmering student unrest there.

As they wander around their hometown, other memories awake. The ethos risks a feudal servility now yoked to new masters. The student protests bring back memories of their own past when they were romantically involved with the terrorist movement against the British. Their university, like most universities in the country today, is run by local hoodlums and petty politicians. But one boy—Rohit—has the audacity to stand up and fight. He asserts, though it could cost him his life, that the local industrialist's son had Rohit's roommate killed. The victim had accused the industrialist of engineering the

accident in which 'difficult' workers were killed.

Rohit becomes the focal point around whom angry students gather to protest against the take over of the university by criminal elements—but he has set himself up as the next target! The industrialist's son and his gang slink into the hostel to bump off Rohit, but he is nabbed by furious students who beat him mercilessly and lock him up. Tension builds as the industrialist pressurizes the Vice-Chancellor to call the police in. The police lathi charge the students, a policeman is killed by the industrialist's hireling. Rohit is framed for the murder. He runs for his life and lands up in the old men's house, tired, exhausted and frightened to death. And the old men are faced with a moral dilemma for the second time in their lives.

In the past, they had handed over a fellow terrorist to the British in order to save their skins. Now,





they have not only to confront the guilt but expiate for their past cowardice. In a situation fraught with moral undercurrents, Baig blurts out the secret to a common friend Ismat—the moment of truth is upon them. The old men decide to save Rohit... and Singh's nephew, the local Superintendent of Police becomes the unwitting decoy for their escape plan. Because, Rohit is now hunted by the police as well as the revenge-bent son of the industrialist. The fairy tale ending of this film should be that they manage to save him and thus atone for their sins. But that is not how it is...

The film uses lines from Ghalib, the pre-eminent Urdu poet of the 19th century, as a poetic leit motif. Two generation of students voice their aspirations through the oft-quoted lines made refreshingly new here.

## THE DIRECTOR SAYS

"Visually the film is divided into three sections. The present, the past and the dreams of the old

men. The present is dealt with quite realistically. The past confronts the viewer in spurts and flashes, and as incidents essentially, but not totally recalled. The dreams are linked by a common theme but are absolutely loose, apparently unconnected and without a narrative flow to them."

"In terms of Indian cinema, the point in this film is to weave a comple, socially urgent theme into an apparently narrative framework. Within the coherence of a narrative, certain departures are attempted. The complex interaction of reality, memory and fantasy, merges into a total audiovisual experience. It is not true to say that the Indian viewer only understands an absolutely linear structure. As long as the framework is coherent, and the attempt is not esoteric, he will receive it. And as far as I am concerned, the attempt is not esoteric. The film attempts to tackle a complex theme and it attempts it in a manner that is dramatic, humorous and, above all, audiovisual."



# PANORAMA SHORTS



## A B SEE

Col/35mm/3mins/English

**Director :** Arun Gongade **Camera :** M. S. Patwari **Enquiries :** Films Division, Bombay.

This animated short film is about the tragic reality of blindness, and makes a fervent appeal to donate eyes.



## BODH VRIKSHA (The Wisdom Tree)

B&W/35 mm/35 mins/English

**Direction:** Rajan Khosa **Script:** Kajri Jain, Rajan Khosa, **Camera:** Piyush Shah **Cast:** Kaushalya Gidvani, Yashwant Das, Smt. Vidya Gouri Bakhle. **Enquiries :** Film & TV Institute of India, Pune.

The film attempts with visual and sound to capture the growing stream of consciousness of young woman groping for meaning as she nurses her 80-year old grandmother. This formalistic work won the top award at the Oberhausen film festival.



## CHAU DANCES OF MAYURBHANJA

Col/35mm/35 mins/English

**Direction :** Nirad N. Mohapatra **Camera :** Asit Padhi **Enquiries :** Films Division, Govt of India, Bombay.



## DHAKIA

Col/35mm/24mins/Hindi

**Direction :** Shankar Nag **Script :** Ranjit Chowdhury **Camera :** S. Ramachandra **Enquiries :** Padam Rag TV International, Bangalore.

An episode from **Malgudi Days**, the TV serial based on R.K. Narayan's novels and short stories. **Dhakia** evokes memories of the fast-vanishing tribe of postmen in the days when they were not mere mail-deliverers but almost a part of a family's hopes, dreams, and aspirations.



## FLOWERING OF SOIL

Col/35mm/33 mins/English

**Direction/Script :** Marinal Gupta

**Enquiries :** Director, Film Dept. of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. of West Bengal, Calcutta.

On nine traditional crafts of West Bengal, and their relation to the artisans' social beliefs and customs, heritage and the challenges of modern technology.

## GOLDEN APREGGIO: Brocades of Varanasi

Col/16mm blown up to 35mm/20 mins/English

**Direction :** Paresh Mehta **Subject**

**Consultant :** Mastand Singh **Camera :** Darshan Dave **Enquiries :** Paresh Mehta C/o Chitradhwani, Jyoti Studios, Bombay 400 007

The film attempts to weave together spirally the ethos of Varanasi with the ancient craft of handloom, using on the sound track the metaphorical poems of the Sufi saint Kabir, who was a weaver of Varanasi.

## HIGH ADVENTURES ON WHITE WATERS

Col/35mm/33 mins/English

**Direction/Script :** C.L. Kaul **Camera :** Mahesh Kamble **Enquiries :** Films Division, Bombay

An introduction to the high adventure sport of white water running in the country.



## THE ILLUSTRATED MANUSCRIPTS OF ASSAM

Col/35mm/16 mins/English

**Direction/Script :** Ardhendu

**Bhattacharya Camera :** Girish Padhair

**Enquiries :** Bidhen Roy, Global Film Associates, Thomas Building, Chandmari, Guwahati 781 003

The myths, legends and history of the Brahmaputra valley remain enshrined in the illustrated manuscripts of the 'Khanikars', a traditional sect of artists in Assam centuries ago.

## LOOKING BACK

B&W/35mm/30 mins/English

**Direction/Script :** Ravi Deshpande

**Camera :** Sudesh Pande **Cast :** Zutshi (Anil), Sudir Gupta (Sudhir) **Enquiries :** Film & TV Institute of India, Pune.

The film attempts to analytically recreate the events of 24 hours in a small city, following the announcement of the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, on the morning of October 31, 1984.





## MUNI

Col/35mm/28mins/Hindi & English

**Direction :** Shankar Nag **Script :** Ranjit Chowdhury **Camera :** S. Ramachandra  
**Cast :** Kanti Wadia, Teddy White, B. Vijaya Shree, Somu and Krishna Gowda **Enquiries :** Padam Rag TV International, Bangalore.

An episode from **Malgudi Days**, the TV serial based on R.K. Narayan's novels and short stories. **Muni** features the unlikely and amusing confrontation between a penniless goatherd who speaks only Hindi, and an only-English-speaking American tourist in search of the real India.

## PARAMPARA

Col/35mm/107mins/English

**Direction :** Prakash Jha **Camera :** Rajan Kothari **Enquiries :** Films Division, Bombay.

The film deals primarily with the tradition of Guru Shishya Parampara, including various styles of Indian dance—Bharat Natyam, Kuchipudi, Odissi etc.



## THE RACING SNAKES

Col/35mm/10mins/English

**Direction/Script :** K.R. Mohanan  
**Camera :** Marcus Bartley Jr. **Enquiries :** Kerala State Film Development Corporation, Trivandrum 14.  
Boat races are held in all parts of Kerala but the major water festivals are celebrated in Kuttanad, a land shimmering with rivers and lakes. The snake boats, low lying, swift and highly manoeuvrable, have a 300-year-old history behind them.

## THE SEER WHO WALKS ALONE

Col/35mm/50mins/English

**Direction :** G. Aravindan **Camera :** Shaji **Enquiries :** Films Division, Bombay.

An attempt to present the great seer of our times, J. Krishnamurthi. The film won the National Award for Best Documentary.

## SIKKIM CULTURE AND PROGRESS

Col/35mm/16mins/English

**Direction :** Bankim Kapadia **Camera :** Madhu Patwari **Enquiries :** Films Division, Bombay.

On the history, life and culture of the Sikkimese people. The problem of deforestation is also woven in.



## SILENCE

B&W/35mm/32mins/English

**Direction/Script :** Sagar Sangam Sarkar  
**Camera :** Michael M. Cast : Rekha Sabnis and Zutshi **Enquiries :** Film & TV Institute of India, Pune.

The story of an unusual love-relationship—between a young man of 22 and a lady much older.

## THROUGH A DIFFERENT LENS

Col/35mm/22mins/English

**Direction/Script :** S. Krishnaswamy **Enquiries :** Krishnaswamy Associates Pvt. Ltd, Madras.

A compilation film tracing the contribution of Indian Cinema to India's freedom struggle, with extracts from films of the pre-independence era chosen from all regions of India.



## A TRIBUTE TO ODISSI

Col/16mm/37mins/English

**Direction/Camera :** Gautam Ghosh  
**Performed by :** Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra, Illeana Chitaresti and Gotipuas of Orissa **Narration :** Aparna Sen **Enquiries :** Swapan Sarkar, Orchid Films Pvt Ltd, Calcutta 19.

**A Tribute to Odissi** is filmmaker Gautam Ghosh's tribute to this enchanting dance form of Orissa... "a tree which grew in the eastern region, put out many fresh leaves, then decayed, almost collapsed with the ill-winds that blew, but which is now resurgent with new shoots upon its tender branches."



## WARLI PAINTINGS

Col/35mm/17mins/English

**Direction :** V.K. Wankhede **Camera :** B. Khosla, M. S. Gangadhar **Enquiries :** Films Division, Bombay.

On the exuberant paintings of the Warli tribals from Thane district, Maharashtra—which have found a place in art galleries today. The film won the Silver Lotus at the National Film Festival, 1986.





**SISTER ALPHONSA OF  
BHARANANGANAM**

*Col/35mm/28mins/English*

**Direction :** *Rajiv Vijay Raghavan*  
**Production :** *Dejo Kappen, George Sebastian*  
**Camera :** *Venugopal*  
**Editor :** *Bina Paul* **Music :** *Isaac Thomas Kottukapally*  
**Enquiries :**  
*"Divya Chaithanya", Flat MF/IV  
224, Brindavan Housing Colony,  
Pattom, Trivandrum.*

The film traces the life of Sister Alphonsa (1910-1946), a simple Catholic nun from India who, in her short and outwardly uneventful life, cloistered within the four walls of a convent and racked by illnesses, showed great fortitude through all her trials and tribulations. It uses elements of her own words in the form of a monologue, visual recreations of spiritual moments in her life, interviews with people who knew her intimately, painting and music to evoke the beauty and sanctity of her soul.